

IV. Open Space and Pedestrian Environment



Chapter IV

OPEN SPACE AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Among the issues of greatest concern to the people of downtown Anchorage are the amount and quality of open spaces in the area. The Downtown Community Council, in particular, emphasized the need for more parks, both large and small, and an attractive pedestrian environment (see Chapter II summary of public participation program) that is conducive to a healthy and diverse retail environment.

This chapter begins with a summary of existing open spaces within downtown Anchorage and a summary of policies and open space plan components, followed by descriptions of:

- Recommended open spaces
- A program for improvement of the pedestrian environment improvement of the downtown pedestrian environment
- A strategy for the initiation of a weather-protected downtown skyway system in major redevelopment areas

EXISTING OPEN SPACE AMENITIES

The natural setting of downtown Anchorage, with mountains on four sides and water to the north and west, is spectacular and well recognized (see Figure 1.2). However, downtown Anchorage has no real open space focus that capitalizes on these

assets. Of the two major open space resources, the park strip (just outside the CBD area) and the cemetery, the former is currently used only for active recreation (i.e., sports and athletics) and the latter, as a burial ground, only provides visual openness to nearly high-rise buildings. Existing open space within and adjacent to the study area is indicated in Figure IV.1.

Among the most significant of these open spaces are:

- The grassy slope north of 3rd Avenue between E and Barrow Streets
- Resolution Park at the northwest corner of the CBD
- The park strip (formerly the Anchorage airfield) running from P to A Streets between 9th and 10th Avenues, a distance of nearly a mile
- The cemetery within the area bounded by 6th and 9th Avenues and Cordova and Fairbanks Streets
- A number of approximately triangular parks adjoining the Alaska Railroad rights-of-way along the waterfront on the western side of the CBD

In addition to significant open spaces are a number of landscaped areas within downtown Anchorage, including:

- The park in front of the Old City Hall

- The landscaped area along the 4th Avenue frontage of the Old Federal Building
- The landscaped areas around the new Federal Office Complex and on the roof of the underground portion between 8th and 9th Avenues
- The plaza in front of the financial building at the northwest corner of 5th Avenue and F Streets

Anchorage is fortunate that its downtown has not yet developed to the intensity that precludes any possibility for providing additional open space amenities. Although certain areas -- particularly the sensitive area near Resolution Park -- have been developed to high intensity, much of the land in downtown Anchorage is still underdeveloped and/or used for surface parking. Many excellent possibilities exist to satisfy the public need for open space within downtown.

APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

The program for improvements in the open space/pedestrian environment network was based on input from the Downtown Community Council as well as policy recommendations developed by the Physical Planning Division of the Municipal Planning Department. Specific recommended actions respond to the need for:

- A focal center for downtown Anchorage
- A public space system that responds to the unique character of Anchorage

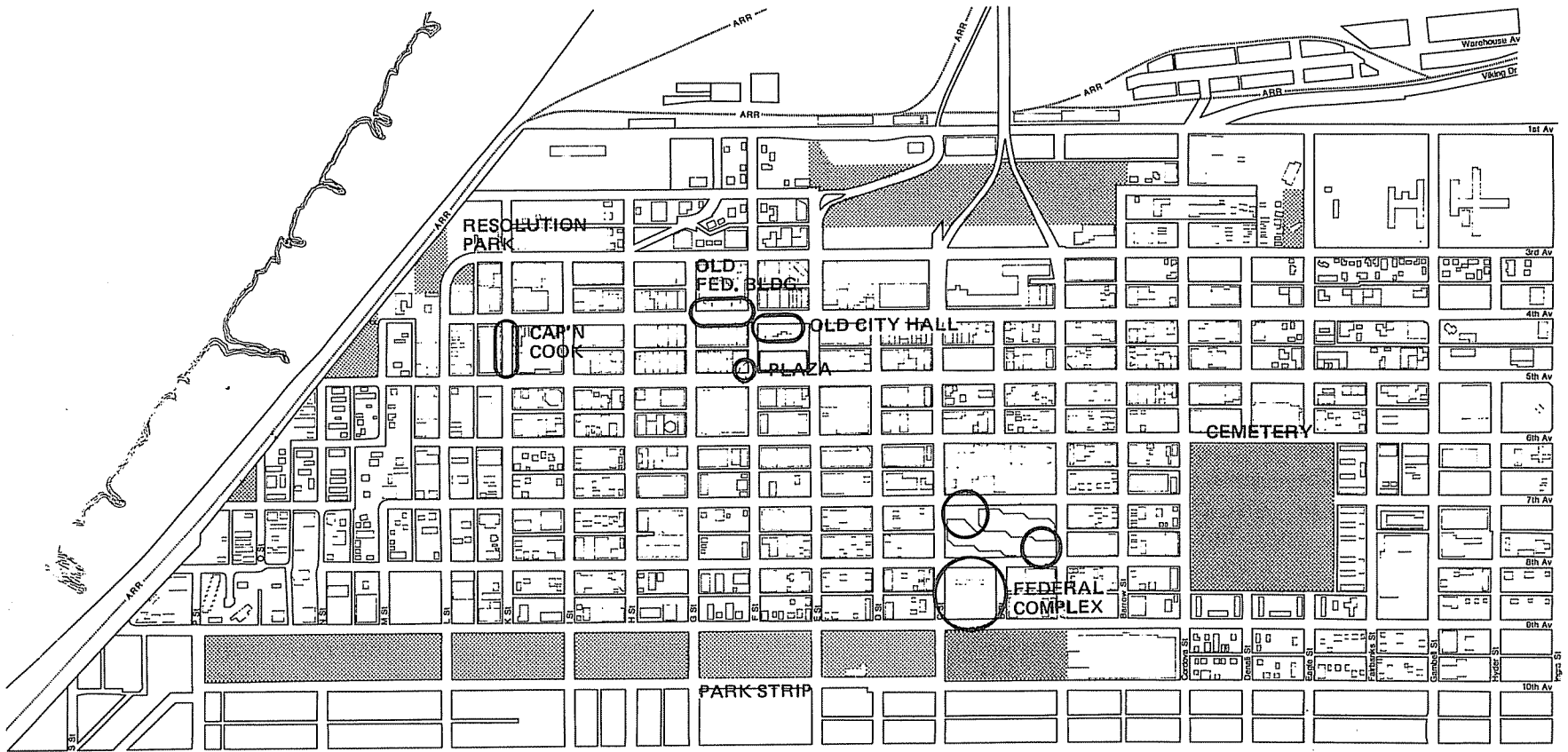
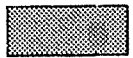


FIGURE IV.1

Existing Open Space Amenities



EXISTING OPEN SPACE



MAJOR BUILDING-RELATED LANDSCAPED AREAS OR PLAZAS

- Urban design standards
- Priorities for the expenditure of capital improvement funds for pedestrian amenities
- Revision of the CBD zoning and bonus point system
- Pedestrian-oriented retail opportunities

Focal Center for Downtown

The Anchorage CBD now lacks an identifiable "heart" that can serve as the focal point for the area in which capital improvements may be made and linkages with adjacent areas established. Based on the quality of existing development and the amount of new public investment occurring, an area called the Town Center (Figure IV.2) has been designated as the civic core of the CBD.

The Town Center area is defined as the area bounded by 3rd and 6th Avenues and E and G Streets, with an additional block attached that now accommodates the Bus Accommodation Center and the 7th Avenue/G Street garage. Within this area are numerous important institutions and facilities, both existing and programmed for completion in the near future, including:

- A mall along F Street (see discussion later in this section)
- The Performing Arts Center
- The Convention Center
- The Municipal Offices in the Hill Building

- Other buildings that are predominantly public in orientation, such as the old Federal Building and the old City Hall

These buildings are generators of pedestrian activity, in addition to the retail streets in and near the Town Center. A citizen report on the area noted that the selected theme for the area, "Downtown is for People," should emphasize the area's sense of place, its meaning to the people of Anchorage, and that both daytime and nighttime activity are essential to downtown economic health and social vitality.

Public Space System that Responds to Unique Character of Anchorage

The Municipal Planning Department has established a guideline that public spaces in the heavily developed office and commercial centers should contrast the large suburban and wilderness parks in Anchorage by being smaller and vibrant, with many activities. Surrounding buildings and streets should provide spatial definition.

The policy calls for urban parks to offer opportunities to meet and watch people and engage in a variety of activities, as at the front of the old City Hall, the Alaska Mutual Bank Plaza, and the old Federal Building lawn. A Town Center plaza, two other major downtown parks, and a system of vest pocket parks associated with viewpoints, transit stops, and historic buildings are proposed to augment existing public spaces in downtown Anchorage (see discussions in a later section of this chapter).



FIGURE IV.2

Town Center Concept

Urban Design Standards

In order to assure a consistent, attractive image for the downtown Anchorage streetscape, urban design standards have been proposed. These standards have three components:

- Uniform sidewalk, crosswalk, parking bay, and curb cut construction standards
- A consistent design vocabulary for Municipal sidewalk paving and fixtures, such as light poles, traffic control fixtures and signs, transit shelters, trash receptacles, and benches
- Flexible guidelines for commercial signs, street-level facades, planting, screening devices, and plazas, intended to allow variety within a general design framework for private development

Priorities for the Expenditure of Capital Improvement Funds for Pedestrian Amenities

The Municipal capital improvement program, Project 80s, includes funds for improvements in the pedestrian environment. It will be important to apply these limited funds to the areas where the investment will derive the greatest benefit, in terms both of visibility and of new private-sector investment that may be generated.

Therefore, a policy has been recommended that allocates funds initially to improve sidewalks on retail streets and in other areas with heavy pedestrian traffic. Sidewalks second in priority will be those linking the core area with existing, well-developed sidewalks and plazas such as the

Carr-Gottstein Plaza, the Captain Cook Arcade, the Federal Building, and others. Private projects in the blocks on the periphery of the core area are likely to include new sidewalks as part of overall construction plans; it is recommended that these privately financed pedestrian environment improvements be consistent with the Municipal Pedestrian Urban Design Standards.

