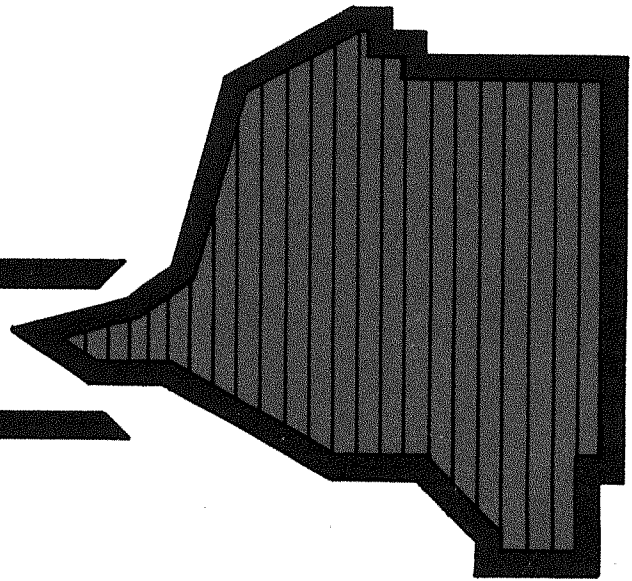


GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA



PLANNING DEPARTMENT
GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH

104 NORTHERN LIGHTS BLVD.
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

June 15, 1970



Greater Anchorage Area Borough Assembly
Mr. Edward Willis, President and
City Council, City of Anchorage
Mr. George Sullivan, Mayor

Gentlemen:

The Greater Anchorage Area Borough Planning Commission is pleased to transmit a plan to guide the growth and development of the Anchorage Central Business District. This plan is the result of many months of study on the part of the planning staff, the Commission and the various departments of the City, Borough and State government. The plan has been developed with the active participation and assistance of numerous individuals and groups interested in the quality of our community's downtown area.

The Planning Commission has adopted this plan as a guide to assist in decisions affecting the core area. We respectfully urge that the legislative bodies also adopt this CBD Plan as an integral part of the comprehensive plan for Anchorage.

Sincerely,

Arliss Sturgulewski
Arliss Sturgulewski, Chairman
Planning Commission

AS:rvd

Attachment



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Anchorage, Alaska

1970

**A COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
OF
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
1970 - 1980**



Prepared by
The Greater Anchorage Area
Borough Planning Commission
June, 1970

The preparation of this plan was financed in part through a Comprehensive Urban Planning Assistance Grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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INTRODUCTION

As in many other urban communities throughout the United States today, Anchorage is experiencing a decline in the role and importance of its Central Business District as a retail center. Huge increases in suburban population, a declining core area population, improved transportation and communication facilities, and the availability of lower priced land outside the City's core area have taken a substantial toll on the CBD in its traditional position as the center of retail trade. Modern shopping centers in outlying areas located closer to the population they serve now provide all of the goods and services that were once available only in "downtown". Greater convenience to the consumer in terms of adequate parking, less traffic congestion and a savings in time have firmly established the suburban shopping center as an integral part of modern America. Anchorage, despite its uniqueness in many ways is no exception to this trend.

This "centrifugal dispersion" of the retail economic base of the community, however, has been successfully counteracted where it has been the desire of a community to do so. In many instances, the process has taken the form of a redirection of the role and function of the CBD from that of the retail center of the community to that of the center of business, financial, entertainment, government and cultural activity.

There are factors related to the Anchorage CBD, however, which do make it unique with respect to its problems and possible solutions thereto. The normally slow and always costly process of urban renewal was accomplished in Anchorage's downtown area in a matter of four minutes when the March, 1964, Good Friday Earthquake destroyed, or rendered unusable, 60% of the buildings in a 21-block area.

The task of rebuilding a portion of the Anchorage CBD after the earthquake, however, was set back when it became necessary to construct a "buttress" along 4th Avenue in order to prevent further sliding of the bluff along Ship Creek. Only after the massive engineering project was completed, and the necessary administrative and legal steps accomplished, was this property able to be made available for beneficial private development. Thus, this large area has lain dormant since 1964. Only recently has the Alaska State Housing Authority and the City of Anchorage announced the impending sale of a portion of the buttress area. It is anticipated that a complex of retail shops and offices and a 250-room hotel will be constructed beginning in 1970. The contribution to rehabilitating the CBD which this

development will lend, remains to be fully assessed. It is expected, however, that the CBD will benefit greatly from this development in that it will return to productive use a vast area of the downtown core which has for the past five years been nothing more than a huge vacant area in the virtual heart of the Anchorage community.

A prosperous CBD as the center of the community's varied functions is an important ingredient for continued growth and development of the Anchorage region. The fostering of this ingredient, of necessity, requires the mobilization of public and private support, and most importantly, finances. It requires, first, however, a development plan which is acceptable to all sectors of the community and is, at the same time, practical and realistic in its goals. While a desire on the part of many merchants, businessmen and civic leaders to rebuild the core of the City and thereby hopefully attract business back to the City center was undoubtedly present in 1964, five years has heightened it and there is today a much broader public support for a reassessment of community goals and plans as they relate to the CBD.

This report is the product of many months of research, investigation and formulation of goals by the Borough Planning Commission, its staff and the various departments of government of the City of Anchorage; as well as "public input" gained at numerous small meetings and a major public forum. It is an attempt to set forth guidelines and goals to foster a successful redevelopment of the downtown core areas as the real center of business and financial activity for the Anchorage metropolitan area. It is an attempt to place in understandable form the facts, the assets and the liabilities with which those who make decisions effecting the community can work. It is an attempt to place in realistic perspective precisely what courses of action the community should take in order to have a CBD befitting the largest City in Alaska which is, at the same time, the hub of most commercial, industrial, distributive, tourist and economic activity in the State.

The question might well be asked, "Why another CBD Plan now?". The answer is simply this: Anchorage, and indeed the entire State of Alaska, is on the threshold of the greatest growth period in its history. It is a formative period when much of the course for the future will be set. If we do not take advantage of this, the position Anchorage now enjoys as the center of activity in the Great North will unquestionably diminish. The community will suffer the same pains that are being suffered by so many other metropolitan areas in the United States. It is the feeling of those in leadership positions within the community that this should not be allowed to happen and that by planning and implementing now, when the opportunity is greatest, Anchorage can move vigorously towards the goals that have been established.

THE STORY OF ANCHORAGE

Anchorage had its beginning in the early 1900's when the U.S. Congress decreed that a railroad would be constructed to gain access from the coastal areas into the vast and rich interior of the Territory. The City was founded in 1914 and originally existed as a base camp for the railroad construction effort. The town was formally laid out by railroad engineers in 1915. Completion of Federally-owned Alaska Railroad in 1923 from Seward through Anchorage to Fairbanks accomplished its purpose of providing a new means of access to interior Alaska. This feat set the stage for the development of the Anchorage area for decades. In the 1920's and 1930's, Anchorage was the base for all rail operations as well as the headquarters for all governmental activity and for wholesaling and distributing of goods into the rest of the Territory. In the 1940's and 1950's, Anchorage's role in the Territory and in fact in the Nation, became more important as existing military facilities in the area were expanded and new ones were created to support the military effort connected with World War II. Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson, both located in Anchorage, are today among the largest military facilities in the United States.



Anchorage continues today as the center for much of the governmental activity within the State. It is also the distribution center for the entire State of Alaska and for much of the Arctic North. With the

coming of the jet age transportation network, Anchorage has assumed a role of major importance as a stop-over point and refueling base for over 20 of the world's commercial airlines. It is the major refueling point for almost all military flights to the Far East and Asia. Anchorage is the most populous City and the metropolitan area is the largest within Alaska, having 113,500 inhabitants according to the 1968 Special Census of Population. With the discovery of oil on the North Slope, Anchorage promises to become the hub of activity connected with oil exploration and marketing in the entire Northwestern United States. If the oil discoveries to date, and the total available deposits of marketable crude come to pass in the quantities being discussed, the State may well become the "Oil Capital of the World".

Such events, of course, cannot help but place the Anchorage area in the enviable position of being able to determine its future. Aside from being the center for much of the economic activity in the State and the entire Arctic, Anchorage is unique in all of Alaska because of its urbanity. Nowhere else in the State are all of the advantages of modern-day American living offered to the extent they exist in the Anchorage area, while at the same time offering to the resident the distinct closeness to the great outdoors that Alaska is noted for. With these assets added to the picture, Anchorage is indeed on the threshold of the greatest period of development in its history.

From medieval times, man has banded together in a communal setting for various reasons, not the least important of which was the benefit derived from the adage of, "In numbers, there is strength", but man has also realized other benefits of such "community" living. Trading centers have historically developed where men's paths crossed; at confluences of rivers, crossing of overland trails, or natural seaports. From these villages or trading centers, larger towns arose, accompanied by the development of the "downtown" area in every community. From the downtown area evolved the Central Business Districts of the large urban centers today. From the beginning of modern man's recorded history, the Central Business District, in all its various forms, has been the place where some men worked and others sold and traded their home-crafted goods or their crops. It has been the place where men met to transact business, practice the arts and trades, and meet others. But most importantly, the town center has traditionally been the focal point of much of the social activity that resulted from man's joining together in a community setting.

Today, the town center, or Central Business District, is a vastly different creature than it was in man's early history . . . indeed, it is vastly different from what man envisioned it would be. Many CBD's today have become seething hotbeds of congestion, strife and physical decay, and the center of many of man's most perplexing social and environmental problems. As population continues to increase,

and as the society becomes more urban-oriented, people flock to the metropolitan area. Recent decades, however, have produced a new phenomena . . . the "flight to the suburbs". Today we are witnessing a reversal of the trend that predominated throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century. Whereas population was shifting from the rural areas to the City during the Twenties and Thirties, this decade has seen a flight from the City center to the surrounding suburban communities. It is not the outward

move itself, but rather the reason for the outmigration that concerns those who address themselves to the problems of the urban areas. The movement is a protest against the many undesirable conditions plaguing the metropolitan centers today. This "urban sprawl", as it is fashionably called, if allowed to continue, promises to lay the City center barren and render it a bitter memorial to man's inability to cope with his own environment.

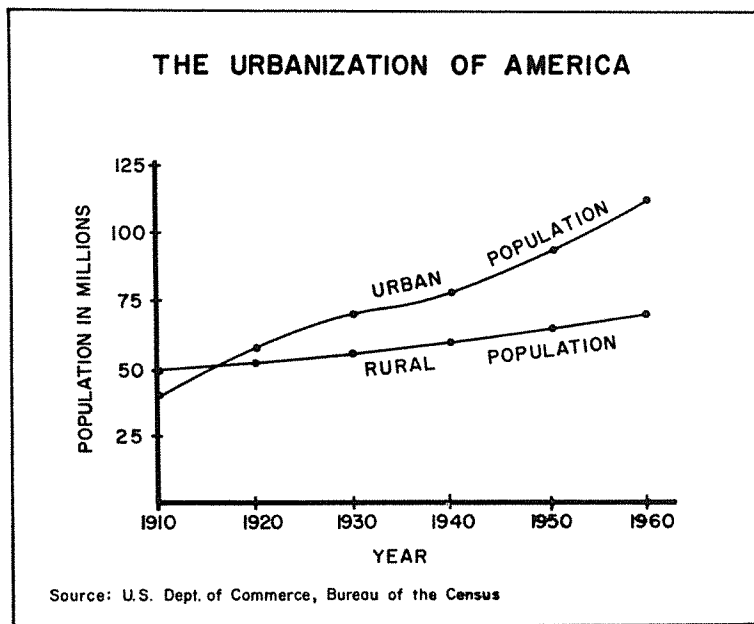


Fig. 2

While this background can be said to be generally reflective of what has happened nationally, it is so only to a minimal degree in the Anchorage area. The Anchorage CBD and its immediately surrounding area is not the dilapidated, congested, overcrowded place that many core areas throughout the world are today. Rather, the Anchorage CBD is surprisingly structurally sound, has only minor instances of traffic congestion, an adequate supply of parking facilities and does not suffer from overcrowding by people or buildings. It does, however, have several problems which will be discussed in detail in this report.

What of the CBD of the future, Anchorage's as well as others? There is little prospect for the CBD ever again becoming the only center of retail activity in any community. Substantial investment in land and buildings by private enterprise, shopping facilities located in suburban areas, and the movement of the center of population from the core area dictate that the trend of suburban growth and

expansion is "set" and will not change. But what does this mean to the CBD? In simple terms, it means that if the downtown core area is to continue to be a vital part of a community, it must find a "new reason for being".

This "new reason for being" in the case of the Anchorage CBD appears to be embodied in the recent up-surge in construction of business and office facilities. As a result of the tremendous interest in Alaska on the part of the major oil companies, Anchorage is destined to become the headquarters for most of the administrative forces centered around the exploration and the eventual production and marketing of this valuable natural resource. While retailing may never return to the degree of dominance it once held, it will remain a significant factor in the total Anchorage CBD economy. Indeed, it will undoubtedly grow to a greater dollar volume than it has ever before enjoyed; but as a percent of the total CBD economy, it is likely to remain secondary to the burgeoning business, financial and office activity.

While the relative merits and demerits of these trends are not universally agreed upon, they are encouraging when compared to the decay found in many other Central Business Districts. The life-blood of a downtown area is people . . . and if, through the professional, governmental, administrative and financial activities envisioned for the CBD, the vitality of the area is preserved and enhanced, the result will be a marked upswing in retail sales and in the many service facilities that make downtown a lively, active and spirited area in which to work, play and do business.

