Preliminary Development Program for Downtown

Aurora

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Aurora, Illinois

August 1974

Prepared By

BAF Ben-Ami Friedman AIP Urban and Environmental Planning

Acknowledgements

This Preliminary Development Program was prepared for the City of Aurora by a consulting team directed by Ben-Ami Friedman, AIP, 126 East 38th Street, New York, New York. The team also consisted of Alan M. Voorhees and Associates (traffic engineering); Economics Research Associates; Miceli, Weed & Kulik (renderings); Neighborhood Development Associates; Theater Planning Associates; and Toups and Olson (civil engineering). An important element of this assignment was the participation of several agencies and civic organizations in the study process. These included the City Council, the Downtown Redevelopment Committee, the Plan Commission, the Aurora Revenue Sharing Committee, the Downtown Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Fox River Valley Pleasure Driveway and Park District, the Aurora Area Arts Council, and more. Mr. Edmond R. Browne, Jr., Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, coordinated the project for the city and was of invaluable assistance.

This report was prepared by the following project associates:

Arthur G. Boutilier
Maureen A. Cotterill
Shirley C. Dugdale
Estelle I. Kazman
Marilyn E. Matis
Andrés T. Rojas
Michael N. Weinstein

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Ben-Ami Friedman AIP Urban and Environmental Planning

September 17, 1974

The Honorable Albert D. McCoy, Mayor
City of Aurora
44 East Downer Place
Aurora, Illinois 60507

Dear Mayor McCoy,

I am pleased to submit to you the completed Preliminary Development Program for Downtown Aurora. As requested, we have placed the greatest emphasis on development projects that are of highest priority for downtown, and most feasible for implementation. It is essential at this time that the resources of the City be placed on the final planning and design of these priority projects, which will lead to their actual construction in the near future.

I have greatly enjoyed working with you and the City Council on this assignment.

Sincerely,

Ben-Ami Friedman

Ben-Ami Friedman

BAF:mem

cc: Commissioner James A. Ahlgren
Commissioner Robert H. Locke
Commissioner Mark J. Mitchell
✓Commissioner Osmund Orland

126 East 38 Street, New York 10016 New York 212 • 889 • 4916

Introduction

Purpose of Study

Downtown Aurora reflects its historical significance in the rich and unique character of its buildings situated on the Fox River. These factors, combined with a favorable economic climate, once made Aurora a regional focal point for social and economic activity. The continued viability of a downtown, however, depends on its ability to attract people to work, shop, conduct personal business, and seek entertainment. In recent years, downtown Aurora has lost some of this attraction, owing, in part, to the new patterns of urbanization and competition from outlying shopping centers. Realizing that the new centers, like the Fox Valley Mall, may offer up to twice the retail, office and entertainment space found in the downtown, it is unrealistic to expect Aurora to regain its former prominence as a major shopping center. It becomes necessary, therefore, to redefine the role of the downtown. With positive action on the part of the city and the business community, the socio-economic environment could thus be stabilized and improved.

A number of objectives could be realistically achieved for the betterment of the downtown. Initially, steps should be taken to bring about improvements for the immediate future. Such improvements should be undertaken not only for their immediate effect, but also as stimuli for possible subsequent development. Because of the need for immediate action in undertaking these initial improvements, much of the responsibility at the outset must rest with the city. Efforts should be made to involve the private sector wherever investment opportunities exist. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify development projects that can be undertaken immediately in downtown Aurora, with the objective of stabilizing the area and stimulating additional activity.

The following five goals were formulated for this study:

1. Establish and maintain downtown Aurora as the center of government, finance, social services, civic, cultural, specialized commercial, and entertainment functions for the city and vicinity.

2. Encourage the redevelopment of the downtown area by means of a coordinated program.

3. Retain and enhance the historic character of buildings.

4. Maximize the potential use and enjoyment of the Fox River.

5. Initiate immediate development activity in the downtown area.

Scope of Work

Three main tasks were pursued in the preparation of this Preliminary Development Program for downtown Aurora:

Research and Analysis

Information was gathered and analyzed to gain an understanding of local conditions. This information included inventories of existing land uses, market potentials for certain types of special uses and activities for the downtown, traffic, parking and transportation conditions, requirements for construction or modification of structures along the river, and existing conditions and required improvements to utilities. General information was also collected and analyzed regarding property ownerships, general real estate values and building conditions.

Formulation of a Development Concept

The main thrust of this study has been the preparation of a preliminary Development Concept. Based on research findings and design ideas, the program reflects how the downtown is likely to change in the near future, and provides a flexible framework from which it can take a new shape. This concept is the first step in a continuing development process. It emphasizes those projects which are feasible for immediate implementation, and suggests alternative activities and land uses that might proceed in subsequent phases of development. Working within a conceptual framework, the city can coordinate these development efforts and strive towards the creation of a unified downtown.

Identification of Priority Projects

The Development Concept has been formulated for the purpose of immediate implementation by means of public and private investment. Several Priority Projects are therefore identified and described. These projects are intended to be developed with available resources and in a highly visible manner, with the intention of encouraging further investment activity downtown. Once a Priority Project has received favorable support, it should be carried forward immediately through design implementation studies and actual construction. This is a preliminary study, however, and final determination and plans will be necessary for each project.

Relationship to Other Planning Studies

There are three other planning studies currently in progress or about to get started in Aurora that relate to this report. They are the City Options Program, the Comprehensive Planning Program, and the Transit Development Program.

Each of these other studies builds upon the preliminary results of this downtown report. In the case of City Options, the National Endowment for the Arts and the city are funding in-depth planning efforts to preserve and enhance the riverfront through the implementation of various design concepts, and to formulate and initiate activity programs to coincide with these design concepts. The Island and the riverfront will be emphasized as unique settings for restoration and development in an effort to reinforce the downtown as an activity center for the community.

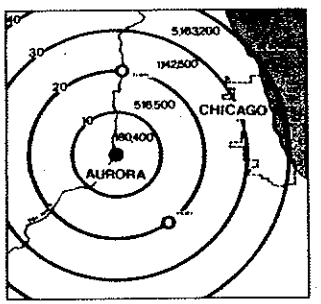
The second study, Comprehensive Planning, provides for an expanded study of downtown to include the rehabilitation of existing residential areas and an investigation of future development possibilities and alternative development strategies. These strategies will be projected through several time periods and will be analyzed in light of the expected impacts of new growth on the outskirts of the city. The program also includes an in-depth transportation survey covering access, circulation, and parking in and around downtown. The funding for this program is provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development with funding for staff services furnished by the city.

The city expects to begin a Transit Development Program later this year, which will provide for a thorough analysis of those public transportation issues which are critical to downtown and the rest of the city. Study funds would be provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation (Urban Mass Transportation Administration) and the State of Illinois, with staff services provided by the city. Special emphasis will be placed upon mass transit needs, and operational and management alternatives will be suggested. In addition, a five-year capital improvements program will be recommended as a basis for requesting capital grants.

Profile of Downtown

Chapter One

Profile of Downtown



POPULATION BY DISTANCE -1970

Physical Organization

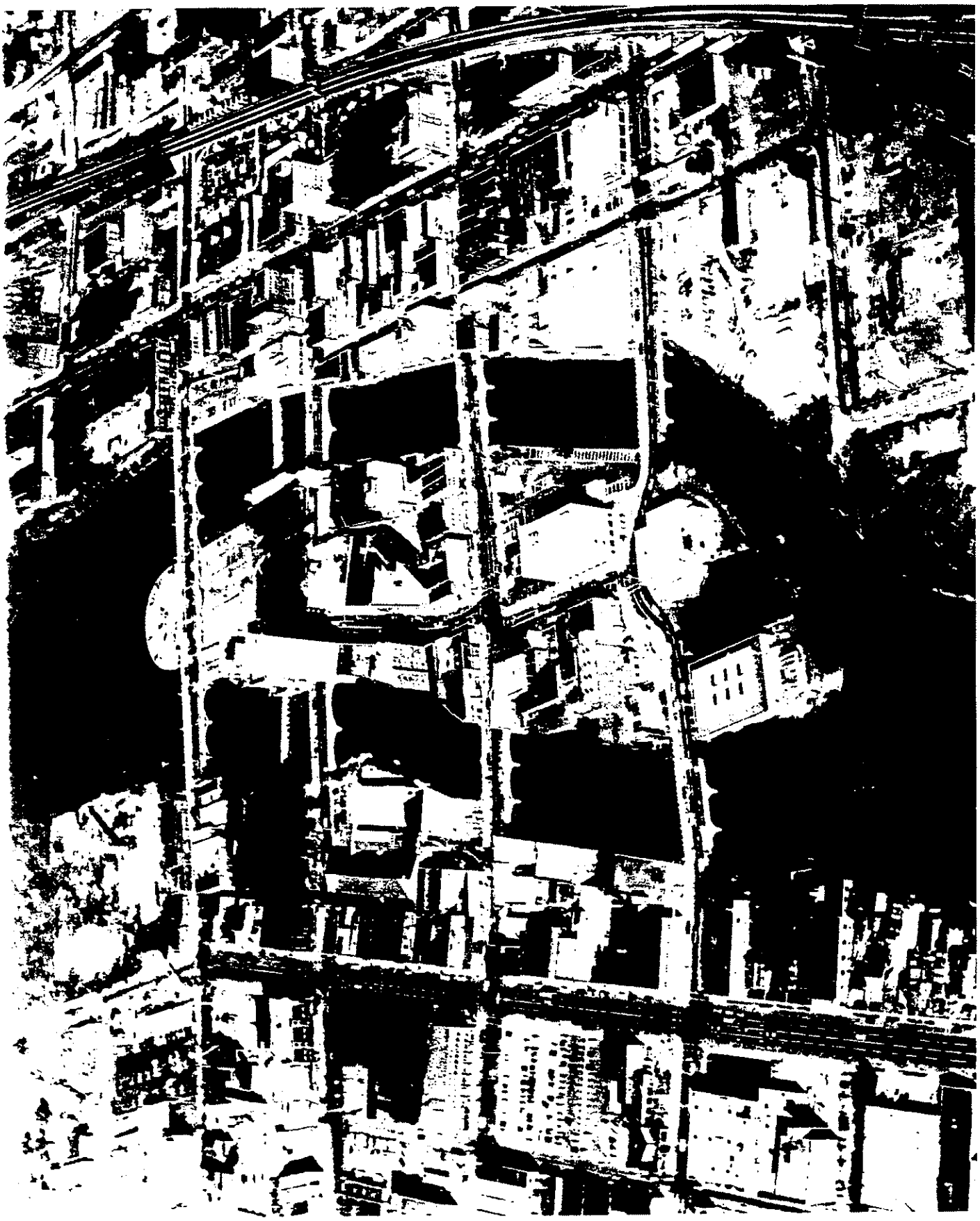
Aurora is located in Kane and DuPage Counties on the edge of the Chicago Metropolitan Region, 39 miles west of that city. It contains a land area of approximately 21 square miles, and has a population of 76,000 according to the 1972 Special Census.

For the purpose of this study, the downtown area is bounded by the Burlington Northern Railroad viaduct on the east, and Middle-Street on the west. The northern and southern limits are set by the ends of Stolp Island. Thus, the downtown study area measures approximately 1900 feet square, or 83 acres of total space. Of these 83 acres, approximately 11 acres are taken up by the Fox River and 72 acres are land. These boundaries are general and not rigid. Initial surveys of downtown conditions extended far beyond these limits. The results of these surveys indicated that most viable and cohesive activities are contained within this area.

The physical organization of downtown Aurora is shaped by several major features:

1. The Fox River flows from north to south. In its course through downtown, it divides into two channels on either side of Stolp Island, varying in width between 100 and 200 feet. The downtown is thus divided into three sectors: The Island, the East Bank and the West Bank. Though the Island contains only fifteen acres of land, it is is the physical center of downtown. The Island is long and narrow, measuring 1900 feet in length (north to south) and only 430 feet at its widest point on the south end. The East Bank is bounded by the Fox River and the railroad viaduct and totals 29 acres. It measures 600 feet across midway between the Island's ends. The West Bank contains about 28 acres. Its east-west dimension varies with the shoreline of the Fox River but has an average width of 650 feet. Because of the river's natural division, the downtown lacks physical focus and cohesion.

2. Four east-west bridges cross the Island and river channels. These bridges serve several functions, some of which are in conflict with one another. For instance, they carry large volumes of vehicular traffic moving through the city; local



traffic circulating within downtown; and pedestrian traffic moving between sectors.

3. The north-south arterials on both sides of the river include two state highways: Broadway (Rt. 25) on the east and Lake Street (Rt. 31) on the west. Many activities on the East Bank of the river are located along Broadway. The result is a conflict between traffic attempting to travel through downtown to other destinations and traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, attempting to circulate and conduct business downtown.

4. The Burlington Northern Railroad mainline is a major physical barrier on the eastern edge of downtown, isolating it from the rest of the city. The mainline is on an elevated viaduct supported by concrete columns approximately 20 feet above grade.

It is readily apparent that the physical organization of the downtown is critical to its stability and future growth. Any decisions regarding the future development of downtown Aurora must account for the unique spatial organization of this area. Although this arrangement presents opportunities for future improvements, it also is the source of serious problems.

Existing Buildings

Activity Areas

There are several primary activities in downtown Aurora that are highly significant to its vitality. This study is focused on those existing activities that serve as a stabilizing force, attract relatively large numbers of people and other ancillary activities, and which currently represent a substantial amount of space downtown. These primary activities are: Shopping and Services, Financial, Office and Civic. Briefly, these primary activities include the following uses:

Shopping and Services includes all types of retail establishments, services such as shoe repair and dry cleaning, as well as eating and drinking places, and entertainment such as movie theaters and bowling alleys.

Financial refers primarily to the six major banks and savings and loan institutions in or near downtown. These are placed in a separate activity category because they are highly stable uses of regional impact, and can function independently of other downtown activities.

Office refers to general private office space typically occupied by professionals and business firms.

Civic includes a wide range of public and semi-public uses including government offices and facilities, civic and semi-public facilities, and service clubs and agencies.

Certain activities were not listed in the primary group because they did not apply to the immediate goals and priorities of this assignment. They are: industrial, warehousing, automobile sales and services, and residential. However, these activities should definitely be attended to in the near future, with particular attention given to potential and existing housing and its relation to the improved environment.

There is a need for spatial continuity between interdependent activities which is illustrated by the distinguishable pattern of building concentrations in the downtown. One concentration of buildings is focused on River Street on the West Bank, another is clustered on both sides of Broadway on the East Bank, and they are linked by a corridor of buildings between Galena and Downer, running across the Island. This continuity is especially important for ground floor businesses.

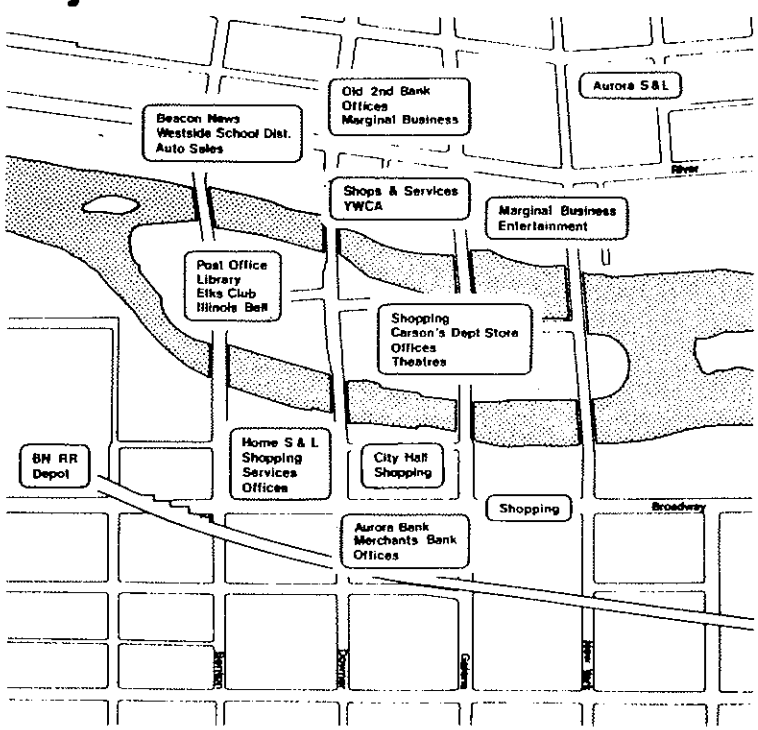
Beyond these pronounced activity concentrations, the pattern gradually falls apart as additional automobile parking is interspersed with existing buildings. Ample off-street parking located in convenient proximity to the buildings they serve, is essential downtown. More than half the land area downtown is devoted to parking and streets. Nevertheless, the relationship between parking and the activities it serves is a critical one. Parking must be carefully planned and sensitively designed to promote interaction and pedestrian movement. In the case of downtown Aurora, the demand for increased parking may become self-defeating if additional parking areas encroach into the cohesiveness of the remaining activity groupings. These remaining concentrations of buildings and activities are an indispensable resource and should therefore be reinforced where feasible.

Building Floor Areas for Major Activities

Downtown Aurora 1974 (in square feet)

Activity	Island	East Bank	West Bank	Total
Shopping & Services	179,000	201,000	120,000	500,000
Financial	--	68,000	37,000	104,000
Office	168,000	72,000	91,000	331,000
Civic	108,000	56,000	54,000	218,000
Total	455,000	396,000	303,000	1,154,000

Major Activities



The Island

The Island sector contains the largest amount of total floor area downtown, even though it has no financial institutions. The major concentration of activities is found in the center block of the Island with offices, retail stores, theaters, and residential uses. The main activity generator is the Carson Pirie Scott department store, which occupies 57,000 square feet of building floor area. The Paramount Theater offers virtually the only family entertainment available downtown, but fails to attract large audiences to its 2000-seat house. Many of the structures on this block are of an interesting design nature, but as of yet, nothing has been done to exploit this opportunity.

The south end of the Island contains a significant mixture of civic activities: the Post Office, the Main Library, and the Elks Club. These facilities are only a short distance from the main concentration of activity; yet they are isolated from the rest of the Island by two intervening arterials, a large parking lot and a lack of pedestrian-oriented amenities and attractions.

East Bank

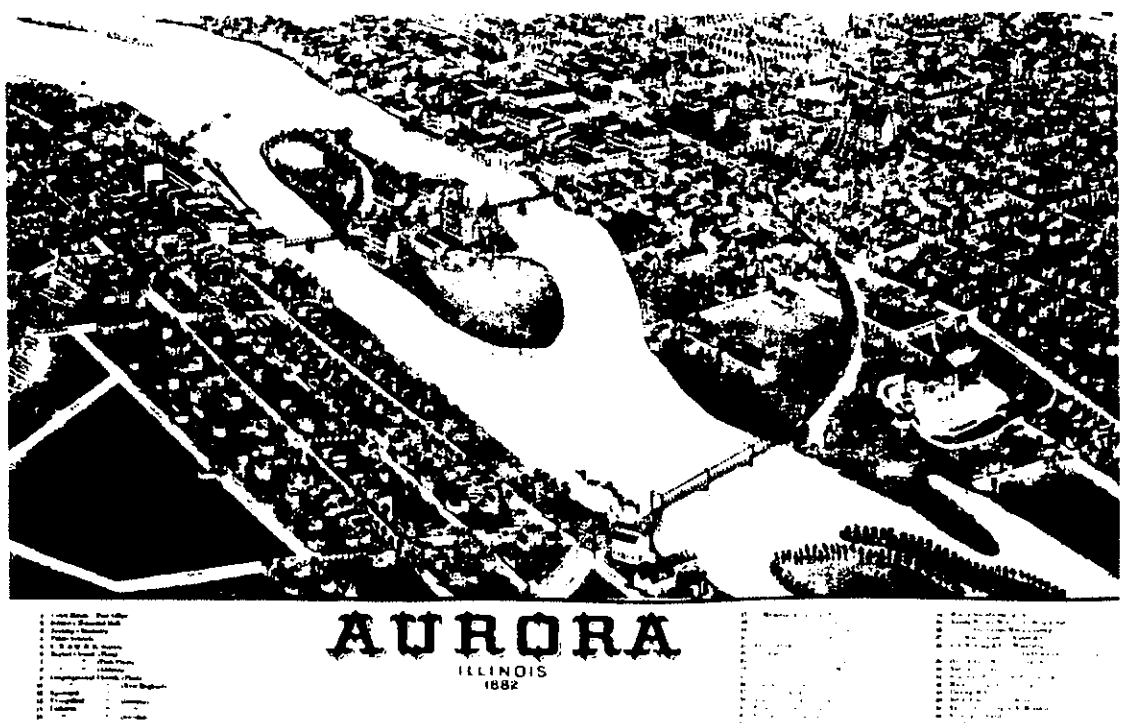
This sector contains the largest concentration of shopping and service establishments downtown. The City Hall and Township Offices are very strong activity generators in this area. The City Hall offices are in need of new and expanded facilities.

The East Bank is also the site of three financial institutions. Two of them, the Merchants National Bank and the Home Savings & Loan Association have completed major

redevelopment programs, including general office space and improved parking facilities. The relationship of these financial institutions to shopping uses appears to be a stabilizing one. Despite this, shopping activity has declined on the East Bank these past 10 to 15 years, contributing to the general decline of the vitality of the area. Substantial effort will be required to generate new activities that are appropriate to this location.

