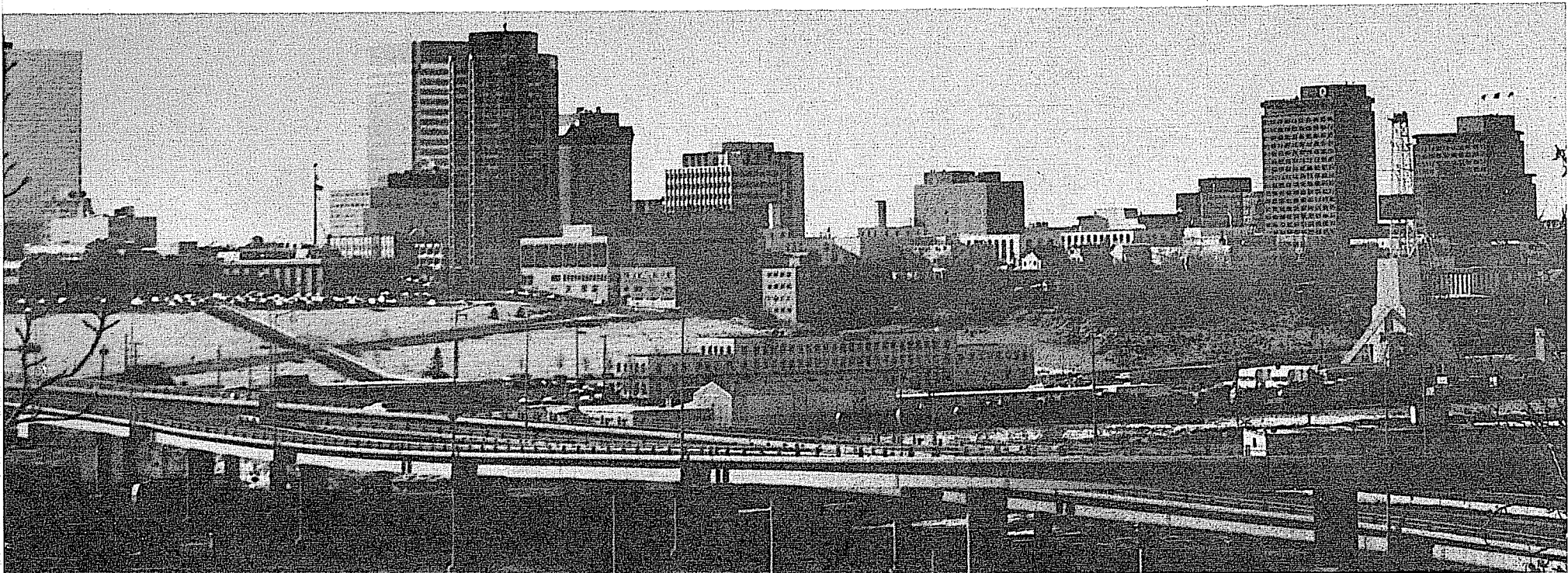


Anchorage CBD Comprehensive Development Plan

**COMMUNITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
GRUEN ASSOCIATES**

in association with Gladstone Associates • CCC • Maynard and Partch



ANCHORAGE
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

prepared for the Municipality of Anchorage by
COMMUNITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

and

GRUEN ASSOCIATES
in association with
Gladstone Associates
CCC
Maynard and Partch

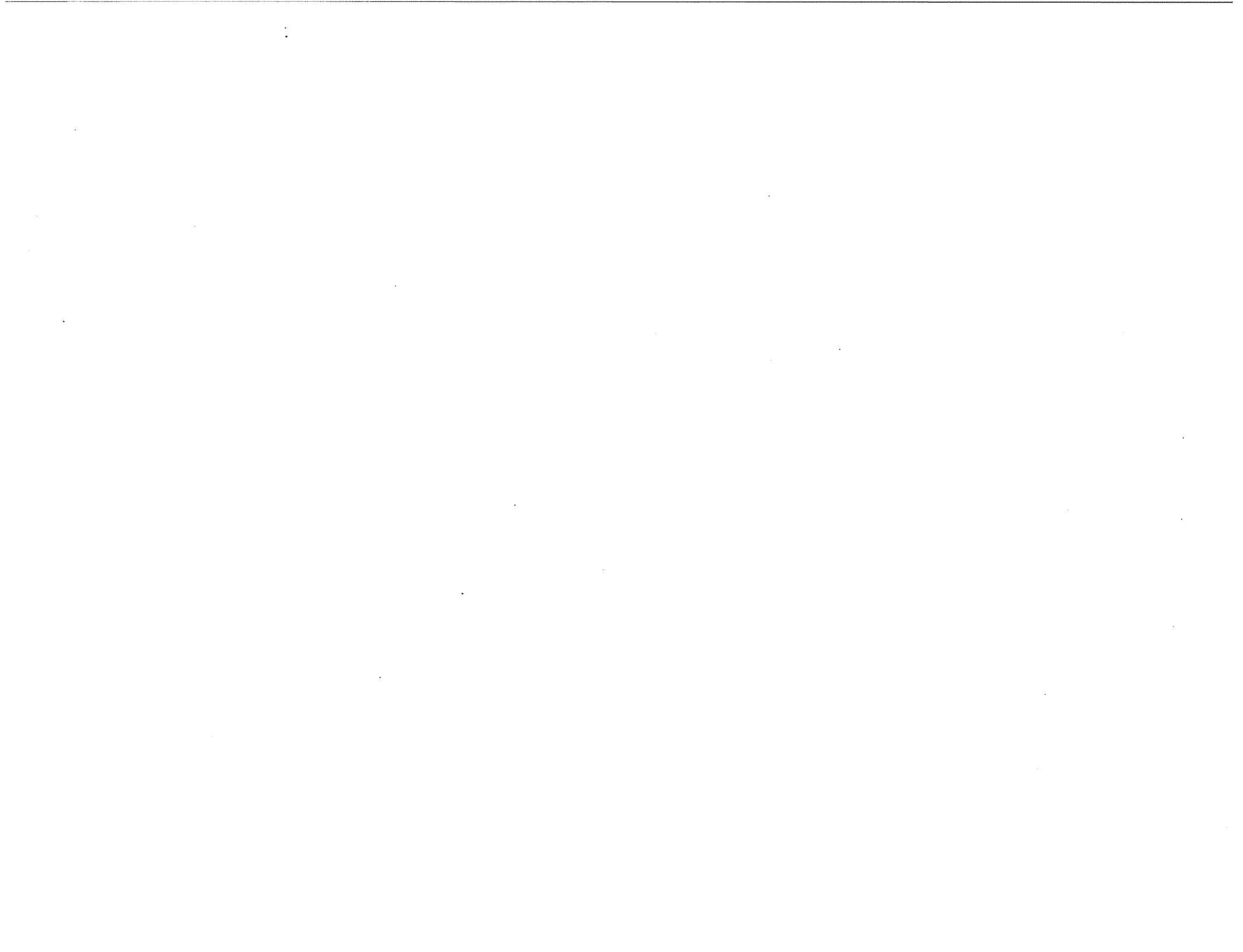
adopted by the
Anchorage Municipal Assembly
Fall 1983

The Anchorage CBD Comprehensive Development Plan has been prepared jointly by the Community Planning Department of the Municipality of Anchorage and a consulting team led by Gruen Associates. The Community Planning Department is responsible for many of the key short-term recommendations pertaining to circulation and transit, open space and the pedestrian environment, the parking management strategy, and the historic preservation program.

The planning process began in late 1981 and a draft plan was prepared in mid-1982. A public review period followed distribution of the draft plan. A final draft was prepared and distributed in spring 1983, reflecting public comments received during the review period. This final draft was approved by the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission in June 1983 and was adopted unanimously by the Municipal Assembly in fall 1983, pending minor modifications. Those modifications are incorporated in this final Comprehensive Development Plan document.

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I. Introduction and Overview of the Plan



Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

Downtown Anchorage has entered the 1980s with a sound economic base and its prospects for the future appear to be equally positive. Increasing employment and high levels of both private and public investment in downtown have reflected dramatic regional economic and population growth. Unlike many American downtown areas that are experiencing physical decay as a result of economic decline, the problems and opportunities facing downtown Anchorage are posed by conditions of change and growth.

Citizens of Anchorage have expressed a desire for the central business district (CBD) to be people-oriented, rich in activities, and the focal point of the region. The overall finding of this report is that a new, coordinated decision-making process, based on a cooperative and interactive relationship between the public and private sectors, is necessary in order to realize the full potential of downtown Anchorage. Within a well-defined planning framework, each new public investment will foster compatible private investment; in response to market conditions and planning guidelines, private development will seek out and reinforce the areas of highest activity potential. At the same time, valuable open space and other resources will be preserved and enhanced.

The goal is a unified downtown development with a strong cultural, institutional, and commercial core; high levels of interaction among employees,

residents, shoppers, and visitors; and preservation of a human scale and the Anchorage heritage. The planning framework within which new development will occur can be considered the glue that binds together and revitalizes all the parts of downtown.

The result will be a thriving, multi-use center -- far more than an assemblage of employment, business, and living places. Downtown Anchorage can offer experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the region, including the widest range of retail stores, restaurants, cultural events, entertainment facilities, and year-round landscaped gathering places. These experiences, added to the area's established identity as the institutional and corporate headquarters of Alaska, can elevate downtown Anchorage to the ranks of a world-class metropolitan center.

DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE TODAY

The Anchorage central business district is the area of most intense development in the greater Anchorage region. The Anchorage CBD, unlike those in many other cities, is not central to the region; instead, it is situated at the northwestern tip of the urbanized area, with the Knik Arm to the west and the port and industry to the north (Figure 1.1).