The Anchorage CBD is structurally sound and economically healthy; and can, with proper direction and development, maintain and solidify its position as the business and financial center of Alaska.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ANCHORAGE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT, 1969

A thorough understanding of downtown areas in terms of their historical role and development, and the functions they perform is basic to preparation of a development plan for any CBD. This is especially true in the instance of Anchorage, Alaska, where unusual forces and circumstances have in the past and are presently working to create a truly unique downtown area. As a basis for this understanding, however, a complete analysis and evaluation of, for example, such factors as population, economics, land use, space utilization and parking and traffic features must be accomplished. It would be impossible to report here all of that basic data and its accompanying analysis. The historical aspects and background on early development of the area have already been discussed. For brevity's sake, only the topics of land use, economics, and function are discussed in detail in this section.

LAND USE

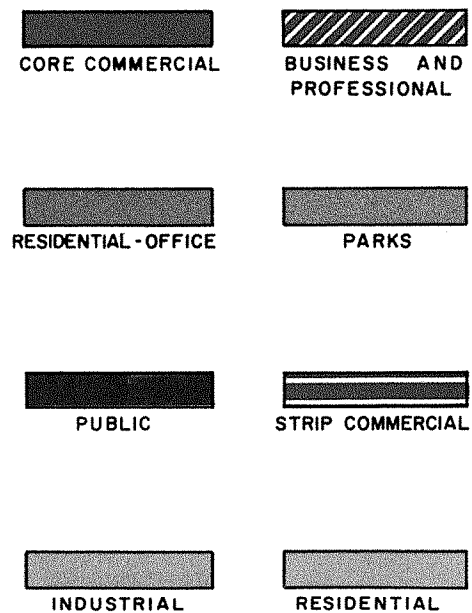
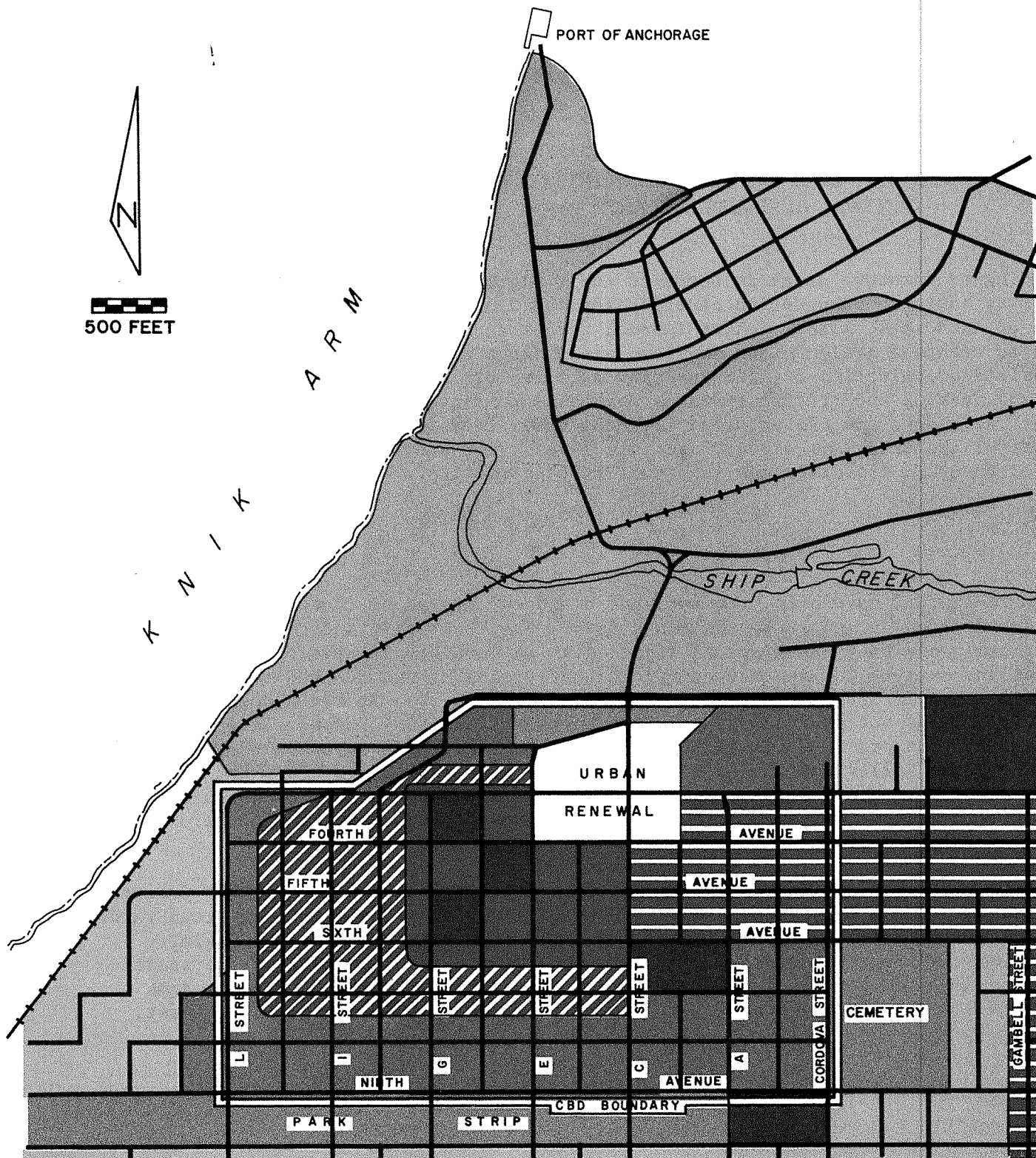
The land use patterns in the CBD have been both influenced and encouraged by those features (shown on Figure 3) that are situated around or close to the CBD proper. The Park Strip and Cemetery have served not only as aesthetically pleasant green spaces adjacent to an intensively developed area, but also as definite boundaries and buffers between the commercial activities of the CBD and the adjacent residential uses. The L Street bluff line has served a similar purpose in that it has also acted as a boundary and buffer. While it has not provided green space in the traditional sense, the approximate 100-foot difference in elevation has provided visual open space in the form of a sweeping vista of Cook Inlet, Mt. Susitna, the Ship Creek Valley and the Port of Anchorage. The Ship Creek bluff and the permanently open areas in the R-20 Buttress Project are a continuation of these buffer areas on the north of the CBD. This northern buffer, however, does not separate residential uses from commercial activities, but rather industrial from commercial.

That area immediately to the north of the CBD encompasses the major industrial area of the Greater Anchorage Area Borough. The Ship Creek Valley contains the Port of Anchorage, the Alaska Railroad yards and numerous wholesaling and other transportation-oriented and light industrial uses. The proximity of these industrial activities has affected downtown adversely to a degree, because most of the traffic (in many instances, truck) to and from this area, must at present pass through the CBD. At the same time, this proximity has been a desirable adjunct to the retailing operations downtown. In the past,

Fig. 3

GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE

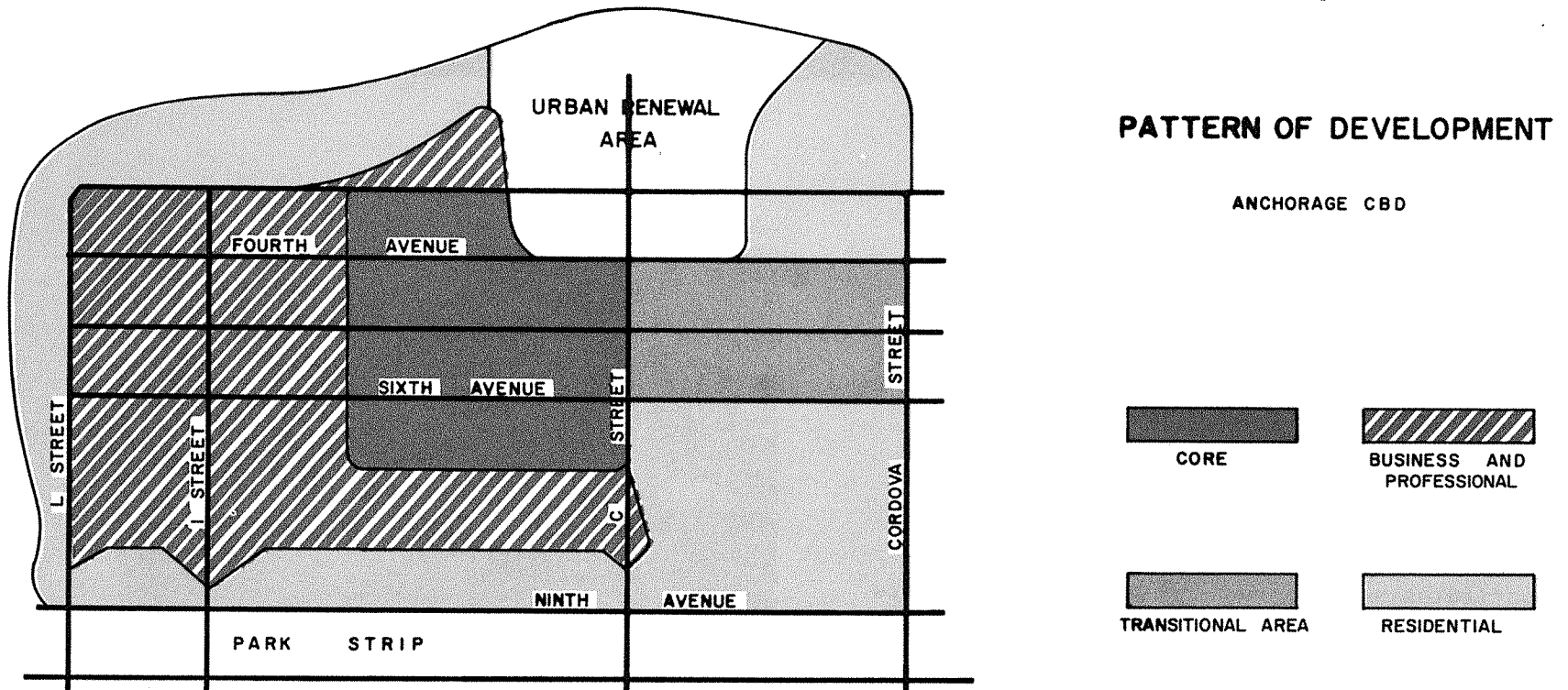
CBD AND SURROUNDING AREA
1969



the downtown retailers enjoyed the advantage of being located within several hundred feet of their warehousing space. It appears, however, that warehousing space is no longer readily available in the Ship Creek area and this function has been forced to move south along Arctic Boulevard. The movement of warehouses towards the south has contributed in some part to the relocation of several major retailers to the Northern Lights Boulevard area.

All of these external influences, as well as the internal development patterns portrayed in the following photographs has helped to mold the CBD of Anchorage into its present form.

Fig. 4



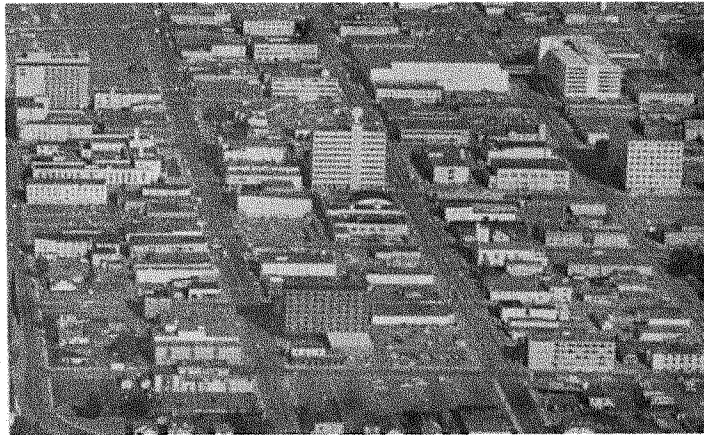


Fig. 5

CORE AREA

The core area is today a rather intensively developed commercial area, with adequate parking, basically sound structures, and a good environmental rating. This is the business and financial center of the entire State, as well as a tourism center and important commercial area. It is quite capable of maintaining and solidifying this position.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL AREA

The developing business and professional area contains those businesses that desire a CBD location, but for various reasons do not desire or demand a location in the core. The vacant land that still exists in this area constitutes some of the most desirable business sites in the metropolitan area. This development character should be protected and encouraged by actions that will direct development towards business and commercial activities on the vacant parcels or on those containing obsolete structures.

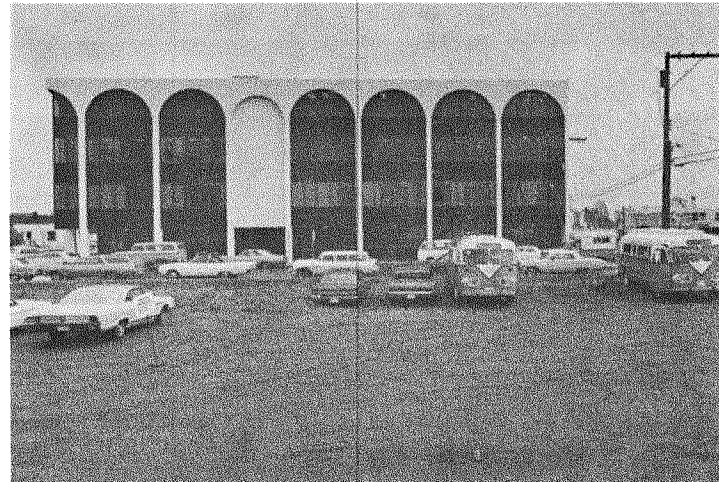


Fig. 6

TRANSITION AREA

The transition area between the core and the transportation-oriented facilities to the east contains a mixture of vacant, commercial, highway-oriented, and office-type activities that are housed in buildings ranging in structural quality from new and substantial to deteriorating and dilapidated. It has a critical need for direction to its growth to prevent its development as the "catch-all" commercial area of Anchorage.



