

**DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA  
AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY**

**A report to the Columbia City Council**

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City of Columbia**

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The State Historical Society of Missouri was invaluable in researching this project and allowing me to copy all their archival photographs for the survey. Bob Garrett of Columbia's P.A.S.T., Ron Westenhaver, Dr. John Crighton, and Marian Ohman provided much time and assistance. However, the one person without whose wisdom, lively reminiscences, and enthusiasm this material could not have been compiled is Columbia's quintessential citizen, Max Woods.

## Downtown Columbia: An Architectural Survey

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## Downtown Columbia: An Architectural Survey

### The Downtown's Architectural History

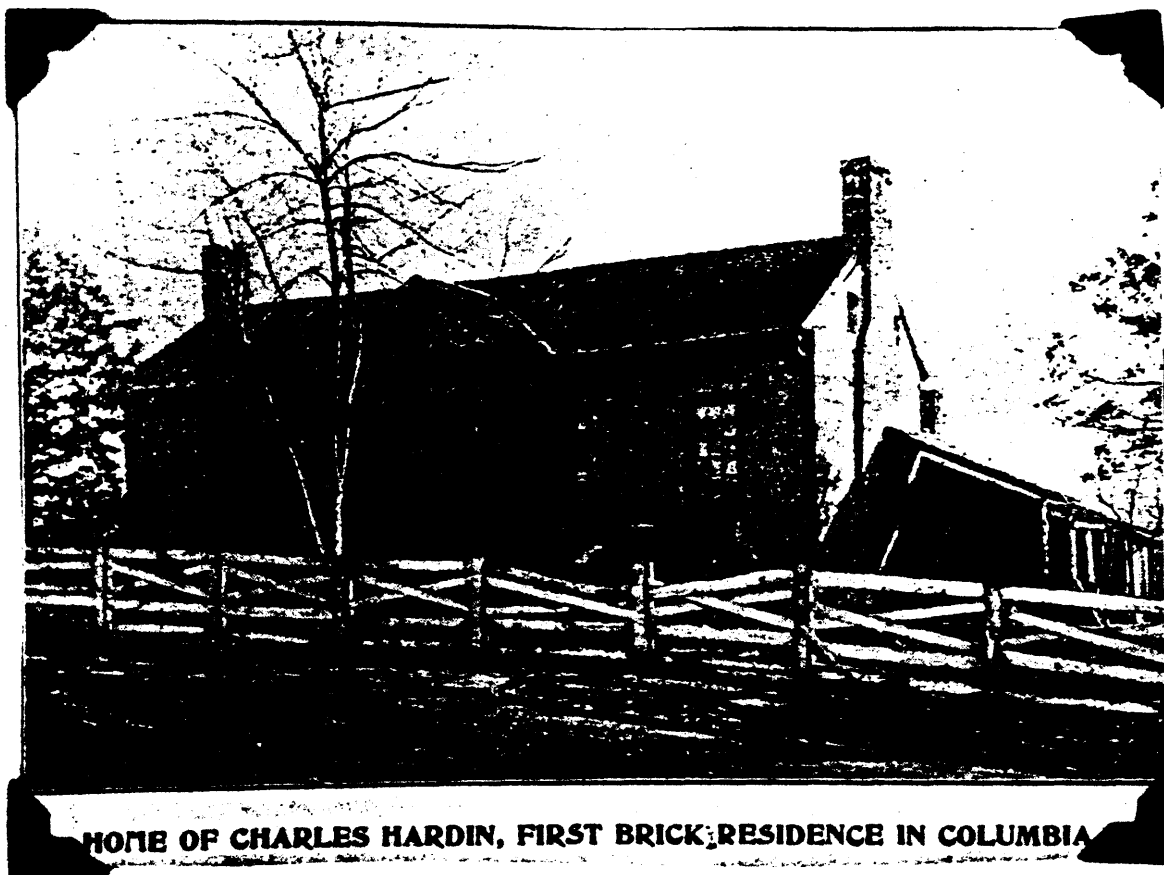
In the fall of 1818 when Richard Gentry built Smithton's first house, the present site of Columbia was a wilderness. Gentry was truly Columbia's founding father: the town was not even laid out until the following winter, and the first sale of lots was not held until the spring of 1819. There was no architectural pretentiousness in Smithton. The entire town, which was located at today's intersection of Walnut and Garth, consisted of crude log cabins housing about twenty people.

In May of 1821 after three fruitless attempts to find water, Smithton's cabins were abandoned and the town moved south to begin anew, at Flat Branch Creek. Thus small Flat Branch Creek, today concreted, sewered, littered, and neglected, was the Nile River of Columbia's birth. The original town of Columbia, Old Town on the plat maps, was platted around the log cabin of Thomas Duly at the southeast corner of Fifth and Broadway. This site today is occupied by a one-story brick building housing Columbia Auto Parts.