Study Area

The Comprehensive Development Plan study area is bounded on the west by the Knik Arm, on the north by 1st Avenue, on the east by Ingra Street, and on the south by 9th Avenue. The study area encompasses approximately 475 acres or about

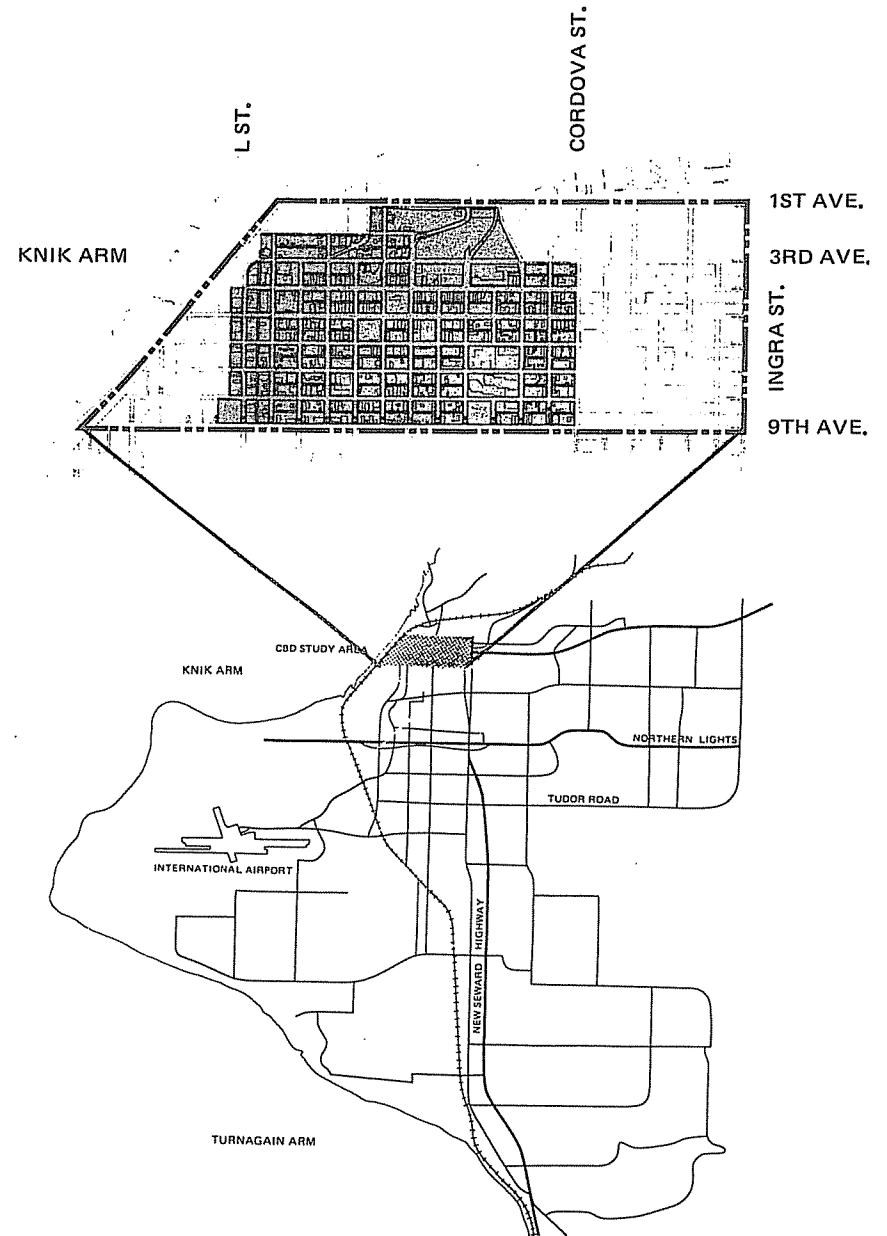


Figure 1.1. CBD study area in the Anchorage region. Insert shows study area boundaries; area of primary concentration is shaded.

three fourths of a square mile. The park strip immediately south of 9th Avenue, though not technically within the downtown study area, has nevertheless been considered in many analyses in view of its importance to the CBD open space network. Within this overall study area, the majority of commercial office, governmental, and retail land uses can be found within a smaller area, bounded by L Street on the west, 2nd Avenue on the north, Cordova Street on the east, and 9th Avenue on the south. The primary concentration of the study has been on this area, which encompasses approximately 250 acres.

Signs of a Promising Future

The condition of downtown Anchorage is particularly encouraging when compared to patterns of urban decay found in many American downtowns. For example:

- In contrast to stagnation in construction activity, evident in many cities in the last few years, Anchorage has enjoyed a remarkable rate of construction in its downtown area. Over 30 major new projects have been completed since 1975, encompassing over 2.4 million square feet. Another eight projects, encompassing over two million square feet, are either under construction or committed to be developed in downtown Anchorage in the next few years (Table I.1). It is noteworthy that over half of the square footage incorporated in completed projects and projects under construction is publicly developed.
- Although traffic conditions in downtown Anchorage are worsening with increasing employment and will require remedial action,

TABLE I.1
SUMMARY OF ANCHORAGE CBD
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY, 1975-1982

	Number of Projects	Approximate Area (SF)
COMPLETED PROJECTS		
Public	9	1,084,000
Private	<u>24</u>	<u>1,364,200</u>
Subtotal	33	2,448,200
UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR COMMITTED		
Public	4	1,287,700
Private	<u>4</u>	<u>881,300</u>
Subtotal	8	2,169,000
TOTAL	41	4,617,200

the area's circulation problems are far from insoluble. Overall, traffic volumes today are well below the capacity of the street network according to Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) data (Table 1.2).

- Few cities are as fortunate as Anchorage in having a wealth of natural beauty to be enjoyed in an urban center. Recent development, extensive as it has been, has still left numerous opportunities to retain dramatic views of the spectacular mountains and bodies of water surrounding downtown Anchorage (Figure 1.2).

TABLE 1.2
SUMMARY OF TRAFFIC CONDITIONS AT
SIGNIFICANT SCREENLINES, 1981

	Screenline Location	
	Between D & E Streets	Between 7th & 8th Avenues
Daily Capacity ¹	95,400	123,000
Daily Volume ²	58,130	80,380
Volume/ Capacity	0.61	0.65

¹Gruen Associates estimate based on AMATS data

²AMATS data

- Since the main part of the CBD is on a plateau, with slopes on the north and west sides, and because of the presence of the cemetery on the east and the 16-block-long park strip on the south, the main part of the CBD is well defined on all four sides. The primary development area of downtown Anchorage is therefore compact, allowing new developments to act as magnets integral to existing development, rather than as appendages that might otherwise siphon off activity and commerce from existing development.

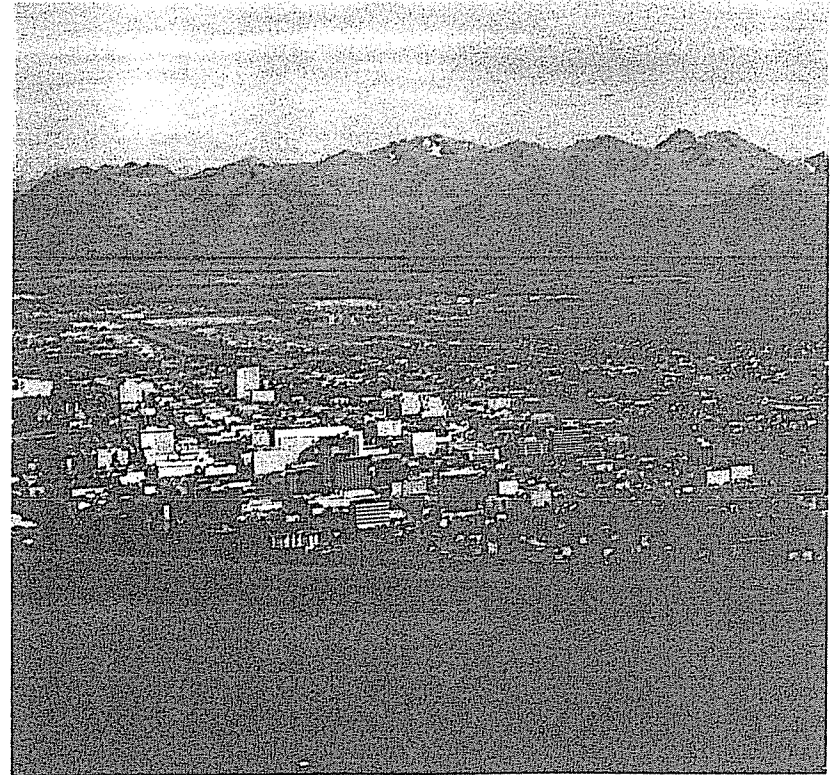


Figure 1.2. Dramatic mountain views surround downtown Anchorage.

- Dramatic growth in population has taken place in the greater Anchorage area since statehood, from 83,000 in 1960 to 174,000 in 1980 (Table I.3). The proportion of the state population residing in Anchorage has also increased since statehood, from 37% in 1960 to over 43% in 1980. The downtown population represents a relatively small portion of the overall Anchorage population and is generally

TABLE I.3
ALASKA AND ANCHORAGE POPULATION
GROWTH TRENDS¹

Year	1960 ²	1970 ²	1980 ³
State of Alaska	226,000	303,000	400,000
Metropolitan Anchorage	83,000	126,000	174,000
Percent of State Population in Anchorage	36.7	41.6	43.5

¹All figures rounded to nearest thousand

²Source: State of Alaska Department of Labor Statistics

³U.S. Bureau of Census, March 1980

confined to a few sections of the CBD. Still, the entire Anchorage population draws upon facilities, services, and amenities in the CBD. Downtown Anchorage is thus in the unique position to serve as the urban focal point for nearly half the people living in Alaska.

- Finally, economic indicators point to the strong long-term likelihood of continuing construction and commercial activity in downtown Anchorage (Table I.4). All the major sectors of the downtown economy have shown excellent prospects for expansion in the years ahead, though realizing this expansion may in some cases -- particularly in the retail sector -- require a concerted public and private effort.

Problems to Overcome

While the potential of downtown Anchorage to mature into a vital, metropolitan urban center appears to be good, many problems remain to be overcome:

- In spite of extensive recent development, downtown Anchorage is not firmly established in the minds of most residents as the "place to be"; instead, the area faces growing competition from several emerging multi-use activity centers.
- Development downtown has tended to be random and scattered, with independent clusters of retail and office developments, in contrast to a more synergistic arrangement where each entity helps to strengthen its neighbors.

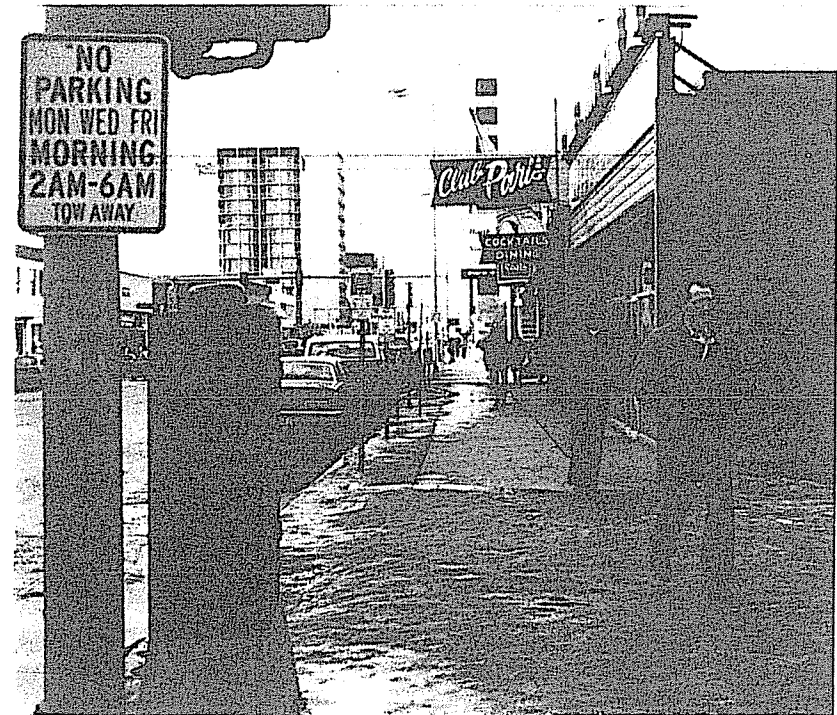
TABLE I.4
 POTENTIAL PRIVATE COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT
 IN ANCHORAGE CBD, 1981-1990

	Low Range	High Range
1981-1985 POTENTIAL		
- Office	+770,000 sf	+1,300,000 sf
- Hotel	+700 rooms	+1,100 rooms
- Residential	0 units	+1,000 units
- Retail	-125,000 sf	+ 370,000 sf
1986-1990 POTENTIAL		
- Office	+150,000 sf	+ 250,000 sf
- Hotel	+300 rooms	+ 700 rooms
- Residential	0 units	+ 300 units
- Retail	0 sf	+ 100,000 sf

For more information on specific projections for these development sectors, please refer to Chapter II.