Fig. 7

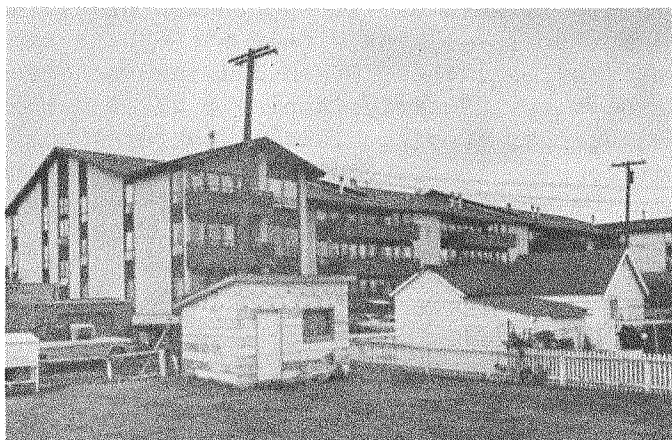


Fig. 8

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL AREA

That area immediately surrounding the core and business-oriented zones is comprised of new apartments contrasting with deteriorating cabins and vacant lots. Because of its location and the already established construction and development trends, it should be encouraged to develop into a high-density residential area that would contain also those professional offices and neighborhood-type service facilities compatible with its primary function as a CBD-oriented living area.

ECONOMY

The overall economic picture of the downtown area is particularly encouraging when compared to the trend of central business districts "outside" where the picture is one of continuing decline of all sectors of the downtown economy. Economic activity in the Anchorage CBD, by contrast, is on the up-swing, due to the increasing level of tourism and the influx of petroleum-oriented firms into the area. Although retailing is becoming less of a factor in the total downtown economy, the retailer can benefit from this activity by re-directing his individual operation to capitalize on these developments and the increased number of people who will result therefrom. Acknowledgement and understanding of this changed character, followed by positive action to meet the demand for the type of economic activity that is best suited for the CBD is expected to result in a continued healthy economic growth for the downtown area of Anchorage.

A brief review of employment data and the development and utilization of floor space in the CBD will give a good insight into the economic structure of downtown Anchorage. There are, obviously, other aspects of the area economy which are equally as important, but these two will adequately illustrate the direction in which the CBD is growing in terms of its relation to the total Anchorage area economy.

EMPLOYMENT: According to data compiled by the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) during 1968 and 1969, that portion of the Anchorage area labor force working within the CBD is comprised primarily of persons employed in the fields of government, services, financial-insurance-real estate, and retailing. Figures 9 and 10 indicate that the service industries employ a great number of persons, although all levels of government combined employ the most people. This illustrates the important role Anchorage plays as the center for much activity by both the Federal and State governments. It further is indicative of Anchorage's position in the economy of the State as the distributive and service center for all of Alaska.

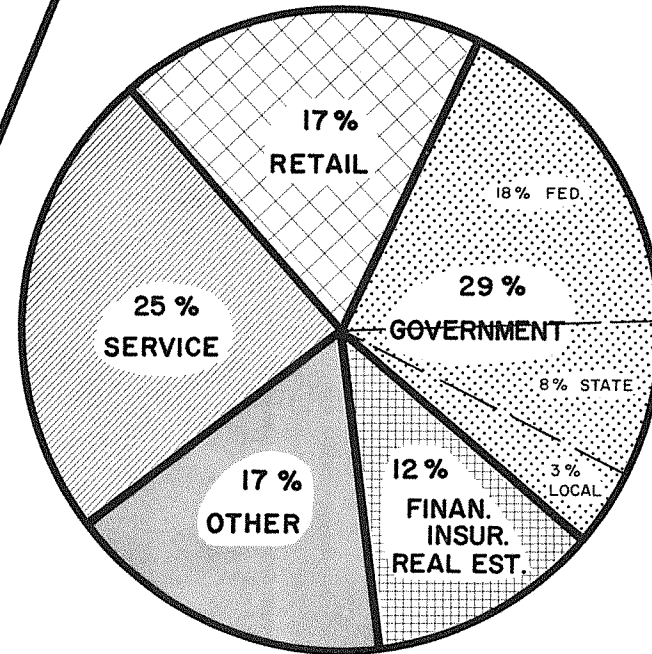
DISTRIBUTION OF CBD EMPLOYMENT

Anchorage, Alaska

Category

Services	1,881
Federal Government	1,337
Retail	1,315
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	914
State Government	582
Mining	340
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	295
Local Government	246
Wholesale	220
Contract Construction	203
Manufacturing	186
TOTAL	7,519

Source: Anchorage Metropolitan Area
Transportation Study



CBD LABOR FORCE

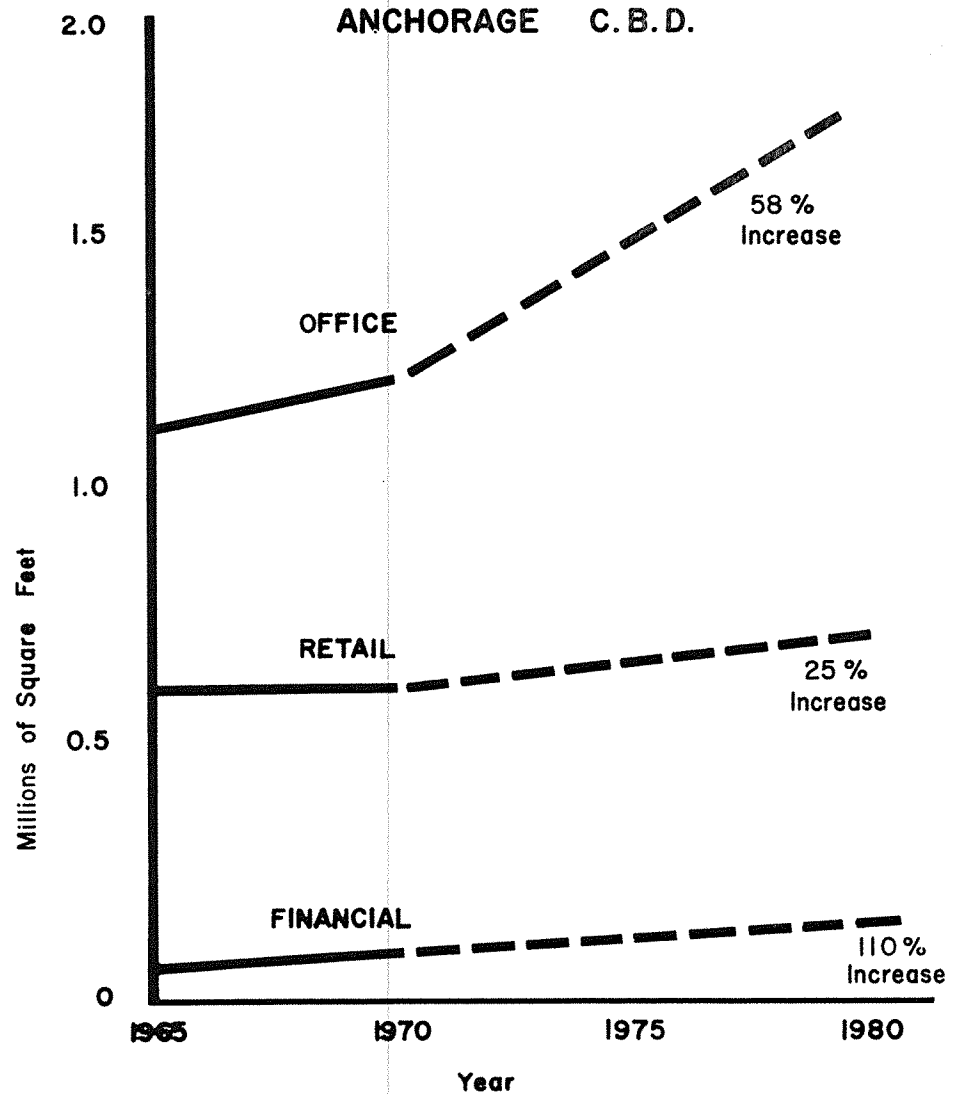
Fig. 10

Source: Anchorage Metropolitan
Area Transportation Study

FLOOR SPACE: Construction of buildings housing office facilities and financial institutions has, as was projected by Real Estate Research Corporation¹, proceeded at a much more rapid rate than has construction of retail facilities. This trend should show a moderate, but only temporary, change during the period between mid-1969 and late 1970 when the new Northern Commercial store and the retail facilities proposed for the R-20 project are constructed. These however, are to some degree "replacement facilities" in that Northern Commercial presently operates a store in the CBD and these facilities proposed for the R-20 urban renewal area will in great part replace retail operations destroyed in the 1964 earthquake. At the same time, several new office buildings of substantial floor area are proposed or are currently under construction. The net effect over the next five years is expected to be a continued acceleration in construction of office facilities with little additional increase in construction of retail floor space.

¹Land Utilization and Marketability Study Downtown Urban Renewal Project, Anchorage, Alaska, prepared for the Alaska State Housing Authority, July, 1964, by Real Estate Research Corporation, Los Angeles, California.

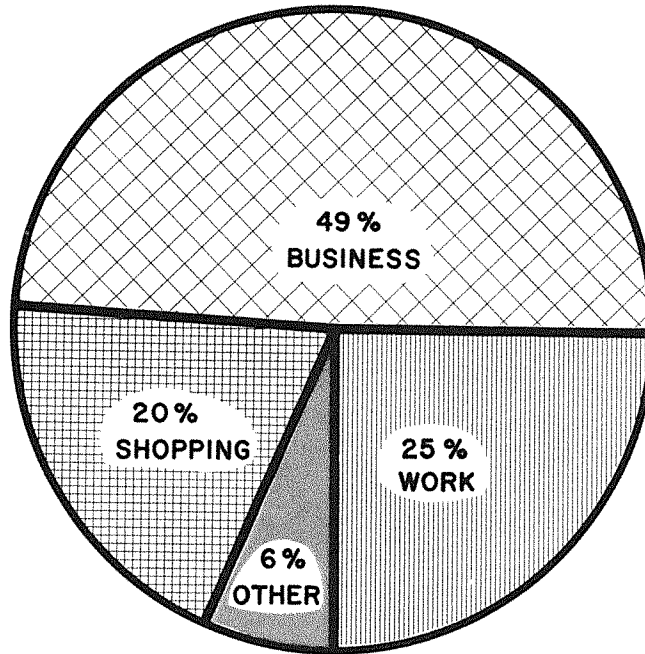
OFFICE, RETAIL, AND FINANCIAL FLOOR SPACE



Source: Real Estate Research Corp., City of Anchorage Building Dept., GAAB Planning Dept.

FUNCTION

Of importance is a determination of the functions that the downtown area is performing. A survey of all persons parking vehicles in the CBD was conducted in June, 1968, by the AMATS in an attempt to determine the purpose of each trip to the downtown area and the specific destination within the CBD of each person. Figure 12 indicates that by and large business-oriented trips were the single most important with "work" and "shopping" being second and third respectively. Figure 13 (page 18) indicates that the great majority of trips to the CBD were destined for the core area as opposed to the fringe residential or transitional area.