West Bank

Most activities on the West Bank are concentrated on River Street. Among the key facilities here are the Beacon News offices and plant, the Westside School District office, the Old Second National Bank, the YWCA, and the Aurora Savings & Loan. Most of these activities are located within two or three blocks of one another, but the continuity between them is severely disrupted. Street frontages are not oriented to pedestrians: many buildings were demolished on the west side of River Street and replaced by large parking areas offering neither landscaping nor other pedestrian amenities; most businesses to the north of the Old Second National Bank are marginal and unsightly. The Tivoli Theater and adjoining buildings are run-down; almost half a block of buildings bounded by Galena and the Fox River are vacant. Although the West Bank does lack cohesion at present, it also has potentials for improvement. It is stabilized by several major facilities. The Beacon News has just completed a major expansion program. The Old Second National Bank and the Aurora Savings & Loan Association are both planning expansions of their respective facilities. The West Bank is well served by traffic arteries. In contrast with the other two sectors of downtown, the West Bank has several relatively large parcels of land that are vacant and under-utilized. These parcels may possibly become sites for large scale residential and commercial redevelopment during the next five to ten years.



Design Resources

Downtown Aurora has a special identity made up of the kinds of human activities that attract people to it: shopping, banking, government, etc. All of these activities occur within a physical environment. The interaction between human activities and the physical environment influences the quality of experiences within downtown and is therefore critical to its identity.

The physical environment is composed of many elements: streets, sidewalks, buildings, parks and plazas, traffic, vistas, noise, visual appearance and climate. These physical elements when properly identified and utilized represent important design resources. By accounting for these resources and utilizing them properly, the visit to downtown can become a more interesting, convenient and enjoyable experience.

On the opposite page are examples of only some of the many design resources in downtown Aurora. Although shown separately, the way they fit together is of great importance, as demonstrated in later chapters of this report. An examination of these design resources should help one to understand how they could be utilized more effectively.

Approaches to Downtown

The approaches to the downtown are those points at which the downtown first becomes visible and visitors may enter it. These points identify where downtown is and guides visitors to it. It gives a first impression of what to anticipate. Downtown Aurora has eight approaches from the east and west, and three from the north and south. These approaches are on major traffic routes.

As seen from the examples, the approaches to downtown present problems to arriving visitors. Most often the view of downtown is fractured by an overall lack of visual unity. Directional signs are few and need greater coordination in design and placement. There is also a heavy visual overload of business signs and commercial graphics, which confuses the eye and offers little directional information. The approach from the east is interrupted by the railroad viaduct, which is both a physical and visual barrier. The viaduct is a permanent fixture and should be greatly improved in appearance to soften the impact. The river is generally not visible, neither from a distance nor from the bridges. Greater consideration could be given in the future to opening up the views to the river, as there is a general lack of landscaping which leaves the downtown approaches looking drab and uninviting.

The Fox River

The river is one of the most significant design elements downtown. It may also be the most neglected resource. Characteristically, most development encroaches upon the river and closes it off from view. The Fox River Valley Park District has made exemplary progress in creating usable open space along the river outside of downtown. Within the downtown area, there is approximately a mile and a half of shoreline, but there is not one park or plaza for public or private use. There are a few limited instances where pedestrian walks have been developed, but these lack continuity and amenities, and are in need of maintenance.

The river offers an outstanding resource for creating visual interest and recreational amenities. Improving its appearance should be given immediate priority. Aurora should lead the way in the effort to clean up the Fox River as an environmental and recreational asset.

Landmarks

Landmarks are conspicuous objects that mark a locality. Many prominent man-made features mark the downtown: individual buildings, groups of buildings and the bridges. Because of their age, many of Aurora's landmarks represent its history. The potentials presented by these landmarks are great. They provide focal points for identification and help create a "sense of place." They provide unique character and a human scale. Unfortunately, Aurora's landmarks have been almost totally neglected and are typically defaced and frequently threatened with demolition.

Downtown Aurora has a unique quality which no new shopping center or suburban development can match, and that is its history. The potential presented by this history is present in its buildings, which retain a legacy of human scale, a museum of cultural styles and building techniques, and create a new atmosphere which, if properly blended with new development, cannot be matched by the plastic styles of the new center.

The care required to maintain and restore old buildings, and to adapt them to new uses, is a real challenge. It is being done in a number of places, including Columbus, Indiana, and closer to home, Geneva, Illinois. It requires the contribution of many talents along with general organization and attention to the fundamentals of traffic and pedestrian movement, exterior design controls, street furniture, etc. This begins with some understanding and pride in the heritage which is being preserved.

Demolition and disguise are a way of rejecting a heritage, and there are obviously trends moving in this direction in Aurora. If they continue, they will destroy one of the few major assets of the downtown and one of its chief potential competitive advantages over the newer shopping centers. The alternative is to find the funds, the organizations, the methods and the people who care to restore and put to new uses the older buildings in the downtown. Done within the framework of a general design for development, the restoration activity could itself be both the generator and source of civic pride and associational vitality.

Approaches

1. North Lake

2. West Galena

3. West Benton

4. East New York

5. North Broadway

Landmarks

6. Old Second National Bank

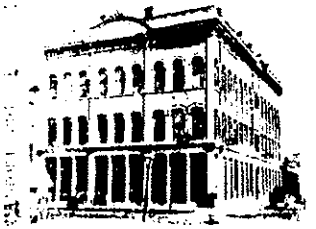
7. G.A.R. Memorial on East Downer

8. Elks Club

9. Library

10. Post Office

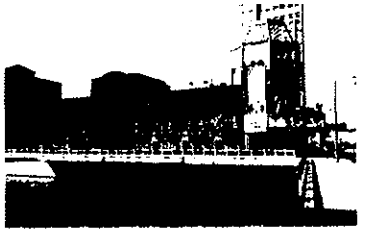
Landmarks



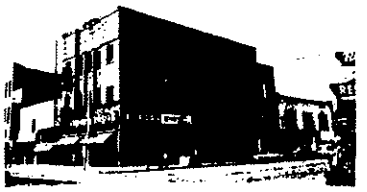
11. Coulter's Opera House 1874

12. Coulter's Opera House 1974

13. Aurora Hotel



14. Paramount Theater



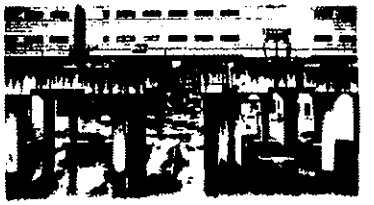
15. Walgreens Building
(formerly American National Bank)

The Fox River

16. North from W. Galena

17. South End of Island

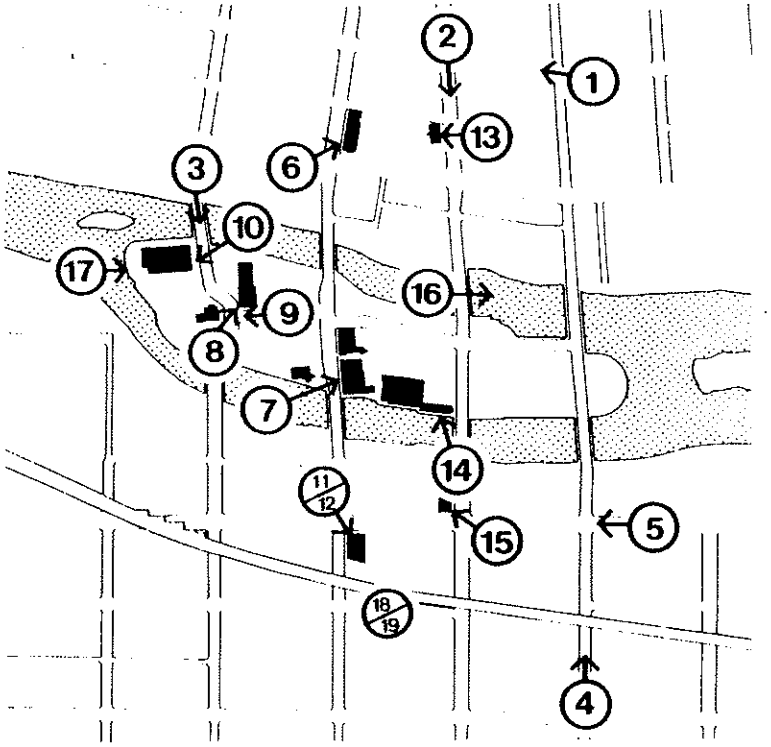
Railroad Viaduct



18. Commuter Train

19. Supporting Structure

Design Resources



Circulation and Parking

In planning for renewed vitality in downtown Aurora, transportation factors are of paramount concern, for transportation plays a major role in shaping and supporting urban centers. Traffic congestion, limited parking facilities, and unsatisfactory access to downtown can discourage shoppers and contribute to its decline. It is therefore necessary to consider carefully those issues which affect the functioning of downtown.

Street Function

Lake Street, River Street and Broadway are the major north-south streets in downtown. The east-west streets are New York Street, Galena Boulevard, Downer Place, and Benton Street. At present Lake Street and River Street (Rt. 31) function as a one-way pair, starting at New York Street on the north. These streets carry mainly through traffic; southbound Lake Street carries about 80 per cent through traffic and northbound River Street about 40 per cent. Galena Boulevard and New York Street also function as a one-way pair, from Oak Street on the west to Smith and Ohio Streets on the east, and carry a moderate (20 to 30 per cent) amount of through traffic. Benton Street and Downer Place function as a one-way pair, but mainly serve downtown circulation traffic. Stolp Avenue, which runs north and south on the Island, functions as a circulation street.

Broadway (Rt. 25) functions as a two-way street, carrying a load of 15 to 20 thousand vehicles per day, with 34 per cent of those vehicles being through trips. It is also the main business street downtown, and thereby serves pedestrian and local traffic as well.

This multiplicity of duties has forced Broadway to perform many of its functions poorly, when a separation of its functions could significantly improve its operation.

Parking

Parking becomes a critical issue downtown as demand for facilities located near the activities they serve increase. Generally, off-street parking throughout the city is well utilized. There is, however, excess capacity on the west side of the river, north of Galena Boulevard, on the east side of the river south of Downer Place, and on the north end of Stolp Island. The metered municipal lot on Stolp Island adjacent to the Illinois Bell Telephone Company, and the school district lot on River Street between Benton and Downer are critical areas, i.e., they are used over 95 per cent of capacity. Following is the existing distribution of public and private parking spaces:

	Municipal	Private	Total
East Side	197	548	745
Island	349	84	431
West Side	449	437	986
Total	993	1069	2162

On-street parking is critical on the following streets:

Stolp, between Downer and Galena
Water, between Downer and Galena
Broadway, between Downer and Galena
Downer, between Broadway and Stolp
Galena, between LaSalle and Stolp

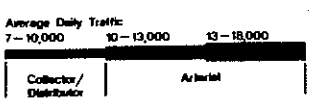
On most other streets where there is high usage, parkers have the option of choosing between 24 minutes, one-hour and two-hour spaces.

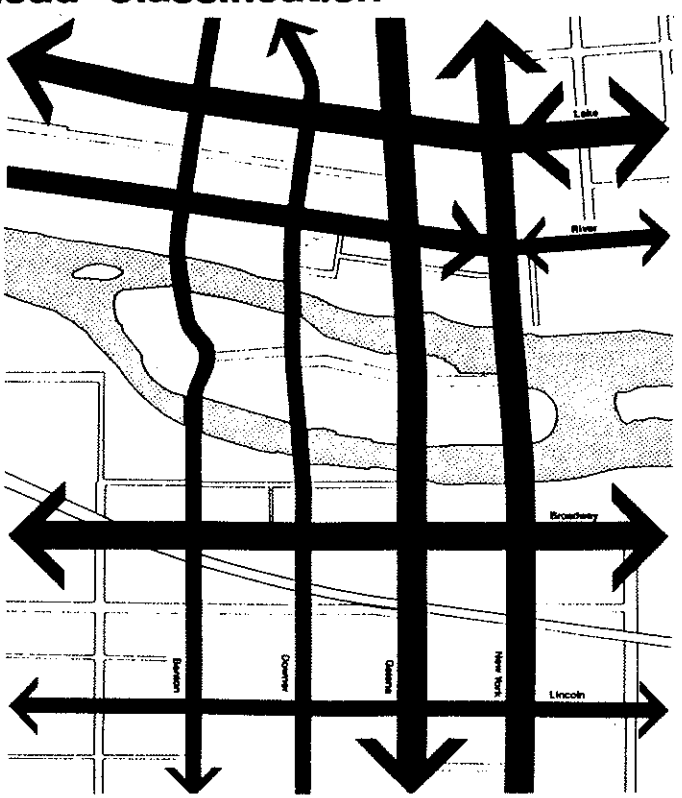
Mass Transit

Commuter Railroad Service

Burlington Northern provides commuter rail service between downtown Chicago's Union Station and the Burlington Northern commuter station near downtown Aurora, the western terminus of this line. According to the Transportation Planning study prepared by Perplana Associates, the commuter service has seen a 33 per cent increase in passengers during the past two decades despite rate increases. A 1973 survey showed that during the morning rush hours (5:05 AM to 8:05 AM) about 16,000 passengers rode the Burlington Northern train that departed from Aurora that year.

Road Classification





Inter-City Bus Service

Continental Trailways provides two trips daily from Chicago to Aurora and three trips daily from Aurora to Chicago. None of the service is during rush hours. The Fox Valley has limited bus service which is presently operated by the City of Elgin, Department of Transportation. The service is sponsored by and serves Aurora, Batavia, Elgin, Geneva, North Aurora, St. Charles, South Elgin, and Valley View. Hourly service is provided daily with reduced service on Saturdays and holidays. There is no service on Sunday. Ridership on the Fox Valley Route between Aurora and Elgin has been increasing over the past year. At present, ridership is over a thousand rides per week. Ridership on regular week days is approximately 200 rides.

Intra-City Bus Service

The City of Aurora operates a public bus system. The service is financed in part through a capital improvement grant from the State of Illinois Department of Transportation. In October of 1973, eleven thirty-one passenger new diesel buses were purchased through a federal capital improvement grant. The Aurora Transit System also owns ten buses purchased in 1968. At present, the new buses serve nine routes which fan out from the downtown area and operate on a thirty-minute headway. Usually, one bus serves each route. Service is provided from 6:00 AM to 6:15 PM. All routes meet on one corner downtown (Downer and Broadway) to provide easy transfer between routes. Temporarily, buses are leaving downtown from Stolp Avenue, between Downer and Galena, because of the reconstruction of Broadway. The Aurora Transit System carries approximately 4,000 passengers per day.

Economic Considerations

Historically downtown Aurora has served a multitude of functions both as the center of the City of Aurora and as the hub of a region. As suggested earlier in this report, the importance of the downtown in its city and regional context has decreased, and is undergoing certain transitions in function. However, in certain respects the role of the downtown has remained unchanged. It remains the center of government for the city and, to some extent, the region. This is significant for as long as government activities are located downtown there is virtual certainty that various types of private space users will also remain. Although in its role as an office center the downtown has not kept pace with the overall growth of the city and region, the total amount of private office space has not declined appreciably. The downtown still remains a strong financial center with three banks and three savings and loan associations. Moreover, a significant share of the city's professional and general office space users are still located downtown.

The most serious erosion of downtown viability is, without question, found in retail and related functions. Specifically, the most serious deterioration has occurred in comparison shopping -- those stores which typically comprise a downtown's retail drawing power. The table shows a comparison of the number of stores, by type, found in downtown Aurora in 1967 and 1974. While the data for the two years are derived from different sources and represent possible variations in classification, some conclusions are nevertheless valid. It may be noted that while the total number of stores has remained virtually constant, the number of general

Number of Stores in Downtown Aurora

Comparison Goods	1967	1974
General Merchandise	8	3
Apparel and Accessories	34	36
Furniture, Home Furnishings, and Appliances	14	13
Miscellaneous Retail	24	27
Sub-total Comparison	80	79
Convenience Goods		
Building Materials, Hardware, and Farm Equipment	4	3
Food Stores	6	5
Eating and Drinking Establishments	22	26
Drug and Proprietary Stores	6	6
Sub-total Convenience	38	40
Total	118	119

merchandise stores, which includes department and variety stores, has decreased from eight to three. Moreover, the quality of many of those establishments which have located downtown is less than desirable.

As a result of the changing mixture of stores in downtown, its overall drawing power has been substantially reduced. The table shows the percentage of related services for downtown Aurora as compared to a modern community shopping center. Note that Aurora's downtown contains only about one-fourth of the general merchandise space considered desirable for a modern center. However, for total comparison shopping, Aurora compares quite favorably.

A major difference between comparison shopping in Aurora and a modern center is spatial organization. In a modern center, the mall concept is often employed to take full advantage of crowd flow. By contrast, in downtown Aurora, shopping facilities are strewn over an extensive area. While Broadway represents the greatest concentration of retail space downtown, such space may also be found on Stolp Island and on the west bank of the river. Carson Pirie Scott, the downtown's only department store, is located on the Island and is relatively isolated from most retail shopping in the downtown.

The issues that relate to the functioning of the downtown are seen as follows:

1. The downtown as a major sub-regional retailing base is a phenomenon of the past.

2. The best prospects for revitalizing the downtown area lie in the reinforcement and expansion of professional and personal services and specialty-retail goods. The professional and personal services would include corporate and public administration, finance, insurance, real estate, and business services.

3. While the radius of influence as an area-wide market center has diminished, there is an absolute radius that could support a community shopping center.

4. The development of professional and service use and a community shopping center could provide the incentive for increasing downtown residents, which in turn would furnish an important market segment for the support of downtown restaurants, theaters, etc.

Space Use Relationships

Comparison Goods	Aurora	Modern Community Shopping Center
General Merchandise	12.5%	47.0%
Apparel and Accessories	16.6	12.0
Furniture, Home Furnishings, and Appliances	26.9	3.0
Total Comparison	56.0%	63.0%
Convenience Goods		
Food	16.0%	22.0%
Personal Services	5.9	4.0
Miscellaneous Retail	22.1	12.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Utilities and Infrastructure

Downtown is generally well served by its existing system of utilities, which include provisions for water, electrical power, telephone, natural gas, sanitary sewers and storm sewers. The water distribution system will have to be upgraded in conjunction with any major new development to satisfy fire protection flow requirements. This upgrading for fire protection should be coordinated with the eventual renovation of the total water distribution system downtown. Downtown is supplied with electricity through existing underground duct systems which are adequate at present. An electrical duct system was reconstructed on Broadway in 1973, and should be adequate for future requirements. Commonwealth Edison provides the electrical service and is obligated to service any new developments. The street lighting system on the East Bank of downtown is in need of repair. The wiring is in conduit and/or direct burial, and is undersized and old.

A major new sewer project has just been completed along Broadway between New York and Benton Streets. This project included the removal of existing combination sewers and replacing them with much larger combination sewers as well as the construction of separate new storm sewers and sanitary sewers. This construction project is designed to alleviate drainage problems that previously existed on the East Bank.

The foundation walls of the buildings bordering the river also serve as river retaining walls. Many of these walls have serious deterioration problems which allow water seepage into the basements of the buildings. Action should be taken to correct these conditions where they presently exist and to initiate a continued maintenance program.

It is the policy of the Illinois Division of Waterways to prohibit any encroachments on the existing channels of the river. This policy would generally prohibit the placement of any structure along the banks of the channels that would result in a reduction of the cross-section of the river. However, it would be permissible to construct foundations in the channels for structures over the river, after obtaining a permit from the state.

Social and Institutional Factors

Important questions face the civic leaders of Aurora. The future of the downtown, and to some extent the future of Aurora as a coherent community, are at stake in these questions. If institutional inertias dominate and events follow their "normal" course, the questions will not be dealt with, and the future of the downtown is easily predictable. It will wither away as a center of civic life. And what is equally important, it may not be replaced. Aurora could become a fragmented region of urban sprawl with no vital center for its civic, political, commercial, cultural and institutional activities. Two major issues have been identified. The resolution of these issues will largely determine the future of the institutional life in downtown. They are: (1) downtown as a link or gap, and (2) concentration or dispersal of downtown institutions.

Link or Gap

Aurora can develop as a single community in which both sides of the river are held together by a vital downtown which provides the organizing center and link between the two sectors. Historically, the tensions between whether or not this would be the case, or whether the two sectors would be independent communities, has always been present. Recent developments, notably, the outlying shopping center developments, are posing this question in a more forceful way. If the downtown is slowly abandoned, a gap will emerge, and eventually, Aurora will once again become two or more separate communities.

While the separation of Aurora into several communities is not an unthinkable future, important values would be lost. Many activities which give richness to urban life require a market, service or participation area larger than any one sector could provide. Specialty shops, specialized services, cultural life, media including newspapers, radio and TV, and the wide range of civic and service associations need the larger population out of which to draw customers, participants and leaders.

The only central place for locating these activities is in the present downtown area. These activities when gathered together, reinforce each other. If developed properly, they can continue to provide and build a stronger link between the sectors of Aurora. The community can be welded together, but doing so requires a place where people in fact come together to conduct their business, to politic, to play, and to respond to each others needs. Creating such a place, restoring what was in ways that will meet tomorrow's needs, will require determination and civic statesmanship of a high order.

Concentration or Dispersal

Many agencies, associations, and groups will be making choices about where to locate their activities. Any one of the choices may seem insignificant; together they will represent a move towards concentration or dispersal.

The forces working towards dispersal are many and varied. A gift of property, low rent, parking, more attractive offices or meeting rooms and many other incentives may emerge in any given case. In the light of these, the single most important factor may be ignored, that is, the vitality of interchange created by having associational and institutional centers located near each other in the midst of the political, commercial and cultural centers. Specialized

associations and services, and offices need the context of a community and civic center.