Revision of CBD Zoning and Bonus Point System

The existing CBD zoning and bonus point system was intended to encourage the inclusion of urban design amenities to promote an attractive environment. However, as noted in the review of the existing zoning and bonus point systems (see Chapter II), existing policies have been ineffective in promoting active street-level retail development and pedestrian-oriented urban design amenities.

Therefore, it is recommended that existing ordinances be reevaluated and amended. These include:

- Height and bulk restrictions
- Incentives for various uses and amenities
- Distribution of conditional and permitted uses

The thrust of revisions should be to allow greater land use and architectural design flexibility in return for mandatory pedestrian improvements and "people-intensive" ground floor uses consistent with Municipal Urban Design Standards. Revisions of the downtown zoning and bonus point systems must consider the above factors, as well as changes related to parking and the economic impacts of such changes, to effect a proper balance between community and private needs.

Pedestrian-Oriented Retail Opportunities

As discussed earlier, the public participation program produced a strong expression of support for a healthy, diverse retail development in downtown Anchorage. Because retail is a key component of downtown vitality, and because of existing market conditions in Anchorage (see Chapter II analysis), the objective must be addressed on two levels:

- A strong magnet must be created through development of a major retail center in the CBD, including an anchor store and specialty stores, that must be tied into the existing pedestrian network and integrated with existing retail areas.
- The existing retail environment must be revitalized through the enhancement of the pedestrian environment.

The first element, the retail center, is discussed at some length in Chapter VI. To address the second element requires both physical improvements to the pedestrian environment and an economic development program to foster reinvestment in the existing retail areas. It is very important that both programs -- the new retail center and the revitalization of existing retail areas -- be coordinated and complementary.

RECOMMENDED OPEN SPACE NETWORK

It is recommended that existing open spaces in the Anchorage CBD (see previous discussion) be complemented with numerous additional open spaces, in response to needs expressed in the

public participation program. In order to gain the greatest benefit from investments in open spaces, it was felt that investments should be made in areas adjacent to pedestrian activity generators. These nodes of activity would be linked, in turn, by refurbished sidewalks developed as part of the capital improvements program (Figure IV.3).

Both large and small open spaces are recommended, each with a unique purpose and identity. The following discussions note the key major parks and "vest pocket" parks that constitute the recommended open space network.

Major Parks

Among the major parks recommended for the Anchorage CBD are the Municipal Town Center Plaza and F Street Mall, an historic village on Block 66, and a winter garden at the existing public safety site. In addition, thoughts are provided for methods by which additional activities and greater attractiveness could be provided within the existing park strip.

Town Center Plaza and F Street Mall. The public has expressed a desire for a "central place" that will capture the image of Anchorage and serve as a focal point. Criteria for such a space include:

- Location in the heart of the CBD near activity generators
- Visibility of and from many civic functions and buildings
- Spatial arrangement of existing buildings conducive to providing enclosure for plaza

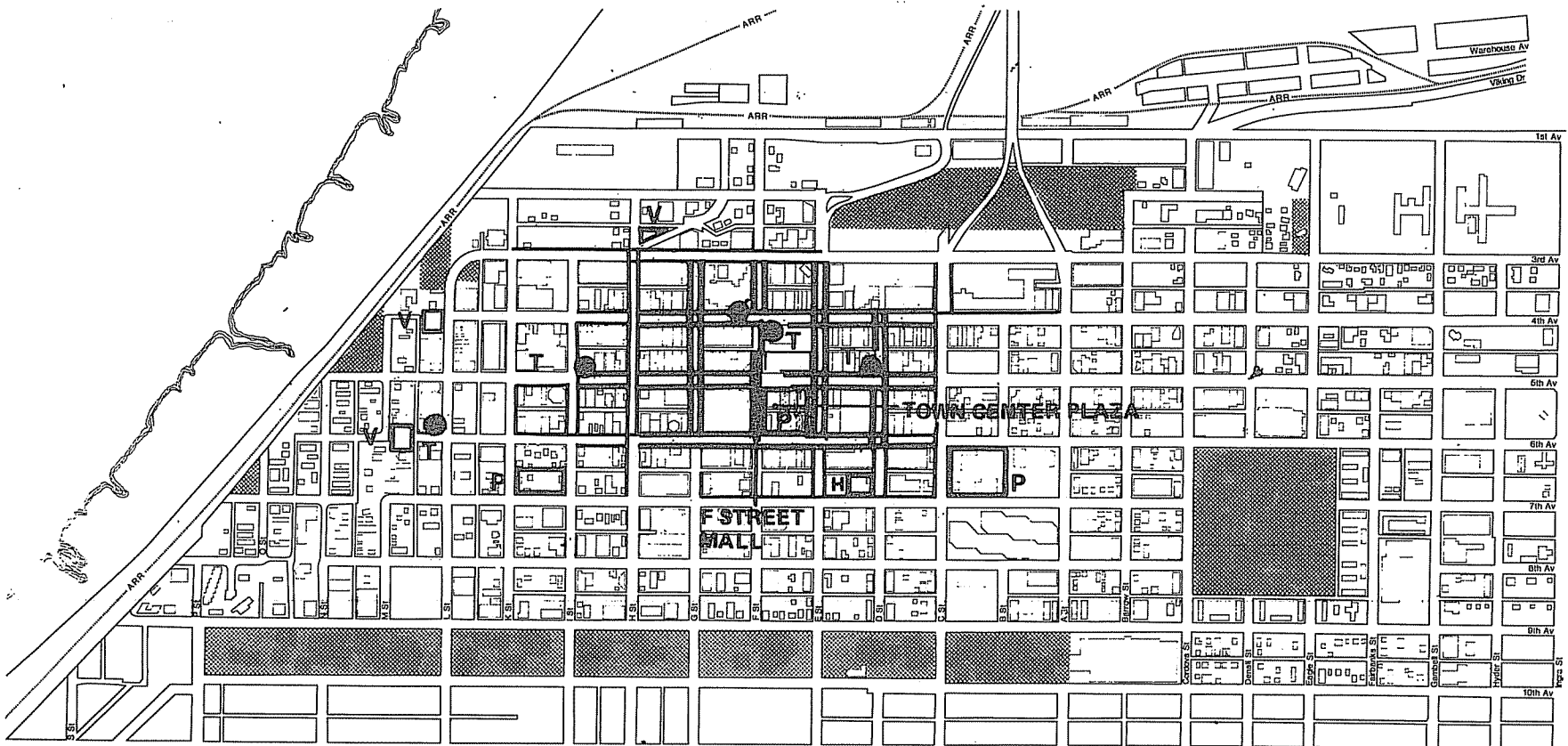
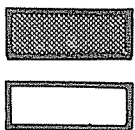
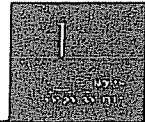


FIGURE IV.3

Recommended Park and Open Space Amenities



EXISTING OPEN SPACE

AREA RECOMMENDED FOR OPEN SPACE AMENITIES

- P PARK OR PLAZA
- V VIEW OR VEST-POCKET PARK SITE
- T TRANSIT PARK



1ST PRIORITY PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT*

2ND PRIORITY PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT*

*SEQUENCE RECOMMENDED BY
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

- Land area of at least one-third of a block to permit a significant landscaped area
- Solar access and protection from wind
- Minimal relocation impacts with particular sensitivity to existing retail establishments

In view of the amount of public support for an improved pedestrian environment, consideration was given to the concept of removing vehicles altogether from selected segments of streets to offer an even more generous and versatile pedestrian environment. The downtown Anchorage circulation system (see Chapter III) is heavily reliant on the existing east-west avenues between 3rd and 6th Avenues, precluding their closure. Among the north-south streets, those that provide access to points south of the CBD -- A (upon completion of the A/C Couplet), C, E, G, I, and L Streets -- are all fundamental to circulation. However, the intermediate streets -- D, F, H, and K Streets -- could be considered candidates for pedestrian malls, assuming that access to building service areas was retained.

The best candidate for a pedestrian mall was found to be F Street between 4th and 6th Avenues. Its advantages include:

- A central location in the CBD
- Proximity to numerous civic projects and historic features
- Alternative means of access to most nearby buildings' service areas

- The potential of strong anchors at both ends of the mall: the Park Strip and the 2nd and F Street historic area

The Municipal Town Center Plaza, an urban plaza composed of F Street Mall and Block 51, will be the focal public space of the CBD. It is bounded by the Convention Center, the Performing Arts Center, and the Alaska Mutual Bank Plaza. It will draw upon the Hill Building, old City Hall, the Federal Building, and the 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenue retail stores for pedestrian activity.

The F Street Mall urban plaza creates use relationships with the public spaces within the Performing Arts Center and the Convention Center. Protection from inclement weather should be provided, as well as outdoor spaces for art shows, concerts, rallies, recreation, and informal gatherings. A carousel, ice rink, and provision for vendors of food, arts, and other items have been suggested for consideration in the design. Reuse of the church on the southeast corner should be considered.

A great deal of public controversy has centered over the location and shape of the "Town Center Plaza." Initially proposed for Block 42, and then for Block 51, a full square block has long been seen as the ideal Downtown Park. The conflict is caused by the need to relocate several stores on Block 51 in order to accommodate the "Town Square." As noted earlier, street-level retail development is a key component of downtown vitality; the potential loss of a block of contiguous shops must be weighed against the benefit to be gained by a larger public park. One major consideration is that, if downtown Anchorage

develops as densely as some projections indicate, a park/open space area in the center of the business/retail district may be considered a better, more functional design, particularly in a context that includes the Performing Arts Center and Convention Center.

A phased approach to park acquisition and design is suggested. Properties should only be acquired after a thorough review of their ability to contribute significantly to the function of the Town Center Plaza and an evaluation of economic impact. The Municipality should first assess the need to acquire development rights in order to preclude unwanted development. Until these conditions are met, the retail activities contribute to pedestrian and economic activity, upon which the success of the park will depend. Steps should also be taken to ensure that the Kimball Building remains at its present location.