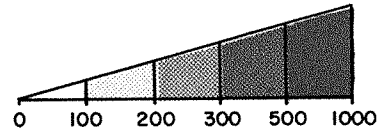
TRIP PURPOSE IN CBD

Fig. 12

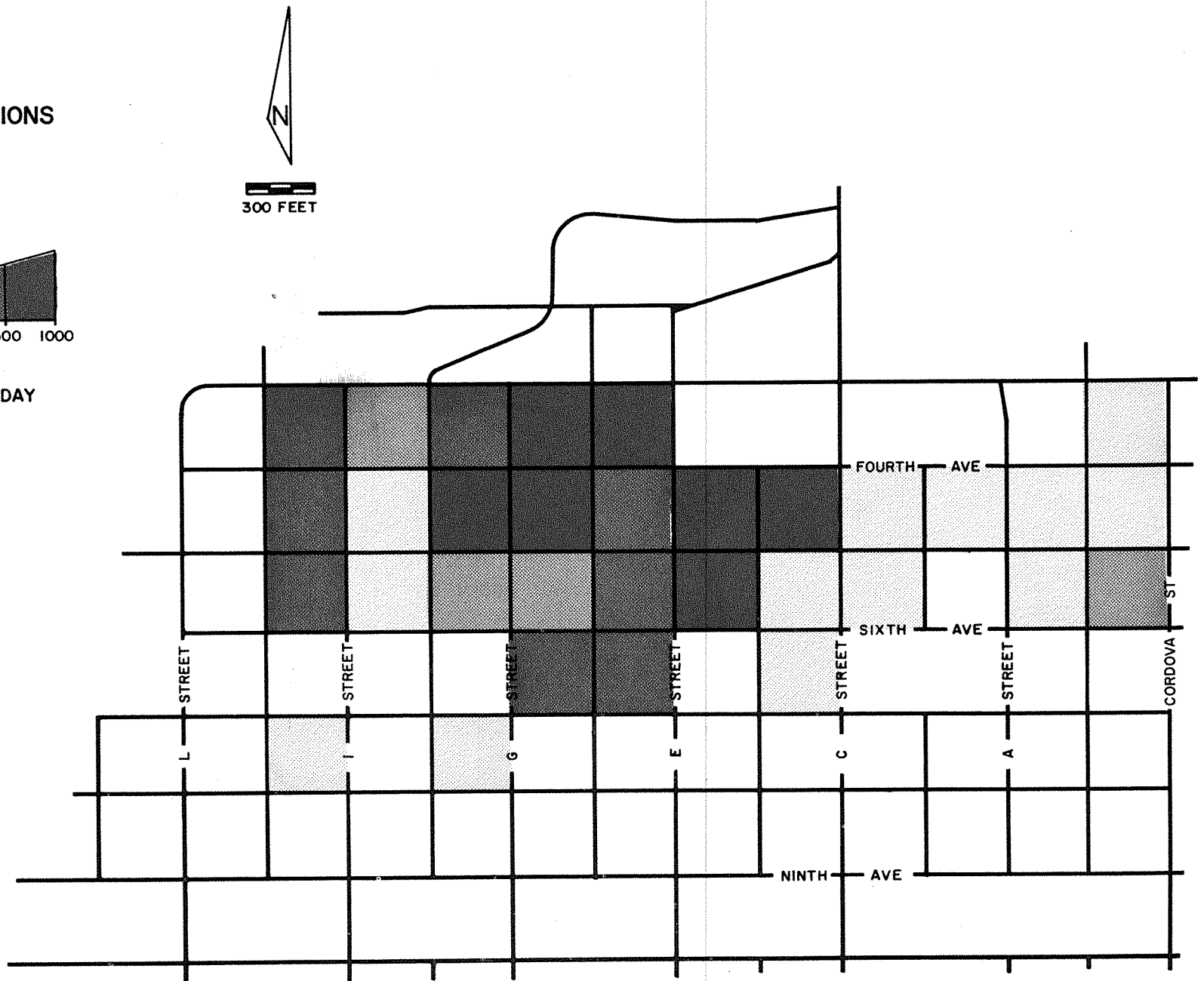
Source: Anchorage Metropolitan
Area Transportation Study

Fig. 13

TRIP DESTINATIONS IN CBD



DESTINATIONS PER DAY



Source: Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.

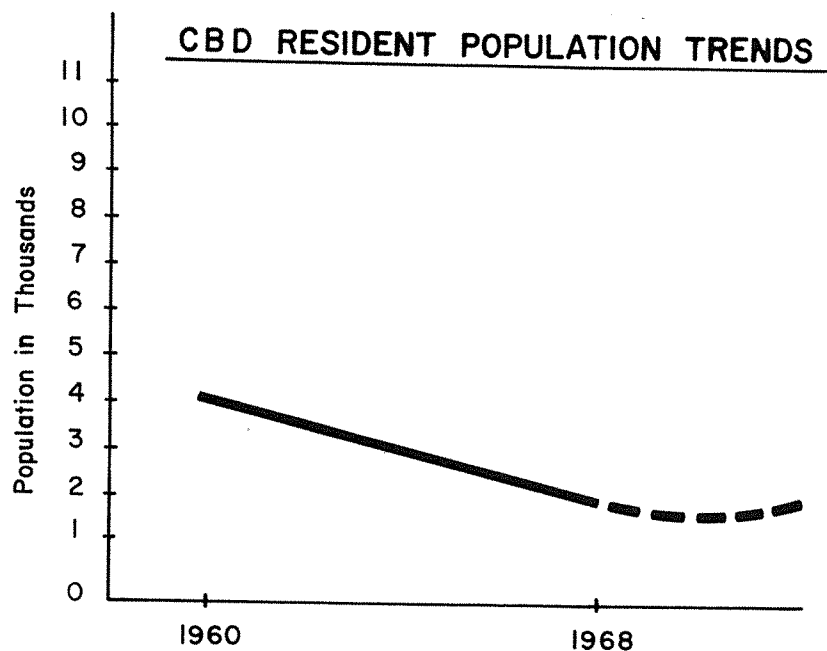


Fig. 14

Source: U.S. Census, 1960 and 1968

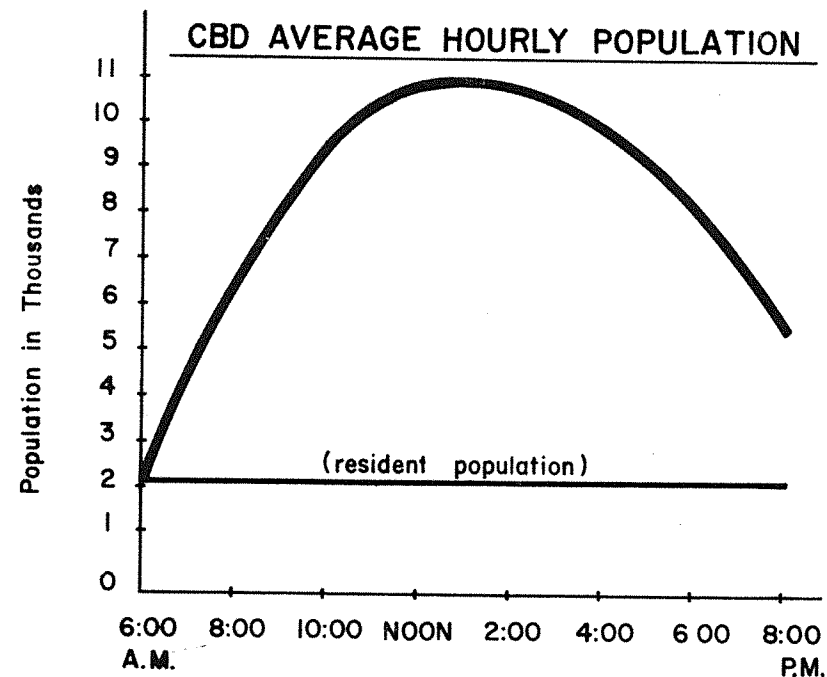


Fig. 15

Source: Estimate, 1969; GAAB Planning Department

The population data on the CBD evidences further the function of downtown. Over the past eight years, the resident population has declined from 4,267 to 2,165. This can be attributed in part to "the flight to the suburbs" and by the displacement during this period of time of some 1,034 dwelling units by the business enterprises of a growing Central Business District and by the 1964 earthquake. By comparison, however, there appears to be a "daytime population" of approximately 10,000 persons in the CBD. There is no specific data available to indicate the annual increase in this latter figure, but all relevant factors support the assumption that it is increasing.

By comparing the population trends and statistics to trip purposes, a composite picture of the activity in the CBD can be developed. This view shows relatively few permanent residents, but a large influx of workers, shoppers, businessmen and their associates during the daytime hours. This bell-shaped curve, graphically portrayed on Figure 15, is accentuated even more by the tourists that visit Anchorage in ever-increasing numbers.

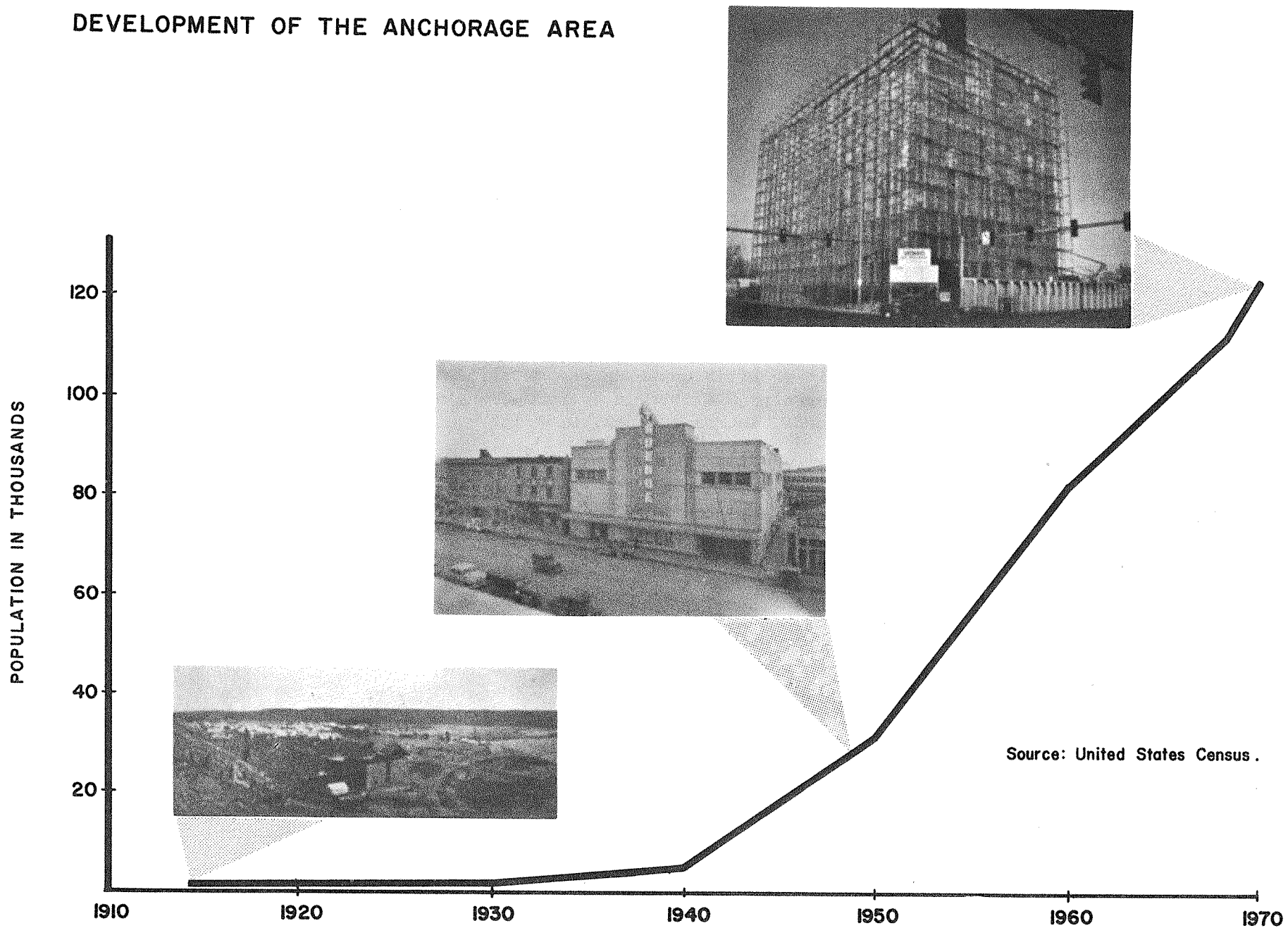
Since the CBD is only a part of the total community, it is necessary to review the development of the entire Anchorage area to fully comprehend the CBD today. One must remember also that neither a plan nor a community can be fully comprehended by a "one point in time" still photo. Both are dynamic and must be reviewed from a comprehensive perspective along the continuum of time. When this is done, the "why" of the existing situation becomes obvious and a solid base for valid projections develops.

Figure 16 portrays the past and projected future population of the Anchorage metropolitan area, and vividly illustrates several points. Anchorage first assumed importance in 1914 when the construction camp for the Alaska Railroad was located in the Ship Creek Valley. The area experienced a tremendous growth rate between 1940 and the mid-50's because of the establishment of Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson, the basing of approximately 15,000 uniformed personnel on them and the resulting employment of several thousand civilians for support functions. Although military and governmental employment and influence has remained at the mid-50's level, the growth of the entire Anchorage area and the Central Business District has continued.

This continued growth cannot be specifically attributed to any one factor as the pre-1955 growth can be. The cause of recent and continuing growth of the Anchorage area and the development of the Central Business District as the business center of the State is very complex. It is concerned with "the success of success", the urbanity of Anchorage, its location in a relatively temperate and accessible portion of America's "last frontier", the changing social mores of the populace, the development of the petroleum industry in the State, and the "instant urban renewal" of the 1964 earthquake. These complex and inter-related influences may be separated into two categories, one being those influences that stimulate growth, while the others are those that affect the type and configuration of growth.

Fig. 16

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANCHORAGE AREA



The Anchorage Central Business District will continue to grow because it is today a sound and vibrant business and tourist center with a well-established base for continued growth. Clustered around the CBD are the various offices and administrative facilities of the numerous oil companies. As the industry passes through the development and into the production stages, it is expected that the impact on the Anchorage area will be even greater than it has been in the early stages. The largest single factor, however, indicating that the CBD will continue its change from a totally retail-oriented center to a financial, business, professional and tourist center is the fact that the trend is so firmly established today, there is little, if any, chance for it changing. Simultaneous with the dispersion of the retailing functions from the CBD, is the build up in the downtown area of business and financial activity. Developers, active in the CBD, are providing increased amounts of office space, more specialty-type outlets, and greatly upgraded tourist accommodations.

Another factor that bears upon the continued growth of the CBD is the desires of its patrons. Although many Alaskans enjoy the outdoors, the more rugged sports, and the frontier-like aspects of the State, they are nevertheless becoming more urban in their attitudes and more convenience-oriented in their day to day lives. While it is often unspoken and sometimes unconscious, the desire for the activity and bright lights of "downtown" exists in everyone, and will undoubtedly have an influence upon the development of Anchorage's Central Business District.