The clustering of associational offices and activities in downtown will have several other important effects:

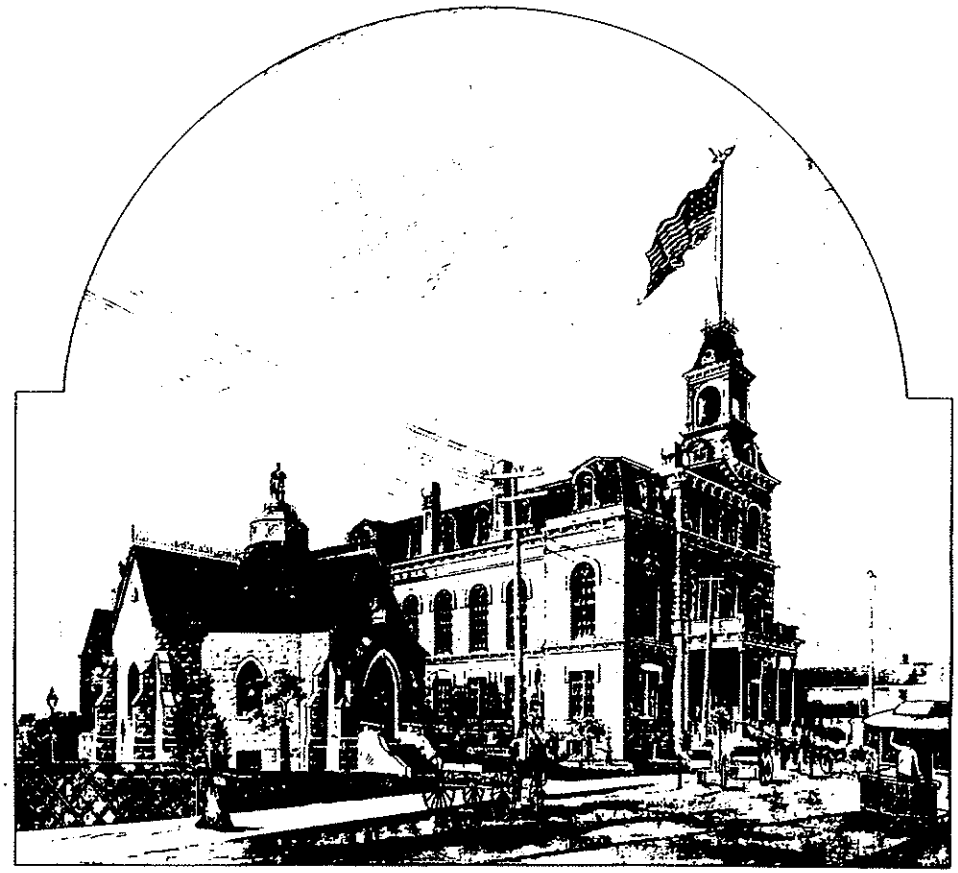
1. It will strengthen downtown as a commercial center.

2. It will contribute to the potential for residential development in or near downtown.

3. It will contribute to the use and thereby the strength and viability of the public transit and rail systems.

In order to attract these associations, however, it is important that low-cost space be made available in downtown. An argument can be made for free public indoor space for meetings, conferences, and even offices for non-profit associations. In a northern climate, such space is as important as the outdoor space provided at public expense in parks and malls. Any non-profit group might be eligible for such space, with the only requirement being that they maintain a certain volume of use.

Concentration of associational and institutional uses will require a deliberate decision to create and maintain space, on the one hand, and the decision by groups to stay in and help build a center of activity on the other.



MEMORIAL HALL
[PUBLIC LIBRARY]

CITY HALL

MEMORIAL HALL.

Concept Formulation

Chapter Two

Concept Formulation

Having reached an understanding of the issues that affect downtown Aurora, a series of alternative development concepts were prepared. These alternatives represented several strategies for the revitalization of downtown. Each alternative incorporated several priority projects which were considered for immediate implementation. The alternatives were proposed primarily as a means of generating information as to the best way to proceed with the improvement of downtown. The best elements of each alternative were subsequently combined and reformulated into a recommended "Development Concept."

The process of concept formulation involved many workshop sessions. Participants in these sessions included the City Council, city department heads and representative public agencies, downtown business organizations, the newly appointed Downtown Redevelopment Committee, the Plan Commission, the Revenue Sharing Committee, various community organizations, and the consulting team.

Alternative Concepts

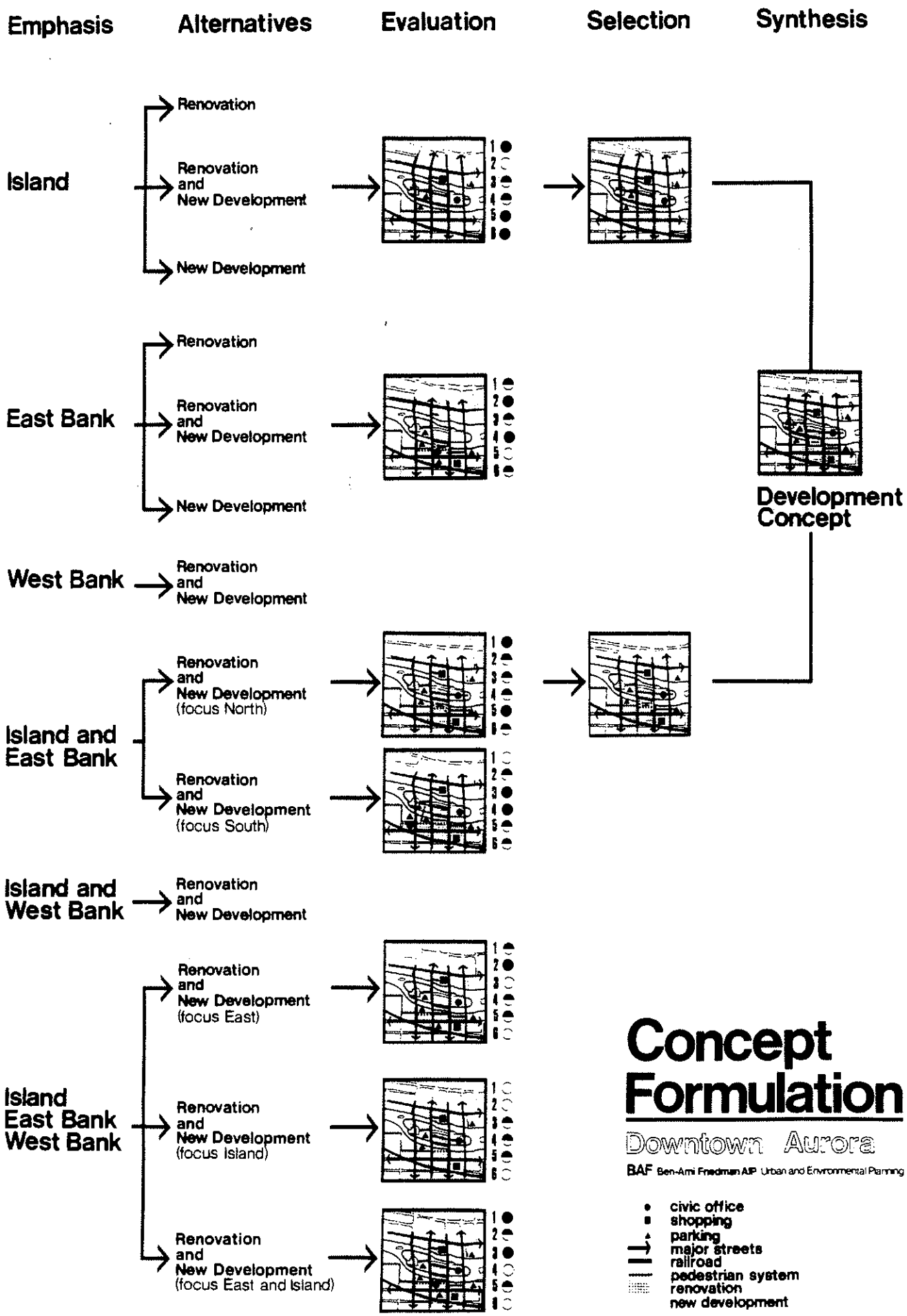
The Concept Formulation chart which follows presents the process which was followed to generate, evaluate and select alternative concepts for downtown together with their related priority projects.

Downtown was divided into its three main sectors: the Island, the East Bank and the West Bank. Each of these sectors taken individually or combined with one another could be emphasized for renovation and/or new development.

The first column of the Concept Formulation chart, titled "Emphasis," lists the sectors of downtown upon which the emphasis of each alternative concept was placed.

In the second column, "Alternatives," the major alternative concepts for downtown improvement were listed. These alternatives were grouped according to the basic types of improvements being suggested for each sector. These improvements were broadly defined as "renovation" and "new development." Those alternatives having the least likelihood of implementation were eliminated. The remaining alternatives were then carried into the next column of the chart.

In the third column, "Evaluation," the remaining seven alternative concepts were evaluated according to six criteria:


Emphasis
Alternatives
Evaluation
Selection
Synthesis
Island
Renovation
Renovation and New Development
New Development
East Bank
Renovation
Renovation and New Development
New Development
West Bank
Renovation and New Development
Island and East Bank
Renovation and New Development (focus North)
Renovation and New Development (focus South)
Island and West Bank
Renovation and New Development
Island East Bank West Bank
Renovation and New Development (focus East)
Renovation and New Development (focus Island)
Renovation and New Development (focus East and Island)
Development Concept
Concept Formulation
Downtown Aurora
BAF Ben-Ami Friedman AIP Urban and Environmental Planning
civic office
shopping
parking
major streets
railroad
pedestrian system
renovation
new development

1. Ease of property acquisition.
2. Development risk.
3. Vehicular system.
4. Pedestrian system.
5. Economic impact on downtown.
6. Political feasibility.

On the chart next to a map of each alternative, the relative performance of each alternative was rated by giving a score to each of the six criteria. The full black circle represents a top score for that criterion, a half-circle represents a medium score, and an empty circle represents a low score.

Those two alternatives which ranked highest appear in the next column, "Selection," and are represented by the maps. These two selected alternatives were used to compare two different solutions. They are the Island Alternative and a combination Island and East Bank Alternative.

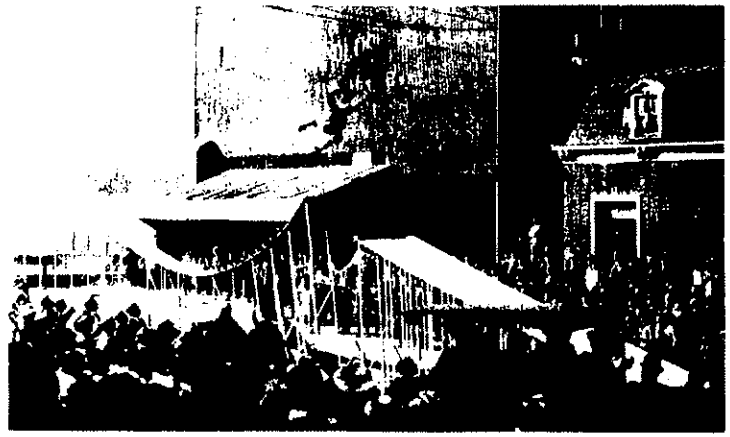
Island Alternative

In this concept, the Island is considered to be the unique place in the downtown and therefore to have the greatest opportunity for creating a dramatic and unified center of activity. This concept would combine renovation and new construction to transform the Island into the central urban place of Aurora and its region. Initially, the adjacent East and West Banks would receive significantly less public and private investment.

Island and East Bank Alternative

This concept would distribute initial priority projects over the Island, the East Bank, and to a lesser degree, the West Bank. The Island was emphasized by directing a significant portion of renovation and new development towards a combination of civic, cultural, office, specialty and recreational activities. The East Bank would be strengthened as a focus for business and shopping; a major renovation on the West Bank would create a farmers market and specialty shops, and expansions of its financial institutions are anticipated.

The most desirable elements from each of the two selected alternatives were combined into the recommended Development Concept for downtown. This resultant Development Concept is shown in the last column of the chart under the title of "Synthesis." The Development Concept is explained in the following chapter.



The Development Concept

Chapter Three

The Development Concept

The Development Concept is intended to serve as a framework for the coordinated revitalization of the downtown area by means of the recommended Priority Projects. Emphasis is placed on those projects that are most feasible of immediate implementation, i.e., within the next three years. The Development Concept also suggests alternative land uses and activities that might proceed in subsequent phases of development, but allows for flexibility in response to specific conditions that might then apply. A major emphasis is placed on renovation of existing buildings and spaces, some significant new developments, the re-routing of through traffic from Broadway, better use and beautification of the riverfronts, and the creation of pedestrian-oriented activity areas.

The Island

The entire 15-acre Island may be viewed as a potential site for civic and cultural activities interspersed with offices, specialty commercial, entertainment, and other amenities such as plazas and walkways. In this context, the Island should be developed as a unified and compact environment containing several activity areas. These activity areas would be bounded by the major east-west arterials that cross the Island, but would be interconnected by an overall pedestrian circulation system.

- The Island is the most readily identified place in the central part of Aurora and has the potential of creating an entirely new identity for the city and the downtown.
- The Island is central to the present and anticipated future geographic boundaries of the city.
- The Island has the potential of becoming a unifying focus of the east and west sides of Aurora.
- It has a limited and highly defined space where phased improvements can achieve maximum results.
- The Island offers outstanding urban design potentials with its river setting, visual distinction from the rest of the city, and existing older buildings that offer creative design resources.
- The Island has good access and is virtually at the crossroads of auto, bus and commuter rail service.

- There are potential locations for selective parking on the Island, and it is also within walking distance of existing and potential parking areas on either side of the river.

- It potentially offers the greatest positive impact on the rest of the downtown, by being immediately adjacent to and supportive of the main concentration of business on Broadway, as well as the commercial establishments on the Island. Of all the sites evaluated, it will provide the most significant impact on the future viability of downtown Aurora by absorbing currently vacant space, revitalizing blighted areas, stabilizing property values, attracting more people to the downtown area and encouraging new private investments.

- The Island already contains important civic institutions and other facilities which form the nucleus of a civic complex.

One of the most dramatic sites downtown is on the north end of the Island. This site has an outstanding view looking north on the Fox River, and should serve as a prime location for a civic complex, for new government offices, including a new City Hall, community services, and commercial activities. The northern-most tip of the Island should be improved as a public plaza to include such possible facilities as an ice-skating rink, amphitheater or outdoor cafe.

On the southside of Galena, a new Civic Auditorium should be developed through public acquisition and renovation of the Paramount Theater. The Auditorium, combined with meeting and banquet facilities in the proposed civic complex, could also function as a conference center.

On the block bounded by Galena, Stolp and Downer, many opportunities exist for the eventual development of specialty shops, community facilities and offices in addition to the auditorium. This entire block should be considered as an entity for the coordinated improvement and renovation of existing buildings. The development of a new civic complex on the Island should encourage new commercial investments downtown. The parking lot south of Downer Place is proposed for development at a later time. One possible use for this area is a new hotel with additional conference facilities and amenities such as a restaurant and cinema. A plaza should be developed around the GAR Memorial.

The southern end of the Island, in the vicinity of the Library and Post Office, also offers potentials for combining cultural and recreational uses. All of the propery south of Benton Street is publicly owned and therefore lends itself to more intense public uses. It is suggested that landscaped plazas and promenades be developed in place of existing parking lots between the Library and the Fox River. At such time as the Post Office is relocated, this building could be converted to a cultural use such as a museum or arts center.

East Bank

The East Bank of the river focuses on Broadway between Benton and New York Streets. This area contains a relatively significant amount of commercial activity. As such it must be stabilized and improved. The entire area is proposed for renovation involving actions on the part of the public and private sectors. A key element of this renovation will be the re-routing of through traffic from Broadway to Lincoln Avenue to by-pass

Development Concept

A. Commercial Renovation/Expansion
Streetscape Improevements

B. Bank Expansion
Commercial Renovation
Streetscape Improvements

C. Farmers Market
Specialty Commercial
Streetscape Improvements

D. Riverfront Beautification
Street Realignment
Underground Parking
Future Museum/Arts Center

E. Future Hotel and Plaza

F. Civic Auditorium & Plaza
Commercial Renovation

G. Civic Complex
Plaza Development

H. Commercial Renovation
Streetscape Improvements

I. Commercial Renovation
Mall on Water Street
Transit Station
Streetscape Improvements

J. Commercial Renovation
River Beautification
Streetscape Improvements

K. Future Parking & Commercial
Streetscape Improvements

L. Commercial Renovation
Streetscape Improvements

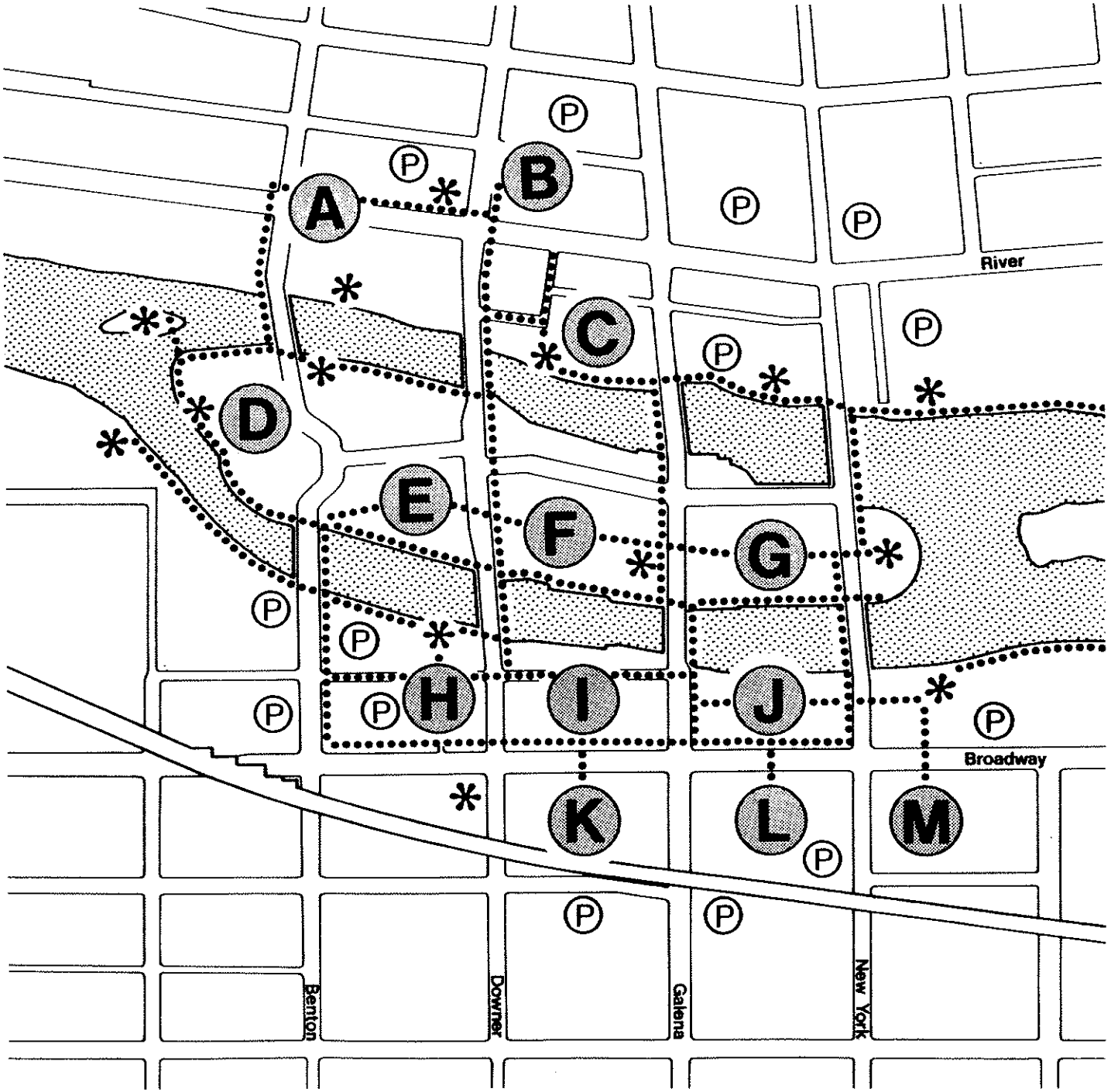
M. Firehouse Museum
Additional Parking

(A) Activity Area

* Park/Plaza

(P) Parking

····· Pedestrian Walkway



downtown. This re-routing will allow the renovation of Broadway as a shopping street for the exclusive use of local traffic, pedestrians, parking and transit buses.

West Bank

While the West Bank of downtown contains several important individual business and civic uses, there is a need to fill the voids between these uses to create more continuity and activity. This is especially true on River Street between New York and Benton.

Several potentials exist here for making better use of the physical resources on the West Bank:

- There is, of course, the west channel of the Fox River, which can be utilized more effectively as a visual attraction. There are several locations along the river that are open and underutilized.

- There are many old commercial buildings which lend themselves to restoration and re-use as specialty commercial.

- Vehicular access and circulation is generally more favorable on the West Bank than elsewhere downtown.

- Property values are relatively depreciated and acquisition of sites for new development should be attractive to investors for future development of residential and commercial uses.