Figure I.3. Most sidewalks in downtown Anchorage are devoid of landscaping; signs and parking meters intrude on pedestrian space.

- A relatively poor streetscape, with most downtown streets devoid of landscaping and amenities, has resulted in a lackluster visual image for downtown (Figure I.3).
- Increasing vehicular traffic and a lack of adequate parking will become major problems if strategies to cope with these situations are not developed immediately. Projections show some traffic volumes by the Year 2001 to be over existing capacity by up to 45%. And downtown Anchorage faces a near-term shortfall of parking spaces estimated at over 3,000 cars.



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Since the completion of the last development plan for the Anchorage CBD in 1973, many significant events have occurred, having a tremendous impact on the growth and development of the Municipality of Anchorage and the CBD. Because of this substantial growth, and in view of the development impact associated with current and proposed public and private projects, it was determined that the existing plan should be reevaluated and updated.

Specific objectives of the plan included:

- Establishing an ongoing planning and decision-making process to enable the Municipality to evaluate individual development proposals from a standpoint of changing demands and marketplace dynamics
- Involvement of and close coordination with elected officials, public agencies, and diverse community interest groups in such a way that their views and concerns become an intrinsic part of the study
- An emphasis on phased implementation strategies to achieve both short-range and long-range development objectives
- Consideration of the preservation of existing sound buildings and both natural and man-made assets

In summary, the Comprehensive Development Plan is to function as a guide for coordinated public and private investment decisions. Inherent in this overall goal of the planning effort is a high level of public and private partnership.

PLANNING APPROACH

Since the time frame allocated to the preparation of the Comprehensive Development Plan was relatively short -- and since important decisions regarding numerous public development projects required the inputs of the CBD planning effort -- the work was divided into two phases (Figure 1.4).

Phase I Planning Effort

Phase I of the Comprehensive Development Plan, completed in March 1982, focused on the near-term interrelationships between current and proposed public and private projects:

Short-Range Public Sector Development. This aspect of the Phase I plan concentrated on those near-term public development projects or services that are funded and implemented by local, state, and federal agencies. These projects and community service improvements are to be coordinated to provide maximum leverage for near-term private sector investment in the CBD.

Short-Range Private Sector Development. This aspect of the Phase I plan concentrated on those development projects that can be packaged, financed, and implemented by the private sector on a near-term basis through various cooperative mechanisms.

The specific recommendations of this planning effort are documented in the "Phase I Development Plan" and summarized later in Chapter I of this report.

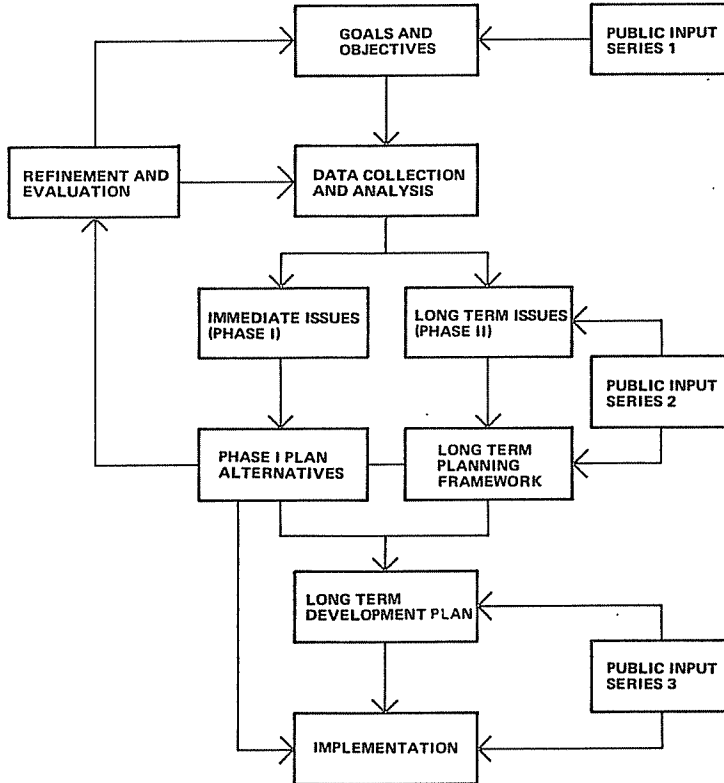


Figure I.4. Planning process diagram.

Phase II Planning Effort

Phase II of the Comprehensive Development Plan has focused on long-range policies and implementation guidelines for channeling various future public and private improvements with a programmed consistency to provide maximum community benefits with minimum public costs. The long-term plan provides a framework to assist the Municipality in adopting new planning ordinances, in modifying the Capital Improvement Program, in day-to-day public decision-making, and in generating additional implementation and financing tools. Most importantly, the long-range plan establishes a united course of community action for a strong, dynamic downtown Anchorage.

Public Participation and Goals

Public input and response guided the Comprehensive Development Plan. During the planning period, three major series of meetings were held, during which members of numerous public and private interest groups and the public at large offered suggestions on planning approaches, informed the consulting team about their individual desires and concerns regarding downtown development, and responded to alternative preliminary planning concepts.

The overall goal established for the development of the Anchorage CBD was "to promote a people-oriented central business district as the focal point of Anchorage with a full range of urban uses and activities." In addition to this major goal were the following objectives:

- A mixture of financial, retail, cultural, recreational, governmental, and service-

oriented development, as well as high-density housing

- Preservation of historical resources in their original context
- Preservation of a human scale and enhancement of the pedestrian environment
- A circulation system providing improved access to and around the CBD while discouraging elimination of through traffic
- A balance of parking and transit facilities in and around the CBD

The public participation program provided specific amplification of these general goals and objectives, for example:

- The desire that downtown Anchorage be people-oriented and the focal point of the community
- Opportunities for a mixture of large and small retail concerns, oriented to the pedestrian network
- A network of small and large open spaces designed for a mixture of activities

Specific results of the public participation program, in conjunction with established goals and objectives, are noted in Chapter II of this report.

Need for a Planning Framework

To date, the development of downtown Anchorage has occurred at a rapid rate as noted above, but

has also been random and scattered. Major projects undertaken by the public sector have been approached much as private sector projects are approached: the location for each project has been based on an assessment of the individual merits of alternative sites from the standpoint of that project alone, rather than from a standpoint of the overall downtown development pattern.

Until recently, the consequences of this practice may not have been considered critical. However, now downtown Anchorage is at a threshold, a point at which public investments will help determine the quality of downtown Anchorage in the future. Two alternative futures are possible:

- A continuation of current practices, where decisions about public and private investments alike are made from the standpoint of individual projects alone, will most likely result in a fragmented development pattern with competing, multiple nuclei of activity. Individual project costs may be lower initially, since land availability and cost are the primary site selection determinants under such a system. However, the long-term vitality of downtown, measured by the number of people who will be attracted there, and the consequent revenues passing through downtown would be limited. With this kind of downtown, people would continue their current habit of coming downtown for a single purpose (to work, to attend a cultural event) and leaving immediately afterward.
- If future development is guided by an integrated planning framework, wherein each major public investment is situated to stimulate interaction with other downtown

attractions, overall activity levels will be higher and, as a consequence, private developments will tend to orient themselves around these activity centers. Downtown Anchorage can be molded through this public investment into an integrated, multi-use center that is rich in activity.

The public participation program generated a consensus during the second meeting series in support of the second scenario. In this scenario, new downtown development would be guided by a planning framework within which each new investment would contribute to the diversity and overall activity level within downtown.

Elements of the Planning Framework

The planning framework, within which fit the specific Phase I Development Plan recommendations, is intended to continue to guide development into the Phase II planning period. It consists of the following four elements:

- Reinforcement of existing activity areas
- Concentration on the geographical heart of downtown as the nucleus of all downtown activity
- A focus on the public right-of-way for pedestrian linkage and circulation
- Concentration of public investment in development opportunity areas not already experiencing heavy private sector investment

Reinforcement of Existing Activity Areas. Figure 1.5 indicates the generalized existing activity modes in downtown Anchorage, consisting of:

- Independent retail clusters along 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues that, due to their being distributed over an 8-block length with many intervening non-retail uses, discourage comparison shopping.
- Strong office clusters in three general areas in the western and southern sections of the study area which, as with retail development, tend to have little interaction.
- Hotels distributed along 4th and 5th Avenues over such a length (over 3/4 mile) that nighttime activity is very dissipated.
- A strong residential district west of L Street and pockets of housing around the cemetery, but few significant housing clusters elsewhere in the CBD study area.

The long-term planning framework seeks to reinforce existing development and, at the same time, create identifiable downtown districts as essential parts of a greater whole.

New infill developments, integrated with existing facilities, will strengthen the identity of established districts and simplify the relationships among the various districts. Figure 1.6 indicates this concept.

Concentration on the Heart of Downtown. The core area of downtown Anchorage is the place where the highest activity levels will be generated. As the geographical center of the CBD and as its