These complex and inter-related influences upon the Central Business District are projected to remain dominant as the Central Business District, the Anchorage area, and indeed the entire State of Alaska mature and develop. These areas are becoming less dependent upon government and more self-sufficient. The plans in the following sections are based on the assumption that continued development of the Central Business District as a tourist and business center, serving the needs of visitors, as well as those of Anchorage's fast-growing resident population, is a sound, prudent and wise course of action which needs and deserves the support and participation of the private as well as public sectors of the community.

GOALS

There is running throughout this development plan a theory that downtown Anchorage, and especially the core area, should not be allowed to sprawl or grow uncontrolled in all directions, but rather that it should be contained within definite boundaries. This is not to say that the growth and development of the CBD to its fullest potential should be discouraged, but it must be guided along sound land use principles. Adequate open space must be assured; judicious application of and adherence to setback and parking requirements should become the standard rather than obstacles to be overcome; private developers should be encouraged to adhere to the community's adopted plans for development in the CBD and should be encouraged to exercise a degree of restraint consistent with good development and land use principles. Large amounts of vacant or under-developed commercially zoned land adjacent to the core area of the CBD is not, as sometimes believed, a healthy sign of "plenty of room for expansion". It is frequently an undesirable characteristic damaging to the established business district and one which encourages further harmful dispersion of the CBD's economic base.

In early 1969, the Planning Commission held a public discussion forum at which the results of the data collection and analysis phase of this study were presented to some seventy-five businessmen, merchants, tenants and landowners in the Anchorage Central Business District. More important than the data and accompanying conclusions presented at that meeting were the discussions which followed. From these discussions, it is obvious to the Planning Commission that equally as important as having "a plan" to guide the development of downtown is the need for an acceptable and realistic set of goals and objectives towards which all energies and efforts can be directed.

Any attempt to elicit such a set of goals and objectives is difficult at best given the varied interests and ideas present about how downtown should develop. However, it is obvious that the desire of most people in the Anchorage area with regards to the downtown area, is what might be termed "a better CBD". This is a very general statement or goal and is really too broad to be meaningful and useful as a tool or guide. This can best be done by breaking the broad statement into components or parts, which, when meshed together, serve to point toward the end result so generally stated.

"A better CBD", as the stated desired end, is composed of and results from a sound economic base coupled with what could be termed a vibrant or dynamic character. These two ingredients in turn are composed of several less broadly stated objectives; physical attractiveness, intensity of development, accessibility, diversity of function and physical soundness. These five objectives can, in turn, be further reduced by relating to specific goals or, in some instances, specific projects which need to be accomplished.

These are:

1. BUTTRESS AREA;

Development of the R-20 Urban Renewal area into a combination of retail, financial and office facilities in conformance with the Urban Renewal Plan at the earliest possible time.

2. GOVERNMENT CENTER;

The location of most government administrative office facilities in the downtown area, preferably on a site south of the Public Safety Building as recommended in previous studies.

3. TRAFFIC CIRCULATION;

Improvement of traffic circulation within the CBD, separating where possible, vehicular from pedestrian traffic. Improvement of access routes into and out of the core area.

4. PARKING FACILITIES;

Provision of adequate and efficient parking, expanding the heretofore acceptable "one level" parking lots, and proceeding to construct multi-level parking structures as the demand increases.

5. LAND USE:

Intensification of land use in the core area consistent with the need for open space, but at the same time mindful of the need for maximum utilization of the extremely high-priced downtown land.

6. TOURISM, CONVENTIONS AND ENTERTAINMENT:

Attraction of more tourists and conventions to the Anchorage area and development of adequate tourist, convention and entertainment facilities that will increase the evening activity in the downtown area.

7. PHYSICAL SOUNDNESS:

Promotion of quality construction by strict enforcement of building codes to prevent early obsolescence and physical decay, and adherence to the seismic building codes currently in force to minimize the effect of earthquake-caused damage.

8. HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:

Attract residential population back to the downtown area by encouraging and promoting development of high density residential structures in the peripheral area of the CBD.

It is recommended that these eight goals be adopted by the Borough Assembly, and the Anchorage City Council and thus, in addition to recognizing their importance, give direction to downtown and to those active in development of the area. The Planning Commission has relied heavily upon these goals in the formulation of the plans presented in subsequent sections. Indeed, they are the very basis and foundation upon which the plans are built. Their acceptance by the legislative bodies and decision-makers of the community is essential to the success of these plans.

A LAND USE PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE

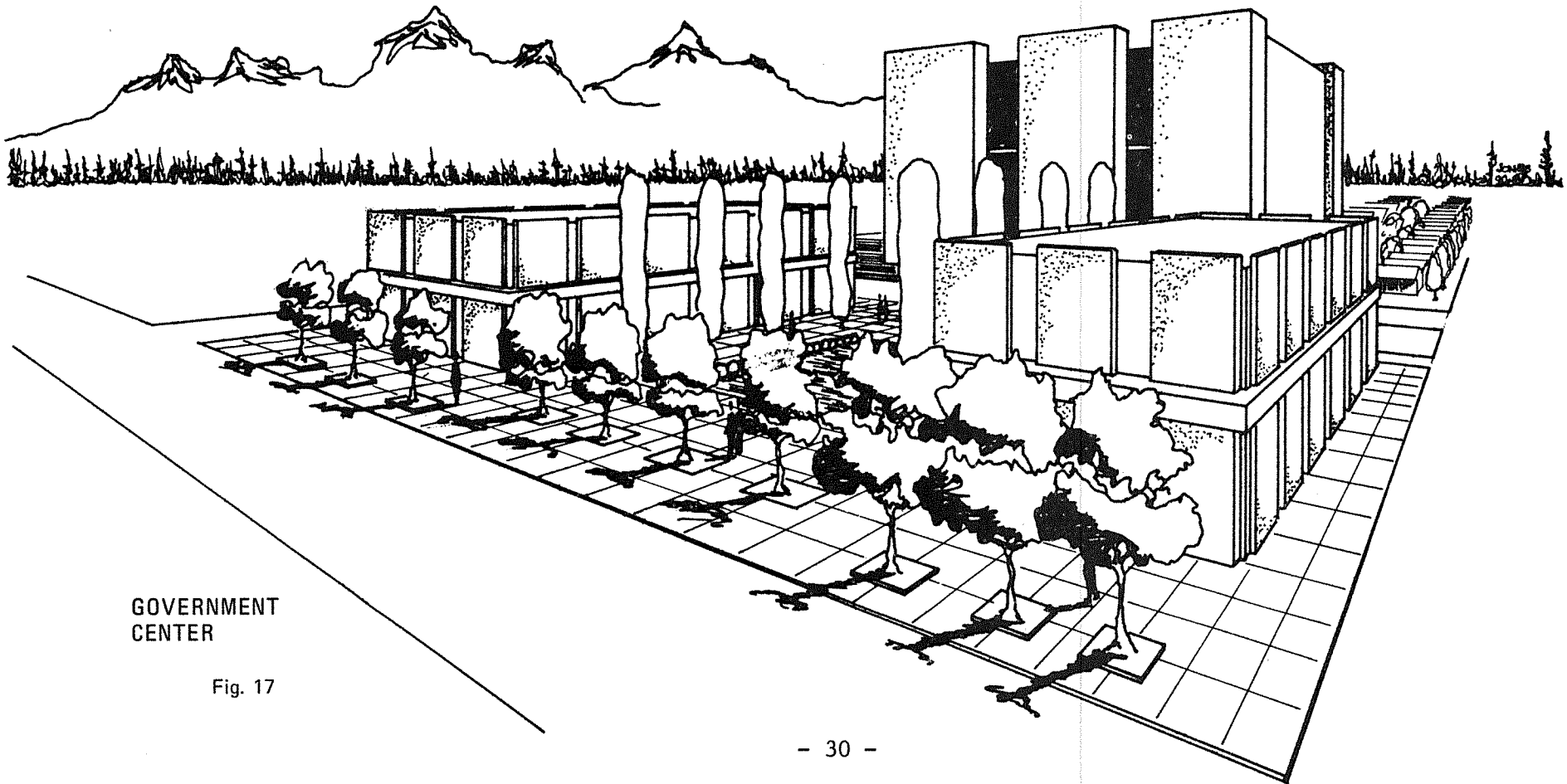
The comprehensive development plan for downtown Anchorage consists of three related parts; namely, a land use plan, a parking and circulation plan and a zoning plan. The land use plan is a graphic portrayal of the general and specific goals developed for the downtown area and discussed in the previous section. It should serve as a general guide to local officials and to the private sector as they collectively invest in and continue to develop and improve the downtown area.

A community is a dynamic thing, ever changing with time. A land use plan which does not allow for change or which is either so long-range in scope as to be unrealistic or so short-sighted as to lack imagination, is of little value. Since Anchorage is an extremely dynamic community and subject to tremendous change over the next several years, the time span, 1970 to 1980, of this development plan is relatively short.

This land use plan has been designed to capture a workable balance between the dreams of theoretical planners, frequently heralded as imaginative and seldom implemented, and the schemes of the speculative operator interested only in a quick and sizable return on his investment. It envisions an intensively developed business and commercial core of approximately sixteen blocks centered somewhere between 4th and 5th Avenues and B and F Streets. The trend for the surrounding blocks has already been firmly established as a business and professional area. This belt has, in recent years, been the site of rather feverish construction of office buildings. More plans are being prepared for this same type of development. The trends in the area around the periphery of the Central Business District have not, however, been so firmly established. The demand for this land has not been as great and the development on it has been rather varied. This plan encourages high density residential development in this peripheral area intermingled with retail shops and professional offices.

Certain features about the proposed land use plan are unique to present-day downtown Anchorage. Some of them are imaginative, but they are all practical and feasible for Anchorage despite its peculiar climatic problems, and the natural resistance to change that is often built into communities. The most noteworthy of these changes are detailed in the following pages.

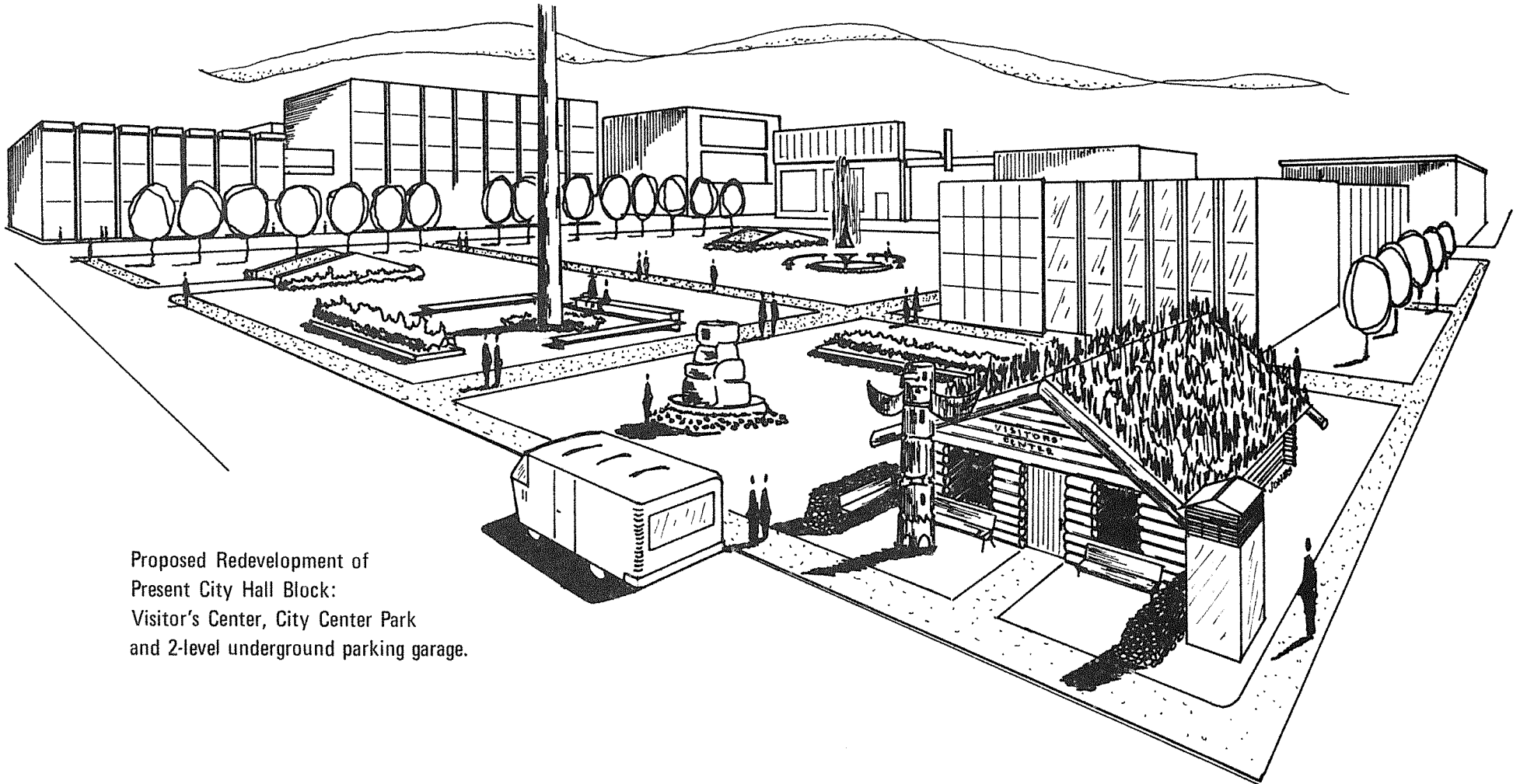
One of the important features, in terms of the extent of change for downtown envisioned in this land use plan, is the proposed relocation of most local, State and Federal governmental office facilities to the "Government Center", and the subsequent redevelopment of the two blocks now occupied by the City Hall and the City Hall Annex. The 4 blocks south of the Public Safety Building and Fine Arts Museum are proposed as the site for the "Government Center". This site should be designed to accommodate Borough and City governments, or if unification succeeds, the one local government that emerges. It should also accommodate those State and Federal offices that are in need of better quarters. The location of these facilities, as proposed, adjacent to the intensely developed core will provide increased impetus towards development of a healthy and economically vibrant CBD. It would also serve as a public "gateway" to the Park Strip.