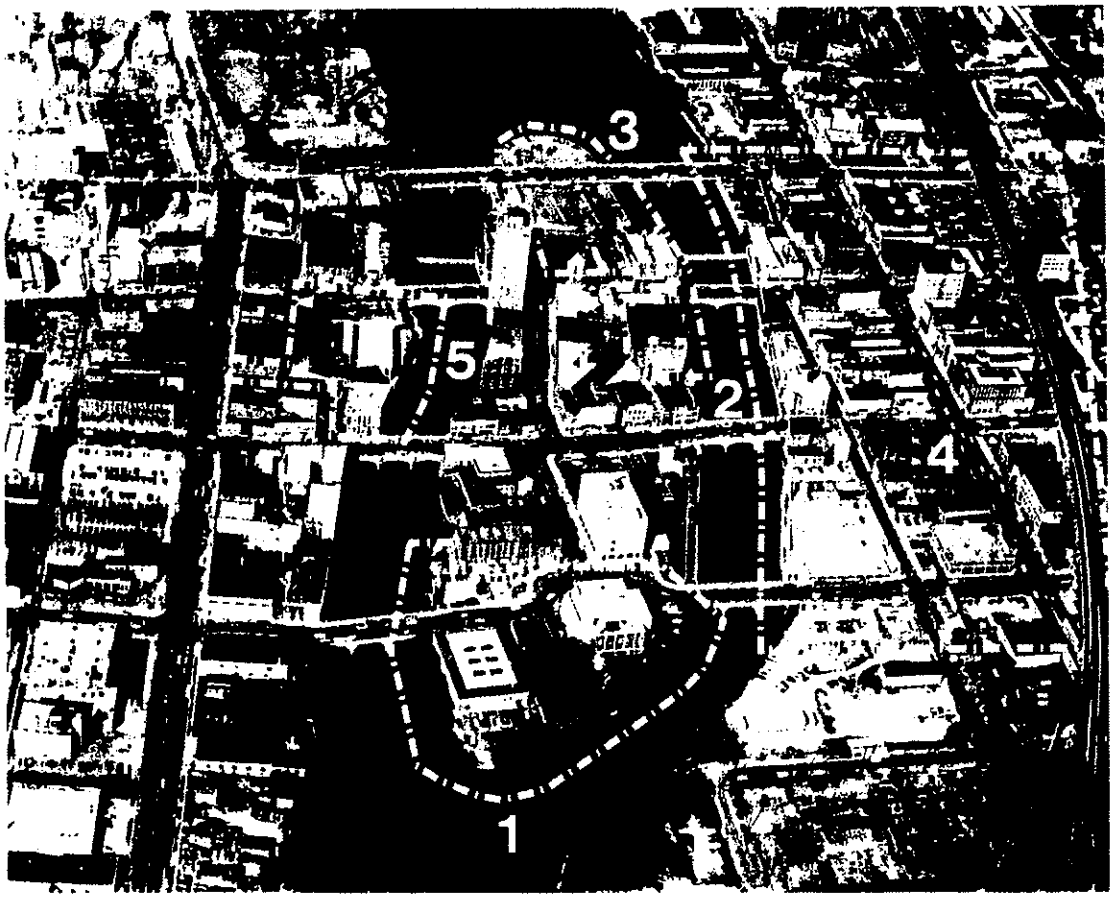
As a means of generating more activity in the immediate future, it is suggested that a Farmers Market be created on the block bounded by Galena, River, Downer and the west channel of the river. A complex of vacant old stone and brick buildings with frontage on Galena and the river would lend itself well to this type of market. There is already a long-standing precedent for this activity: an informal, open farmers market is held every Saturday in downtown Aurora during the summer.

The Farmers Market could be a major year-round attraction serving customers from a large area who would find an array of fresh foods. It could also be an exciting leisure activity as well. As the Farmers Market takes hold, it should help attract other related specialty shops into the older buildings surrounding it on River Street.

Priority Projects

Chapter Four

Priority Projects



The ultimate goal of the Development Concept is the revitalization of downtown Aurora. The City of Aurora will have to take the primary responsibility for initiating downtown revitalization by means of the Priority Projects. However, participation by the private sector will be essential for these projects to succeed. These projects are intended to reinforce the downtown as a full-time activity center, both day and night, and to encourage further investment.

A long list of projects was originally considered for downtown. The following five projects were selected as being of the "highest priority":

1. South Island Beautification
2. Civic Auditorium
3. North Island Complex
4. Broadway Area Renovation
5. Farmers Market

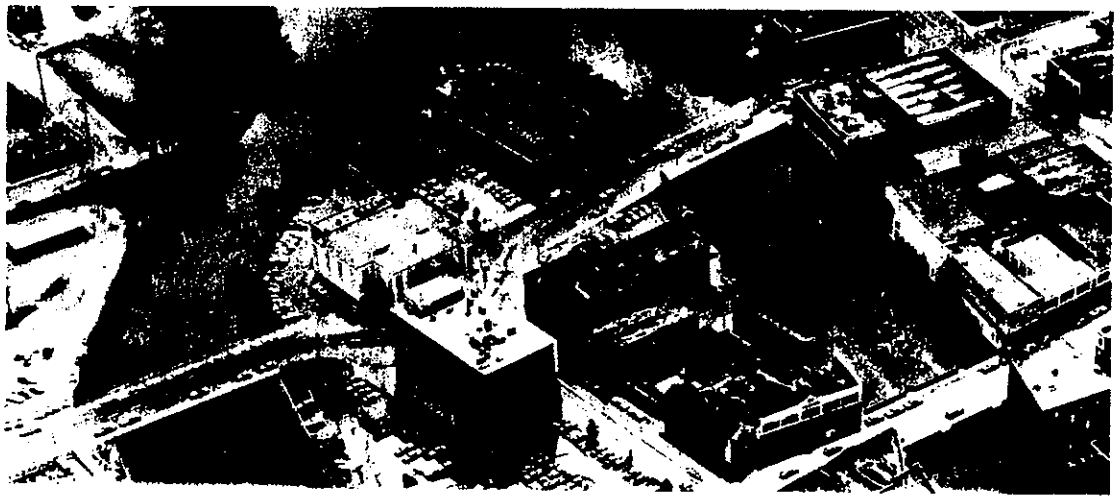
Selection was based on need, projected support, development feasibility, and impact on the downtown economy. The appendix contains supplemental data regarding market

support, traffic and parking and development strategy as pertinent to each Priority Project.

Obviously, there are other worthy projects still needed downtown. No time should be wasted in preparing the next list of priorities. Among these priorities, consideration should be given to a downtown college campus, additional parking structures, a new hotel, east-west by-pass routes and bridges, a sports arena and new housing.

Priority Project 1

South Island Beautification



Public Library from Stolp Avenue

Location

The project is situated on the southernmost end of the Island directly south of the Elks Club, but excluding the Post Office site. A total of 2.5 acres are contained within this area.

Objectives

1. Beautify the riverfront and make it more accessible to the public.
2. Improve traffic flow on Benton Street.
3. Provide more efficient parking.
4. Beautify the entrance vistas to the Island.
5. Provide increased activity areas around the Library.

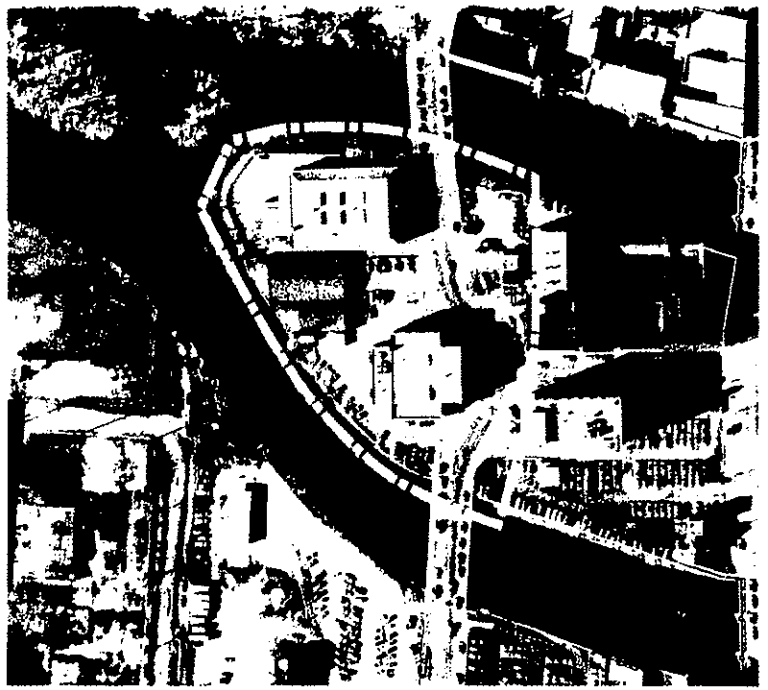
Concept

The south end of the Island presents opportunities for making immediate improvements that will have strong visual and functional impacts. Most of the project area is in public ownership: the planning, coordination and funding of the project should, therefore, be relatively simple. This site is also one

of the most neglected places on the Island; it consists of parking lots, fences, barriers, and a vacant garage.

Presently, the traffic flow on Benton Street is awkward and dangerous. Also, the street encroaches on the western side of the Library building. These situations would be alleviated by realigning Benton to the north between Stolp Avenue and the west channel bridge. Benton Street would also be designed and landscaped to provide a more attractive appearance at the entrance to the Island and beyond. The Library would also be surrounded by extensive landscaping on the west.

Another major feature of this project is the creation of plazas, promenades, a play-lot and amphitheater along the river and adjacent to the Library. These proposed open spaces would provide activity areas and attractions at one of the most beautiful points of the river.



The subterranean level of the vacant garage would be used for parking about 35 cars and would connect to the Library via a pedestrian tunnel. The entire lower level would, of course, be refurbished and lighted, and a new ramp would be provided. The rest of the garage building would be removed above the ground level so that a plaza/amphitheater could be built in its place.

In total, the number of parking spaces on the south end of the Island would remain about the same. Nevertheless, the safety and convenience of parking would be improved and the end result would be attractive and useful open spaces for public use in a prime location.

The concept would transform almost 400 feet of river frontage into promenades at varying levels above the average water level of the river: two feet, six feet, and twelve feet. The lower level would be designed for fishing and will be able to withstand being inundated during flood stages.

Among the funding options appropriate for this project are general obligation bonds, capital improvements and library reserve funds.

A. Benton Street

REALIGN FOR BETTER TRAFFIC FLOW AND INCREASED SPACE IN FRONT OF LIBRARY IMPROVED LANDSCAPING OF STREET AND ENTRANCES TO ISLAND

B. Arts Center / Museum

WHEN POST OFFICE IS RELOCATED, CONVERT BUILDING TO A MUSEUM OR ARTS CENTER

C. Underground Parking

USE VACANT SUBTERRANEAN GARAGE FOR PARKING 35 CARS PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL FROM GARAGE TO LIBRARY

D. Plaza / Amphitheater

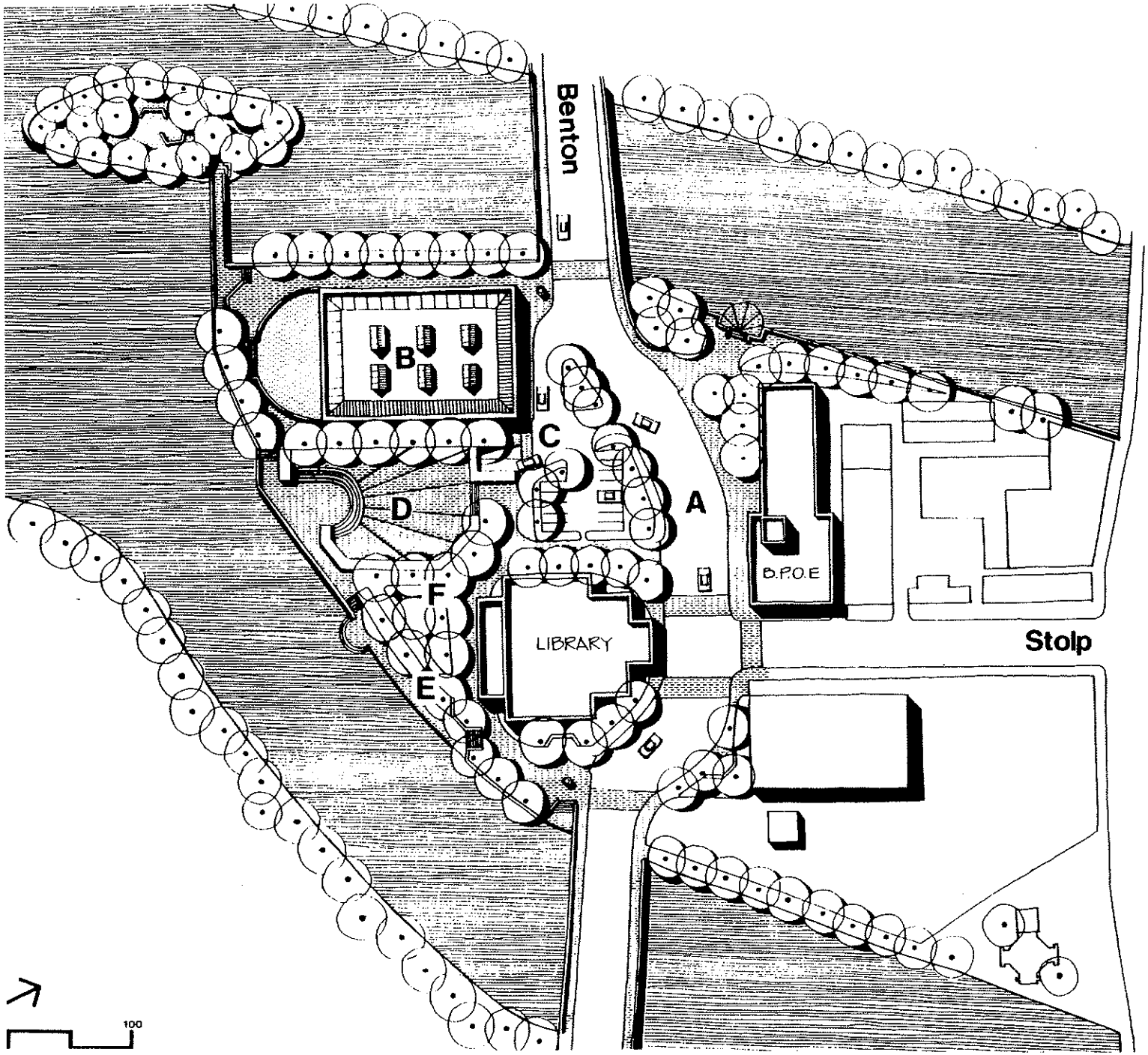
DECK OVER PARKING GARAGE TO BE LANDSCAPED AS ACTIVE PLAZA WITH OVERLOOK AT RIVER'S EDGE

E. Promenade

DEVELOP WALKWAYS AT VARIOUS LEVELS LEADING DOWN TO FISHING DECK AT WATER'S EDGE

F. Park

SPACE BEHIND LIBRARY TO BE DEVELOPED AS A GREEN PARK AND TOT-LOT ACCESS MAINTAINED FOR BOOKMOBILE

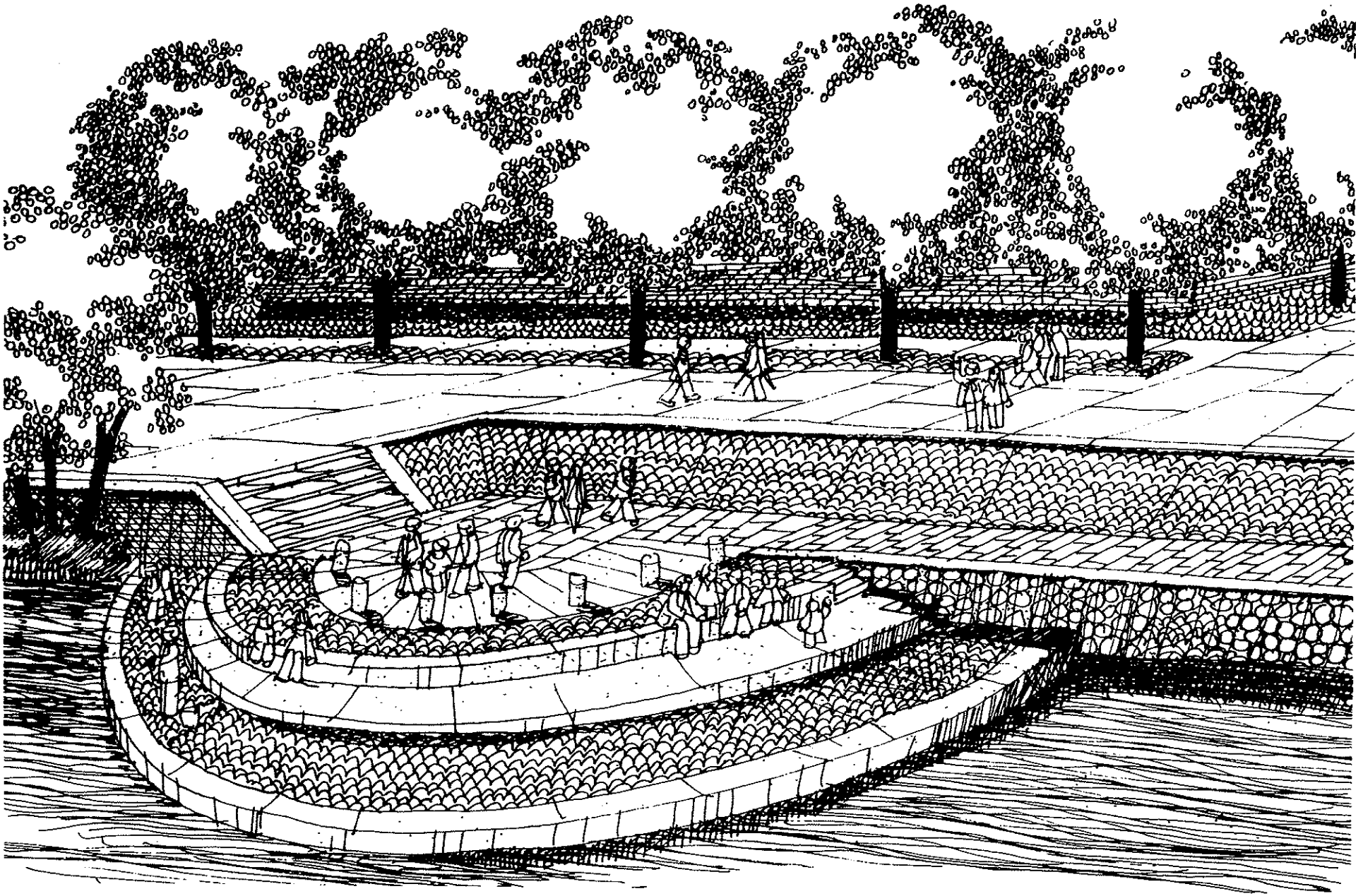


South Island
Beautification

Downtown Aurora

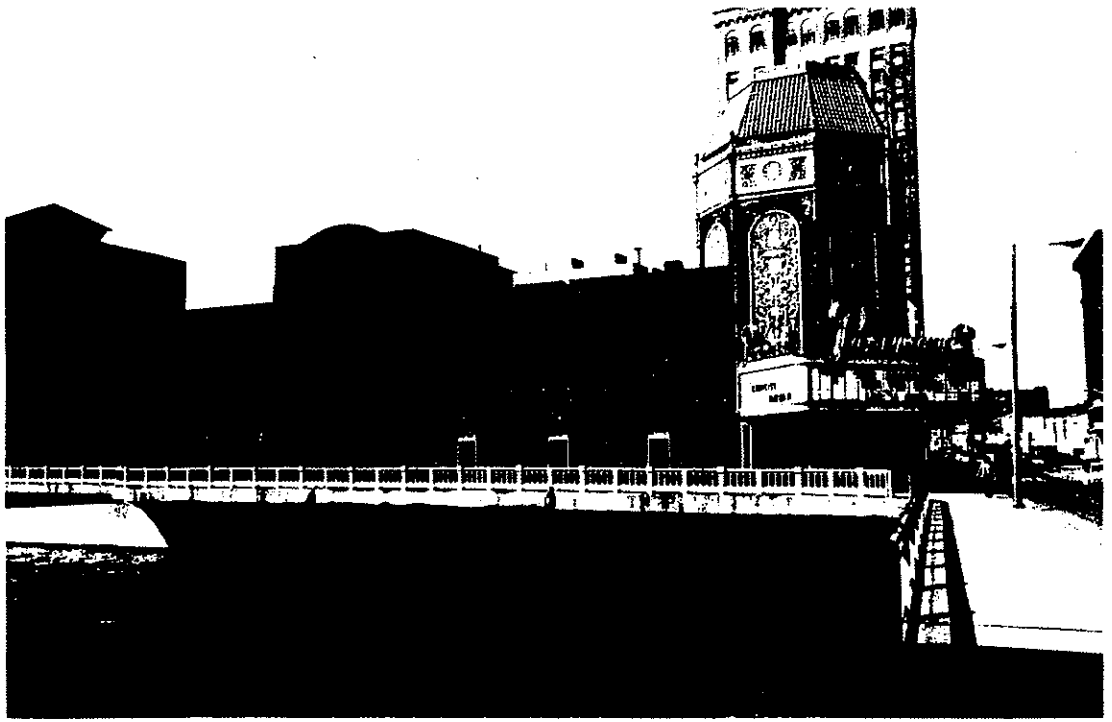
BAF Ben-Ami Friedman AIP

Proposed River Promenade



Priority Project 2

Civic Auditorium



Paramount Theater

The project is located on the Island. The proposed site consists of 0.8 acres. It includes the Paramount Theater and an adjacent commercial property bounded on the north by East Galena Boulevard, on the the east by the Fox River, on the south by a property line approximately 290 feet south of Galena Boulevard, and on the west by an alley.