Westend Park. Because of the intensive retail and office development in the western part of downtown, consideration must be given to providing open space there. An open space area is proposed for the southern portion of Block 66. The Municipality now owns three of the lots in this half-block; consideration should be given to the expansion of the municipally-owned section to the west and east. The functions of this area would include park and open space and, potentially, the relocation of several historic structures.

Winter Garden. A greenhouse-like structure enclosing major public spaces is proposed for the site of the present Public Safety Facilities Building. The relocation of the Police and Fire

Departments is scheduled to take place by 1985. The site is bounded on the east by the Anchorage Historic and Fine Arts Museum, on the south by the Federal Building, on the north by three blocks designated for retail redevelopment, and on the west by the Nordstrom store. The timing of winter garden development should be determined when commitments to develop recommended nearby projects, such as the State Office Complex and the retail complex, are assured.

The winter garden concept is that of a major complex of indoor public spaces with an emphasis on horticultural displays, planting, and spaces for civic activities and informal gatherings. It should be integrated with Museum expansion proposals and the proposed retail complex; and it should also provide limited retail space. An existing winter garden development in a similar climate is illustrated in Figure IV.4.

Solar Access. The quality of all of these proposed major open spaces will be greatly enhanced with the preservation of direct solar access. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration be given to the mechanisms by which the shapes of buildings immediately to the south of these open spaces will not block the sun. Among the possible mechanisms to be considered include terraced building facades (described in a later section of this chapter) or a limitation of permitted building height. The latter mechanisms might require some compensation to existing property owners, possibly in the form of transfer of development rights.

Vest Pocket Parks

A series of vest pocket parks is proposed for bluff-top viewpoints, well-used transit stops, and

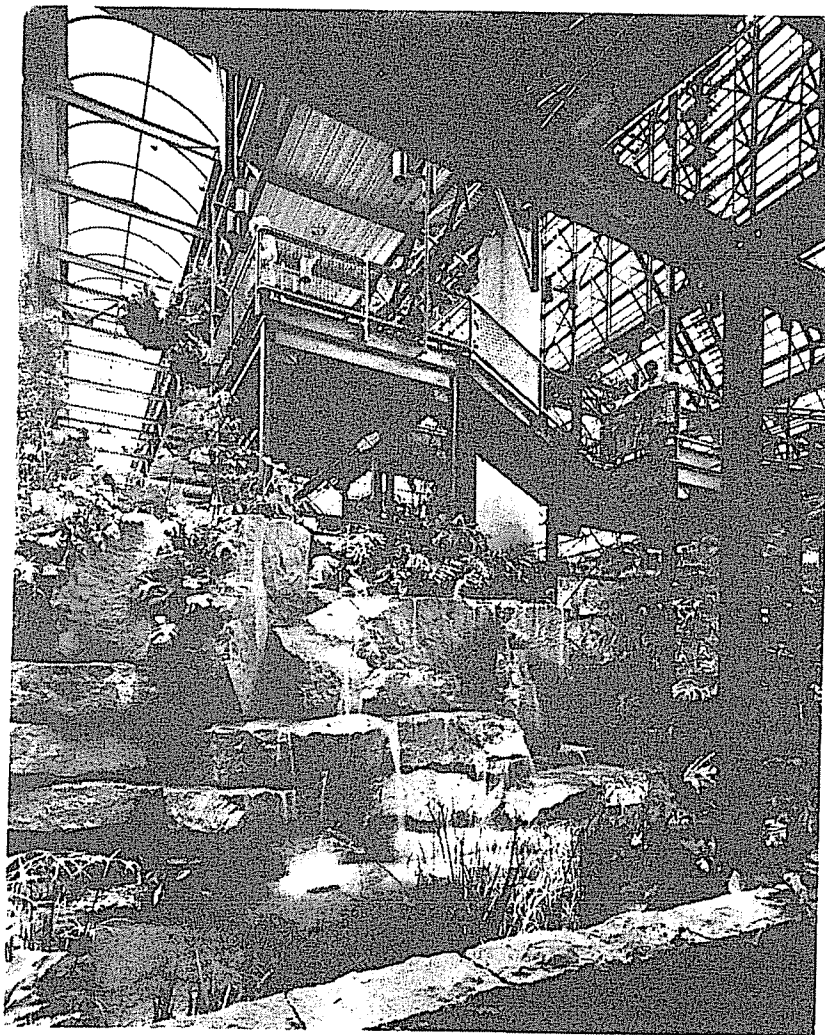


Figure IV. 4. Wintergarden concept features year-round landscaping within glass enclosure. Photo is recently completed wintergarden in CBD of Niagara Falls, New York (architects: Gruen Associates).

areas adjacent to historic buildings, following the philosophy of integrating parks with pedestrian-generating functions (see Figure IV.3).

Viewpoint Parks. A "view walk" on 3rd Avenue and L Street is proposed to link three new viewpoint parks with the existing Captain Cook Resolution Park. This sequence of vest pocket parks will offer views of Mount Susitna, the Alaska Range, the Port of Anchorage, Ship Creek, and Cook Inlet. Each vest pocket park will be developed within unused right-of-way or land already in Municipal ownership at the top of the bluff. Each should be designed with steps for access up and down the bluff. Each of these viewpoints should incorporate the following facilities: observation platforms with visitor information signs, planting, shelter, seating, garbage cans, and other park furniture. The locations for these viewpoints include (see Figure IV.3):

- Terminus of 6th Avenue at L Street: Presently this right-of-way is a drive between two apartment buildings. Its terminus overlooks Bootlegger Cove. A well-worn path exists where people climb up and down the bluff. Stairs at this point would offer safe pedestrian access to Nulbay Park.
- Terminus of 4th Avenue at L Street: This right-of-way is adjacent to 330 L Street, a historic building built in 1938 now housing law offices, and the parking lot for the 420 L Street office building. The potentially outstanding view is now obscured by trees and brush. The right-of-way of 4th Avenue and an existing utility easement may be used

to develop view platforms and stair access to Ederberry Park.

- Terminus of H Street on 3rd Avenue: A triangular parcel now owned by the Municipality is available for planting and viewpoint development in addition to the H Street right-of-way. A stair access down the bluff has already been developed by an adjacent office building. This viewpoint provides views of the port, Ship Creek, Government Hill, the Alaska Railroad yards, and the cannery and warehouse district.
- 7th Avenue and M Street: Access to the Coastal Trail via existing sewer easement that would be acquired by Municipality.

Transit Mini-Parks. Transit mini-parks are proposed to link transit shelters at well-used bus stops with landscaped vest pocket parks. In addition to park planting and benches, each transit mini-park should include a well-designed, spacious transit shelter, public information (maps, transit schedules, and routes), telephone, and waste paper receptacles. Locations for the transit mini-parks (see Figure IV.3) are on primary transit corridors. They include:

- Northwest corner of 5th Avenue and I Street: This site is near the Captain Cook Hotel, the State Court and office building, and Holy Family Cathedral.
- Northwest corner of 5th Avenue and D Street: This site is adjacent to the Rexall drug store, across from J.C. Penney and the Loussac-Sogn Building.

- intersection of 4th Avenue and F Street Mall: This intersection is adjacent to the old City Hall, the old Federal Building, and the 4th Avenue retail stores.
- Terminus of 6th Avenue at L Street: A transit mini-park is proposed in combination with the viewpoint vest pocket park, strengthening the attractiveness of each. The transit mini-park will serve workers in new office buildings in the northwest sector of downtown Anchorage. These include Resolution Tower, Peterson Tower, and 420 L Street.

In addition to transit mini-parks, the developments proposed for Transit Rider Accommodation Centers (TRACs) should include outdoor park areas to complement indoor waiting rooms. These centers are recommended for incorporation in the first level of two parking garages proposed for 6th Avenue and G Street and the block bounded by 4th and 5th Avenues and B and C Streets. Additional shelters should be located at offices and other potential high transit use corridors. Cooperative agreements for shelter location should be sought in plazas adjacent to the Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, the Federal Building, the Hunt Building, the ARCO Building, and Loussac Library.

Historic Vest Pocket Parks. The concept of historic vest pocket parks calls for small parks to be established in locations adjacent to older structures that may be preserved on-site. It may be necessary to purchase development rights to preserve these grounds. Mature trees and gardens can offer spots of landscaping and textural detail in contrast with new urban

development. Park development and design should reinforce the historic quality of the park context, possibly through the use of traditional planting, walkways, and seating area design. Proposed locations (see Figure IV.3) include:

- "Mrs. Martin's Garden" at the northwest corner of the intersection of 7th Avenue and D Street. This garden is the object of great affection among many residents of downtown Anchorage. It appears to have good potential of being preserved as an example of the residential scale that used to epitomize the central area of downtown Anchorage. The site also enjoys excellent solar access, one of the probable reasons that flowers in the garden are thriving. The site has many advantages. It is located in a transitional zone between areas recommended for expanded retail and office use, respectively. Thus, it is accessible both to occupants of office building (the Hunt Tower one block to the west) and to shoppers at nearby retail facilities (J.C. Penney and Nordstrom both less than a block away to the north). Finally, the site is along a key view corridor on D Street, for which pedestrian amenities are proposed. While the site is in private ownership, provisions could be made for its eventual transfer to public ownership; alternately, transfer of development rights could be considered for application to this site.
- The backyard of Kimball's Store features a garden that may offer the opportunity to create a special entry to the Town Center Plaza.

- The front entry area of the old Federal Building on 4th Avenue is a south-facing, grassy area that enjoys excellent solar access. The facility is an important element in pedestrian activity patterns along 4th Avenue. It is proposed that the front entry area be refurbished with additional lawn planting, paving, and benches. Care should be taken to preserve its open lawn quality.