GOVERNMENT
CENTER

Fig. 17

The relocation of the City of Anchorage's administrative offices from their existing locations would allow these two blocks in the very heart of the core to be put to other more beneficial uses. The present City Hall Annex site is proposed as the location for a convention center which might be leased to a developer and concessionnaire who would erect, in accordance with pre-determined plans, a convention center providing such badly needed facilities as meeting rooms, hotel accommodations, parking facilities, auditorium, ballroom, restaurant or other similar features. This development would result in a beneficial economic impact upon downtown. It would also add to the intensity of activity as well as attract tourists, visitors and local citizens to the downtown area. The development of the block now housing City Hall into a park and "public square" with a two-level underground parking garage would benefit downtown as well as meet the stated desire of the voters to keep this area from becoming completely developed. This civic area and beautified downtown park could serve as the focal point of the entire CBD as it is centrally located and at the intersection of the pedestrian ways that are proposed.



Proposed Redevelopment of
Present City Hall Block:
Visitor's Center, City Center Park
and 2-level underground parking garage.

Green space and pedestrian-oriented areas are desirable in all downtown areas. In addition to the City Center Park, this plan contains two additional open space features in the downtown area; the proposed "L Street Vista Park" and a series of pedestrian ways.

The proposed "L Street Vista Park" would provide an aesthetically pleasing relief from the hustle and bustle of the City Center and at the same time make use of a unique topographic feature. An unobstructed view of the City Port, Cook Inlet, Mt. Susitna, and the Alaska Range Mountains is possible from this vantage point.

The proposed pedestrian ways have not been defined so precisely as to allow their graphic portrayal in a specific manner. They should be considered as directional features that point towards pedestrian-oriented areas that might range from simply a prohibition of vehicular traffic during certain hours to heated and enclosed areas for the protection of pedestrians, the display of merchandise, and the enclosure of utility conduits. This concept should be implemented gradually as public support develops and funding becomes available.

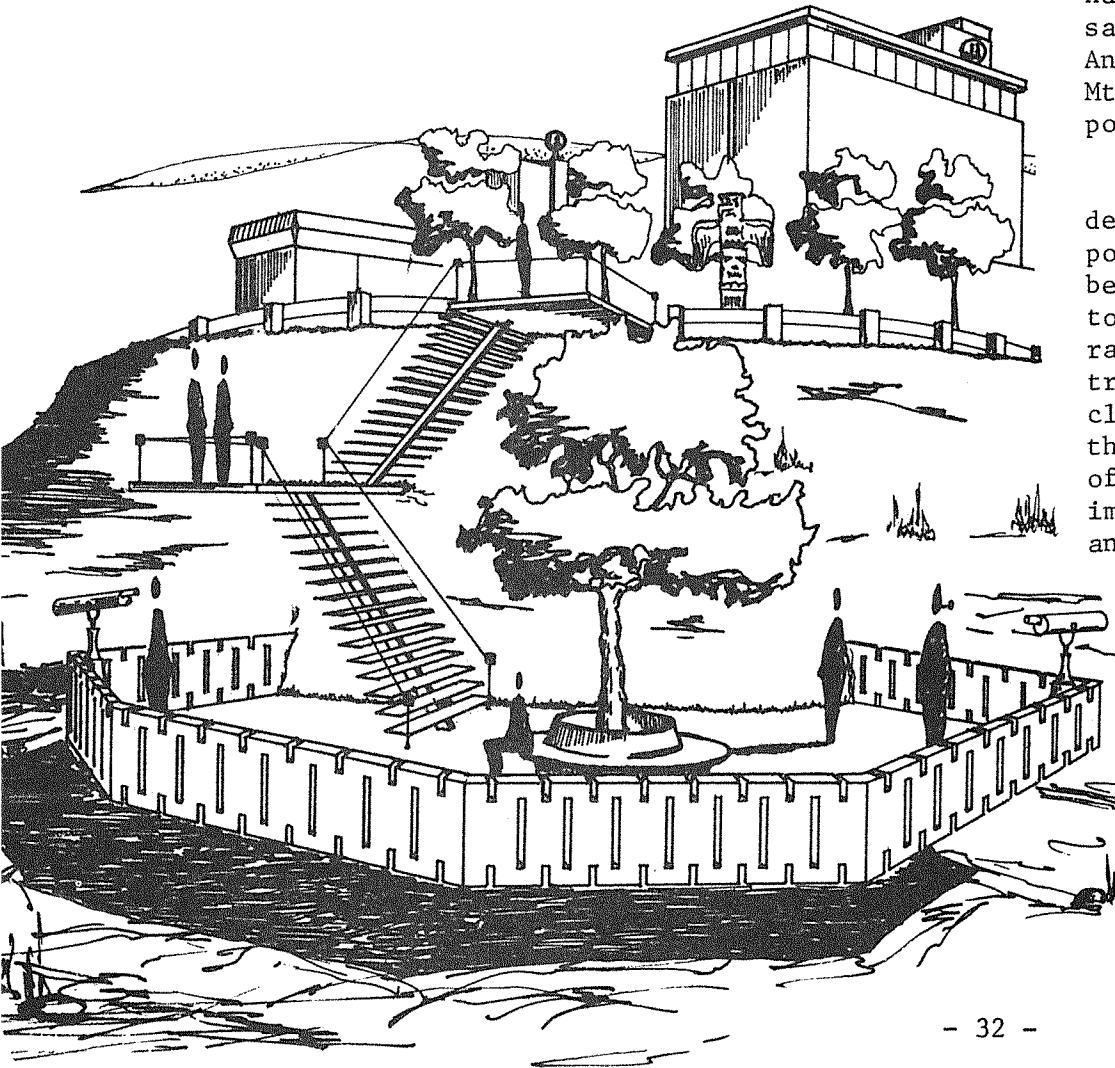


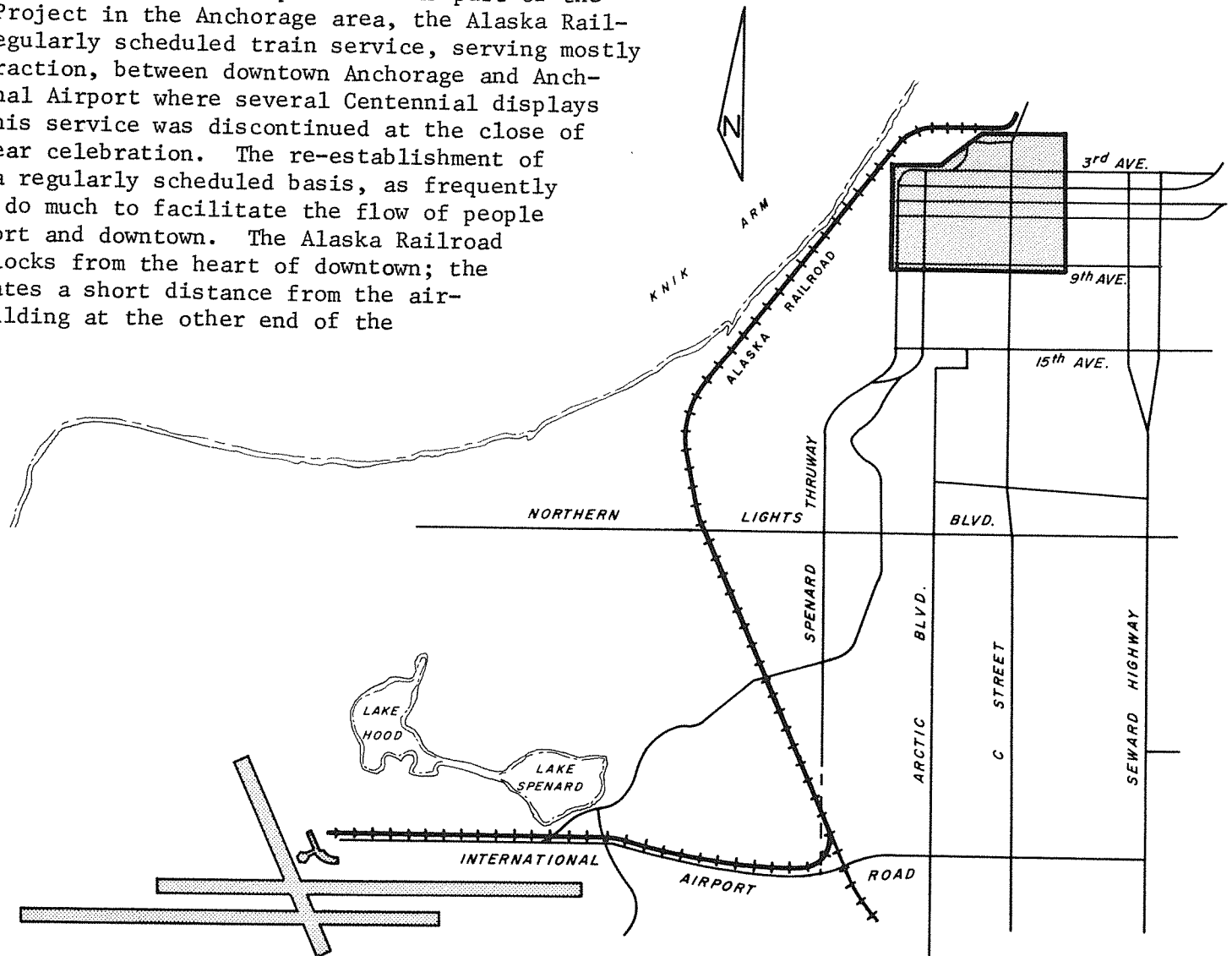
Fig. 19

PROPOSED "L STREET VISTA PARK"

One of the most serious problems facing many communities today is that of getting people quickly and efficiently from the downtown area to the major transportation facility, the airport. Anchorage is not faced with a serious problem in this respect today, but it is apparent that it will be in the not too distant future. There is, already built into the transportation network presently existing in the Anchorage area, a simple and somewhat unique, if not in fact attractive, solution to this problem. As part of the 1967 Centennial Project in the Anchorage area, the Alaska Railroad initiated regularly scheduled train service, serving mostly as a tourist attraction, between downtown Anchorage and Anchorage International Airport where several Centennial displays were located. This service was discontinued at the close of the Centennial year celebration. The re-establishment of this service on a regularly scheduled basis, as frequently as hourly, would do much to facilitate the flow of people between the airport and downtown. The Alaska Railroad station is two blocks from the heart of downtown; the spur line terminates a short distance from the airport terminal building at the other end of the route.

**PROPOSED AIRPORT-TO-CBD
RAIL CONNECTION**

Fig. 20



A ZONING PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE

The Zoning Plan has been developed under the principle that zoning serves to implement the land use plan. If one accepts the premise that an intensely developed core area is desirable, it follows that the best way to achieve this is to concentrate development in the core area; a further expression of the "containment" principle discussed previously. Therefore, the zoning plan proposes B-2 "Central Business District" zoning for the core and the immediately surrounding areas. The remaining land in the CBD should be zoned to an R-0 "Residential-Office" classification or, where appropriate, PLI "Public Lands and Institutions" classification.

It might logically be asked why the proposed B-2 District boundary does not correspond exactly with the core and core-oriented areas shown on the land use plan. There are two reasons: first, it would be unwise to change the zoning in the downtown area any more than is necessary to implement the land use plan. Accordingly, the boundaries of the B-2 zone are proposed to correspond with existing zoning boundaries wherever possible. The second reason is that zoning is a "now" implementation tool, whereas the land use plan is long-range in scope.

It should be pointed out that the differences between those areas designated as a "core", "core-oriented" and "residential-office" on the land use plan are not as great as they might first appear. One will blend into the other over a several block area. Keeping in mind the undesirability of "strip" or "spot" zoning, this blending explains why, along some parts of the eastern and southern perimeter of the B-2 zone, the zoning boundaries do not correspond with the land use categories. In addition to reducing the size of the existing B-2 zone, the proposed zoning plan eliminates several other business zones now applied in the CBD. The relationship of the B-2 zone to the R-0 zone and their applicability in downtown has been made more appropriate with the adoption of the Areawide Zoning Ordinance. As proposed, the zoning plan will guide the development of downtown in a more desirable direction.

The implementation of the zoning plan will serve not only to guide development, but also as a policy statement designating in which area of downtown parking will be provided by the City. The B-2 zone is the only zoning district which does not require a private developer to provide off-street parking. The parking plan for the CBD goes into more detail on this subject.

PARKING AND VEHICULAR ACCESS PLAN

An integral part of a comprehensive plan for a downtown area is a workable and practical parking and circulation scheme. Provisions for accommodating the automobile in modern America have ranged from totally ignoring its existence to multi-million dollar investments in elaborate, complex and sometimes unworkable facilities. A tremendous reliance is placed upon the automobile as a mode of travel within the Anchorage metropolitan area. There is no public transit system of any type in the community at this time. While the need for urban transit is apparent, and the matter is presently the subject of a study grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation, there is little prospect of a viable system developing in the immediate future. Thus, as the automobile assumes a dominant position, adequate facilities in the form of parking garages and efficient flow systems must be developed.