Objectives

1. Provide a suitable facility for major civic events in Aurora.

2. Attract more people to the downtown area, both day and night.

3. Complement the civic aspects of the proposed North Island Complex.

4. Provide a major auditorium as one component of a proposed conference center.

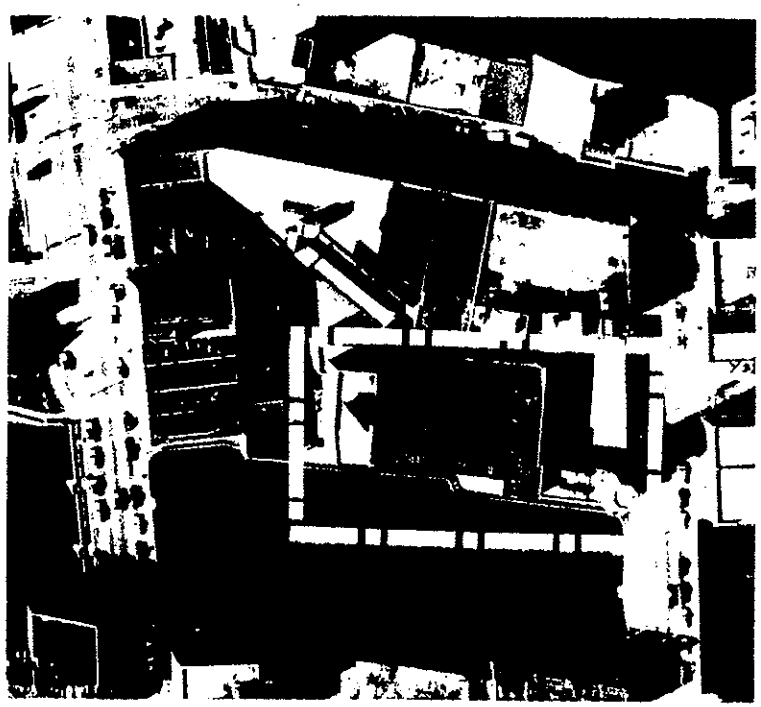
5. Reinforce the Island as the focus for civic and cultural activities.

6. Economize on cost by re-use of an obsolete theater.

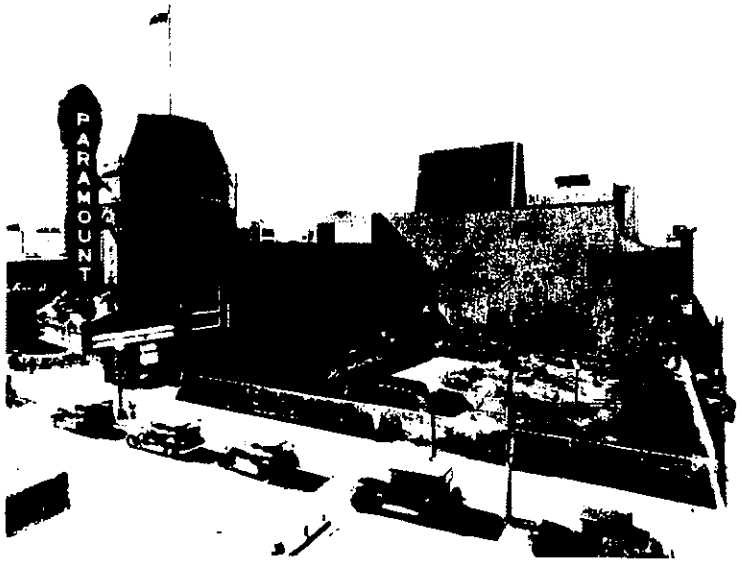
Concept

The City of Aurora would sponsor the acquisition of the Paramount Theater for renovation and use as a Civic Auditorium with a seating capacity of approximately 1,800 persons. The auditorium would serve an important part of the civic, cultural, entertainment, and community needs of the city and surrounding region. The auditorium would also complement the civic facilities within the proposed North Island Complex across the street. The two buildings would be joined by a pedestrian skyway. Parking for the auditorium would be provided within the North Island Complex. The auditorium would also serve as a key component of a conference center to be located on the Island. A small plaza would be restored on the north side of the auditorium in place of an existing building to afford a proper setting and circulation area. Such a plaza was originally included as part of the theater when it opened in 1931. The existing cantilivered promenade on the east side of the auditorium, along the river, would be repaired and made more functional as part of a complete pedestrian system on the Island.

Two basic funding options are appropriate for this project: the Aurora Civic Center Act and general obligation bonds. Consideration should be given to funding by foundations.



Former Theater Plaza



A. Auditorium

ACQUIRE AND RENOVATE PARAMOUNT THEATER AND CONVERT TO CIVIC AUDITORIUM

B. Plaza

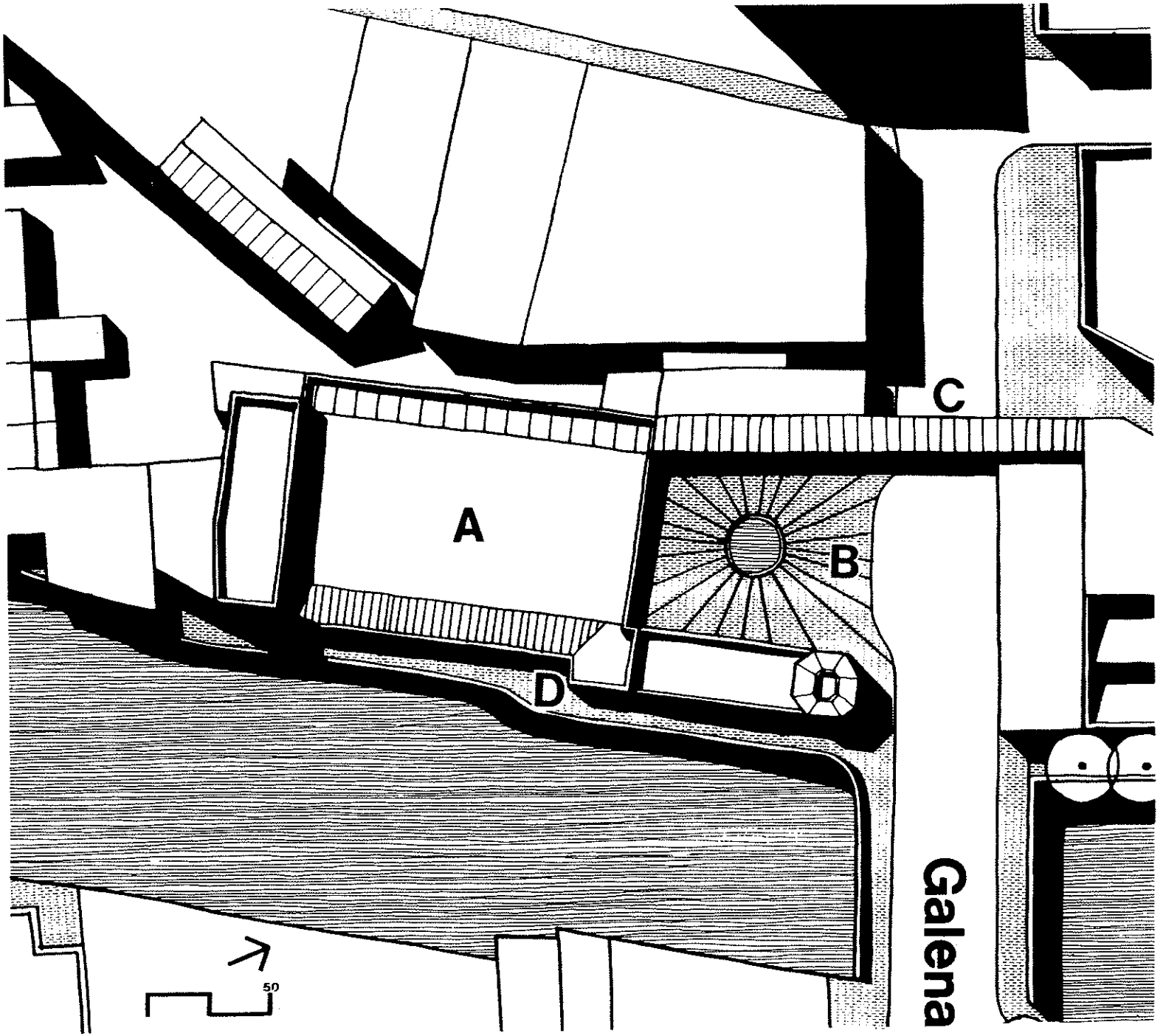
RESTORE PLAZA TO THEATER

C. Skyway

ALL WEATHER PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO THE PROPOSED NORTH ISLAND COMPLEX

D. Promenade

REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING LIGHTING, RAILING AND PAVING



Civic Auditorium

Downtown Aurora

BAF Ben-Ami Friedman AIP

Proposed Civic Auditorium

Priority Project 3

North Island Complex

Site of Proposed North Island Complex

Location

The project is bounded by Galena Boulevard on the south, Stolp Avenue on the west, and the Fox River on the east and north. The New York Street-Memorial Bridge crosses the site on the north. A total 2.6 acres in gross land area is included within these boundaries. The net land area, i.e.. the building site to the south of Memorial Bridge, is 1.9 acres.

Objectives

1. Accommodate the major civic office space for Aurora in a modern and visible building.

2. Attract more people to the downtown area, both day and night.

3. Reinforce the utilization of the Island as a focus for civic and cultural facilities.

4. Provide incentives and opportunities to stimulate new investment and activity nearby.

5. Emphasize the Island as the focus of downtown and the city.

Concept

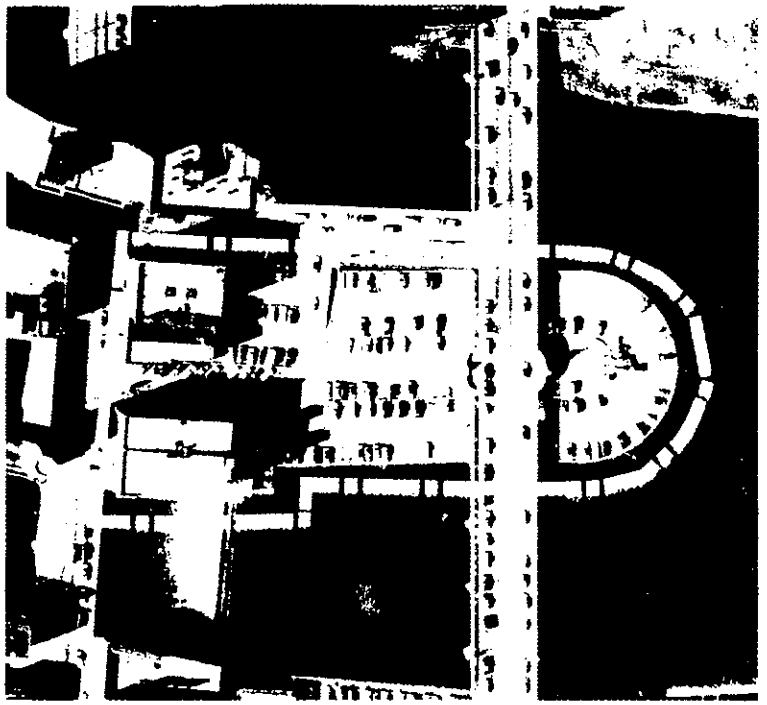
The north end of the Island is a prime, highly visible location in the city. It is surrounded on three sides by water and is afforded a splendid view of the Fox River. Two major arterials run across the site, making it highly accessible.

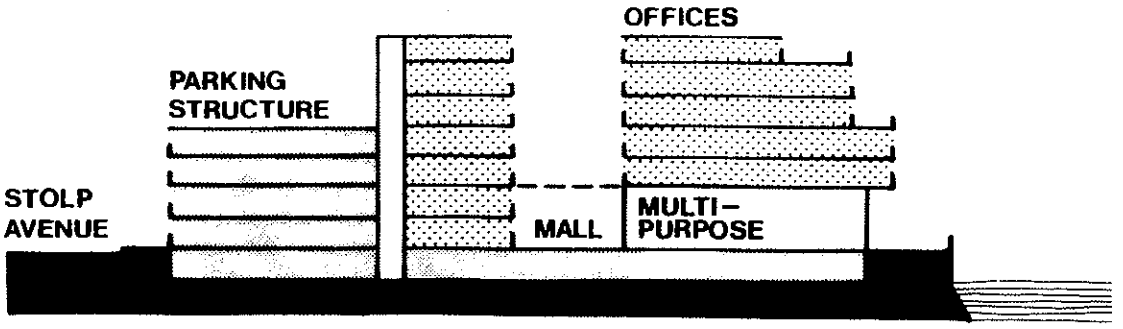
The proposed North Island Complex will consist of several types of activities combined together for mutual support and interaction. As such it can become a central and unifying activity center in downtown, both by day and night. The complex will also relate directly both physically and economically to the proposed Civic Auditorium and activities elsewhere on the Island. An estimated 600 persons would work here. The following is a tentative floor area program for the complex:

Civic Office	150,000 square feet
Private Office	25,000 square feet
Institutional/Financial	30,000 square feet
Multi-Purpose/Conference	25,000 square feet
Commercial Services	20,000 square feet
Total Floor Area	250,000 square feet

While the building floor area is shown to be 250,000 square feet, it should be recognized that it is presented to serve as a basis for further discussion, review and modification.

The major component of this complex would be the new civic offices. An estimated 150,000 square feet would be assigned to new city and township offices and to other government and semi-public agencies in need of new facilities downtown. Another 25,000 square feet would be assigned to private, professional office space.





A. Interior Court

ENCLOSED MULTI USE SPACE LINED WITH SHOPS

B. Arcade

BUILDING CANTILEVER PROVIDES COVERED WALKWAY ALONG GALENA BOULEVARD

C. Skyway

ALL WEATHER PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO CIVIC AUDITORIUM

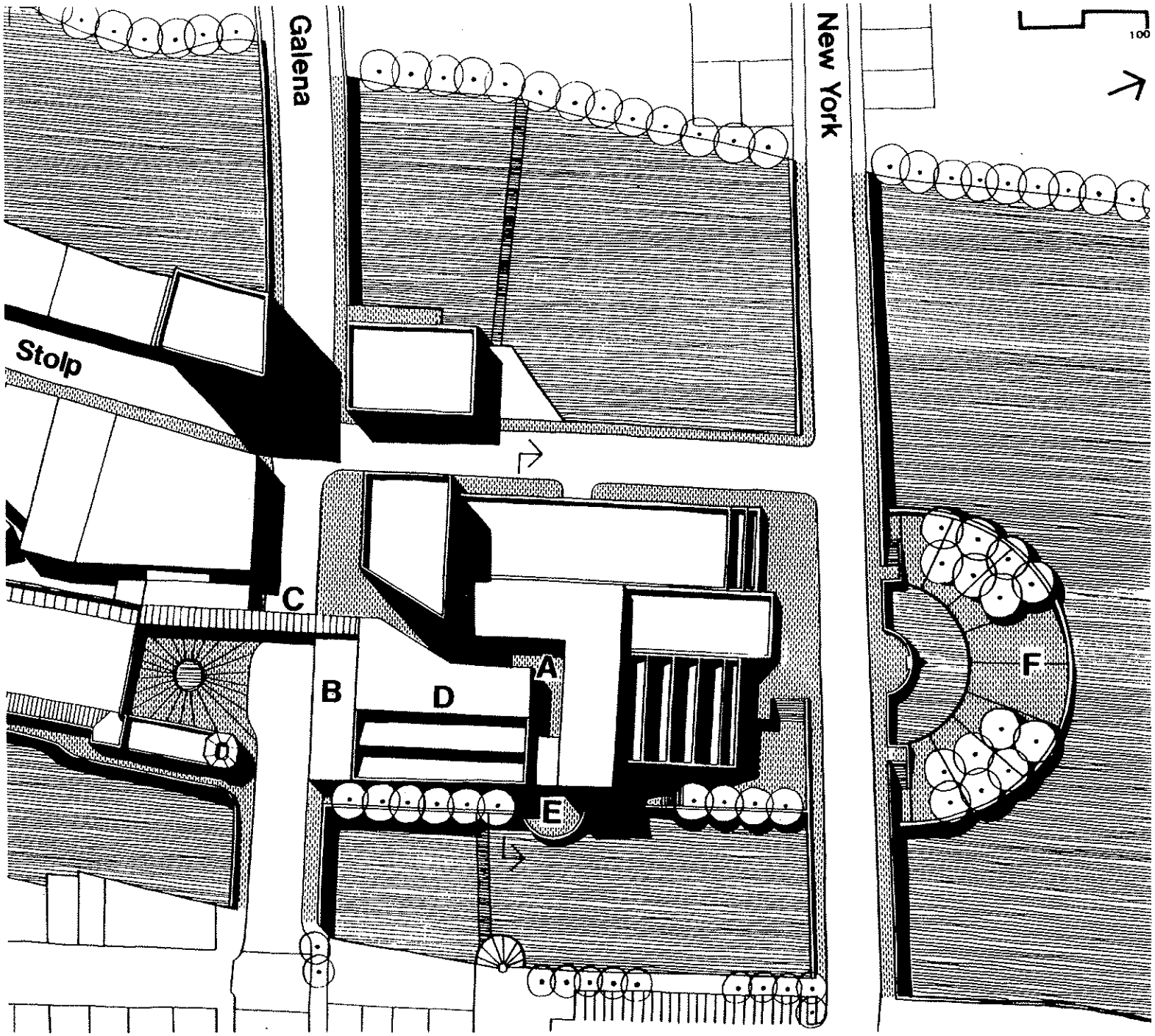
D. Terraced Profile

ORGANIZATION OF BUILDING MASSING AS A RESPONSE TO THE ISLAND'S UNIQUE FORM AND LOCATION ON THE FOX RIVER

E. Promenade

CONTINUATION OF PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM AROUND THE EDGE OF ISLAND

F. Plaza



North Island Complex

Downtown Aurora

BAF Ben-Ami Friedman AIP

The program also includes 30,000 square feet for a potential private institutional use such as a regional headquarters for a business firm or financial institution.

The multi-purpose space of 25,000 square feet is intended to accommodate civic, community and privately sponsored functions such as meetings, conferences, banquets and receptions. The multi-purpose space combined with the proposed Civic Auditorium would form the nucleus of a conference center for Aurora.

The lobby of the complex is intended to serve as a large interior space that can accommodate exhibits and public events.

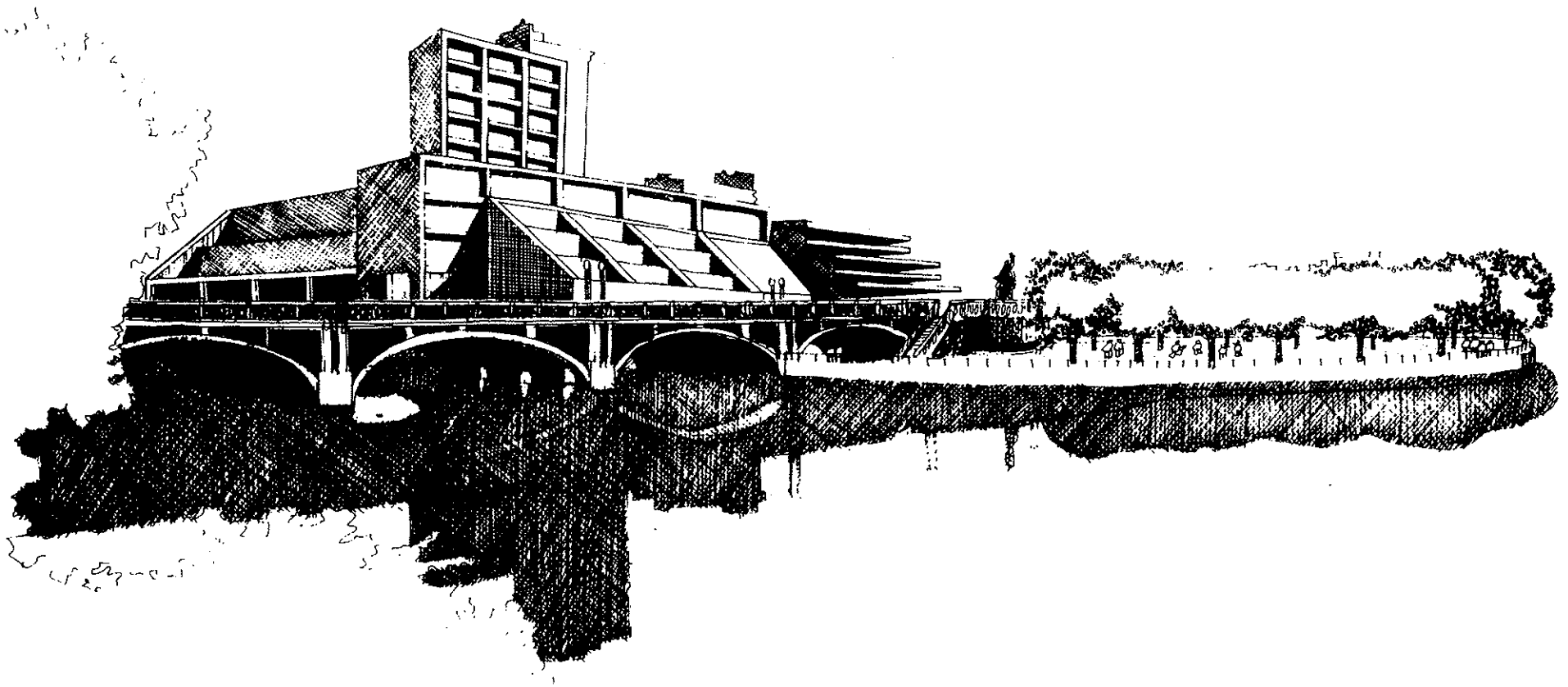
The commercial services include facilities for the benefit of daytime employees and visitors to the site. These facilities could include a restaurant, coffee shop, cinema, gift shop, travel agency and several retail shops.

The entire North Island Complex will feature an extensive pedestrian circulation and plaza system that will make it accessible to the rest of the Island, as well as to the outdoor areas along the river. An enclosed pedestrian skyway would provide year-round access over Galena Boulevard to other buildings such as Carsons Department Store and the proposed Civic Auditorium. The eastern perimeter of the site would be developed with a promenade and plazas. The existing parking lot on the north end of the Island is suggested to become a plaza for year-round use by employees in the area, residents of the city and visitors. It is exposed to the water on three sides, with the river rushing toward it, and is one of the most exciting places in Aurora.