Park Strip Improvements

The park strip, between 9th and 10th Avenues spanning the distance between P and A Streets, is the most significant swath of open space serving downtown Anchorage. It is not technically within the CBD Comprehensive Development Plan study area, but it nevertheless warrants comment because of its potential impact on downtown.

With the exception of a few pathways and a small garden, the park strip is used exclusively for sports. Soccer fields, baseball diamonds, swimming facilities, and tennis courts are the dominant features.

The park strip can function as a true "central park," as well as both an active and passive recreational area. It plays an important role in defining the southern boundary of the central business district and in providing recreational opportunities to the South Addition residential community, daytime CBD workers, and the entire Anchorage public. Because of its strategic location, it further fulfills an important land use role by delimiting the southern boundary of core business expansion. The maintenance of residential uses south of the park strip is an important, related goal of this plan.

The following landscaping and both active and passive recreational facilities should be considered for the park strip:

- Trees and bushes, although the open character of the park should remain and the view of the mountains should remain unchanged
- Mounds, berms, and undulations at the I-L Street couplet
- Active sports areas shielded from adjacent travel ways

In order to preserve the open space quality of the park strip, it is further recommended that building heights in the half-block immediately adjacent to the park strip be limited to five stories. Most of this property is currently zoned to allow a "base height" of three stories; however, through the existing bonus point system, buildings can greatly exceed this base height (see Chapter II). Therefore, it is recommended that, for this half-block strip, the zoning code be modified to set an upper limit of five stories for new buildings.

DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

A sense of place in the downtown area is greatly affected by the character of its sidewalks and streetscapes. A pedestrian improvement program has been proposed by the Municipality of Anchorage, based on alternative concepts for streetscape improvements that have been reviewed by local citizens and interest groups through the public participation program.

The program has two parts: first, the development of Pedestrian Urban Design Standards

and, second, the pedestrian amenities Capital Improvement Program. Their combined effects should provide powerful visual evidence of the commitment of the Municipal government to downtown Anchorage.

The presence of major improvements in pedestrian amenities throughout downtown Anchorage would improve the appearance of the city to drivers as well as to pedestrians. Retailers on these streets may initially be concerned about the potential removal of curb parking; however, they would be expected to benefit from the compensations of an improved pedestrian environment as well as from the availability of convenient off-street parking.

Need for Coordinated Physical Design

The pedestrian environment in downtown Anchorage was recently investigated as a part of a "Pedestrian Amenities Design Study" (Maynard and Partch, 1981). Many recommendations in this study are reflected in the Comprehensive Development Plan recommendations that follow in this chapter.

Decisions regarding specific designs for right-of-way pedestrian enhancements should be made only after thorough study of and coordination with possible longer-range circulation improvement programs (described in Chapter III). Changes in the physical design of sidewalks have implications on the travel-lane configuration. Therefore, so as to avoid any need for subsequent retrofit -- along with its attendant cost -- designs for pedestrian way improvements are most appropriate if they allow some flexibility in the roadway design in terms of such factors as on-street parking (if any), possible future changes in the direction of

travel (such as potential conversion to one-way service), and other factors.

Where major new public or private projects are proposed, opportunities are present for further coordination of urban design amenities both within the development parcel and within the public right-of-way. These are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Urban Design Opportunities

The modification of street and sidewalk configurations within the public right-of-way offers an excellent opportunity to correct existing deficiencies in the pedestrian environment that detract from the image of downtown as a pleasant place to walk. Some of these opportunities include:

- Replacement of existing traffic light standards with well designed and less bulky ones
- Delineation of crosswalks by distinctive pavement texture and color
- Introduction of coordinated graphics in street signs, waste receptacles, kiosks, and other "street furniture"
- Replacement of existing parking meters with models whose designs would blend more successfully with other streetscape elements
- Bus shelters integrated into overall design pattern
- Awnings and other design features that provide a sense of area and design continuity

The climate of Anchorage demands that some of these amenities incorporate special, climate-responsive features, including:

- Heating of bus shelters
- Minimal deviation from straight curb facings to allow easier snow removal
- Clustering of amenities in places near major building court entrances to allow features to be enjoyed visually by people inside these structures

Pedestrian Urban Design Policies and Standards

The "Town Center Report" specified several policies applicable to pedestrian improvements within the CBD, including:

- Means of clearing ice and snow to make sidewalks passable and to encourage their use
- Reflection of the "Downtown is for People" theme in sidewalk and street elements, such as plantings, benches, traffic signals, and public signs
- Overall unified design theme able to be extended throughout the downtown area

In addition to the "Town Center Report" findings, it is recommended that standards be developed by the Municipality to govern the physical design of the downtown pedestrian environment. These standards should not only pertain to Municipality-sponsored improvements, for which administrative adoption of the standards will be necessary, but

also to the street-level design of private-sector development projects.

Standards should pertain to three areas of concern; the first two apply to public rights-of-way and the third to private properties adjacent to public rights-of-way, as follows:

- Uniform sidewalk cross-sections, intersection crosswalk markings, parking bays, and curb cut designs -- to apply throughout downtown Anchorage. Although sidewalk width may vary, a minimum barrier-free passage zone should be maintained. These areas should be explicitly accessible to handicapped persons.
- Consistent design vocabulary for Municipal Capital Improvement projects -- the choice of paving type, transit shelters, street furniture, public sign designs, and light and traffic control fixtures should be made in the context of site-specific design of the first phases of the Pedestrian Amenities Capital Improvement Program.
- Urban Design Guidelines -- to be implemented through the CBD zoning system, in Title 21, for the spatial delineation of the sidewalk, at-grade parking lot screening, street-level building facades, planting design, commercial signs, and solar orientation of public spaces. These guidelines, when adopted, will assure the compliance of private development with Pedestrian Urban Design Standards, without stifling the design flexibility desired by the private sector.

Location for Capital Improvements

The first priority for application of capital funds for pedestrian area improvements should be upgrading of major streets in the core area and in existing retail areas. Sidewalk improvements in the blocks west, south, and east of the core area are included in existing and anticipated private sector and state building projects, and thus will not require Municipal capital funds. Second priority locations for capital expenditures are those linking privately developed sidewalks with the core area.

Funding Priorities

The Municipality has established criteria to determine location priorities for capital improvement expenditures for sidewalk amenities, based on the objective of enhancing the quality of the downtown environment along existing retail streets and adjacent to public gathering places.

A single block length of sidewalk was chosen as the appropriate unit for evaluation. The criteria included the block face's proximity to pedestrian activity generators and the potential of establishing linkage between activity generators. First-priority ratings were given to sidewalks adjacent to public facilities, storefront retail blocks, transit facilities, public buildings, and existing blocks with well-developed pedestrian amenities. Sidewalks linking these first-priority areas were considered equally important to establish a coherent design scheme. It was considered important that sidewalks on both sides of a street be improved at the same time.

Generally, first priority blocks occur along east-west retail streets and the Town Center area (Table IV.1, referenced to Figure IV.3; the recommendations contained in this table are meant to be general guidelines to the development of future pedestrian improvement projects. The actual design, locations, and features of pedestrian improvements will be determined by more detailed pedestrian design analyses). Second-priority areas for improvement extend the core area improvements to peripheral areas. In the southern and western peripheral areas presently undergoing new development, it is anticipated that sidewalk improvements will be included in private-sector development plans, in accordance with the Municipal Pedestrian Urban Design Standards. Future developments further east in the CBD study area, such as the proposed retail complex and the State Office Complex, may be anticipated to do so as well. The mechanism for enforcement will be the revised CBD zoning and Bonus Point System (see earlier discussion).

Intersection Design

Special design treatment of intersections throughout the CBD core area is an effective way to establish a strong identity for the area. Special district banners and kiosks could be considered, particularly within the Town Center area. The intersection design treatment may involve some combination of the following actions:

- ⊙ Replacement of overhead traffic light fixtures with differently designed fixtures that coordinate well with surrounding development and other urban design components

- ⊙ Establishment of a coordinated signage program, considering both design and locational standards
- ⊙ Reconstruction of sidewalks, curb cuts, and crosswalks to comply with handicapped-access standards
- ⊙ Delineation of crosswalks with unique surface treatment, possibly incorporating masonry and/or other color and textural elements, to reinforce the pedestrian orientation of the core area

Coordination of Proposed Improvements

Recommended pedestrian environment improvements must be coordinated with other recommended or committed actions. For example, transportation requirements may have bearing on available sidewalk width; and often the available right-of-way limits the extent of planting and other sidewalk amenities that may be incorporated into the streetscape.

With this in mind, it may be helpful to classify recommended improvements in either of two categories:

- ⊙ Standard improvements, those that can be accommodated within limited space, such as planting, paving, lighting, signage, and intersection crosswalk improvements
- ⊙ Special improvements, such as planting masses, benches, and other design developments, that consume more space and may require additional review to assure coordination with other programs

TABLE IV.1
PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Street	Transportation Pattern	Pedestrian Improvements (1st and 2nd Priority)
3rd Avenue	Retain present 2-way lane traffic and 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> E St. to L St.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk width:</u> Same, with parking bays for trees, etc.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> None</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> E to H</p> <p><u>Private:</u> H to L</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, lighting, planting, public signage, intersection crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Railing and raised sidewalk between H and K Streets on the north side. -Planting in buffer strip along parking lot on the south side of the street between H and G. -Viewpoint Park at 3rd and H.
4th Avenue	Retain present 4-lane, 2-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> C St. to L St.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> C to H</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> A to C, north side; I to H south side.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> H to L, north side; I to L south side.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same, with parking bays for trees and street furniture.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, planting, lighting, signage and intersection crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extend sidewalks at intersections and mid-block to create parking bays for planting, benches, etc. -Design integration with Old City Hall, Federal Building and F St. Mall. -Historic facade restoration between E and F Streets on the north side of 4th Avenue. -Banners and special district kiosks on corners of D, E, F and G Streets.