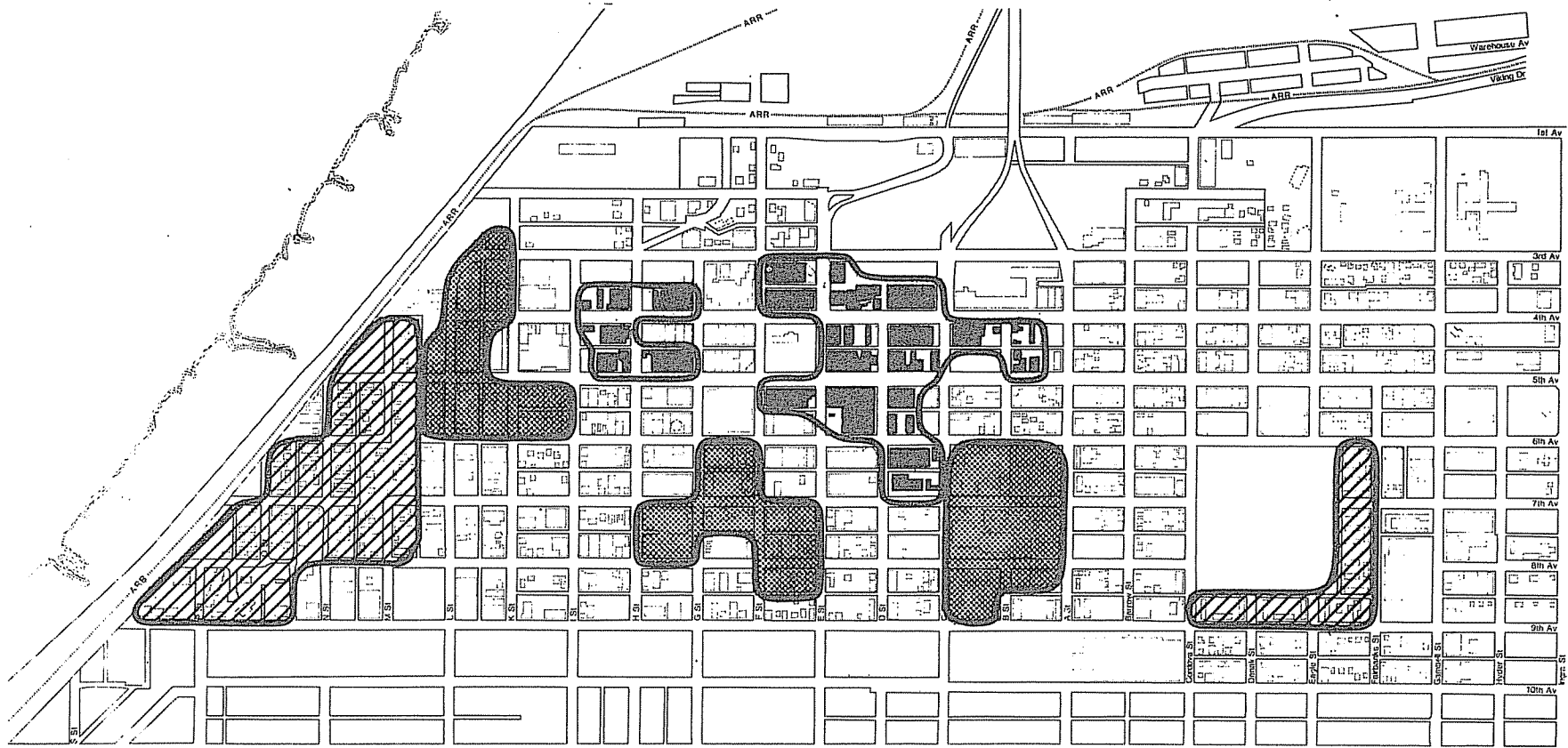

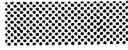
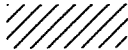


FIGURE I.5
Existing Activity Areas

-  **RETAIL CLUSTERS**
-  **OFFICE CLUSTERS**
-  **RESIDENTIAL**

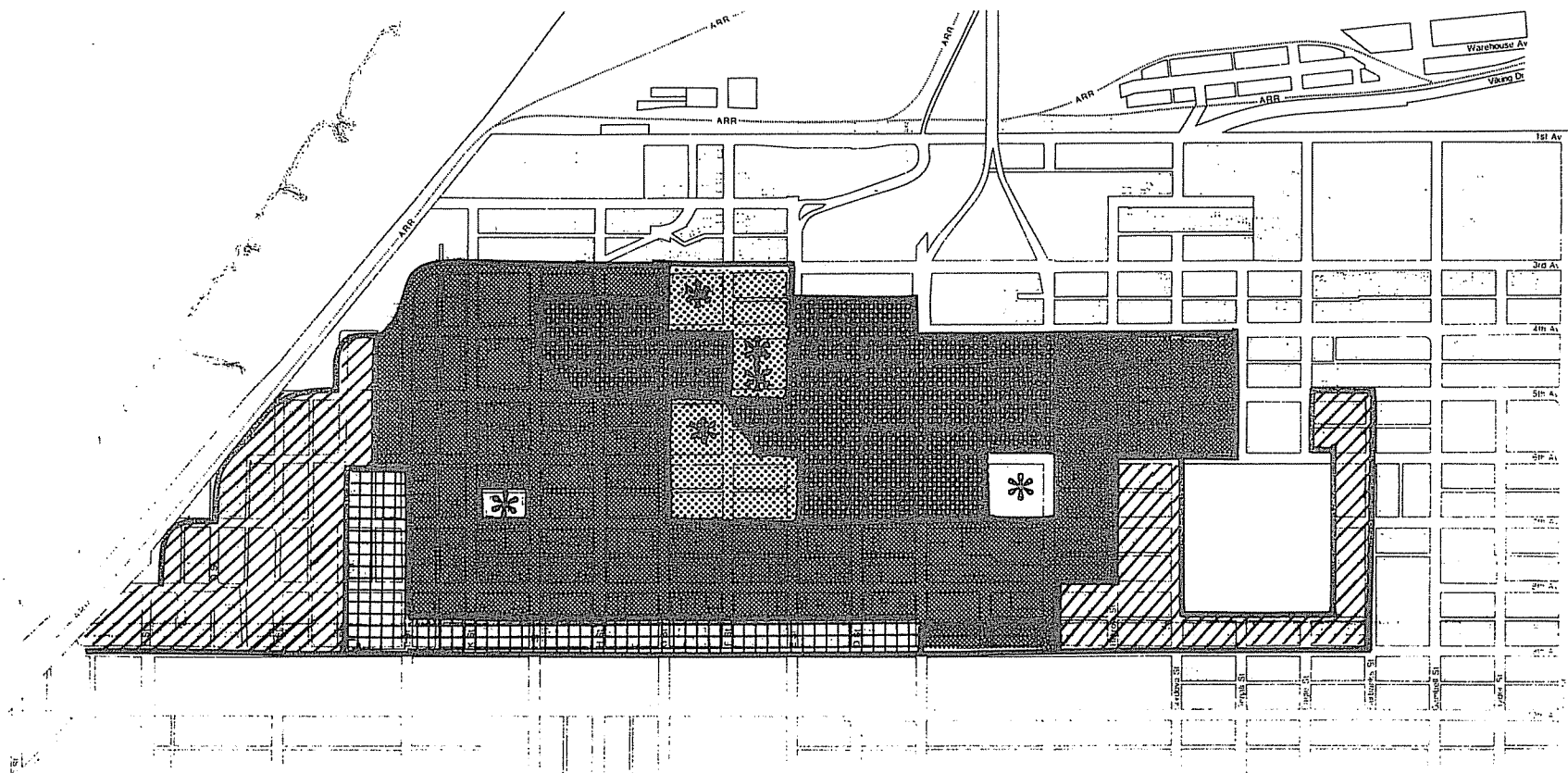
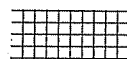


FIGURE I.6

Proposed Activity Areas



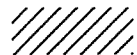
RETAIL CLUSTERS



MIXED OFFICE-RESIDENTIAL



OFFICE CLUSTERS



RESIDENTIAL



"TOWN CENTER" AREA



SPECIAL ACTIVITY OR ATTRACTION

crossroads, the core area or "Town Center" enjoys easy accessibility on foot from all points within downtown, but lacks a visual focus, a place to gather, around which the various activities, employment centers, recreational opportunities, commercial establishments, and institutions are clustered. A central plaza, "Town Center Plaza," is proposed to provide this focus. Its suggested location is in the midst of major new public investments (Figure 1.7) and along streets and avenues slated for landscaping and pedestrian amenities.

Focus on Rights-of-Way. Public streets in downtown Anchorage are now the only means of pedestrian and vehicular circulation (with the exception of the bridge connecting the J. C. Penney store with its parking structure). Given the compact layout of downtown Anchorage, the winter climate, and the desirability of pedestrian-vehicular separation, a skyway system was considered in the planning program. Through public participation, it was determined that the most appropriate initial focus of skyway development is within new development projects, rather than the extensive retrofitting of existing developments. Within new developments, the skyway system would be integrated with street-level pedestrian areas so that both levels would be mutually supportive, rather than isolated and competitive.

The planning framework also calls for a phased program of sidewalk widening and landscaping in conjunction with techniques to extract the greatest vehicular flow in the least space, including eventual conversion of some two-way streets to one-way service (see Chapters III and IV).

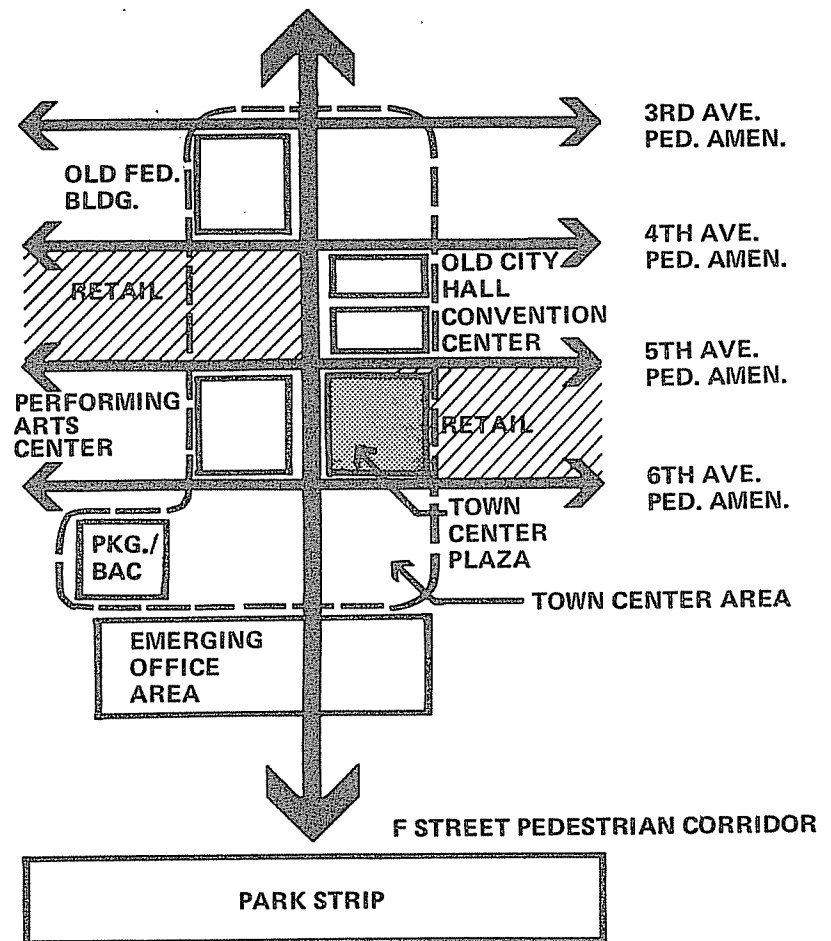


Figure 1.7. Town Center Plaza is recommended for heart of downtown adjoining existing and new retail areas, major public institutions, and proposed F Street Mall.