The complex as proposed would contain 583 parking spaces on-site and 535 spaces off-site. Of the on-site parking, 225 spaces are intended to serve other nearby uses on the Island such as shopping and the Civic Auditorium. The off-site parking is located within convenient walking distance but off the Island. Such parking would be for long-term use by employees who work within the complex.

The North Island Complex would be financed by combining the Aurora Civic Center Act, general obligation bonds, Industrial Development Revenue Bonds and the capital improvements program.

Proposed North Island Complex from Northeast



Priority Project 4

Broadway Area Renovation

Broadway looking south from New York Street

Location

This 29 acre project encompasses the entire East Bank sector of downtown and is bounded by the Fox River, the Burlington Northern Railroad viaduct, New York Street and Benton Street.

Objectives

1. Attract more shoppers.

2. Encourage the remodeling and expansion of business downtown.

3. Improve traffic circulation.

Concept

The Broadway area is the equivalent in size to the downtown of a small city. It is compact and identifiable as a shopping and business district. This project should strengthen the attractiveness, accessibility and image of the Broadway area through various public and private actions.

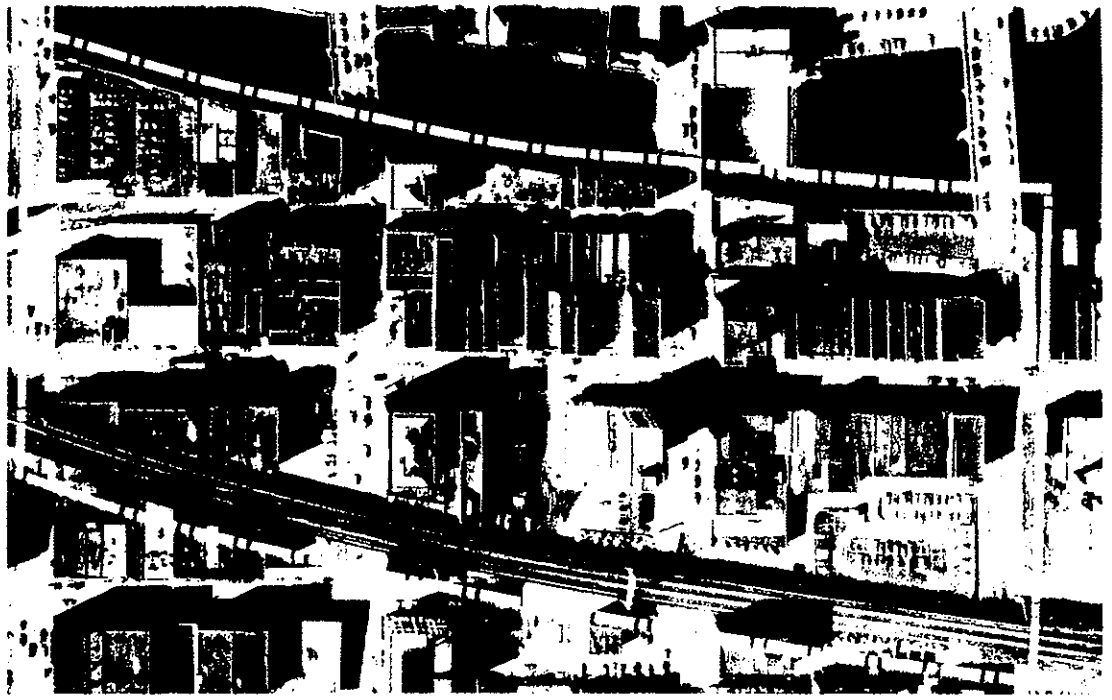
A very basic element of this concept is to make Broadway function as a shopping street. To make this possible, it will be necessary to re-route the extraneous traffic that presently uses this route through downtown as

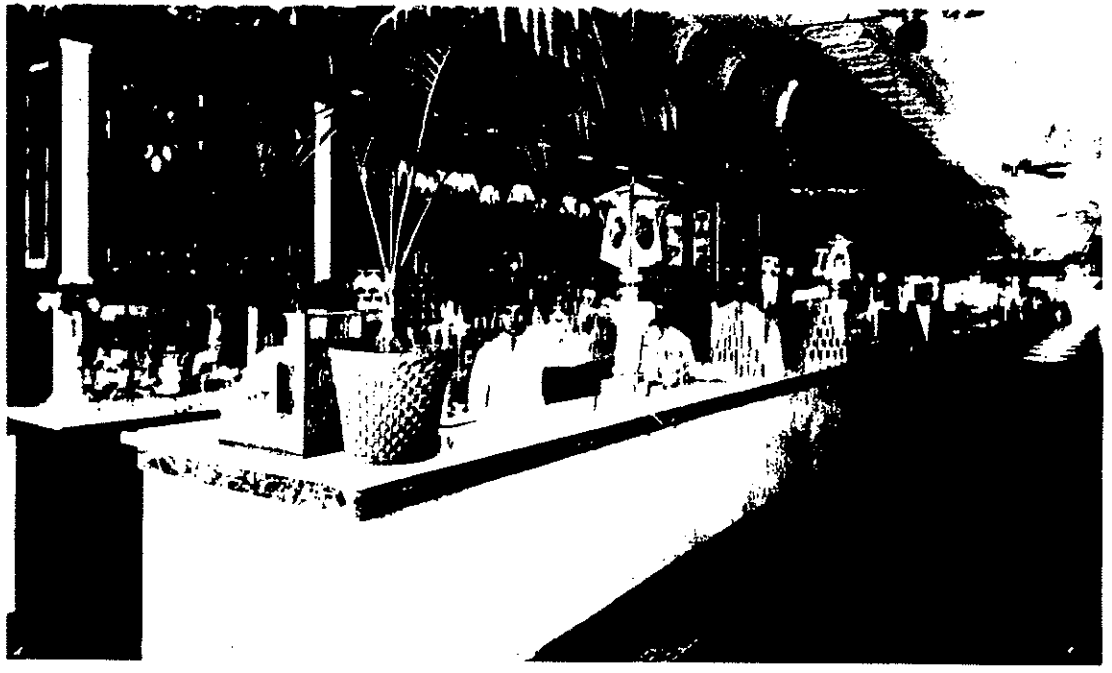
a means for travelling to other destinations. This re-routing of through traffic has long been studied and discussed in Aurora. It is essential and feasible. By removing traffic from Broadway, the area would be rid of excessive traffic conflicts that inconvenience shoppers: congestion, accidents, noise and confusion.

Instead of the present situation, four moving lanes of traffic and two lanes of parking, Broadway would be converted into a two-way local street; it would consist of one traffic lane on each side of the street. This arrangement would leave room to narrow the present roadway, permitting the sidewalk areas to be widened to about 20 feet on each side. Greater amenities would be provided to the pedestrians who constitute the main source of business.

Hence Broadway would be redesigned and reconstructed as a scaled-down shopping street or semi-mall. Special attention would be given to encourage pedestrian use and circulation by use of special pavements, seating, landscaping, directional signs, lighting, bus shelters, etc. These design features will be closely coordinated to create unity and consistency in appearance. The concept for Broadway would generally encourage on-street parking for shoppers in addition to the use of existing parking lots.

A transit station is proposed for the central block on Broadway, between Galena and Downer. The station would provide a central transfer location for city transit buses. (This arrangement is tentative and would not preclude other bus stops downtown.) As shown on the accompanying site plan, the transit station would be served by an exclusive bus island on the west side of Broadway. At a minimum, there





A. Broadway

CONVERT FROM HIGHWAY TO LOCAL SHOPPING STREET. IMPROVE STREETSCAPE BY EXTENDING SIDEWALK LAND SCAPING

B. Water Street Mall

CONVERT WATER STREET INTO A PEDESTRIAN MALL. RENOVATE EXISTING STORE FRONTS TO ORIENT ONTO MALL

C. Education Center

RELOCATE CITY HALL AND CONVERT BUILDING TO EDUCATIONAL CENTER. OPEN UP PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION THROUGH BUILDING TO THE RIVER

D. Shopping Arcade

REDESIGN OF EXISTING STORES AS EXAMPLE OF PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH MALL

E. Skyway

ALL WEATHER PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO FUTURE PARKING STRUCTURE

F. Transit Station

G. Future Parking

PARKING STRUCTURE TO ACCOMODATE [illegible] AREA

H. Plaza

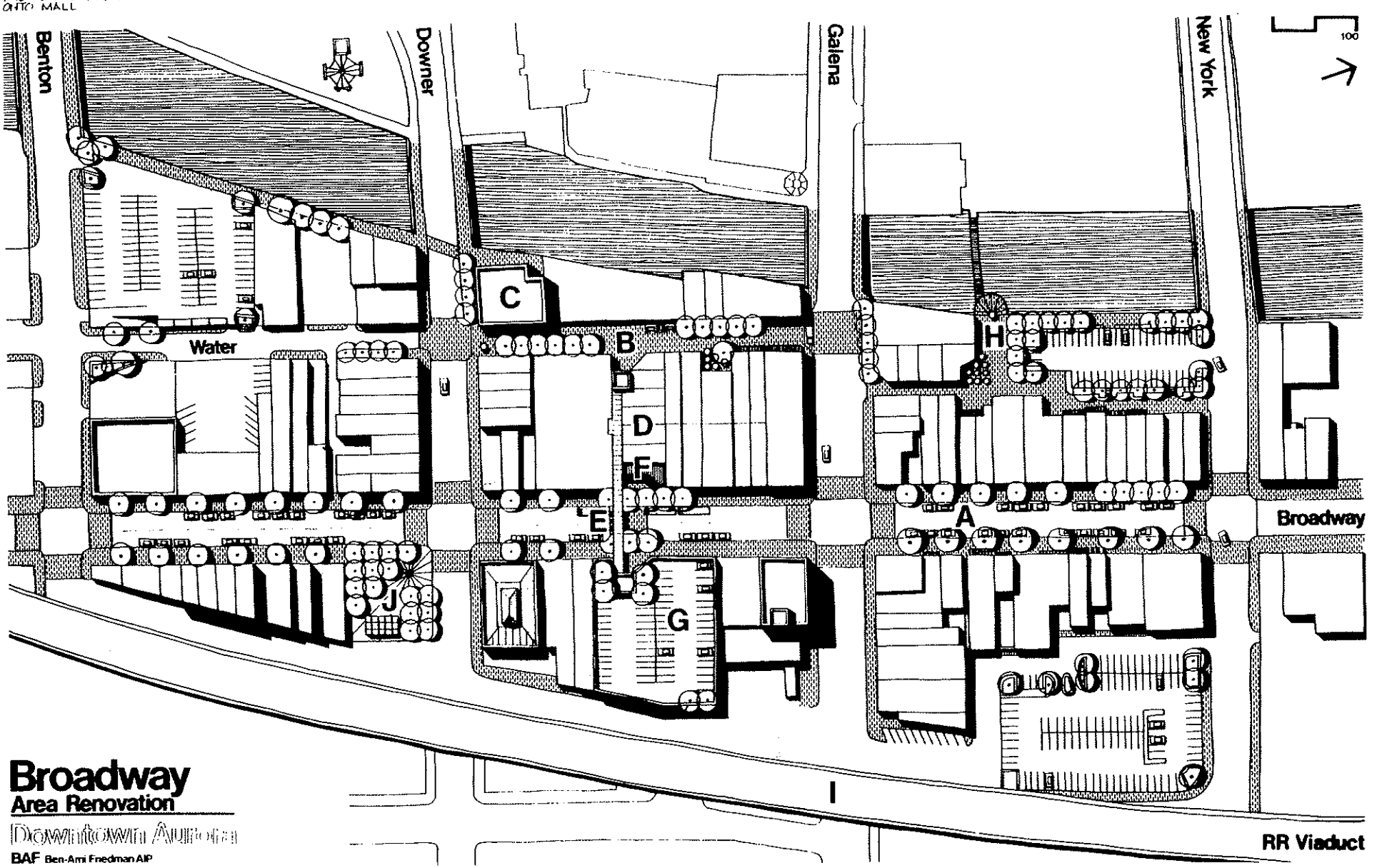
REDESIGN PARKING AREA FOR MORE EFFICIENT SPACING AND PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS AND PLAZA

I. Viaduct

IMPROVE DRAINAGE. REPAINT COLUMNS. PROVIDE SPECIAL LIGHTING

J. Corner Park

CREATE URBAN PARK WITH SEATING AND SUPERGRAPHICS ON WALL



Broadway
Area Renovation

Downtown Aurora

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would be provided a specially designed all-weather shelter for waiting passengers. As shown on the plan, the bus station could be integrated with a small shopping arcade. This arcade is an example of how several properties could be combined for redevelopment with specialty shops, and connected to a variety store or other major generator. This arcade would also connect to a pedestrian mall. To further stimulate shopper use of Broadway, a system of pedestrian ways is proposed to link the entire area. Thus the domain of the pedestrian will be sharply defined. The encouragement of pedestrian circulation is proposed for the rest of downtown as well.

This project also proposes the conversion of Water Street, between Galena and Downer, into a pedestrian mall. This small street lends itself well to this function. In the case of Water Street, vehicular traffic will be totally prohibited from the area with the exception of emergency vehicles. Service trucks will be restricted to certain regulated times. Several of the stores on Broadway

Water Street

Proposed Water Street Mall

already feature rear access from Water Street. Additional shops could be opened here by renovating existing buildings on both sides. When the city offices are relocated, the existing City Hall could be remodeled with commercial uses on the ground floors, and possibly an education center on the upper levels. The proposed Water Street Mall can offer an exclusive and intimate place to shop and browse. It could and should be used as a "stage" for special events. Water Street already has a tradition of community events and activities such as art shows, festivals and a farmers market on Saturdays. Additional activities should be encouraged such as band concerts, dances, fashion shows, etc. Experience in other shopping centers and downtown malls demonstrates the effectiveness of such events in making downtown a more useful place in the community, and as a means for attracting more shoppers.

Needless to say, the improvement of the Broadway area must involve local businessmen and property owners if the project is to succeed. In this regard it is essential that the buildings and properties in the area be greatly enhanced in terms of their appearance and function, in conjunction with the public improvements. The neglect, disarray and chaos of Broadway must be replaced by unity and order. Otherwise the future of this area is highly questionable.

The accompanying sketches indicate the kinds of improvements recommended for the exteriors of the buildings. Although the sketches are of specific buildings in the area, the design principles apply generally throughout downtown. The intent is to renovate existing buildings rather than to replace them. The rich character and detail of the buildings should be restored and emphasized rather than hidden by false facades. The pedestrian relationship

Example of Old Commercial Building and Signs in the 1890's.

Existing Elevation
Galena to New York

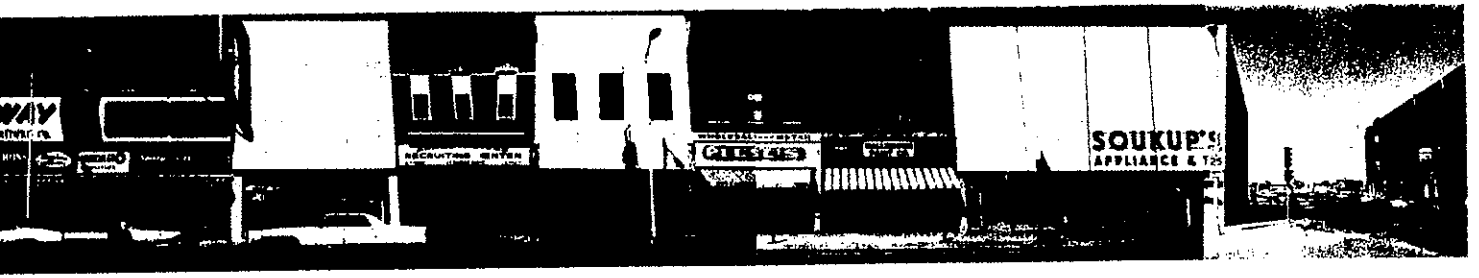
- Overall Lack of Visual Unity
- Overload of Signs Out of Scale with Buildings
- Original Bu by False F

Suggested Elevation
Galena to New York

- Coordinated Graphics, Awnings, Facades, Trees Create Visual Unity
- Reduced Signs and Graphics in Scale with Buildings
- Facades F with Surro

of Signs Out of Scale
ings

- Original Building Character Hidden by False Fronts and Signs
- Lack of Landscaping



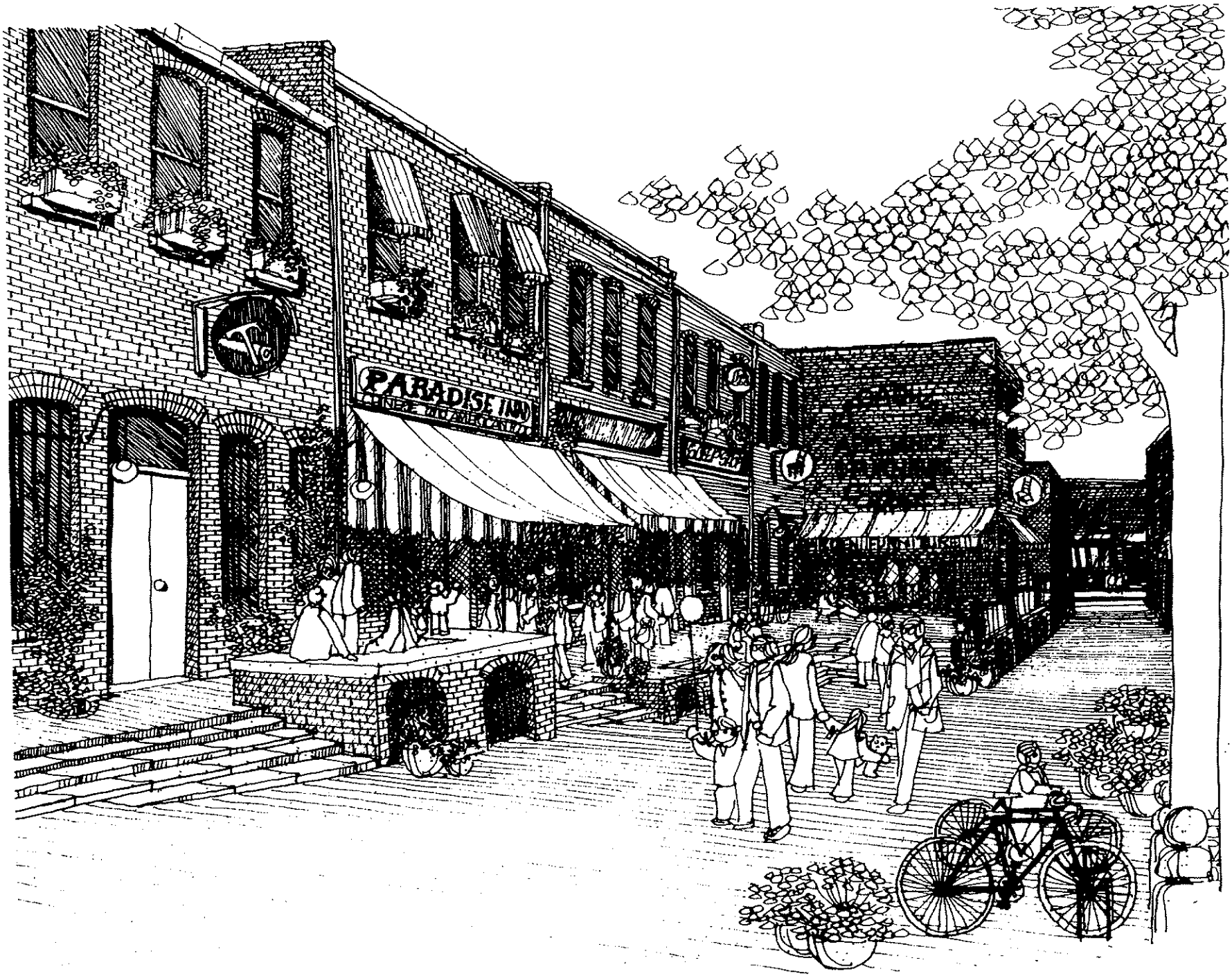
Signs and Graphics in
th Buildings

- Facades Restored in Character with Surrounding Buildings
- Trees and Widened Sidewalks Add Pedestrian Amenity

to buildings and spaces should be reinforced by using carefully designed signage that fits the character of the building. Downtown Aurora harbors wealth in the form of buildings and spaces that should and can be sensitively renovated as a positive effort to attract new business.

Financing options for this project include the special service area, general obligation bonds, capital improvements program, state fuel tax subventions, special state assistance for highway relocation, and federal funds for mass transit facilities.

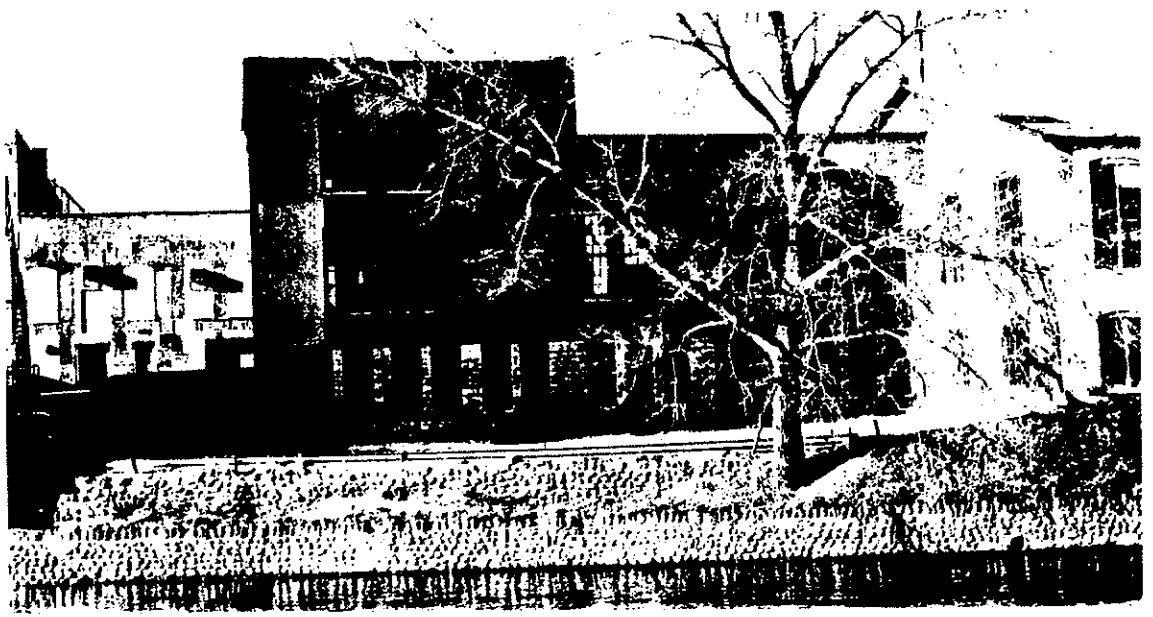
Backs of Buildings on Broadway, New York to Galena



Suggested Treatment for Backs of Buildings along Broadway

Priority Project 5

Farmers Market



View of Riveredge and Proposed Market Buildings

Location

This 2.2 acre site is bounded on the north by West Galena Boulevard, on the east by the Fox River, on the south by Downer Place, and on the west by an alley.