TABLE IV.1 (Continued)

Street	Transportation Pattern	Pedestrian Improvements (1st and 2nd Priority)
5th Avenue	Retain present 3-lane, 1-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> C to K Streets</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> C to H St.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> H to K south side; H to I north side.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> I to L north side; K to L south side.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, planting, lighting, signage, crosswalks and intersection improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Design integration with F St. Mall, Convention Center and Performing Arts Center. -Special district banners and kiosks at D, E, F and G Streets.
6th Avenue	Retain present 3-lane, 1-way traffic pattern.	<p><u>Area:</u> C St. to K St.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> D to H St., north side; C to G St., south side.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> H to K and D to C north side; H to I south side.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, lighting, planting, signage, crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planting in masses to buffer parking lots of drive-in bank at E and 6th, and at the YMCA. -Design integration with F St. Mall, Performing Arts Center, and Hill-Side Cafe. -Transit Rider Accommodations Center landscaped areas and pedestrian amenities. -Special district banners and kiosks at corners of D, E, F and G Streets.

TABLE IV.1 (Continued)

Street	Transportation Pattern	Pedestrian Improvements (1st and 2nd Priority)
7th Avenue	Retain present 2-lane, 2-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> C St. to H St.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> None</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> C St. to G St., north side.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> C to G St., south side.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, lighting, signage, planting and crosswalk improvements.</p>
D Street	Retain present 2-lane, 2-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes	<p><u>Area:</u> 4th Ave. to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> 3rd to 5th Ave.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> 5th to 6th Ave.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, lighting, signage, planting, and crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create parking bays for planting masses, benches, etc. at corners and mid-block areas, between 7th and 3rd Ave. -Special district banners and kiosks at 6th, 5th, and 4th Aves. -Design arcade to shelter or otherwise improve Penney's wall.
E Street	Change to 2-lane, 1-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> 3rd Ave. to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> 3rd to 6th Ave.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> 6th to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> South of 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planting, paving, lighting, signage, crosswalk improvements.

TABLE IV.1 (Continued)

Street	Transportation Pattern	Pedestrian Improvements (1st and 2nd Priority)
F Street	Retain present 2-lane, 2-way traffic pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planting in masses along bank parking lot at 6th and E. -Planting, benches, etc. at Kimball's Store historic vest pocket park. -Design integration with Convention Center and Old City Hall Park. -Special district banners and kiosks at 6th, 5th & 4th Aves. <p><u>Area:</u> 3rd Ave. to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> 3rd to 6th Ave.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> 6th to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> South of 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, planting, lighting, signage and crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Design integration with F St. Mall. -Creation of parking bays for tree masses and benches at intersections and mid-block, from 7th to 3rd Aves. -Special district banners and kiosks at 4th, 5th & 6th Aves.
G Street	Change to 2-lane, 1-way pattern with 2 parking lanes.	<p><u>Area:</u> 3rd Ave. to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Sidewalk Width:</u> Same.</p> <p><u>1st Priority:</u> 3rd to 6th Ave.</p> <p><u>2nd Priority:</u> 6th to 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Private:</u> South of 7th Ave.</p> <p><u>Standard Improvements:</u> Paving, lighting, planting, signage and crosswalk improvements.</p> <p><u>Special Improvements:</u> Design integration with vest pocket park on Performing Arts Center at 6th & G, the Old Federal Building Historic Mini-Park and new Transit Rider Accommodations Center.</p>

As with all recommended actions, development plans should be made on a site-specific design basis.

RECOMMENDED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The existing zoning and bonus point system, as noted in several earlier discussions, is less than effective in achieving a high-quality pedestrian environment, in addition to other shortcomings. Two alternatives have been explored:

- Revision of the systems
- Strengthening of the systems

Each alternative is summarized in the following discussions.

Revision of CBD Zoning and Bonus Point System

The revision of the CBD zoning and bonus point System may increase the system's effectiveness in establishing objective urban design standards. A number of potential standards have been explored, all of which could possibly be incorporated within the existing system, pending their discussion within, and endorsement by, the community:

- Adoption of mandatory Urban Design Standards as described in the Pedestrian Improvement Program section of this report; this might include additional requirements pertaining to mandatory ground-floor retail space in large projects
- Amendment of the CBD zone boundaries to enlarge the CBD core area

- Revision of the permitted and conditional use designations to allow residential uses by right
- Simplification of the height and bulk restrictions to allow greater design flexibility in the CBD, and to restrict height on those blocks south of major parks
- Change of the relative number of incentive bonus points provided for optional amenities; amenities that might continue to be optional, but reinforced through additional height bonuses, include residential space, plaza areas, transit facilities and indoor waiting areas, enclosed parking, and enclosed public spaces

Strengthening of Bonus Point System

The existing bonus point system offers incentives for private developers to include public plazas in new structures. However, as indicated by the type of development that has taken place since institution of the bonus point incentives, it is clear that the incentives alone are not shaping downtown Anchorage according to their primary intent. Observation of recent downtown development indicates that:

- Bonuses for public plazas have not often been sought. One possible reason may be that the current incentives are not attractive enough to offset the loss of building interior areas.
- There has been little urban design coordination between developments on adjacent blocks, with the result that those plazas that have

been provided are less attractive than they might be if equipped with landscaping, seating, etc.

Although other recommended programs and policies should have a major effect in improving the pedestrian environment in downtown Anchorage and in providing much-needed public plazas, the potential contributions of privately developed open space is considerable in complementing public open spaces and in establishing a precedent for development to come.

Within this context, a number of preliminary concepts have been explored with the objective of providing more specific information on the types and qualities of urban spaces that might qualify for bonuses. While the following specific types of open space amenities all entail public access to areas contiguous to public pedestrian ways, each responds to a unique situation:

- Stepped setbacks for buildings in key view corridor locations
- Solar-oriented plazas at the corners of major new projects
- Terraced facades for new high-rise projects in certain locations
- Reciprocal easements for major new projects spanning entire block faces

Setbacks in View Corridors. In order to assure that the continuing development of downtown Anchorage will be responsive to the unique views available, it is recommended that certain key parcels be subject to height, bulk, and site

coverage standards that are somewhat different from those that now pertain. New buildings in key locations along major view corridors would be granted additional "base height" in exchange for stepped setbacks at ground level that will significantly expand views toward the water and mountains. The overall building "envelope" -- or development volume -- would remain the same or even be increased over what is now permitted in exchange for the view-oriented plazas that would be created. Figure IV.5 provides a conceptual example of the effect of stepped setbacks, which would result in attractive widened sidewalks and plazas oriented toward views. Figure IV.6 provides a preliminary indication of some of the key view corridors that have been identified in downtown Anchorage, as well as the key parcels that would be affected by these new standards.

The preliminary investigation has shown the possible development or redevelopment of the following blocks to have significant implication on view corridors:

- Blocks 32, 36, and 37 along the 4th Avenue corridor
- Blocks 36 and 37 along the 6th Avenue view corridor
- Blocks 13, 14, 29, and 30 along the I Street view corridor
- Blocks 14, 15, 28, and 29 along the H Street view corridor

Several other blocks within key view corridors may be affected by future development, particularly within the part of the CBD west of A Street and

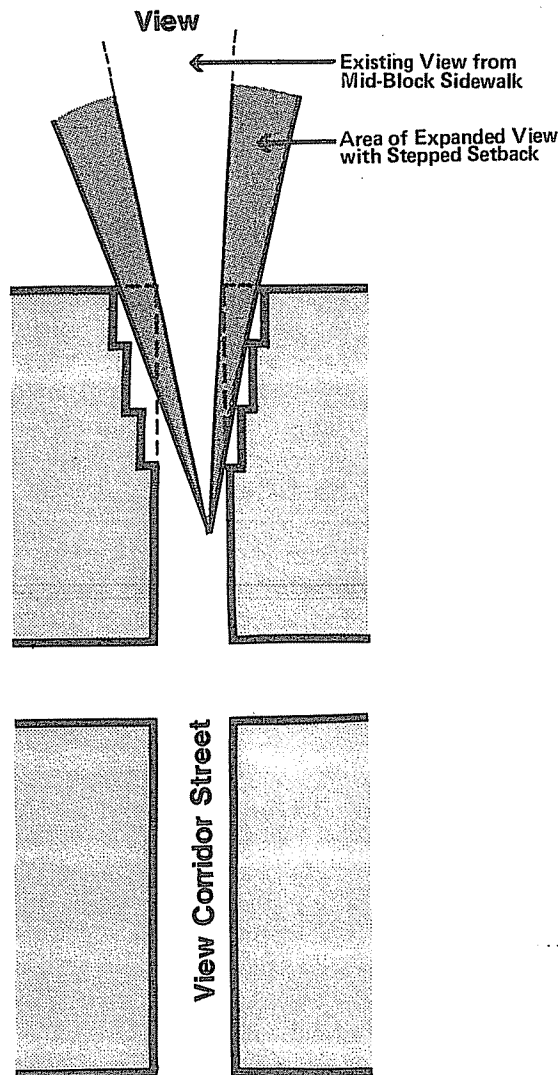


Figure IV.5. Concept for stepped building setback for sites at end block of key view corridors

south of 8th Avenue, particularly along those north-south streets slated for eventual pedestrian amenities. It may be prudent to apply the same standards to these areas in anticipation of possible future redevelopment.

The effective implementation of this recommendation would require a more in-depth study of significant view sites and the implications of proposed building envelope standards on potential developments and consideration of alternatives.

Therefore, it is recommended that one of two options be considered:

- Through amendment of the municipal code, a publicly accessible, landscaped, and usable plaza could be required in major new developments along the primary building facade -- with special emphasis on solar access, depending on configuration of site and building. Bonuses in terms of allowable additional building area would remain as they now are.
- The bonus provided for open plazas be increased substantially as means of "priming the pump" in establishing a tradition of publicly accessible plazas in the downtown core, with a reciprocal reduction in bonuses for other amenities that contribute less to the quality of the downtown pedestrian environment.