A PARKING PLAN

The parking plan is directly related to the other three plans presented in this report. It is related to the land use plan from the standpoint that adequate off-street parking is proposed in proximity to the major traffic generators in the core and the core-oriented areas in order to adequately serve them. It is related to the zoning plan in that it suggests additional municipal improvements only within the B-2 zone. It is related to the circulation plan from locational and access standpoints. In order for parking facilities to be most useful, they must be directly connected to traffic arterials so that the vehicle can enter and leave them conveniently, and yet must be located so that the pedestrian can leave and reach his destination with a minimum of conflict with the vehicular traffic in the area.

The background data for parking plan was developed from the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study. Basic data on existing parking supply and demand as well as projected demand was furnished by the study consultant. This data was analyzed by the Planning Staff and modified in certain instances to compensate for differing projections of development and, therefore, demand for parking spaces.

Included in the list of parking facilities that will be needed to adequately serve the downtown area in the year 1980 are publicly-owned garages and lots, as well as privately-owned garages. No consideration is given to the privately-owned parking lot as there is little to support the assumption that these facilities will continue to constitute a substantial part of the available supply. As the downtown area

develops, these small privately-owned lots will disappear and new buildings will rise in their place. No consideration is given to the availability of on-street parking which, in certain areas downtown will be short-lived due to increased traffic volume and the improvement of traffic flow that is to be gained by eliminating on-street parking.

The proposed off-street parking facilities, as stated above, are a combination of municipally-owned multi-level garages (both above and below ground) and ground level lots, and privately-owned garages. The locations are specific in order to meet the total need for parking in the downtown area with exception of the demand created by governmental office facilities. It is assumed that it is the responsibility of government to develop adequate on-site parking facilities to provide for employees and those using the facilities.

There are three aspects of the parking plan which merit notation. One is the recommendation that a 2-level underground parking garage, with a City-Center Park and Visitor's Center at ground level, be constructed on the present site of the City Hall and municipal parking lot (block bounded by 5th and 4th Avenues and E and F Streets). Figure 18 illustrates this concept. A development along the lines suggested would allow maximum use of City-owned land for a parking facility, retention and perhaps expansion of the existing Z. J. Loussac Library Building, the Visitor's Center and at the same time development of a park and open space area in the heart of the downtown area. Such a development would do much to enhance not only the shopper's convenience through more and better located parking facilities, but also make his stay in downtown a little more pleasing.

The second is the recommendation that multi-level parking structures eventually, as the demand dictates, replace the single-level facilities now in use on City-owned lots. This recommendation is based upon the proposition that continued utilization of the single-level parking lot as a means to provide parking in the high land value downtown is inconsistent with sound land economics. No single feature can be more costly and at the same time less desirable than a Central Business District with half its land area devoted to one-level parking lots.

The third and undoubtedly to be the most controversial aspect of the parking plan is the effect of the redrawing of the B-2 zoning district boundary. This is the only zoning district in which the private individual or business is not required to provide off-street parking to meet the needs created by the business enterprise. Consequently, the City has assumed the responsibility of providing off-street parking facilities in the area zoned for B-2 Central Business District classification. No facilities have been constructed to date in the area from which it is recommended that the B-2 zoning classification

be removed since it was extended in 1966. It is felt that the area east of Cordova Street, while constituting a viable and important business and commercial area, is not actually part of the CBD from the standpoint of function or land economics, and therefore does not merit the same consideration, in relation to parking, as the more intensively developed area.

A VEHICULAR ACCESS PLAN

This vehicular access plan has been developed relying heavily upon the preliminary recommendations of the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study. Those recommendations were developed by the study consultant, Wilbur Smith and Associates after considerable field work, data collection and interpretation; projection of needs and demands, and after consultation with the City, Borough and State, sponsors of the study.

The proposals presented in this vehicular access plan are, for the most part, already programmed and would entail little expenditure of public monies. Therefore, they could be accomplished in a relatively short period of time as indicated in the implementation section of this report. The longer range improvements that will be needed in 10 to 15 years will be determined as the Metropolitan Transportation Study is completed and as the continuing phases of that study get underway.

The vehicular access plan has been developed under the assumption that, to the maximum extent possible with the existing gridiron street system, the separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic should be accomplished. It is proposed that the gridiron street system be modified by closing some of the streets and designating them as pedestrian ways. In addition, the AMATS and City Parking and Traffic Commission recommendation that a one-way system be implemented to maximize the traffic flow has been endorsed. Although it would be desirable to separate even further the pedestrian and vehicular traffic by prohibiting vehicular traffic in the downtown area entirely, it is felt that this is impractical and unduly costly.

A prime objective of any vehicular access plan for a downtown area should be to provide means whereby traffic with no destination in the CBD can be routed around the downtown area and thus avoid conflict with traffic destined for points in the CBD. This is especially critical in the large metropolitan areas and in communities where the CBD is the geographical center of the area. This situation exists to a lesser degree in Anchorage where the CBD is located on the extreme northwest edge of the urban area and due to the fact that a substantial portion of all traffic in the Anchorage area is going to or from some point in the downtown area. However, as the Anchorage area continues to grow in population and encompasses more land area, a greater demand to separate the two types of traffic will be generated.

Proposals developed by the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study for major thoroughways in the Ship Creek Valley, along the southern edge of the downtown area, and along the bluff line of Knik Arm, will, when implemented, provide an adequate vehicular circulation system around the CBD. It is not anticipated that this circumferential system will be needed in its completed form during the time span of this plan, that is 1970 - 1980. Certain portions of the system may well be needed however, prior to 1980. But, for the immediate future, that traffic which must, due to the absence of another alternate, go through the downtown area to get to points beyond, can be accommodated by the Gambell - Ingra Couplet, the "L" - "I" Couplet and, to some degree, by 4th, 5th and 6th Avenues and "C" Street. As the loads placed upon these routes become even greater, consideration will have to be given to restricting or even prohibiting parking along these routes. This in turn will produce a greater demand for additional off-street parking facilities, especially in the instance of 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Avenues, as they are the major east - west routes serving traffic within the CBD.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

No amount of planning, and indeed no plan by itself, is of any value unless there are means for implementation built into it. With this in mind, there is included in this report a "Central Business District Plan Implementation Program" outlining by project, the "sponsor", the means for funding each project and a suggested time schedule.

Certain of the projects can be initiated by the Planning Commission; others require action by the legislative bodies, while still others can only be accomplished by the private sector of the community. Certain of the proposals require action by all three groups working in concert.

The most notable aspect of the Implementation Program is the recommendation to create a downtown improvement district to aid in financing the acquisition of land, construction of parking structures and pedestrian walkways, and making the many other improvements that will come to the downtown area long after this plan is outdated and hopefully fully-implemented. It is felt that those benefiting from the development of adequate parking structures; namely, the merchants and landowners in the downtown core area, should aid in the financing of those facilities. Thus, it is recommended that a special assessment district be created within the area in which off-street parking is to be provided by the City. Revenue from this source, coupled with that from paid parking by those using the facilities will provide the resources needed to acquire land and construct and maintain the facilities. A further broadening of the scope and powers of the improvement district concept would enable it to undertake improvements beyond constructing parking facilities. With appropriate authorities, the district could undertake to provide pedestrian mall-type improvements, covered walkways and open area or park-like developments.

**CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

PROJECT	SPONSOR	FUNDING	TIMING
Amending Zoning Map	GAAB Planning Commission	None Necessary	1970
Development of Buttress Government Center	ASHA - Private Enterprise	Private Capital	1970 - 72
Local	City of Anchorage and GAAB	Undetermined	1971 - 72
State	State of Alaska	ASHA Revenue Bonds - Long Term Lease	1971 - 72
Federal	United States of America	Private Capital - Long Term Lease	1972
Acquisition of Parking Land	City of Anchorage and Downtown Improvement District	Special Assessment	1970 - 72
Development of Convention Facility	City of Anchorage and Private Enterprise	Private Capital; possibly Supplemented by EDA Funds	1971 - 73
City Park Center	City of Anchorage	General Fund	1972 - 73
"L" Street Park	City of Anchorage	General Fund	1973
One-Way Streets	City of Anchorage	Minimal Amount Necessary	1972 - 74
Street Closures and Pedestrian Ways	City of Anchorage and Downtown Improvement District	Special Assessment	Continuing
Provision of Parking Spaces	City of Anchorage and Downtown Improvement District	General Obligation Bonds	Continuing
Better Vehicular Access to CBD	State of Alaska	Federal Aid and General	Continuing

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction of this report, Anchorage, and indeed the entire State of Alaska, is on the threshold of the greatest growth period in its history. Tremendous changes have occurred in the State, the Community and in the CBD since work was begun on this study. Several new buildings have risen in downtown Anchorage; construction has begun on others and more have been announced. Population has increased at an astounding rate. The best tourist season on record is projected for the coming year. All of these aspects indicate the dynamic atmosphere in which our town exists. If nothing else, that point has been made abundantly clear. But more important is the fact that now is the time to act and capitalize upon the impending growth and sweeping changes occurring and about to occur.

It is the hope of those responsible for the preparation of this report that some basic guidelines to direct this growth will result from this work. This can only happen, however, if those in leadership positions within the community will take the initiative and proceed with implementation. Time to the individual and time to the community are normally far different things; but nowhere, as in Anchorage today, are they as close to being the same.

GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

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Ken Cannon
Ray Deditius
Victor Gill
Kelly Martin
Donna Matthews
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John Stetenfeld

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June, 1970

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Greater Anchorage Area Borough Planning Commission and its staff would like to express appreciation to the following organizations, individuals and governmental agencies who contributed to the development of this study:

City of Anchorage, including various departments, boards and commissions of City government.

Wilbur Smith and Associates, Consultants to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.