Objectives

1. Add to the variety of shopping experiences downtown.
2. Attract more people to the downtown area.
3. Make better use of those obsolete and vacant buildings which possess character.
4. Stimulate investment in surrounding properties.
5. Enhance and beautify the riverfront.

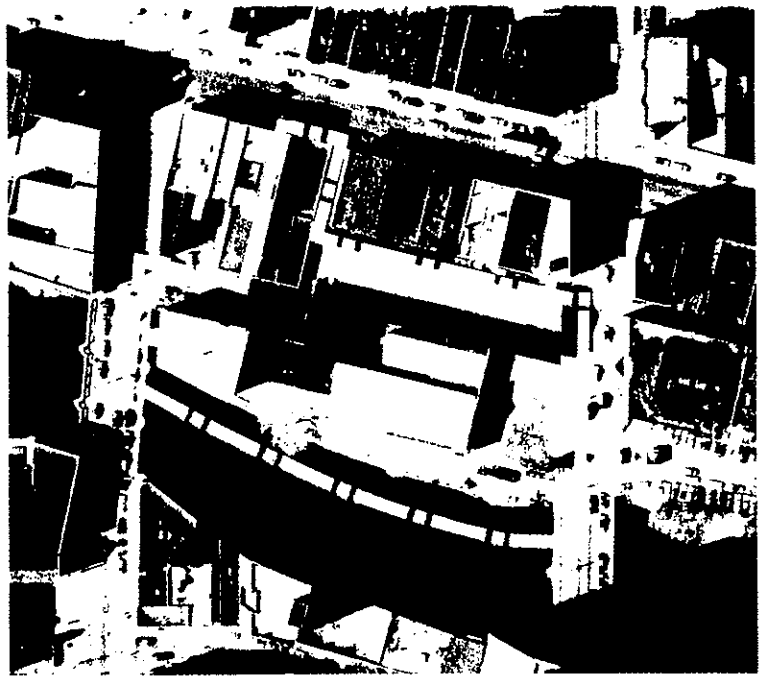
Concept

The existing complex of vacant old stone and brick buildings would be converted by low-budget changes into a farmers market. This project would use the old farmers market theme by featuring fresh fruits and vegetables, poultry, meats, seafood, health food, baked goods, flowers, handcrafts, etc. Seasonal food items would be shipped in from around the country.

The project involves 20,000 square feet of interim merchandising space in the upper level of the building. There would be one loading dock on the north. About 60 parking spaces could be located on the surrounding block. However, this would require the acquisition and demolition of two existing buildings, including the YWCA on the south. (This suggestion is made in light of the YWCA's decision to relocate.) Additional parking spaces are available in a lot on the north side of Galena. Further studies will determine whether parking is available on the lower level of the building.

The riverfront would be left in its present form as a small park with trees, stone walls and a pedestrian path. The steep embankment on the north end will require modifications to stop any further erosion. The riverfront should be placed in the public domain. A streetscape program for the surrounding area should include: repairs to sidewalks, curbs and pavings; improved lighting; landscaping; and directional signs.

Although somewhat different in character, a farmers market is likely to compete with neighborhood supermarkets for support. Its downtown location, however, would be likely to attract additional business from downtown workers and visitors. A survey of existing facilities near downtown Aurora reveals a total of four supermarkets containing approximately 85,000 square feet. Within the downtown area, five food stores of various types account for an additional nine thousand square feet. Based on the population of the downtown area and city respectively, and per capita expenditures for food (approximately $500/year), food store sales potential is estimated at $37 million for the city and $15 million for the downtown neighborhood. At an assumed operating level of $125 per square foot, these food sales potentials represent an effective



Building Detail

A. Market
UPPER LEVEL OF BUILDING TO BE USED AS MARKET

B. Truck Loading

C. Renovation of Stores

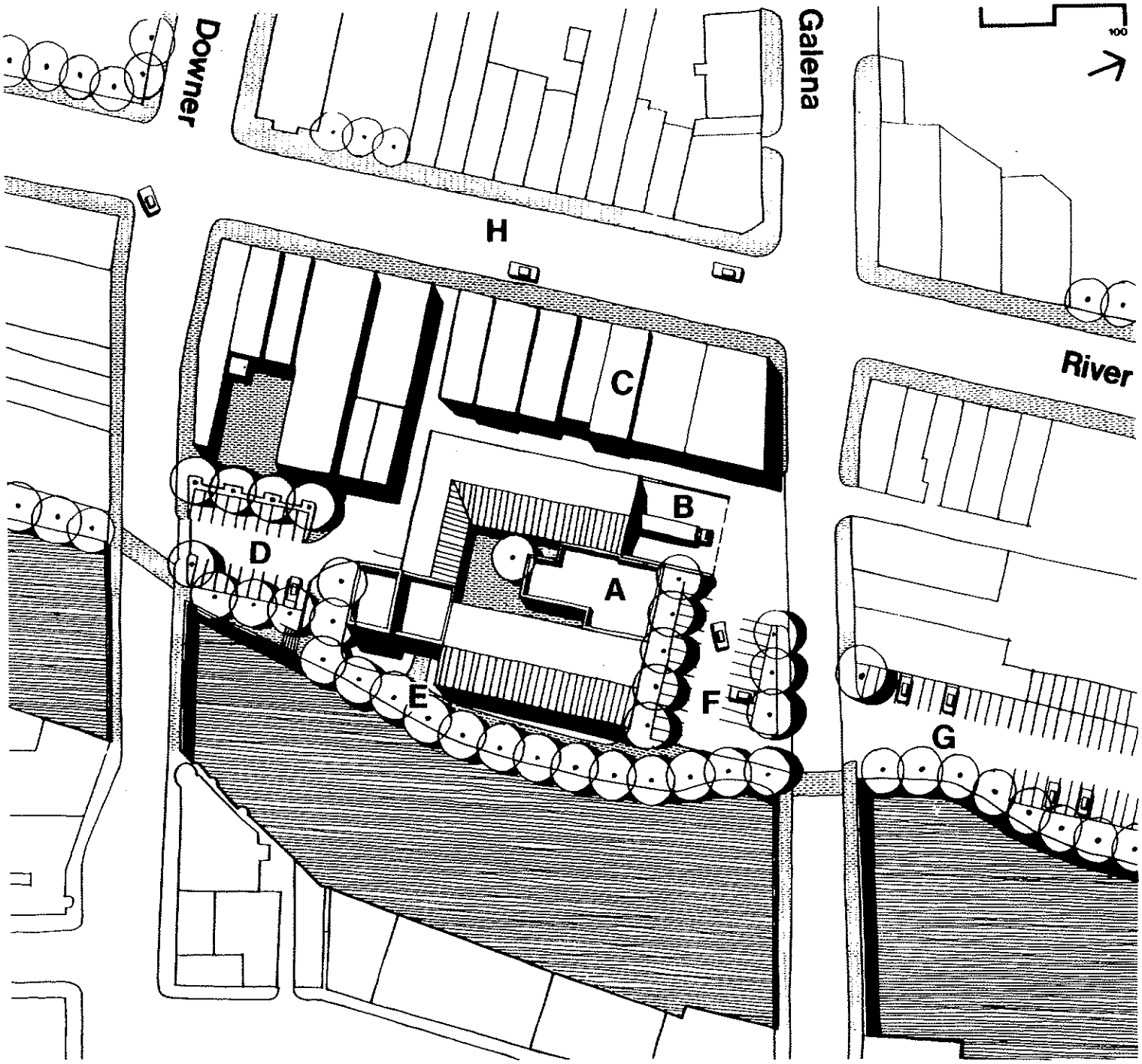
D. Parking
FUTURE PARKING FOR 20 CARS WHEN Y.M.C.A. RELOCATES

E. Riveredge Park
EXTEND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM ALONG RIVER EDGE

F. Parking
FOR 20 CARS

G. Adjacent Parking
FOR 75 CARS

H. Streetscape
IMPROVEMENTS ON SURROUNDING STREETS



Farmers Market

Downtown Aurora

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demand for 296,000 square feet of food store space in the city and 120,000 square feet in the neighborhoods around downtown. Given the absence of food store space servicing the downtown neighborhoods -- plus additional support from workers and visitors downtown, a farmers market such as that being considered would appear to have a good opportunity for success.

The market could be placed under a single central management year-round. Typically, this type of project has been initiated by local chambers of commerce or business groups within downtown areas. The city or a non-profit group sponsors and manages the facility. However, an investment group may show interest in initiating the project as a private enterprise.

A possible funding device for this project would be the industrial development revenue bond combined with general obligation bonds and special service area funds.

Organization and Management

The feasibility of any of the recommended Priority Projects will depend as much on the method of implementation as on the merits of the project itself. It is the responsibility of the City of Aurora and other organizations involved with downtown to consider the application of appropriate implementation techniques for these projects. In the process of formulating the Development Concept and the Priority Projects, substantial progress was made in preparing the way for a sound implementation program. First, public and private organizations were involved in the process and have a first-hand awareness of the issues and recommendations. Second, a nine-member Downtown Redevelopment Committee has played a major role in the formulation of the Development Concept and Priority Projects, and has proceeded to identify funding methods for the Priority Projects.

At this point in time, it is essential to formalize the organizational elements for implementation of the Priority Projects. These organizational elements will involve the cooperation of existing private and public entities having direct interests in downtown progress. Among these entities are the City Council and the various commissions, boards and departments of the city government; the Downtown Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the financial institutions located downtown. An overall network must be devised for coordinating their individual interests and capabilities towards the common goal of downtown revitalization.

In addition to an overall organizational network, there are four essential entities that must be established immediately if the Priority Projects are to commence to successful completion:

1. A Downtown Redevelopment Commission should be established by the City Council under existing provisions of Chapter 24, Section 11-74.2-1 et. seq. of the Illinois revised statutes, 1973. It is presumed that the present Downtown Redevelopment Committee would be converted into such a commission. The functions of the commission must be clearly established by ordinance. Its prime responsibility would be to carry out the implementation of the Development Concept and Priority, either as described in this report or as subsequently evolved.

2. The City of Aurora should establish its own internal staff capability in community development. Consideration will have to

be given to the relationship of a community development entity within the existing city governmental structure. Essential to its success is the requisite that it have a clear line of authority to carry out its mission. This may require the establishment of a new department. A community development entity will provide direct staff services to the Downtown Redevelopment Commission and see to it that the development process actually occurs downtown, in the technical sense. The community development function has been highly successful in many other cities.

3. The downtown management function should be made more effective on the part of the private interests downtown. Greater resources are needed among the merchants, professionals, business firms and property owners to see to it that downtown functions as a modern and coherent business complex. Aggressive and resourceful talents are needed to look after the private interests of downtown, including the promotion and sponsorship of activities (exhibitions, pageants, concerts) to make downtown a more attractive and viable place to visit; to seek out the proper mixture of shopping and service establishments; to establish policies and guidelines of mutual interest such as the types of consumer markets to be sought for downtown; to monitor and coordinate the maintenance and renovation of properties; and to coordinate with the other entities involved in downtown improvement.

4. Assuming the Aurora Civic Center Act goes into effect, (please refer to the description below) then action should be taken to appoint a board to carry out the responsibilities listed in the Act. The board will most likely play a key role in the development of the proposed Civic Auditorium and North Island Complex.

Public Financing Methods

The following is a list of several possible mechanisms available for the implementation of downtown Priority Projects and other related activities. This listing is not all-inclusive, and attempts to focus only on those tools most appropriate to the immediate needs.

General Obligation Bonds

These bonds may be issued by the city or by a Downtown Redevelopment Commission to obtain funds to construct, repair or improve public facilities. They are secured by the city's pledge of its full faith, credit, and taxing power for the payment of the bonds.

Special Assessment Districts

The creation of special assessment districts permits the city to engage in community development activities without federal financial support. The city issues general obligation or revenue bonds to pay for such things as the planning, acquisition, relocation and the installation of public improvements. The bonds are repaid by the property owners in the benefited district. Each property owner is assessed his appropriate share of the benefits on a front-foot basis.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are issued by the city to obtain funds for the construction, repair, or improvement of facilities. The repayment of these bonds is contingent upon the revenue produced by the specific facility that was bonded. It may be appropriately applied to the construction of parking lots, a facility that charges admission or produces any revenues.

Special Service Areas

Under this newly-enacted method of financing, the city designates a downtown area as a special taxing district for the purposes of installing public improvements and providing special services to the district. Bonds are issued by the city and are payable from property taxes levied in that district, based on assessed value instead of benefits received.

There are seven important advantages to the Special Service Area method of financing:

1. Legal procedures are quicker than with special assessment.

2. The ad valoreum (i.e., "based on assessed value of personal property") bonds from a special service area will be marketable at a lower interest cost than special assessment bonds.

3. The procedural and legal expenses involved with a special service area are considerably cheaper than special assessment procedures.

4. The taxes paid in special service area financing may be deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes (still to be determined); this is not the case in special assessment financing.

5. Spreading costs on the basis of assessed value is quick and inexpensive.

6. As a spinoff advantage, a mandatory taxing district provides a unique opportunity to bring together a diverse and oftentimes scattered set of property owners who might not have otherwise cooperated in a joint development effort.

7. A protest by at least 51 per cent of the property owners and residents of the affected area is required to stop enactment of a Special Service Area ordinance by the city.

Industrial Development Revenue Bonds

Unlike general obligations and special service area financing, industrial development revenue financing procedures are initiated by a private company and involve the credit of that company, rather than that of the city. Home rule municipalities such as Aurora have the ability to issue industrial revenue bonds for office and commercial facilities (construed as an extension of home rule powers). Although a revenue bond is an obligation of the city, the city's obligation extends only to the payment of the bonds from a special source of revenue. In general all revenue bonds are based on the concept that only the users of the facilities financed by the sales of the bonds pay for the facilities. With particular respect to this discussion, industrial bond financing is the means by which a municipality issues and sells its revenue bonds to build an improvement (which could be constructed on air rights); the security behind such bonds is a net lease entered into between the city and the private corporation. The lease payments made by the private corporation are sufficient to pay all costs of servicing the bonds (i.e., to amortize the debt); in this way, the corporation can obtain lower rates than through normal corporate bond financing.

It is strongly emphasized that the procedure described above is quite different from one where municipalities issue revenue bonds to finance construction of improvements that are subsequently leased to private corporations in that:

1. The extender of credit is the city, placing the burden of costs and risks on the private corporation.

2. The entire formal procedure is initiated by the private corporation which will have use of the facility.

3. The industrial development revenue bonds are exempt from the Federal Income Tax; this feature lowers the financing cost, and enables the amount available for rentals (air rights, parking, etc.) to be correspondingly higher.

4. If the improvement is to be an office structure, total rental charges within the building are still competitive, which benefits the city as the largest potential tenant in the building.

The amount of the industrial revenue bond issue cannot exceed $5 million, and if it is that high, certain restrictions are placed on the lessee's other construction projects within the city limits. This $5 million restriction applied to a time period covering three years to either side of the date of issuance of bonds.

Aurora Civic Center Act

The Aurora Civic Center Act was recently approved by the State Legislature to provide for an Aurora Metropolitan Exposition, Auditorium and Office Building Authority. The Aurora Authority is specifically authorized to borrow money and issue bonds in a total amount not to exceed $10 million for the purposes contained in the Act. The Authority has the "right" to acquire, purchase, own, construct, and lease as lessee or in any other way acquire, improve, extend, repair, reconstruct, regulate, operate, equip and maintain fair exposition grounds, convention or exhibition centers, civic auditoriums and office and municipal buildings including sites and parking areas and facilities located within the metropolitan area. At the time of writing, the Aurora Civic Center Act was awaiting approval by the Governor.

Appendix

Appendix

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FOR THE PRIORITY PROJECTS

South Island Beautification 80

Parking

Civic Auditorium 80

Market Support
Operation and Management
Organizational Structure
Factors Affecting Operating Income
and Expense Levels

North Island Complex 83

Market Support
Circulation and Parking
Development Strategy

Broadway Area Renovation 85

Market Support
Circulation and Parking

South Island Beautification

Parking

Within the 2.5 acre area of this project, there presently exist 64 parking spaces; 58 spaces are off-street, while the remaining 6 spaces are on-street. According to current specifications for parking space design, the parking along the river in the vicinity of the Elks Club can be considered substandard. As proposed, this project allows for 54 spaces, a net loss of 10 spaces. However, this loss may be attributed to the use of current specifications. Off-street parking would account for 48 spaces. Of these, 35 spaces would be accomodated in the underground garage, 6 spaces would remain on-street. If parking is inadequate, all-day parking for employees of the Library, Post Office, Elks Club and Illinois Bell Telephone Building might be accomodated on the east side of the river. This is only a short distance from the south end of the Island, and a generous amount of parking is either already available here, or could be provided as an improvement.

Civic Auditorium

Market Support

The single most important determinant of demand, thus usage, for a Civic Auditorium is the size of the market from which the enterprise will draw support. The second most important determinant is geographic accessibility of the facility to its potential market.

The City of Aurora emerged independent of Chicago proper. Isolated some 40 miles from Chicago, Aurora developed as a relatively self-contained city surrounded by an extensive trade area. Currently, the City of Aurora contains approximately 76,000 persons. The market support area available to the cultural facilities being considered for Aurora, however, encompasses an area extending in a 20 mile radius from the city's downtown, given local transportation accessibilities. Approximately 800,000 persons reside in this market area. By 1985, projections indicate a market area population base exceeding 1,000,000 persons.

Based on studies in other cities, findings reveal that most cities with a population of over 300,000 either have or are planning to build separate theater and arena facilities along with exhibition space. Based on this standard, the Civic Auditorium planned for Aurora would appear to have a sufficient market support base.

As noted in the Civic and Cultural Center Study prepared by William L. Pereira Associates, "the variety of cultural facilities that can be supported in a community such as Aurora is almost limitless. Among the list to be considered are a fine arts museum, a performing arts center for dance, music and drama, a crafts center with studios and galleries, as well as facilities for many types of entertainment and special events."

Numerous events occurring in and around Aurora point to the existing level of community interest for auditorium-type activities. Many of these events are not properly housed because of a lack of satisfactory facilities. This has resulted in lower attendance, limited performances, and the failure to repeat such events more than once. Obviously, the lack of sufficient facilities makes it impossible to attract a whole series of events to Aurora which might otherwise be available. Current and potential events that could be accomodated if an adequate facility were available include exhibit events, musical and theatrical events, conventions, sports events, lectures, travelogues, and films, religious events, meetings and ceremonies, and banquets, dances, and parties.

The use of a Civic Auditorium, meanwhile, would be increased if other facilities were combined within the same complex. There would be a greater potential in attracting conventions, trade shows, scientific conferences and seminars to a multi-purpose building containing arena and theater space. To attract conventions, the facility must have the capacity to accomodate a variety of related events such as meetings, banquets, dances, parties, and exhibits.

The Fox Valley Arts Council conducted a survey of community arts activities and resources which supports these marketing considerations. Some of the conclusions from their report are listed below:

- There is, to be sure, a significant level of activity and interest in the arts in our area. Undoubtedly, a considerable amount of this activity could be concentrated in a cultural center in the downtown area. One could assume that this concentration of activity would lead to further development.

- A Civic Auditorium would certainly have the potential of making a significant impact on the downtown area and the whole community. It might provide a central focus necessary to the redevelopment of cultural, commercial, and aesthetic growth in the Aurora Area.

- The Aurora area is to a large extent culturally under-developed. The facilities of this area do not compare with those available in the immediate Chicago metropolitan area. The Aurora area does, however, present a unique set of growth possibilities.

Operation and Management

Prior to a discussion of financial operations of the proposed facilities, it is appropriate to point out that revenues at most facilities do not cover operating expenses (excluding debt service). A survey of the financial performance of 71 auditoriums, arenas, and related facilities throughout the country conducted by the International Association of Auditorium Managers indicated that slightly more than two-thirds of these operate at an annual loss. Moreover, it is known that many of the facilities which officially operate at a profit list municipal subsidies in income or fail to show certain services or elements donated by either city of county as operating expenses.

Many facilities which show operating losses do so because of insufficient revenue sources to supplement building rentals, or because certain potential sources of revenue have not been exploited. These revenues can often mean the difference between profit and loss for an auditorium.

Generally, these conclusions are supported by the findings revealed in the Fox Valley Arts Council's report:

- For the immediate future a cultural facility in the downtown area of Aurora could not totally rely upon local arts groups in order to make it financially or programmatically successful.

- Should such a cultural center be created in the downtown area, considerable effort and planning will be needed to develop the additional audience required to make it a success and to realize its greatest potential.