Solar-Oriented Corner Plazas. In locations throughout downtown where major private sector developments are proposed, there may be merit in considering the strengthening of current bonus point incentives for ground-level plazas at the

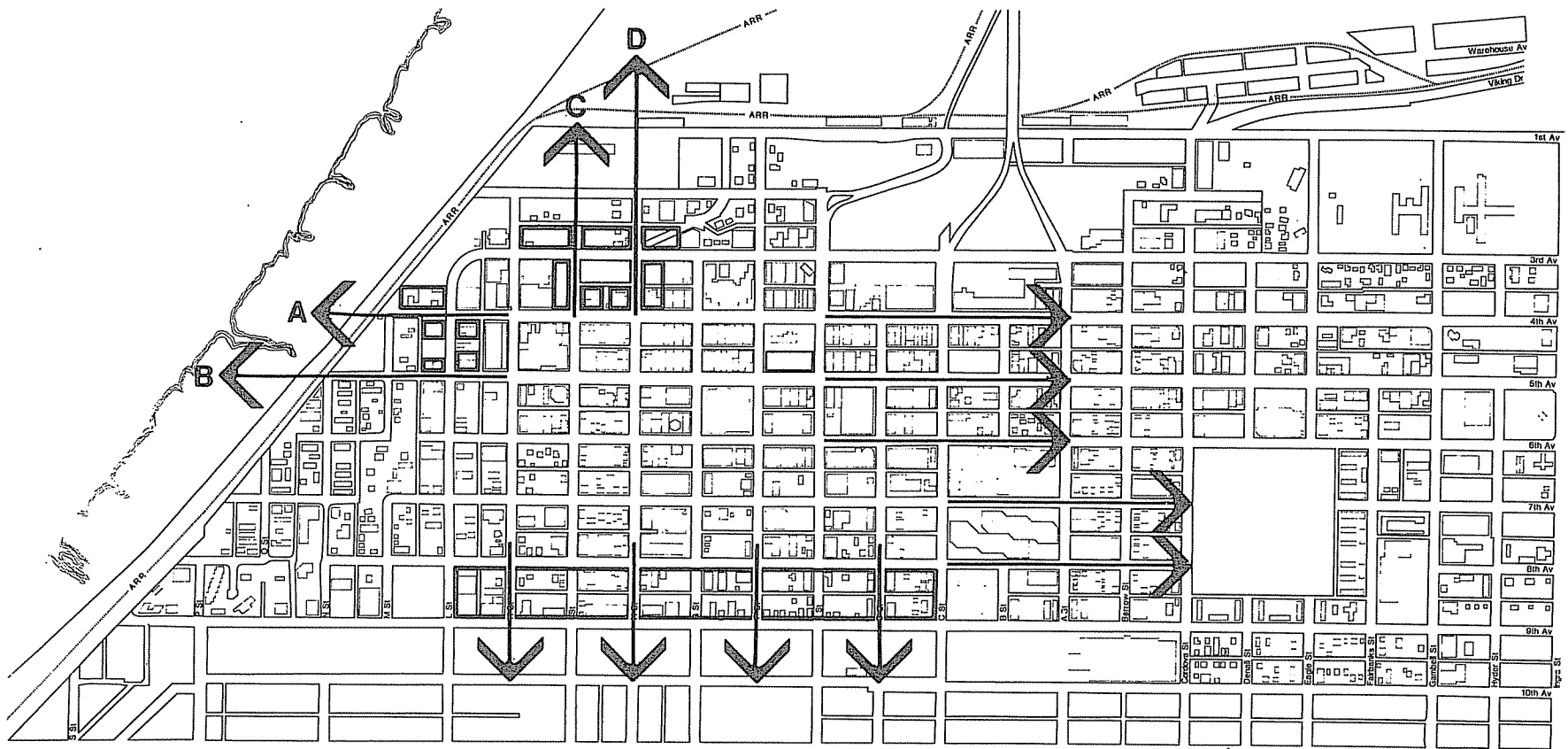
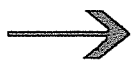


FIGURE IV.6

View Corridor Analysis



PRIMARY VIEW CORRIDOR

BLOCKS FOR POTENTIAL VIEW PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES

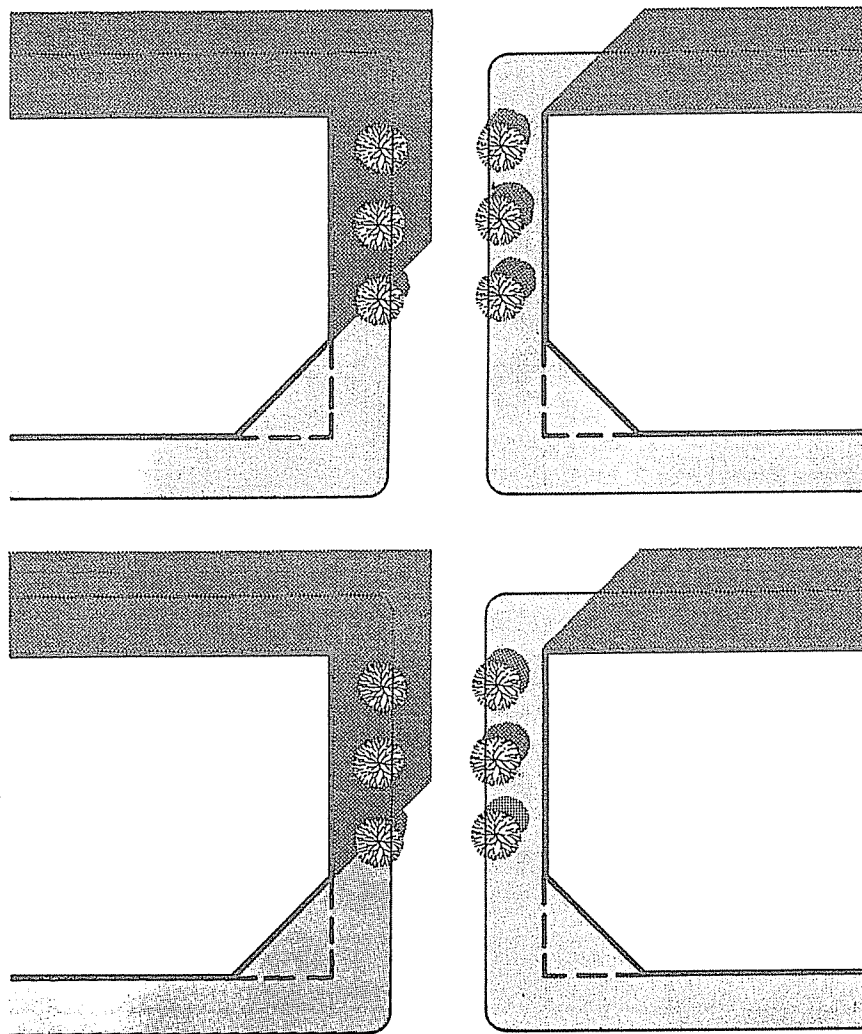


Figure IV.7. Corner plaza concepts to provide sun-catcher spaces with mini-park amenities

southwest and southeast corners of buildings that take advantage of solar access and that are readily accessible and visible to pedestrians. An existing example of such a plaza is the financial development at the northwest corner of 5th Avenue and F Street. Generalized alternative concepts are presented in Figure IV.7. It would be desirable for the plaza area to be a minimum of 1,000 square feet and for the plazas to include landscaping, seating, and other amenities. In addition, it would be desirable for plazas on adjoining corners to have similar physical proportions so as to convey a uniform spaciousness at each corner.

Terraced Building Facades. The existing bonus point system now encourages a building configuration featuring a base and towers. An example of this kind of configuration is the Captain Cook Hotel Complex, which features three towers of varying height and a base consisting of two floors plus an underground level. For the south street frontage along east-west streets (i.e., the north sides of buildings that occupy the northern half of most blocks), consideration might be given to incentives that would encourage a terraced vertical profile for new construction, rather than the base/tower configuration that is currently encouraged. With the stepped profile, significantly more light would be available to pedestrians within the public right-of-way. Trees and other landscaping would experience a corresponding benefit from the additional light and solar exposure. Figure IV.8 illustrates one possible terraced facade configuration that could be feasible for large projects spanning at least one-half of a block face.

Reciprocal Easements. For the north streetface, a concept of reciprocal easements would encourage

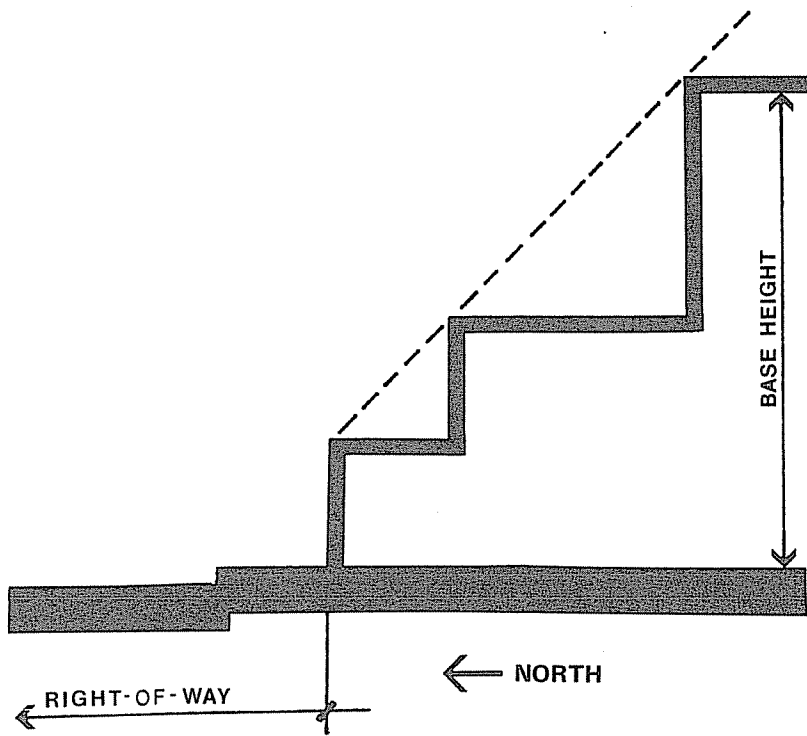


Figure IV.8. Terraced facade concept to admit more sun and light to pedestrian areas