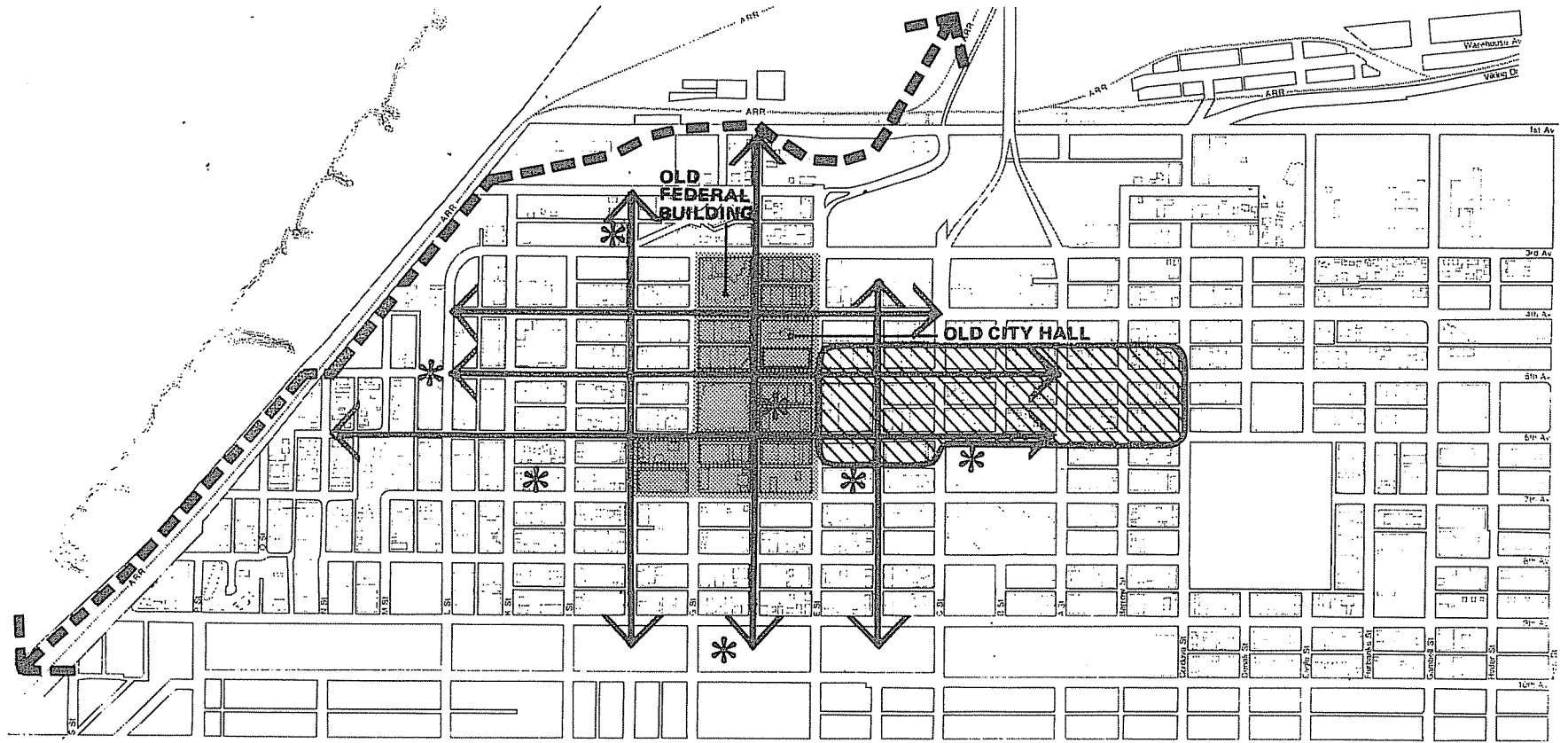


FIGURE I.8
Open Space Linkage



PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN NETWORK



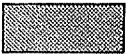
PHASE I SKYWAY SYSTEM ZONE



COASTAL TRAIL



PLAZA OR PARK ACTIVITY AREA



"TOWN CENTER" AREA

The improved rights-of-way will not only provide visual and functional enhancement of downtown for pedestrians and motorists; it will tie together a network of active open spaces (Figure 1.8), including:

- The park strip
- Town Center Plaza
- Clusters of historic buildings
- View parks and vest-pocket parks
- The Coastal Trail

In establishing this important framework of landscaped open space, the streetscape will be the major element that ties all of downtown Anchorage together, that provides opportunities for people to enjoy strolling or window-shopping, and that promotes the likelihood of the chance encounters and discoveries that contribute to the enjoyment and activity level of the urban center.

Concentration of Public Investment in Development Opportunity Areas. Substantial recent investment has occurred in some downtown areas, while little or none has occurred in others, the two most conspicuous of which are the older commercial district along 4th Avenue east of A Street and the 5th and 6th Avenue corridors east of D Street. Public investment should be channeled to promote revitalization of those areas that appear not to be generating new investment on their own. Conversely, those areas that appear to be thriving with minimal or no public intervention should generally be left to private sector market conditions (Figure 1.9).

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The long-term planning framework, described in the preceding section, is more a strategy on which to base decisions than a specific blueprint for development. Within the planning framework are the diverse components that will meet the specific goals and objectives established by the community. Many of these components will be completed and others initiated in the Phase I planning period.

The long-term development plan depicted in Figure 1.10 represents one combination of coordinated public and private investment that might be undertaken within the recommended planning framework.

In reality, a different set of components may be implemented or different locations for some components selected. For example, a street landscaping concept illustrated in Figure 1.10 featuring curving pedestrian plazas and widened north sidewalks was initially endorsed, but subsequently dropped. Downtown development objectives will still be served as long as decisions about projects to be built and their locations are based on the recommended planning framework.

In addition to key developments included in the long-term development plan would be extensive infill development clustered around major downtown anchors. Areas for infill development, described in Chapter VIII, will generally accommodate combinations of land uses to respond to specific market and locational criteria and to provide transitions between major downtown subareas.

Specific projects recommended at this time for development in the Anchorage CBD, in conformance with the planning framework, include:

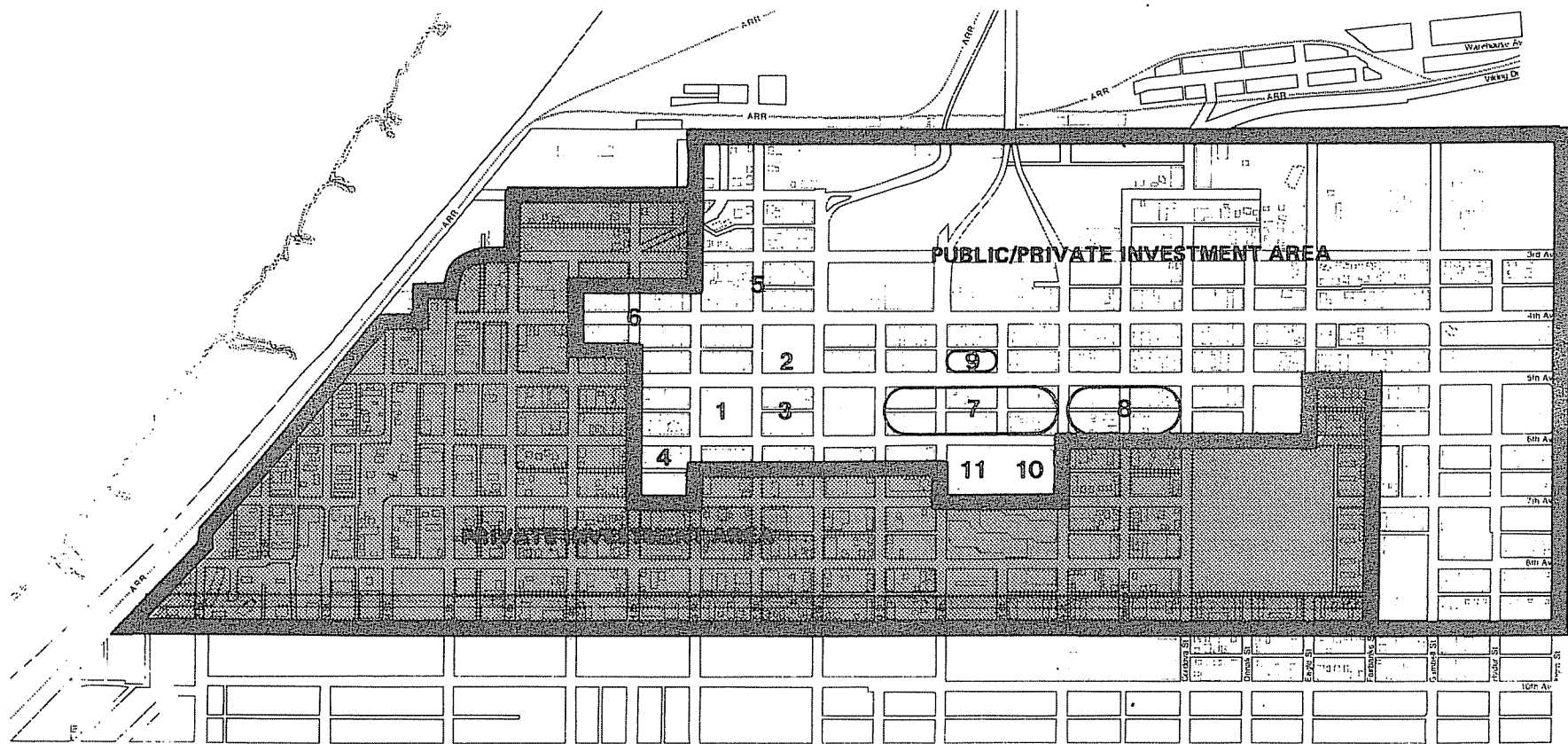


FIGURE 1.9

Investment Area Strategy

- 1 PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
- 2 CONVENTION CENTER
- 3 TOWN CENTER PLAZA
- 4 PARKING STRUCTURE
- 5 F STREET MALL
- 6 4TH AVENUE PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