- An arts center of the type being suggested would require considerable professional management if it is to be a success. In addition to this management, a great deal of organizational effort at the community level will be required to gain public acceptance, support and appreciation of the programs and activities that will go on in this facility.

A survey conducted by Economics Research Associates on auditoriums indicates that certain key factors affect the use and operation of auditorium facilities, those being the adequacy and flexibility of the facilities and general population support in the area. Other factors which significantly affect the utilization and financial operation of a facility are discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Management Operating Philosophy and Rental Policy

Auditoriums generally operate under one of two types of policies: a proprietary policy, designed to produce maximum revenues; or a community policy, with emphasis on maximizing use of the facility by both local citizens and convention groups with secondary consideration given to building revenue. Under the latter policy, deficiencies are made up using funds supplied from taxes or some other public or private source. The majority of auditoriums operate under policies which tend to maximize utilization, especially those facilities in smaller communities.

Firm auditorium operating and rental policies should be established prior to the facility's opening and be consistently maintained thereafter. Conflicts have arisen in many cities over the question of whether community groups should receive discounted or free rental, and whether specific groups should receive first chance at scheduling use of the facility. Exceptions - a policy can have a disastrous effect on the auditorium's operations. Since convention groups plan their meetings two or more years in advance, scheduling conflicts between conventions and local facility users rarely occur.

The rental schedule for the proposed Aurora center should be based on an operating philosophy that will encourage use of the facilities, and at the same time, attempt to maximize revenues. All users of the facilities should be charged a rental. Since the ability to pay varies with the event and with the organization sponsoring the event, lower rental rates should be established for noncommercial events than for commercial events. In any event, the established rentals should be comparable to and competitive with those established for similar type facilities located in the Chicago suburban regions.

2. Managerial and Promotional Ability

The necessity of selecting capable management cannot be overemphasized. Qualified management is necessary for the proper handling of the many problems associated with the hiring and direction of auditorium personnel, expense control, event scheduling, and many other operating details. Further, the manager can generate additional use through creative and active promotion.

3. Political Influences on Management

Attempts by individuals or special interest groups to influence management decisions constitute one of the best ways to ensure the unsuccessful operation of an auditorium. An auditorium cannot be operated to the best advantage of the community if favoritism is shown to specific groups in use or in rates charged, if operations are influenced by local government officials, or if appointments are made for political reasons.

Organizational Structure

Auditoriums are usually administered under one of four different types of organizational arrangements. These are briefly described to show how organization and administration of the proposed complex might be handled.

1. Department or Agency of Local Government

Under this arrangement, the auditorium is operated as a separate department or as part of an existing department of the local government. The facility manager is responsible to a city official or a group of officials who establish the limits of his authority. He may or may not be independently responsible for the operation of the facility; much depends on the decision of the leading city officials.

2. Advisory Board

Where an advisory board is used, actual operation of the facility is delegated to a department or agency of the local government. Advice and suggestions are furnished by a board whose members are drawn either from the local government or from the community. The advisory board has no specific responsibility other than to act as a

"consultant" to the facility and the local government. The facility manager can operate relatively independently of local government and community organizations; however, he or she is in closer association with the local government departments under this type of organization than under the administrative board organization. The advisory board usually acts only when its opinion is sought.

3. Administrative Board

This type of organization has been highly successful in operating auditorium facilities in other cities. The board is appointed in most instances by the mayor, city manager, or other leading city government official and is responsible for setting policy, hiring the auditorium manager, and accounting for revenue and expenditures. The auditorium manager is usually given the authority and the responsibility to run the facilities as he or she deems best, subject only to policies established by the board.

4. Leasing Arrangement with an Operating Company

A less common but often successful arrangement is the transfer of responsibility for operation of the auditorium to a private (usually nonprofit) operating company through a lease contract, with the leasing company having nearly complete operational freedom as long as it stays within the terms of its contract.

5. Comparison of Organizational Structures

Examples of successful auditorium operation are found in each category of organization. The administrative board, advisory board, and lease arrangements remove the facility operation from local government influence to a greater extent than does the department or agency operation. Also, under the board or lease organization maintenance of a separate accounting of revenues and expenses is easier. Based on the experience of other communities, a successful operation is more likely under a board or lease type or organization than under a city department or agency type of organization.

Theater Planning Associates suggested the following approach to the operation of the proposed Civic Auditorium:

The key creative forces of the community who actively produce music, dance and choral works, as well as other forms of theater, would form a non-profit corporation. This group would manage the theater, hire a House Manager, book the house for road shows, and be responsible for raising operating funds. As for the role of the city,

(1) it would turn over the theater for one dollar per year to the non-profit organization.

(2) it would be responsible for building maintenance -- heat, light, air conditioning.

(3) it would supply a building engineer to maintain the building.

Factors Affecting Operating Income and Expense Levels

No attempt has been made to estimate operating income and expense levels concerning the proposed Civic Auditorium, since this exercise would necessitate an extensive survey of both current and potential users of the proposed facilities. Factors which affect these levels, however, are highlighted below:

1. Sources of Operating Revenues

Auditorium revenues come from four general sources: building rentals, concession revenues, parking revenues, and charges for special services and equipment rentals. "Parking" does not represent a potential revenue source regarding the proposed Aurora facility. Facilities without parking generally reveal the following revenue source distribution:

Revenue Source	Percentage Distribution
Building Rental	72.0%
Concessions	18.0
Equipment Rentals and Special Services	10.0
Total	100.0%

2. Building Rentals

Facility rentals usually comprise the largest single item of auditorium revenue, ranging from 55 per cent to more than 80 per cent of the total income recorded by various auditoriums.

Most facilities charge percentage rentals for commercial events realizing large attendance, such as sports events and spectaculars; in this case, revenue to the facility is based on a percentage of gross ticket sales, with a guaranteed minimum rental.

The rates which are established must be competitive, and at the same time should encourage use of the facility for both commercial and community events. No group should have free use of the facility, since this usually leads to serious scheduling conflicts, resulting in less than maximum utilization of the building.

Most auditoriums which promote convention usage charge rental only for exhibit space used, with no charge for meetings. Thus public auditoriums can better compete with hotel facilities, most of which do not charge conventions for the use of meeting rooms. Most facilities have very flexible policies on conventions.

3. Concession Revenues

Concession operations provide an important source of revenue for an auditorium facility, a fact that has been recognized and capitalized upon by many facilities. Most facilities contract with a private company for the operation of the food, beverage and checkroom concessions. Where the operation is leased, the auditorium usually furnishes space and utilities; the concessionaires supply equipment and labor. The percentage of return on concessions to the auditorium normally ranges from 20 per cent to as high as 45 per cent of total concession receipts. It should be noted that the operation of a restaurant and/or a bar can represent an important source of building revenue although most auditoriums do not have such facilities.

4. Miscellaneous Rentals

Miscellaneous rentals include charges for the use of equipment, storage and office space. Policies vary widely on equipment rentals. Extra charges are often assessed for the use of portable chairs, special sound and lighting equipment, projection equipment, exhibit and handling equipment, and the like. Special charges may also be applied to excessive use of utilities.

5. Sources of Operating Expenses

The two major categories of auditorium expenses are personnel and maintenance and operating costs. Normally, the distribution of total expenses is as follows:

Expense Source	Percentage Distribution
Personnel expenses	51.0%
Maintenance and Operating Expenses	49.0
Total Operating Expenses	100.0%

6. Personnel Expenses

Wages and salaries may comprise anywhere from 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the total expense recorded in auditorium operations. Staff size varies considerably among auditoriums. In some, the staff has been kept to a minimum with considerable utilization of temporary labor. In others, the permanent staff appears to be significantly larger than warranted by the volume of business. A moderate staff, together with the intelligent use of part-time labor, appears to be an excellent arrangement for controlling personnel expense.

7. Maintenance and Operating Expenses

Maintenance and operating costs usually account for the remaining 30 to 50 per cent of total operating expenses of an auditorium.. Utility costs are the largest single expense. Equipment depreciation, although this item seldom appears in the operating statments of auditoriums, should be included to show a more realistic accounting picture. Maintenance and repair expense is usually at its lowest point during the initial years, increasing in later years as equipment begins to show wear. Advertising, travel, and management expenses can vary from a negligible amount to many thousands of dollars, depending upon the policy adopted toward attracting outside commercial events.

8. Concluding Remarks on Financial Performance

As previously indicated, most auditorium facilities show a net cost of operations, although this has not been quantified regarding the proposed Aurora Civic Auditorium. However, in terms of evaluating the importance of profitable operation as a decision element in appraising the value of an auditorium facility to the community, two factors should be mentioned. First, it is important to recognize that any annual net operating cost is usually insignificant in comparison to the annual debt service cost associated with building construction. In addition, the following statement from Auditoriums and Arenas is offered:

> "One of the most inaccurate methods of determining the value of an auditorium or arena to a community and of judging the efficiency with which it is managed, is a cursory look at the income and expenditure columns of the financial report.
>
> Some of the nation's best managed auditoriums and those most highly praised by professionals each year report heavy losses, ranging to five and six figures. Others known to be less valuable to the community and perhaps not as well managed finish the year in the black.
>
> ...Nor can credit be given in financial reports for the secondary benefits that an auditorium brings a community -- the increased property values in the neighborhood in which it is located, and the business it generates for the merchants of the city."

North Island Complex

Market Support

The major component of the North Island Complex would be civic offices with a projected floor area total of 150,000 square feet. This projection is derived from the Civic and Cultural Center Study prepared by William L. Pereira Associates in November, 1972. According to that study, a total of 185,000 square feet of new or improved facilities would be required by 1985 to serve the needs of public and semi-public agencies requiring a downtown location. The City of Aurora would be the largest user, requiring 65,000 square feet of that total. Thus the projected 150,000 square feet is well within the range of the earlier estimate. An updating of space needs and committments will be necessary prior to initiating the Priority Project.

With the concentration of public offices in the North Island Complex, there exist several opportunities for the inclusion of private space uses. Attorneys are likely candidates for private office tenants, since they tend to locate in proximity to civic offices. An inventory of downtown Aurora revealed a total of 18 law offices with 48 attorneys and 36 secretarial and clerical workers. These offices are not concentrated in one or two buildings; rather, most of them are found between Broadway and River Street, on either Downer or Galena. Judging from the age and general condition of many of the offices, it is safe to assume that some attorneys in downtown Aurora would be receptive to moving into new and modern space within the same building which houses the civic agencies of Aurora.

To determine whether demand from attorneys would be significant when compared to the office space proposed, the probable space needs of downtown attorneys was estimated. In estimating space needs, the assumptions were made that no office would require less than 500 square feet; that each attorney over one in each law office would require 200 square feet and that each secretary or clerical employee over one would require 100 square feet. Based on these assumptions, the following space needs are estimated for law offices:

18 x 500 = 9,000 square feet
30 x 200 = 6,000
18 x 100 = 1,800

Total 16,800 square feet

From the above estimates, it may be noted that law firms now in practice in downtown Aurora potentially require approximately 17 thousand square feet or an amount equivalent to 68 per cent of the total private office space initially planned for the North Island Complex.

Viewed from a different perspective, the amount of office space included in the North Island Complex may be compared to the existing inventory of private office space in the downtown. At present, according to an inventory taken in 1974, there is a total of 331,000 square feet of private general purpose office space in downtown Aurora. Were the office space in the North Island Complex to be completely occupied by tenants from existing office space, the new facility would have to capture nine per cent of the present market.

However, given the economic life of office buildings in a competitive market, the existing inventory should be expected to turn over at two to three per cent a year. Moreover, some additional demand for office space should be created as the area experiences growth.

In summary, given the presence of a substantial civic center and the affinity for certain office space users to locate near civic offices, the inclusion of 25 thousand square feet of general purpose, private office space would appear to be quite realistic.

A third component considered appropriate for inclusion within the North Island Complex is a convention facility. At present, there are no public facilities in Aurora suitable for banquets, seminars, conferences and small conventions. Most group meetings of any size are held in one of the existing motor hotels on the East-West Tollway. Unlike the demand for most other types of commercial facilities, the demand for convention facilities is not always apparent or quantifiable The reason for this is that to a greater or lesser extent, convention facilities are able to create their own demand. Often firms, civic clubs and other groups forego large gatherings such as Christmas parties, dances, seminars, etc., for lack of adequate facilities. Were convention space to be included in the North Island Complex, with proper publicity, it would probably receive frequent usage. Whether the use factor and rental revenues would be sufficient to offset costs remains to be seen.

The fourth component included in the North Island Complex is commercial space consisting of small retail and service establishments. Tentatively, 20 thousand square feet of commercial space is planned, although the amount and mixture will be contingent upon a number of circumstances. If the other components of the North Island Complex are developed and if the Carson Pirie Scott department store remains in its present location, then there will probably be justification for approximately 20 thousand square feet of commercial space based on the pedestrian traffic intensity through the complex. However, to the extent that the conditions stipulated above do not hold true, then commercial services on a reduced scale will probably be in order. Accompanying the various space uses discussed above, the North Island Complex is to include the appropriate number of parking spaces to serve the complex as well as certain off-site needs such as the Carson Pirie Scott department store and the Civic Auditorium. The economic justification for the parking component of the North Island Complex is, of course, that parking is necessary if the rest of the project is to succeed.

Circulation and Parking

Basically, the proposed North Island Complex will be shifting traffic and parking demand from other parts of the downtown area to the north end of Stolp Island. The complex will create a net increase of 350 off-street parking spaces. It should also substantially increase vehicular traffic on Stolp Avenue, Galena Boulevard and New York Street.

Traffic on Stolp Avenue is presently well below capacity. A substantial increase in traffic on Stolp Island could still be efficiently handled with only minimal roadway changes. However, traffic on Galena Boulevard between Broadway and River Street is likely to reach critical capacity. Removal of on-street parking would therefore become necessary, but no extensive roadway changes are foreseen although improvements will be required.

Entrances and exits to the development site must be carefully located and designed to minimize disruption to traffic flow on Stolp, Galena, and New York. Principal access to the site should be from Stolp Avenue. This will probably require removal of some on-street parking around the principal access point.

Removal of some on-street parking in the vicinity of the North Island Complex and the need for additional off-street parking will be a primary concern. These needs may be satisfied by short term off-street parking and additional parking in the area west of Stolp Island. The parking presently used for government employees will become less accessible. A shuttle bus from present lots or underutilized lots may also help satisfy the parking needs of the proposed North Island Complex.

NORTH ISLAND COMPLEX: PROPOSED PARKING REQUIREMENTS

			ON SITE	OFF SITE
1.	Civic Office	150,000 sq. ft. 2.1 spaces/ 1000 sq. ft.	97	218
2.	Convention	1000 visitors; 3 visitors/car	150	183
3.	Bank	30,000 sq.ft., 3.3 spaces/ 1000 sq. ft.	71	29
4.	Private Office	25,000 sq. ft. 3 spaces/ 1000 sq. ft.	20	55
5.	Commercial Service	20,000 sq. ft., 3.5 spaces/ 1000 sq. ft.	20	50
		TOTAL	350	
		Existing Site Parking Displaced	225	
		TOTAL	583	535

Development Strategy

There are innumerable combinations of alternative strategies available for the North Island Complex. The method finally selected will depend on the financial resources available to the city and its decision to commit these resources, as well as its ability to attract private, joint-venture capital, if desired.

First it must be understood that the North Island Complex, as proposed, would consist of between one and four levels of parking across most of the site. The 250,000 square feet of occupied building space would be located above the parking. Most of the development site is currently occupied by a municipal parking lot. Therefore, in order to develop on this municipal lot, it will first be necessary to acquire the air rights above this lot.

According to Aurora's municipal finance consultants, there are two procedures from which to choose for financing the construction of the garages:

1. Advance refund the presently outstanding parking revenue bonds and include in the bond issue an amount of new money for the purpose of constructing the necessary parking facilities. As the required new level of revenue is substantially higher than currently generated, there would have to be capitalized interest during the construction period and for a limited time thereafter until a new income stream is generated -- this serves to increase the bond issue amount by close to 20%.

2. Issue general obligation bonds in an amount sufficient to pay the cost of constructing the additional parking facilities. The presently outstanding parking revenue bonds would not be refunded.

As for the building space itself, it can be divided into 200,000 square feet of "public space," and 50,000 square feet of "private space." One approach would have the public space financed by means of the Aurora Civic Center Act and the private space financed by private interests. In effect, this would be a joint-venture. However, a joint-venture can take on many variations to best suit the needs of both parties. For example, the city could provide the parking and collect those revenues; air rights for the construction of the public space would then be leased to the Aurora Authority for its portion of the development, and the air rights for the private space would be leased to a private developer for construction of that portion of the project. The entire project would be designed and built as one "development package."

Broadway Area Renovation

Market Support

From an economic standpoint, justification for the recommended Broadway Area Renovation must be viewed both in terms of its effect on the commercial establishments on Broadway and also the impact that improvements there might have on the rest of the downtown.

As a component of the downtown, Broadway is unmatched in its importance. This corridor contains approximately 325 thousand square feet of effective commercial space (including two banks) and a total employment of more than 600 workers. Broadway accounts for approximately 29 per cent of all commercial space and 26 per cent of total employment in downtown. Moreover, for those categories of retail generally associated with downtowns, general merchandise, apparel and furniture, Broadway accounts for a third of all downtown space. Nevertheless, the viability of Broadway as a commercial center is questionable. Most critical is the retail component. Office activities might very well be expected to remain in the area in fulfillment of other functions, but the retail picture is much less certain.

The most important determinant of retail viability is, of course, market support. While a detailed valuation of market support was beyond the scope of this study, certain information may be brought to bear at this point. To begin with, if an analysis of retail market support were only to include those activities which are most appropriate within the downtown, at least the following categories would be included:

- General Merchandise
- Apparel
- Furniture
- Specialty
- Drugs
- Eating and Drinking
- Personal Services

Secondly, it is appropriate to determine the markets from which support for these categories of stores might be drawn. Notwithstanding the fact that the downtown has declined as a regional center, it is realistic to expect support from three markets:

(1) The local neighborhood (one mile radius).
(2) Downtown workers.
(3) City and region beyond one mile.

Shown below are estimates of sales potential from these three markets:

	Population (Estimated)	Per Capita Spending	Total Sales Potential
Neighborhood Market	30,000	$1,100	$33,000,000
Downtown Workers	2,300	600	1,380,000
City and Regional Market	65,000	1,100	71,500,000

Given the proximity of the neighborhood, it would be reasonable to expect downtown stores to capture at least 50 per cent of the sales potential found there. By definition 100 per cent of all spending by downtown workers would be captured by the downtown. Given the greater driving distances and competition from peripheral centers, it is reasonable to expect the capture rate by the downtown to be considerably lower in the city and regional market. However, downtown stores should be able to capture 10 to 20 per cent of that market. Based on the above discussion, downtown sales potential for the categories listed is as follows:

	Total Sales Potential	Capture Rate	Downtown Sales
Neighborhood Market	$33,000,000	50%	$16,500,000
Downtown Workers	1,380,000	100	1,380,000
City and Regional Market	71,500,000	15	10,725,000
Total			$28,605,000

Based on an average of $60 per square foot of floor area, the above downtown sales estimate results in a demand for approximately 475 thousand square feet of retail area. By comparison, retail space of all types in downtown Aurora presently totals approximately 597 thousand square feet.

While the above analysis is necessarily a cursory one. Its intent is to show that efforts to upgrade downtown Aurora should not be abandoned for lack of market. On the contrary, such efforts could very well signal the direction in which the Broadway area and the entire downtown proceed in the future. And in a larger sense, the markets from which the downtown draws retail support are in turn dependent upon the downtown for their existence. For example, the neighborhood adjacent to downtown is weakened as downtown shopping facilities and jobs disappear. Likewise, the downtown work force in part consists of workers in the retail categories whose jobs are lost to the downtown if merchants close or relocate. Even office employment will decline if retail services drop below an acceptable level downtown. Not only does the downtown become blighted but many of the business establishments moving from downtown may leave the city altogether with the resultant loss of sales and property tax dollars.

It may be concluded, therefore, that the renovation of the Broadway area is a critical first step in arresting the deterioration of the downtown. By itself, this effort may not provide sufficient impetus to rescue the downtown but it is an important first step.

Circulation and Parking

1. Broadway Renovation

The reconstruction of Broadway, to enhance its pedestrian and local access functions, should serve the downtown area well. The restatement of the Broadway function, however, should be accompanied by improved parallel facilities for through traffic. The traffic volumes now using Broadway are in the area of 15 to 20 thousand vehicles moving through the downtown. This through movement should be shifted to Lincoln Avenue so that Broadway could become a local street. Broadway is 54 feet wide; two moving lanes and two parking lanes could be provided and the sidewalk could be widened to emphasize the local function of the street. Also, operational changes could be made which would further enhance this function.

Broadway is presently under construction and the majority of its traffic has been detoured to Lincoln Avenue via Spring and Clark. Recent traffic counts around Spring and Broadway and along Lincoln Avenue show that the present situation is workable. Some moderate traffic operation improvements would be required, such as additonal traffic signal and improved turning radii.

A parking survey conducted by Alan M. Voorhees and Associates, Inc., shows that most of the parking around Broadway is well utilized. Some excess capacity exists in off-street lots south of Downer Place. On-street parking along Broadway, although effected by construction, was well utilized.

2. Water Street Mall

Water Street exists as a one-way street and is not a major traffic route. Recent traffic volume counts indicate only 148 vehicles in the peak hour use Water Street. Water Street does provide short term on-street parking which is used to full capacity, as well as service vehicle access to adjacent properties. Replacement of the short term parking in this area may be difficult since on-street parking in this surrounding area is already used to full capacity. Service access will be maintained to the adjacent establishments. This may be accomplished through restricted delivery hours.

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