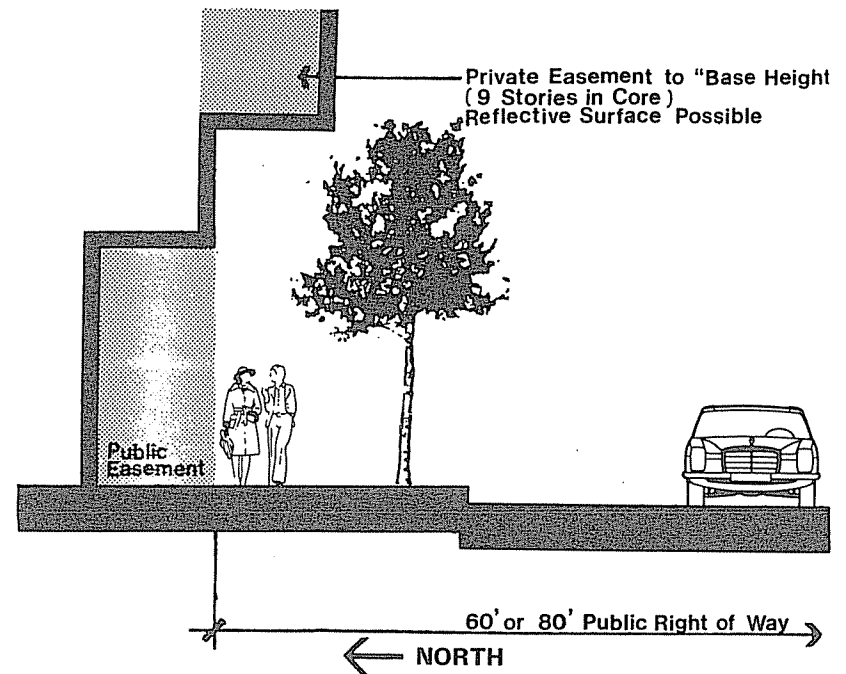


Figure IV.9. Reciprocal easement concept offering bonus space at upper levels in exchange for wider pedestrian areas with solar access

the provision of additional pedestrian areas in locations that receive the most light and sun. Figure IV.9 illustrates one concept that might be considered. In this concept, a property owner would grant the Municipality an easement along the property's southern boundary (north side of the street).

In exchange for granting a public easement at the sidewalk level, the developer would be allowed to cantilever the structure over the public right-of-way a similar width as the easement, up to the "base height" stipulated in the Anchorage Municipal Code Land Use Regulation. In order for this concept to be effective and beneficial, it could only be applied to projects encompassing at least one full block face. This problem and potential structural limitations may have to be overcome prior to widespread implementation of this concept.

Economic Development Program for Retail Service Business

Large new concentrations of office workers downtown will create an increased demand for retail services and commercial businesses. At the same time, the new construction in the downtown area is eliminating much of the moderately-priced retail space. Competition is therefore keen for the existing retail space and many businesses that may choose to locate downtown are unable to do so. The purpose of the Economic Development Program is to encourage the provision of retail space at street level, particularly storefront retail, throughout downtown Anchorage. Its goal should be the generation of a more diverse and economically healthy downtown. Increased numbers of businesses downtown will tend to increase

activity levels in the downtown core. The functions of this program would be to:

- Conduct market analyses and identify particularly good business opportunities.
- Match appropriate businesses to available retail space and to retail space provided in new development.
- Pursue the creation of increased retail space in Municipally-owned facilities, or in joint public/private projects. These projects already include the Block 66 Historic Village proposals (see Chapter VII), the 4th/5th Avenue garage proposal (see Chapter V), and potential use of the Convention Center Galleria.
- Offer business assistance programs that would include marketing, advertising, and design assistance.

GUIDELINES FOR SKYWAY SYSTEM INITIATION

Major new redevelopment projects offer significant opportunities to provide a new level of service to pedestrians. In particular, an opportunity is seen within redevelopment areas to initiate a carefully conceived skyway system that is fully integrated with, and supportive of, existing ground-level retail establishments. Advantages of a second-level skyway system include:

- Climate protection
- Convenience with grade separations removing pedestrian/vehicular conflicts

- The ability to tie activities together

Overall, a skyway system in Anchorage would make downtown more attractive for employees, for shoppers, and for visitors, even beyond its considerable functional attributes.

Downtown Anchorage is well suited to a skyway system for the following reasons:

- The compact size of the intensely developed portion of the CBD
- The cold temperatures experienced for three seasons
- The amount of new construction taking place

Compact Size

For a skyway system to be effective, destinations along it have to be within easy walking distance or else other modes of travel will be chosen. In downtown Anchorage, the distance between major activity generators in the CBD, such as between L and A Streets, is up to 12 blocks. While a continuous skyway linkage between such generators may not be realistic today in Anchorage, this is a feasible distance to be spanned by a skyway network, judging by the experience of other cities such as Minneapolis.

Cold Temperatures

In order for the skyway system to be used, its attractiveness over sidewalks must be demonstrated. The single most effective tool in this regard is climate control, which would be especially welcome from fall through spring in the

Anchorage climate. Cities with the most extensive and successful skyway systems all are known for cold winter temperatures. Experiences in other cities are covered in a later subsection.

Amount of New Construction

It is far easier to incorporate skyways in new construction than to retrofit them into existing buildings. New superblock-type developments proposed for the Anchorage include the State Office Complex, the mixed-use retail complex, several proposed office projects, and three new parking structures. All of these new facilities can be planned to incorporate skyway connections among themselves and bridging to adjacent existing structures where possible.

Experience in Other Cities

Other cities with extensive skyway systems include Minneapolis, St. Paul, Calgary, Spokane, and others. The Minneapolis system is the most mature skyway system among these and is also the most extensive. The system in Spokane is newer and is instructive primarily because of the similarities between Spokane and Anchorage in terms of population and other factors. Both the Minneapolis and Spokane systems have been studied in some depth in order to establish guidelines for such a system in Anchorage.

The Minneapolis Skyway System. The first leg of the Minneapolis skyway system was completed in 1962. In 1981, the Minneapolis skyway system encompassed 12 city blocks and totaled approximately 6,200 linear feet, including passageways through buildings. By the end of 1982, the system will have an additional 1,800 feet as it

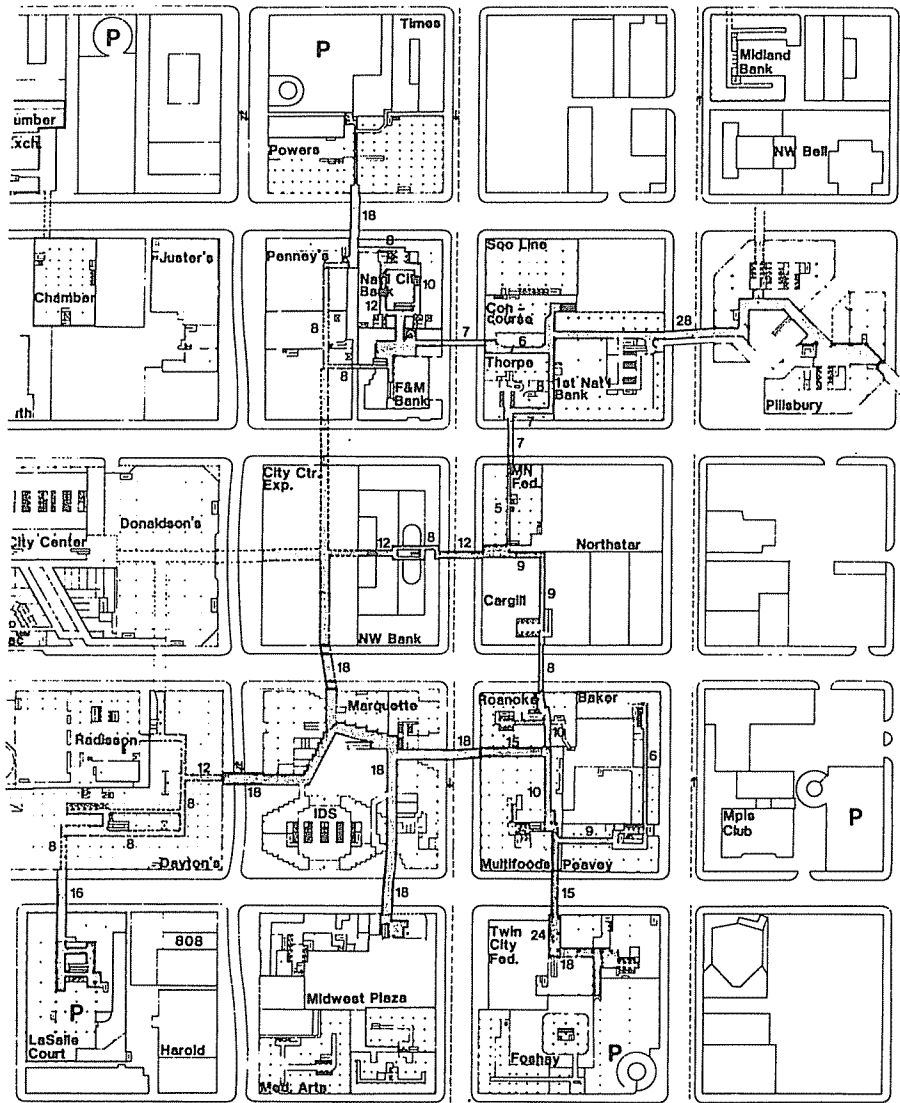


Figure IV.10. Minneapolis skyway system, 1981

expands into a new mixed-use center, to the recently completed Government Center, and to both new and refurbished office buildings at the edge of the CBD core. Pedestrian counts have indicated that the busiest sections of the skyway system have carried up to 4,100 people per hour and as many as 20,000 people per day.