- 7 NEW RETAIL COMPLEX
- 8 STATE OFFICE COMPLEX
- 9 PARKING STRUCTURE
- 10 MUSEUM EXPANSION
- 11 PUBLIC AMENITY

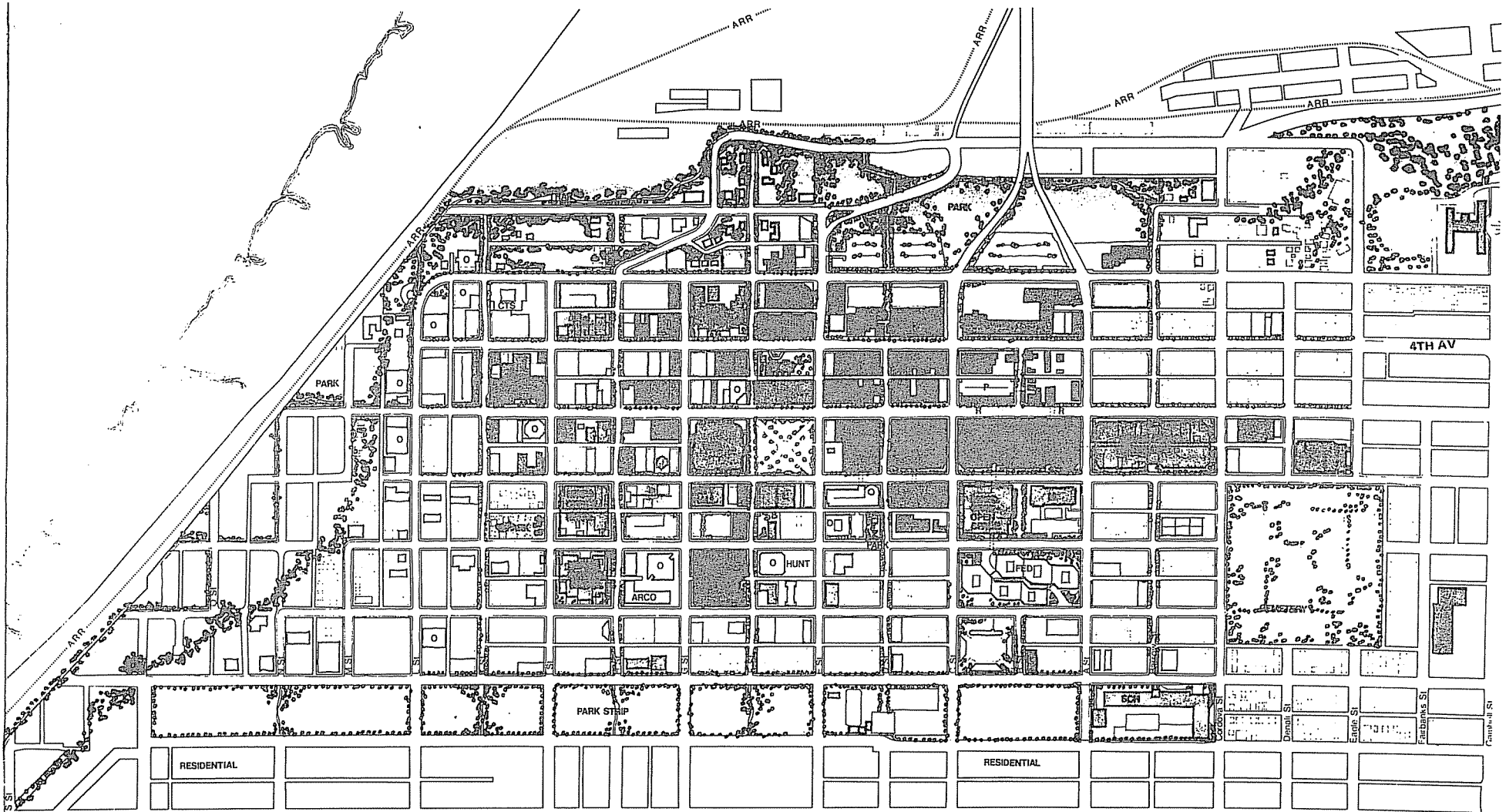
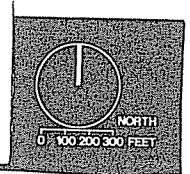


FIGURE I.10

Long-Term Development Plan



- A new retail complex that should be effective in strengthening existing downtown retail concerns as well as in attracting a broad range of new retail establishments
- Critically needed off-street parking facilities and a means for monitoring and dealing with future parking needs
- A proposed location for new state office facilities that would stimulate development in a stagnant area of the CBD and, at the same time, help to distribute demands on services such as transportation facilities more evenly
- Changes in the downtown circulation system to facilitate the pattern of traffic flow
- The phased reconfiguration of roadway and pedestrian areas within public right-of-way to facilitate smoother traffic flow and an improved, landscaped pedestrian environment
- Public squares and open spaces, capitalizing on activity generators, historic and cultural features, and view opportunities
- Changes in transit routing to a "through" pattern complemented by improved transit information centers

Each of these components independently would contribute to the functioning and image of downtown Anchorage; however, when coordinated under phased implementation within the recommended planning framework, these components will combine to change the character and operation of downtown Anchorage in significant ways. The creation of a strong residential community within and near the

CBD, a major goal of the plan, is fully compatible with the above components. Residential development is considered essential to creating extended hours of downtown activity and avoiding a lifeless after-hours atmosphere typical of American downtown areas lacking a major residential component. The following profiles of some of the major elements stress their interaction with other elements and the contributions they will make to the downtown Anchorage environment.

Retail Complex

Downtown Anchorage is at a turning point in terms of its viability as the dominant retail center in the region (see discussion of retail land use in Chapter II). In order to assure long-term viability in the face of increasing competition from suburban developments, an attractive retail development "package" must be developed immediately, or, according to economic analyses, the CBD may actually lose many of its existing retail facilities (see Chapter II).

It is strongly recommended that the package include a retail facility on the blocks northeast of 6th Avenue and D Street (Figure I.11). This complex, which would be climatized, connected to existing department stores by skyway, and outfitted with parking, would provide an important stimulus not only to retail trade, but also to rejuvenate a part of the CBD that has been lagging in development and is substantially deteriorated.

The new mixed-use facility, oriented toward existing retail facilities, would complement them and strengthen overall downtown retail viability (see Chapter VI). Economic studies have shown that the Anchorage market is strong and will attract

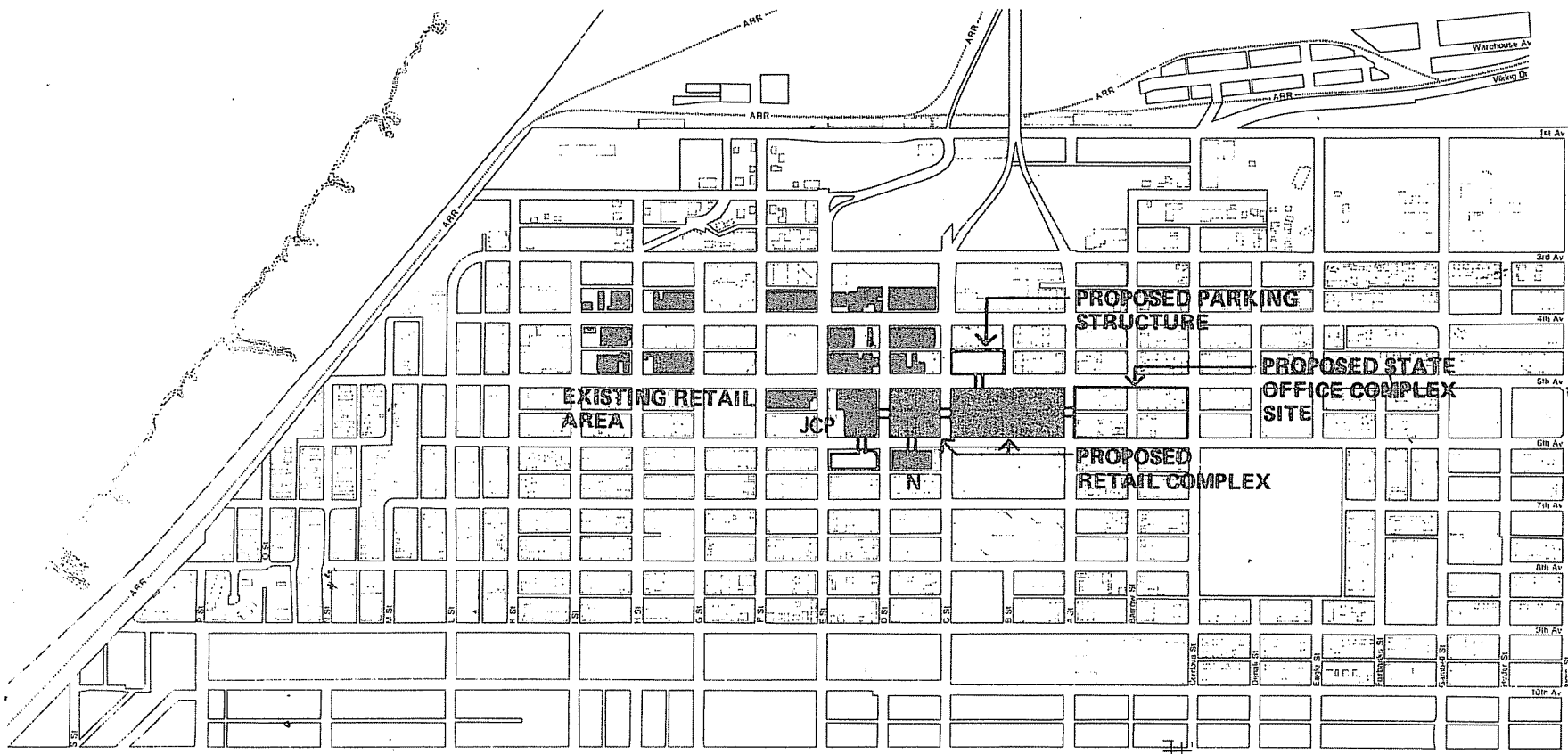


FIGURE I.11

New Retail Area Components



new investment; it is strongly recommended that this occur in the CBD if the area is to maintain its viability as a key multi-use center. Because time is running out -- the new retail investment will occur somewhere in the region -- the retail center project is a first priority for early implementation. To miss this opportunity will significantly limit the potential of downtown Anchorage ever to be the multi-activity center of the region.

Off-Street Parking Facilities

To offset an imminent and critical parking shortage upon occupancy of several buildings now under construction, three areas have been identified for new parking structures to be developed by the Municipality (Figure 1.12): the northwest sector, the south-central area near the new ARCO and Hunt projects, and an area in the center of the study area specifically earmarked by a state bill for a new parking structure. The conceptual plan recommends locations for these three structures, based on the extent of existing development, adjacencies to parking demand generators, the distance from existing off-street parking facilities, and other factors (see Chapter V).

Beyond these short-term recommendations, a long-term policy of peripheral parking with internal CBD shuttle is recommended. In addition, policies that encourage ride-sharing and transit use are recommended to temper the demand for downtown parking and encourage energy efficiency.

State Office Complex

The conceptual long-term development plan indicates a new State Office Complex (see Chapter VI) that would ultimately house 2,800 employees in the

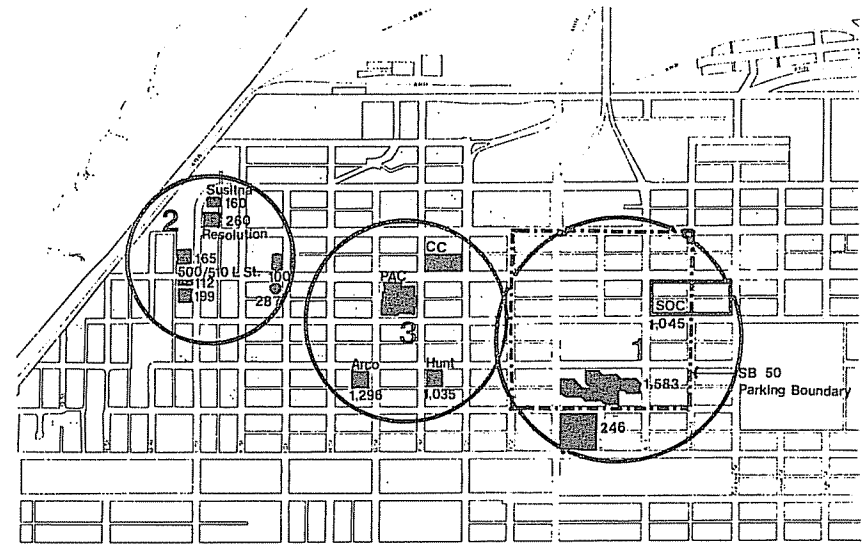


Figure 1.12. Three areas identified as having greatest need for new off-street parking facilities. Numbers indicate amount of parking generated by key recent developments not provided on site. More detailed analysis provided in Chapter V.

area adjacent to and east of the proposed retail complex. In this location, the retail area can be anchored on the east and can act as a noon-time destination for state employees. In addition, this area is situated along major arterials that can provide expedited access to the site and to recommended nearby parking facilities. Finally, the project would add vitality to an area that has experienced a significant downturn in the amount and quality of activities. The site is recommended, pending an assessment of its geotechnical conditions.