Downtown Anchorage Merchants Association

Greater Anchorage Area Chamber of Commerce

Alaska State Housing Authority

State of Alaska, Department of Highways

Photographs by: Alaska Pictorial Service

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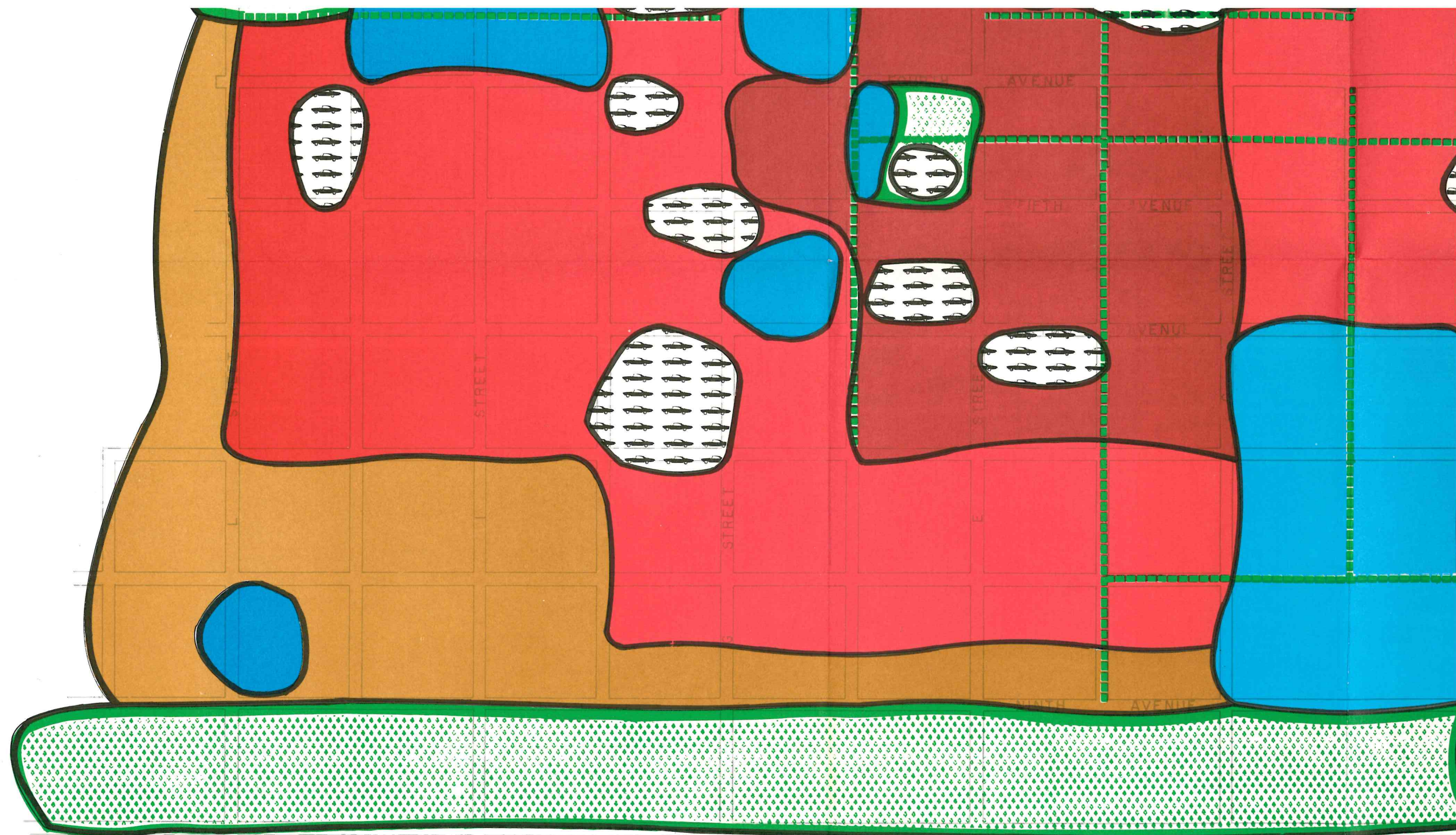
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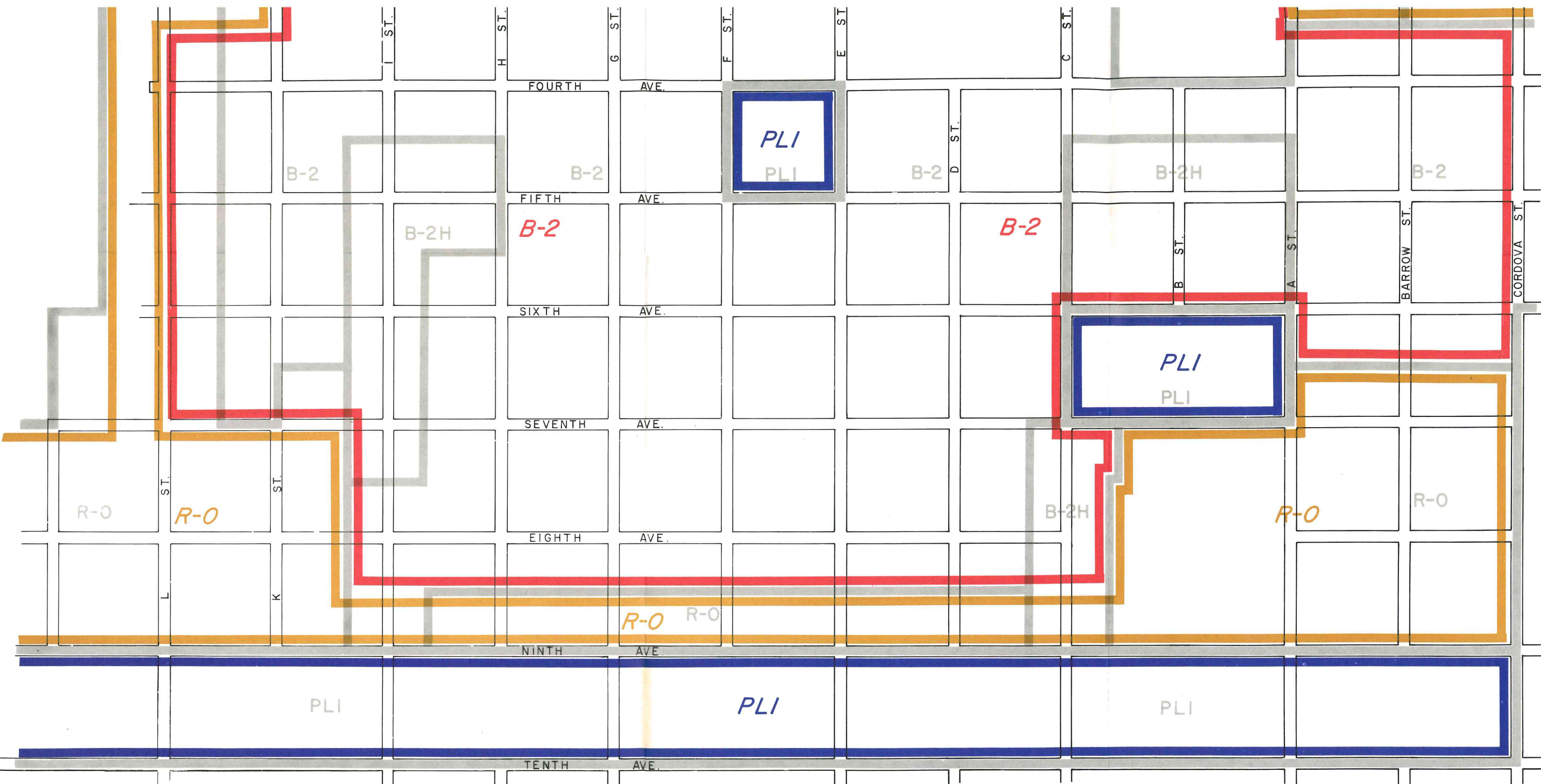
June, 1970



ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY
 GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH
 PLANNING COMMISSION

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- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|
|  | CORE COMMERCIAL |  | PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED TRAFFICWAY |
|  | CORE ORIENTED |  | PARK OR OPEN SPACE |
|  | RESIDENTIAL-OFFICE |  | PARKING AREA (SEE PARKING PLAN FOR DETAILS) |
|  | PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC | | |



PROPOSED	EXISTING	
PLI	PLI	PUBLIC LANDS & INSTITUTIONS DISTRICT
R-0	R-0	RESIDENTIAL - OFFICE DISTRICT
B-2	B-2	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
	B-2H	CENTRAL BUSINESS (HEAVY COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT
	B-3	GENERAL & STRIP COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

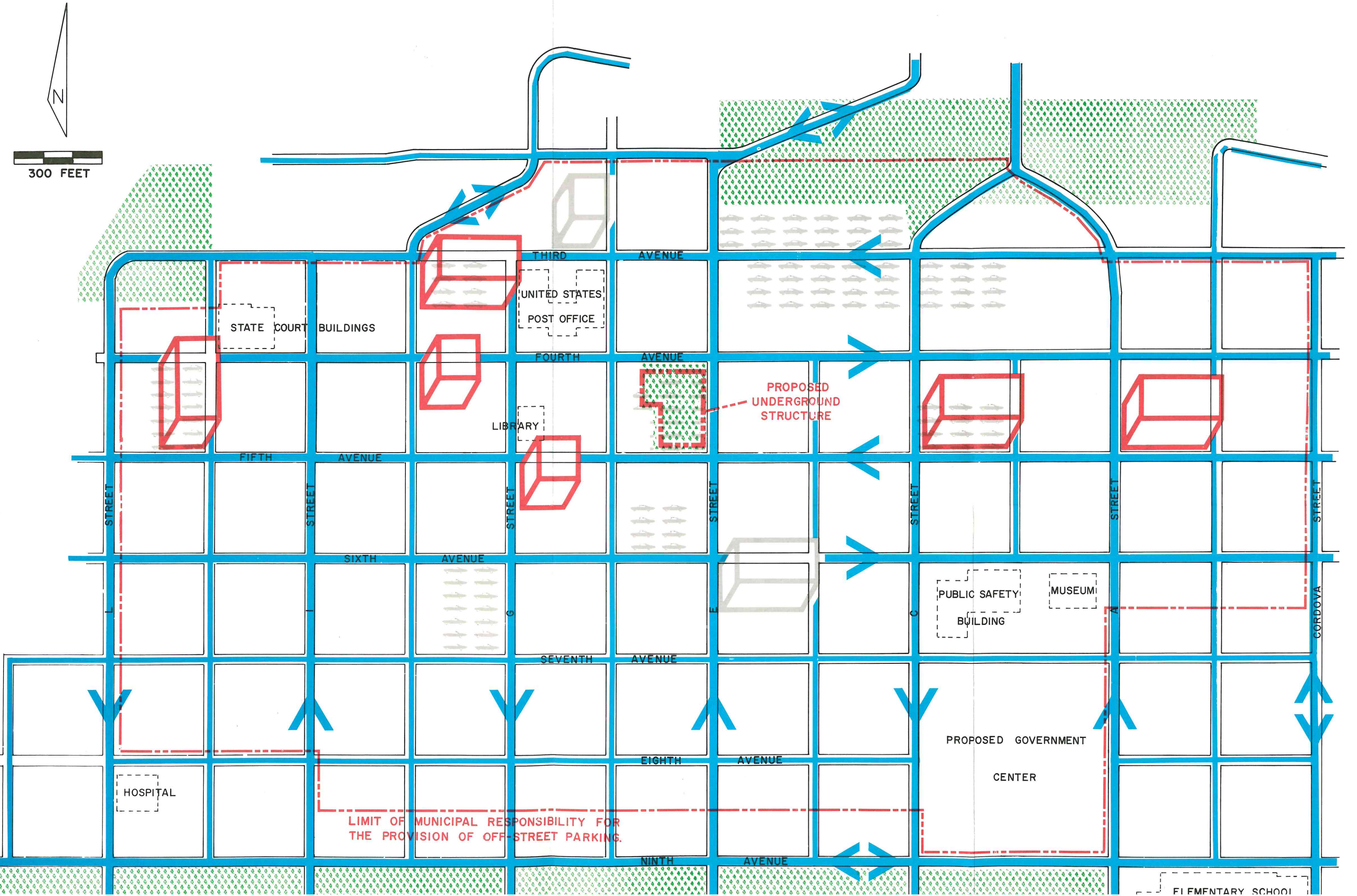
ANCHORAGE , ALASKA
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY
 GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH
 PLANNING COMMISSION

ZONING PLAN

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300 FEET



STATE COURT BUILDINGS

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

LIBRARY

PROPOSED UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

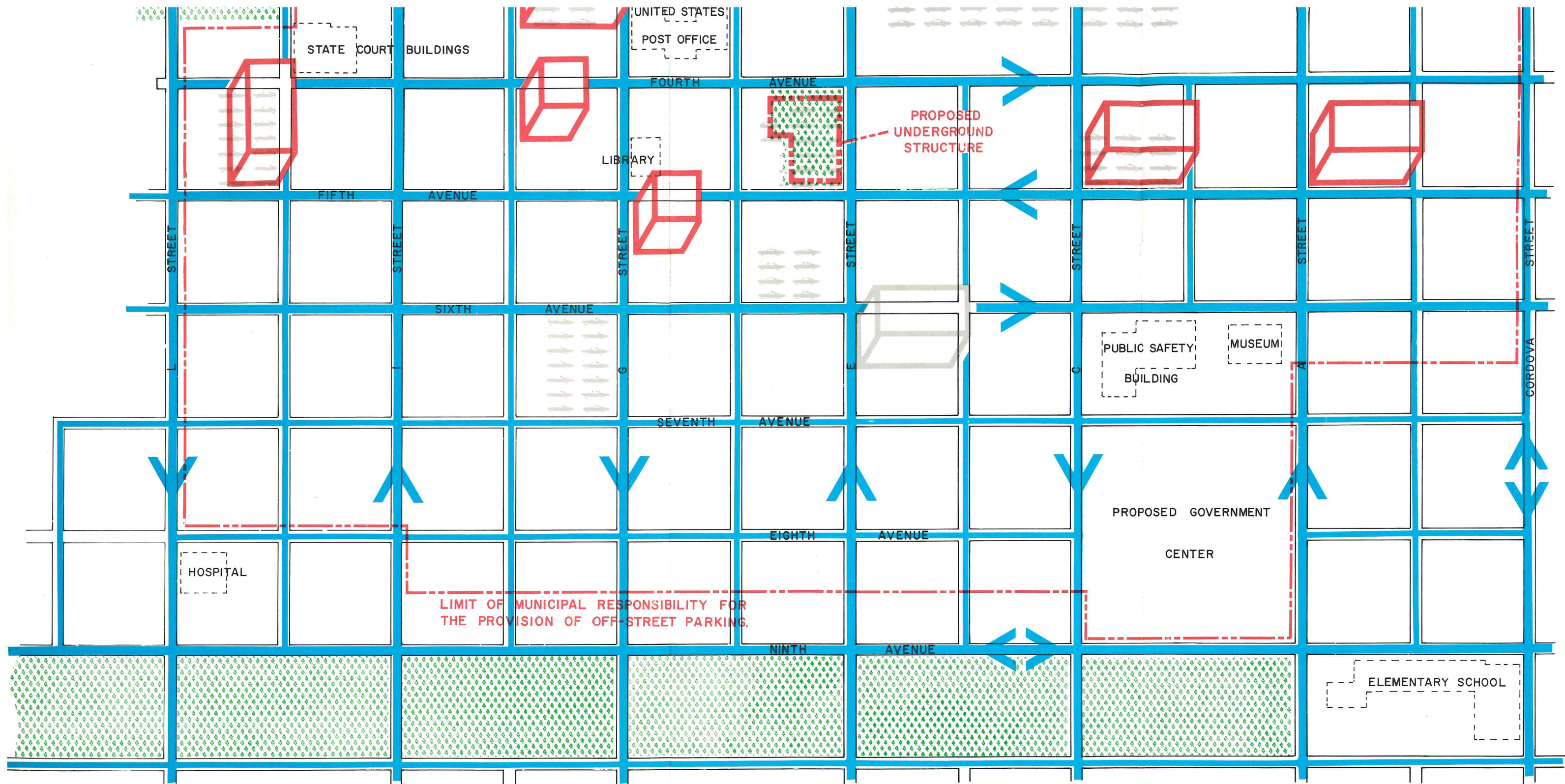
MUSEUM

PROPOSED GOVERNMENT CENTER

HOSPITAL

LIMIT OF MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROVISION OF OFF-STREET PARKING.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
 TRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY
 GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH
 PLANNING COMMISSION

- ARTERIAL STREET
- SECONDARY STREET
- PARK OR OPEN SPACE
- PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PARKING STRUCTURE
- EXISTING MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT
- EXISTING PRIVATE PARKING STRUCTURE

PARKING AND VEHICULAR ACCESS PLAN

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