About 42,000 square feet of retail space could be found in the skyway system in 1981, most of it catering to convenience services such as branch banking, photo developing, photocopying, and fast food. Little detractor from street-level business has been noted, though there is some negative sentiment among street-level merchants in blocks not served by skyways.

A plan of the Minneapolis skyways system is provided in Figure IV.10, which notes the widths in feet of the various skyway corridors and bridges.

The Spokane Skywalk System. The Spokane skywalk system was initiated in the early 1970s. By early 1982, it had expanded to encompass nine blocks and about 2,700 linear feet.

Since the system was developed in conjunction with a multi-faceted downtown revitalization program, the focal point of the skywalk system is a mixed-use retail mall linking three existing department stores. The quality of retail space in the Spokane skywalk system is broader than that of Minneapolis, with both convenience-type and high-fashion stores well represented along the skywalk corridors. As with the Minneapolis system, retailers at ground level praised the system if their stores were in blocks served by skywalk and were ambivalent in other locations.¹

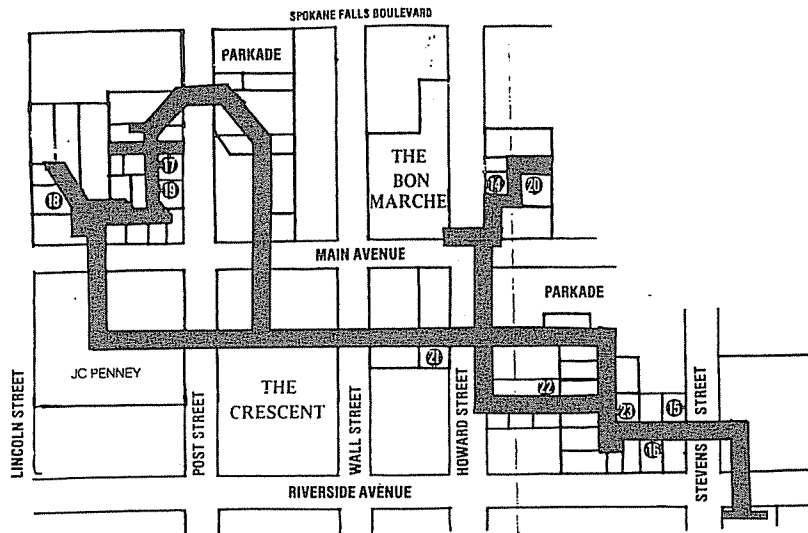


Figure IV. 11. Spokane skywalk system, 1981

A locally drawn plan of the Spokane skywalk system is provided in Figure IV.11. Table IV.2 offers a comparison of the systems in Spokane and Anchorage in tabular form.

Guidelines for Skyway Development in Anchorage

Based on study of existing skyway systems and on knowledge of conditions present in downtown Anchorage, guidelines for an embryonic skyway system have been developed. They include the following factors:

- Where skyways should be built first
- Linkage with the street level
- Design factors such as width, architectural treatment, etc.
- Implementation mechanisms

Where Skyways Should Be Built. The first skyways in downtown Anchorage should be incorporated into projects that are recommended for construction during the near-term planning period. These structures include the State Office Complex, the mixed-use retail complex, and the three parking structures proposed for immediate implementation in the CBD. Once this embryonic system is in place, additional linkages can be established between buildings already served by skyways and adjacent activity centers. For example, once the skyway corridors are established in the State Office Complex and the mixed-use retail center, bridges can be built to the existing J. C. Penney and Nordstrom anchor stores. The J. C. Penney store is already connected by skyway to the parking structure immediately to the

TABLE IV.2
SKYWAY SYSTEM COMPARISON

Characteristic	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Spokane, Washington
Year of initiation	1962	1971
Total length, 1982 (linear feet)	±8,000	±2,700
Number of blocks served, 1982	17	9
Corridor location	internal (climatized)	internal/external (climatized)
Type of retail development	convenience	convenience & fashion
Summer/winter use ratio	60% ¹	N/A
Architectural treatment of bridges	somewhat varied	varied
Visibility/accessibility from street	varies	good
Width of corridors	6-18 ft. (18 ft. current standard)	8-12 ft.
Population served ²	370,951	171,300

¹ Pedestrian counts in summer indicate about 60% of winter pedestrian counts at comparable hours.

² 1980 census for City (not SMSA); comparable figure for Anchorage is 174,431.

south. In this revitalized section of the CBD alone, nine blocks would be interconnected by skyway by the end of the Phase I planning period (Figure IV.12).

Linkage with the Street Level. A comparison of the Minneapolis and Spokane skyways has indicated that a skyway system is much easier to negotiate -- and more conducive to both first- and second-level retail business -- if there are obvious linkages between the two levels. This is best achieved at major courts, where stairs and/or escalators may be provided in a context that attracts people. The IDS Crystal Court in Minneapolis (Figure IV.13) provides this kind of focus and functions as the crossroads of the skyway system in that city. In addition, the effectiveness of the skyway system will be greatly enhanced with uniform graphics, a minimum of sharp angles within corridors, and minimal changes in second-floor level, ramped if necessary. Clear provisions for handicapped access to the second level should be provided with centrally located, card-key-operated elevators.

Design Factors. The width of skyway corridors should be based on projected pedestrian volumes. In Minneapolis, a de facto standard width of 18 feet has been in use for the past several years and appears to be more than adequate for current pedestrian demands. Though they were not subjected to the same level of analysis, the narrower 12-foot corridors in Spokane also appear to be adequately sized, given pedestrian loads in that system. Probably the 12-foot width would be adequate for most places in the Anchorage system; however, this finding should be confirmed through a circulation modeling process that allows for future increases in projected demand.

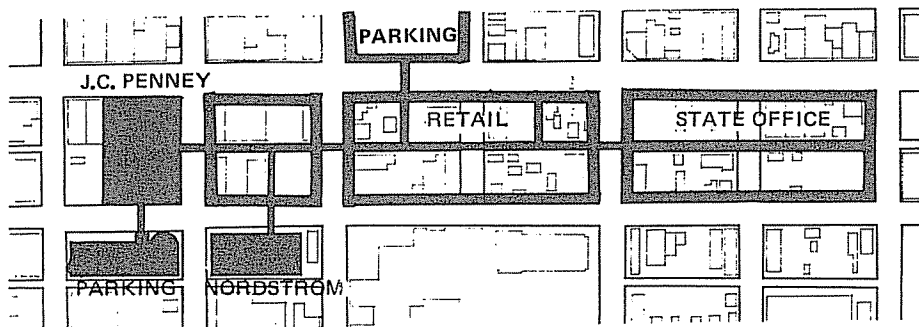


Figure IV.12. Blocks interconnected by proposed skyway system on completion of Phase I projects

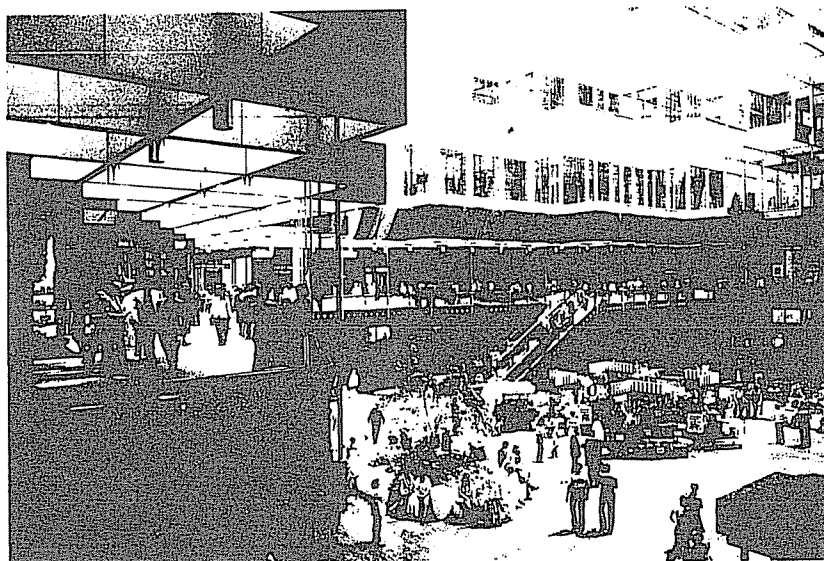


Figure IV.13. IDS Crystal Court in Minneapolis functions as hub of skyway system, the focal point of CBD, with clear interchange between levels.

Architectural treatment is a matter of local taste; however, some uniformity should be sought in the design of skyway bridges. Bridges should have an open feeling to allow views to be enjoyed, in spite of possible costs in energy consumption. The amount of glass area also aids in orientation and in relieving the enclosed feeling that might be engendered while walking through internal corridors. Views of skyway bridges from streets below are enhanced if there is no slope permitted as the skyway bridge spans from one building to another; any changes in floor level are better accommodated by an internal ramping system that would be invisible from outside the bridge.

Implementation Mechanisms. The Municipality should establish a special Skyway Advisory committee to review all proposals for skyways in the CBD and to oversee the design, construction, and monitoring of new skyways. Easements over public rights-of-way have been granted for free in other cities, in exchange for the public rights-of-way through privately owned buildings.

Experience in other cities indicates that skyway bridges can be constructed by the private sector, by the public sector, or by a combination of both. Maintenance is generally paid for by the adjacent building owners linked by skyway bridges; liability insurance is handled in different ways in different cities.

It is recommended that the Municipality establish Skyway Districts within the downtown area. Proposed boundaries for the first skyway district are suggested to be 4th and 7th Avenues and Cordova and E Streets. Essentially, the establishment of a district would require that new construction incorporate skyway facilities, in view

of the skyway's future role as a public thoroughfare. The bonus point system in the Municipal Code could be revised to require such provisions.

REFERENCES

¹Informal survey by Gruen Associates, January 1982.