Circulation Improvements

The addition of major new facilities to the downtown core area, coupled with increasing projected employment in the area, will almost certainly mandate the improvement of the downtown circulation system. The long-term development plan includes a strategy for incorporating additional circulation capacity as well as pedestrian area improvements within existing rights-of-way. Routes recommended for the earliest modifications for additional capacity include 5th Avenue (along which peak-hour parking would be restricted to permit an additional travel lane) and E and G Streets (to be converted to a one-way couplet). The roadway section of G Street between 9th and 10th Avenues would be vacated and dedicated for park use. Intersection improvements are also recommended to expedite traffic flow (see Chapter III).

In addition to these physical improvements to the downtown circulation system, it is recommended that remote parking facilities, transit improvements, and programs to promote ride-sharing all be implemented to reduce the need for subsequent circulation system capacity increases.

Reconfiguration of Roadway and Pedestrian Areas

The phased incorporation of pedestrian amenities, streetscape design, urban design amenities, and expedited traffic flow will have a profound effect throughout downtown Anchorage. The conceptual plan recommends a method whereby more space can be allocated to pedestrian areas, even while traffic flow is improved, through reconfiguration of travel and parking lanes.

Public Squares and Open Spaces

The long-term plan indicates numerous public squares and open spaces (Figure I.13). Among these are a central plaza at the heart of the downtown core, oriented to foster its image as the nucleus of the city; the F Street Mall that would provide an auto-free pedestrian concourse between 4th and 6th Avenues and an enhanced pedestrian environment, a mixed-use development with integral public activity areas on the site of the present public safety facility; and numerous "sun-catcher" and transit-oriented parks on small opportunity sites throughout the CBD.

Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage

Public input to the planning process indicated preservation of the early Anchorage heritage to be a key concern (see Chapter VII for further discussion). Therefore, the plan for downtown development is fully compatible with and supportive of numerous alternative historic preservation concepts. These include various on-site and relocation plans that have been considered, as well as refurbishment and adaptive use of historic structures throughout the CBD, including the 4th Avenue Theater, the Old City Hall, and others.

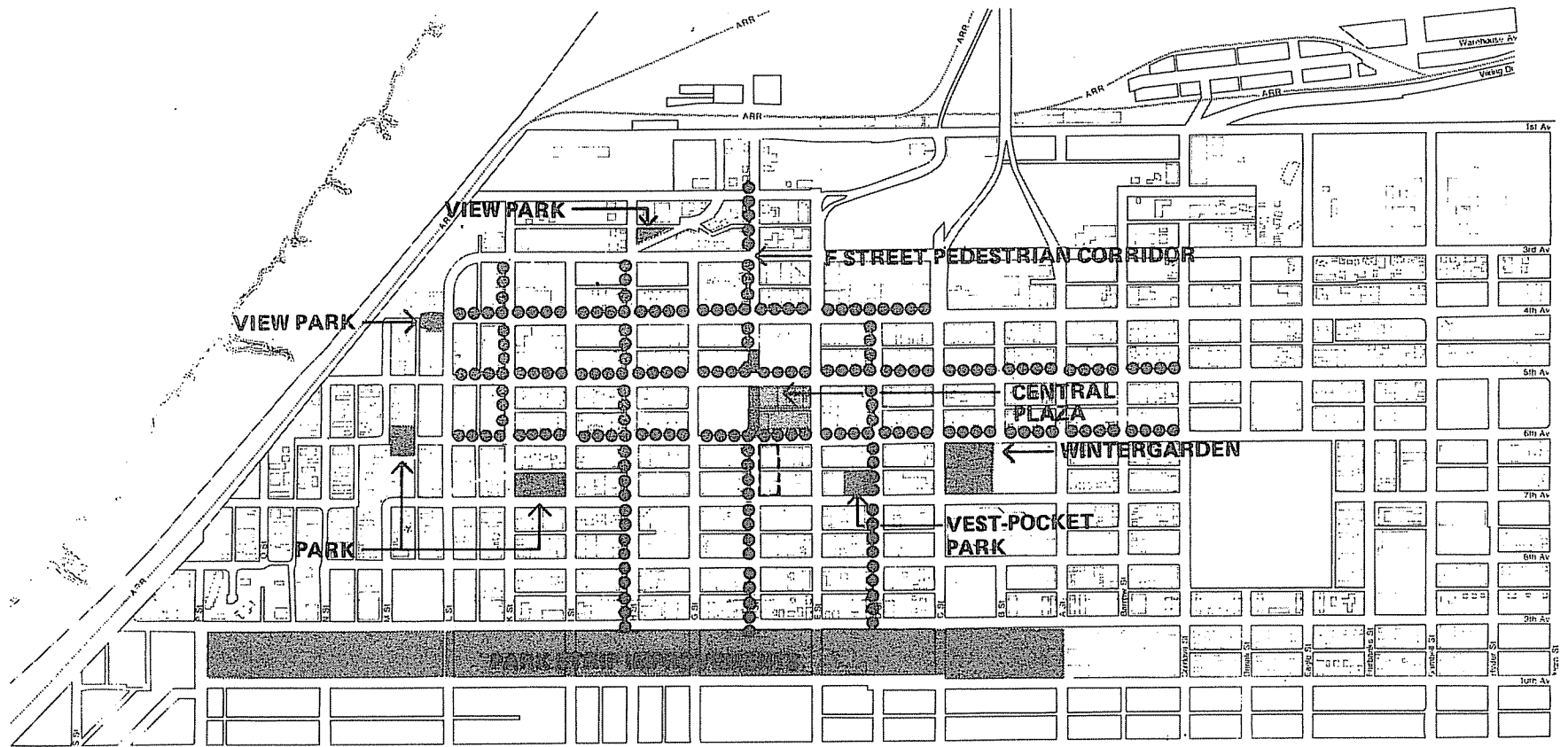


FIGURE I.13

Recommended Open Space Concept

-  PARK OR PLAZA
-  PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES
-  AUTO-FREE MALL

Also important is preservation of a "small town feel," which must be reconciled with growing development pressure. By instituting a policy that promotes a tighter, more concentrated development at the center of the CBD, opportunities will be preserved for retention of the character in peripheral areas, such as the residential districts that envelop the CBD core to the south and east.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The long-term development plan, presented in the preceding section of this chapter, is based on findings and analyses of emerging trends in several specific areas of study including:

- o Land use, zoning patterns, and land ownership characteristics
- o Circulation
- o Open space and pedestrian environment
- o Parking management
- o New developments
- o Historic preservation

Each of these areas of study corresponds to a subsequent chapter in this Comprehensive Development Plan.

The following section of this chapter is devoted to a summary of the major findings, emerging trends, and recommendations pertaining to the above areas of study.

Several of these findings and recommendations pertain to actions on specific blocks, which are numbered in conformance with the Municipal block numbering system (Figure 1.14).

As noted in an earlier section, the study area encompassed the entire CBD, bounded by 1st Avenue on the north, Ingra Street on the east, 9th Avenue on the south, and the Alaska Railroad right-of-way on the west. The primary focus on the study was on the key control development area generally between L and Cordova Streets.

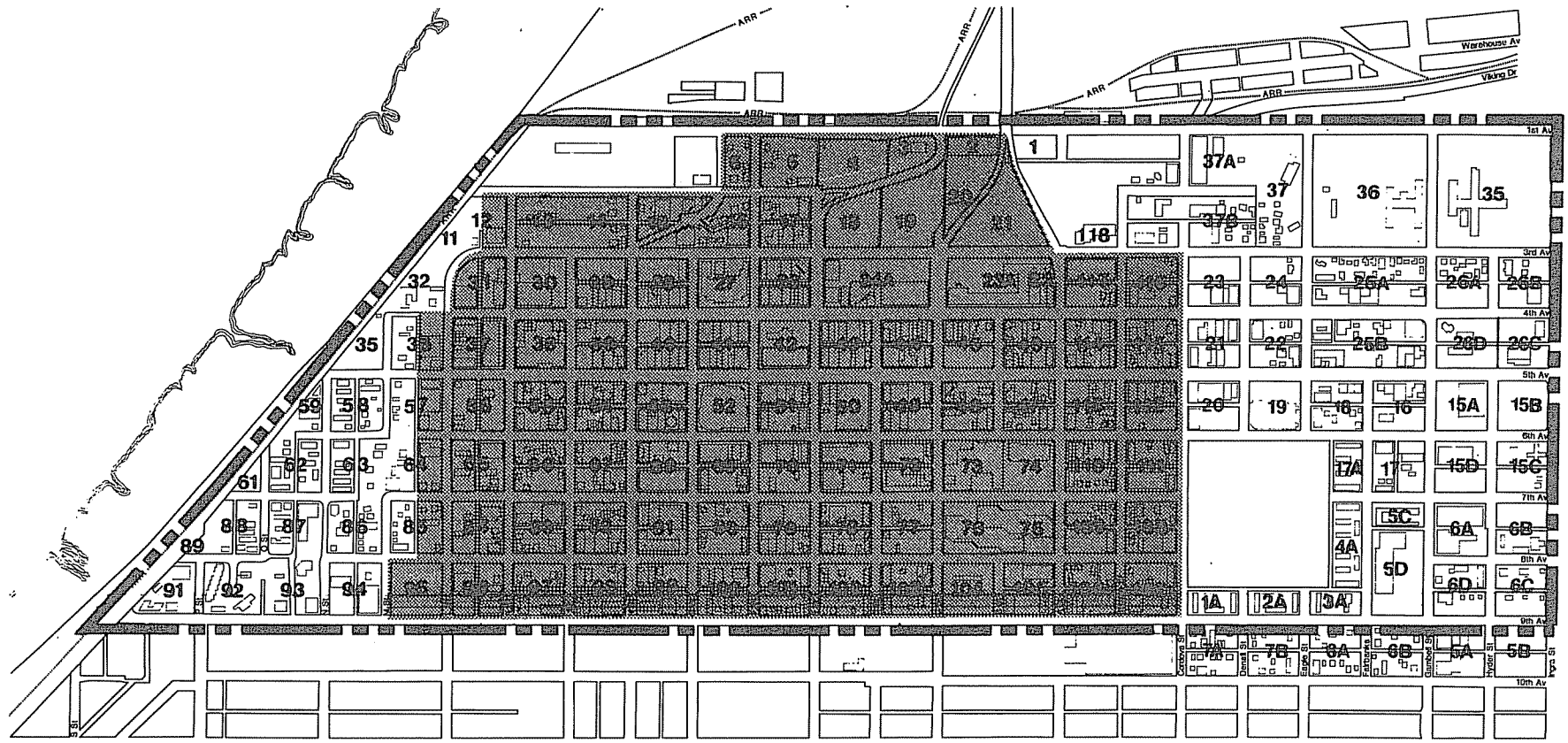

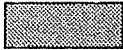


FIGURE I.14
Study Area and Block Numbers

- 
CBD STUDY AREA
- 
AREA OF PRIMARY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS (Chapter II)

Findings and Emerging Trends

- Land uses in downtown Anchorage are, for the most part, fragmented rather than clustered. The consequence of this land use pattern is that opportunities for the mutual strengthening of many resources, particularly office, hotel, and retail facilities, are not capitalized upon.
- Retail land uses can be found in several clusters throughout the CBD with the most intensive nodes near the two major department stores, J. C. Penney and Nordstrom.
- In the absence of a dramatic "package" of retail space, parking, and associated activities near existing retail facilities, it is possible that downtown Anchorage may lose one or both of its existing department stores, as well as some tenant stores, to a competing area. The loss could be as much as 125,000 square feet, 75,000 square feet of it in department store space. With a development package, under a joint public/private cooperative agreement, downtown Anchorage has the potential of attracting as much as 390,000 square feet of new retail space by 1990 with 120,000 square feet in department store(s).
- Three primary clusters of office buildings exist: the northwest corner of the CBD near Resolution Tower, the south/central part of the CBD where the ARCO and Hunt Towers are under construction, and the area around and including the Federal Office Complex. Little recent office construction has occurred in the designated core area zone.
- Hotel facilities are arranged in a linear pattern along 4th and 5th Avenues between I and Eagle Streets -- a distance of over four fifths of a mile.
- Economic analyses have indicated that projections for the office and hotel sectors of the economy are relatively well assured.

The range of projected new office development through 1990 is 770,000 to 1,300,000 square feet. The range of projected new hotel development is 700 to 1,100 rooms.

- Residential land use is the only major land use that can be seen as an identifiable district within the CBD study area to the west of L Street. Even in this land use category, however, many additional residential buildings can be found scattered throughout downtown Anchorage.
- Economic analyses have indicated a range of zero to 1,000 new dwelling units between now and 1990. The potential for new downtown housing development is limited by numerous factors, including existing zoning restrictions, residential market characteristics, and other factors.
- The intent of the zoning code has been to develop a downtown with the highest buildings at the center, the intensity of development decreasing with distance from the heart of downtown. Recent development patterns have not carried out this intent.
- The Municipal Code includes a bonus point system to encourage the inclusion of urban design amenities in new projects. This, too, has been less than fully effective in providing the type of designs and amenities intended by the Code.

Recommendations

- Major new developments that will help to tie downtown together should be situated in the midst of existing land use clusters identified in the land use analysis.
- A major mixed-use retail center should be developed in the vicinity of the existing anchor stores (J. C. Penney and Nordstrom). The results of more detailed site investigations are found in Chapter VI and its summary.
- New offices and hotels should be located in existing office clusters rather than in outlying areas of the CBD study area. It

is especially important that employment and other attractions surround the recommended mixed-use retail center area.

- New downtown projects seem to be approved without the necessary coordination that would result in projects mutually supporting each other as well as existing development. One way to overcome this problem would be for the Planning and Zoning Commission to become more involved in the review and approval process, vested with the ability to negotiate with project proponents and to submit recommendations to the Municipal Assembly.

SUMMARY OF CIRCULATION (Chapter III)

Findings and Emerging Trends

- The regular street pattern of downtown Anchorage is well suited to numerous traffic flow improvement concepts. However, the small number of through streets providing access to downtown Anchorage and origin/ destination patterns heavily biased to the east and south limit opportunities.
- Rights-of-way along 4th Avenue, along 5th Avenue east of K Street, along 3rd Avenue east of E Street; and along a few other segments are 80 feet wide. Nearly all other right-of-way in downtown Anchorage are 60 feet wide.
- Projections indicate that many downtown streets may experience travel demand that exceeds their capacities by the year 2001.
- The best opportunities to improve traffic flow within existing rights-of-way involve new treatments of on-street parking and extension of the existing network of one-way streets.

Recommendations

- A monitoring system, taking into account many factors related to downtown circulation, is recommended. Key indicators would trigger the implementation of plans for specific traffic flow improvement programs.
- Expansion of the existing one-way street network is recommended for implementation at such time that the monitoring program indicates traffic volumes approaching 90% of capacity. The sequence of implementation would take into consideration ongoing pedestrian amenities and parking programs. The E/G couplet will probably be necessary within the next two to three years; improvements on 9th Avenue will also be required.

- At some point in the future when expressway implementation might be considered, it is recommended that expressway off-ramps serving the CBD be linked directly with peripheral parking facilities to reduce possible traffic impacts on streets within the CBD core area.

SUMMARY OF OPEN SPACE AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT (Chapter IV)

Findings and Emerging Trends

- Virtually all significant open spaces today are located on the fringes of the CBD. The only major open spaces near the CBD core are the park strip and the grassy slope of the buttressed area.
- The existing bonus point system in the Municipal Land Use Code has been ineffective in encouraging private developers to provide significant public open spaces within new projects.
- A strong demand was expressed by citizens and public leaders for more open space within the CBD including squares, historic plazas, pedestrian amenities, enclosed landscaped spaces, vest-pocket parks, view parks, park strip improvements, and others.
- Numerous opportunities still exist to provide open space within the CBD core, primarily on land that is underdeveloped and/or currently used for surface parking.

Recommendations

- A phased program of streetscape improvements within public rights-of-way should include widened, landscaped sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, implemented in concert with circulation improvements. The first such actions should concentrate on the heart of downtown beginning with 4th Avenue between E and G Streets and F Street between 4th and 6th Avenues (F Street Mall).
- A plaza occupying one block is recommended as both a central focus for the CBD and a key event along the proposed F Street Mall between 5th and 6th Avenues. This plaza would adjoin the Performing Arts Center and the Convention Center, and should be planned and implemented in conjunction with the F Street Mall.

SUMMARY OF PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (Chapter V)

- An additional open space/park, possibly glass-enclosed, is recommended as part of a new mixed-use redevelopment of the public safety block.
- In order to allow the park strip to serve as a true urban park, it is recommended that mounding, landscaping, tree planting, and opportunities for both quiet and active recreational activities be provided along the park strip.
- Several concepts for modified building envelopes have been proposed in order to preserve views in key corridors and to respond to local solar conditions. Some of these would require reevaluation of the existing bonus point system in the Municipal Code Land Use Regulations.
- A skyway system should be begun in downtown Anchorage as a major component of the pedestrian network. The first step is incorporation of second-level pedestrian ways in major projects recommended for Phase I implementation: the State Office Complex, the mixed-use retail complex, and Municipal parking structures. These facilities would be linked, in turn, with existing retail facilities (J. C. Penney and Nordstrom). In all, nine blocks would be linked at the end of Phase I development.
- Future major construction projects downtown should incorporate provisions for skyway connections. In anticipation of this, the Municipality should agree on a range of second-level floor heights, as well as on standards for future skyway bridges. Also, an advisory committee should be established to govern skyway design standards to monitor pedestrian counts and impacts on retail development, and to set operational procedures.

Findings and Emerging Trends

- The Municipality of Anchorage has not been able to provide sufficient public parking to accompany private sector developments. Since 1975, only about 1,150 such spaces have been provided. However, the completion of over 30 major new buildings in downtown Anchorage since 1975 has resulted in an increase in demand for parking estimated at over 4,800 spaces. Overall, it is estimated that new parking demand will exceed new parking supply by over 3,500 spaces by 1983.
- Under the current zoning code, private developers of new projects in downtown commercial areas need not provide any on-site parking.
- Much of the on-street parking available in downtown Anchorage is being used by downtown employees for all-day parking instead of by short-term shoppers and visitors, whom it is intended to serve.
- Downtown employees are parking in the residential area south of the park strip. Residents in this area object to this practice and have suggested that a residential parking permit system be instituted.
- Demand is expected to exceed supply most critically in three distinct areas of the downtown: the northwest, north-central, and south-central areas.

Recommendations

- A two-phase approach to the parking problem is recommended. In the first phase, immediate parking needs must be addressed with new parking supply in order to allow further development in the CBD to occur. In the second phase, a long-term, multi-faceted parking strategy can be put into effect once the future of downtown is certain. A program to monitor critical parking- and circulation-related factors is recommended

in order to guide the long-term parking management strategy.

- Parking structures should be built immediately, using a combination of private and public resources, in the following three areas:
 - the area north of the planned retail area east of J. C. Penney and northeast of Nordstrom
 - the northwest sector of the CBD near the State Courts building
 - the south part of the CBD near the 7th and C Municipal Garage
- A parking authority should be established to administer the parking development program, to control rates and policies, to develop and implement methods to reduce the overall demand for parking and to administer income from parking facilities and from meter fees.
- Peak commuting hour parking restrictions and higher meter rates should be implemented to discourage use of on-street parking by employees.
- Peripheral parking should be provided for the long-term future. Parking structures could also serve as transit terminals with transfers between long-haul transit vehicles and intra-downtown minibuses. A preliminary locational analysis has been conducted.
- A long-term policy involving incentives for transit use, ride-sharing, and other programs that help to relieve the need for additional downtown parking should be established.

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (Chapter VI)

Findings

- The location of major publicly sponsored projects can have a profound effect on the extent and quality of subsequent private development. Therefore, new public facilities such as the State Office Complex and parking structures should be situated in areas in which private investment is stagnant rather than in areas that are already seeing active private-sector investment.
- The Municipality is in various stages of implementing about 20 capital improvement projects in and around downtown Anchorage.
- Major new projects recommended for development by the Municipality provide an excellent opportunity for designs that are solar-responsive and contribute to the quality of the downtown environment.

Recommendations

- The State Office Complex should be developed in the vicinity of A Street and 5th Avenue to anchor CBD development on the east pending the results of a geotechnical study now underway.
- The geotechnical study now underway should be supplemented with a similar study covering the entire north-central portion of the CBD in order to determine the development potential of this area.
- The proposed retail complex should be located adjacent to existing retail clusters and anchor stores. The blocks bounded by A and D Streets and 5th and 6th Avenues have been identified as the best location for development as a mixed-use retail complex.
- All new publicly coordinated projects should consider and incorporate techniques to enhance the streetscape such as plazas, landscaping, widened pedestrian areas,

and building shapes that allow more solar access to the public right-of-way.

- Each of the 20 capital improvement projects programmed by the Municipality has been evaluated to the degree that it affects key decisions in downtown planning. Many of the projects are recommended for coordination with other projects and programs.

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM (CHAPTER VII)

Findings

- Historic preservation was found to be a major concern of the Anchorage public.
- The need for a strategy for preservation of key buildings of historic significance has become more urgent because of plans by developers to provide surface parking for occupants of new office projects.

Recommendations

- The Municipality should develop a preservation plan for the downtown and should continue to proceed with the development of a historic preservation ordinance.
- A revolving fund concept has been suggested to promote historic preservation efforts; the comprehensive historic preservation program will require a specialist in historic preservation methods to coordinate the program.