Thus Columbia's early commercial area began to grow at the west end of Broadway. The first brick house, belonging to Thomas Hardin, was built near the northeast corner of Fifth and Locust in 1821. This building was quite an anomaly at such an early date, when Columbia's architecture was still dominated by log and frame structures. The earliest business establishments were Peter Kerney's grocery at the northeast corner of Broadway and Fifth (today a Standard Service Station), and Abraham Williams' Dry Goods at the southwest corner (today Ed's Cafe.) In 1824 Columbia's first brick store was built by Richard Estes on the southeast corner of Broadway and Seventh Streets (today the Pizza Inn.) And so Columbia was well on its way to establishing a profitable business community. It was during this time in the 1820's that a battle of the wills was waged between two of Columbia's most prominent and unforgettable citizens, Dr. William Jewell and Colonel Richard Gentry.

Dr. Jewell wanted the center of downtown to radiate from Fifth Street, which at that time was the center of the business district. Gentry, on the other hand, wanted to establish the main business area further east in order to be near the new courthouse. The battle lines were drawn. That Gentry's view prevailed is evident today in Columbia's central business district location. Gentry himself built a stagecoach stop and tavern at the northeast corner of Ninth and Broadway (today Boone National Savings and Loan.)

This was perhaps the only time in Columbia's early business history that Dr. William Jewell's overwhelming strong will was denied. Jewell was to go on to become one of the major influences in the creation of downtown as we know it today. William Jewell was of Virginia descent and was a virtual American renaissance man. Doctor, lawyer, educator, statesman, architect, religious leader--these were only a few of the roles he undertook and in which he excelled. It was Jewell that stipulated that Broadway should be 100 feet wide so that livestock sales could be held in the street and carriages could be easily maneuvered around. Jewell advocated the construction of sidewalks and gutters in 1843 and was so best upon by property owners along Broadway that his life was threatened. However, Jewell's prestige might be illustrated by the fact that after all was said and done not one



• The Dr. Wm. Jewell residence, built in 1828.

property owner brought suit. Another Jewell reform that brought an outcry from the special interest groups involved was establishing regulations for the inspection of slaughter houses, tan yards, livery stables, and pig stys. In spite of heated and often violent threats of reprisal, the regulations were of course established. Jewell was also the major architect of the old courthouse and is responsible for the design of the building so that it was exactly north of the center door of Academic Hall at the University of Missouri, thus establishing the "Avenue of the Columns." Jewell also built his own residence in 1828. True to his own ideals concerning Columbia's center, it was located on the northwest corner of Broadway and Sixth Streets. Jewell's home was an excellent example of early residential architecture in Columbia. Built of brick, the two-story structure was in a classic federal-style tradition with a steep gable roof and windows with flat-arched lintels topped by pronounced keystones. This sturdy house, built with hand-hewn laths and solid walnut woodwork, survived to see its 100th birthday in 1928. At that time it was acclaimed as the oldest remaining building on Broadway. The house was then summarily demolished in 1929 for a filling station; the site today is a parking lot.

Even though Columbia began to build in brick into the 1830's, many of the early buildings were still of plain frame construction, especially the businesses off Broadway. Because of the hazards of fire, these buildings almost annually burned in conflagrations of great community excitement and were almost always replaced with brick "fireproof" construction. Ill. number 2 provides a valuable insight into the architecture of downtown Columbia in the early half of the nineteenth century. The center brick structure housing the Exchange National Bank and Gilman and Dorsey is a beautifully designed and well-proportioned building with classical lines. The fancy mullion windows and tall first floor windows portrayed it to be a building of some importance. In contrast to this elegance and extravagance is the simple house to the east, frame, gable roof, and, in reference to other days when Columbia was not quite so safe and civilized, sturdy wooden shutters on the first floor windows. This window also reveals a design element in the signage of the day: simple, straightforward, and unobtrusive placards which in no way competed with the building. The druggist to the east announces his business even more subtly, with a mortar placed on a wooden post.

The 1860's and 1870's saw a definite style of construction being erected in downtown Columbia. The Italianate commercial structure began in the east before the Civil War and extended to the wilderness of Missouri several decades later. A typical building of this style was the Boone County Bank building, constructed in 1868. Brick, three story, round-arched windows with prominent eyebrow window heads, a pressed tin cornice, and a cast-iron front on this building all combine to exemplify early Italianate commercial construction. This basic formula was to continue well into the 1880's.

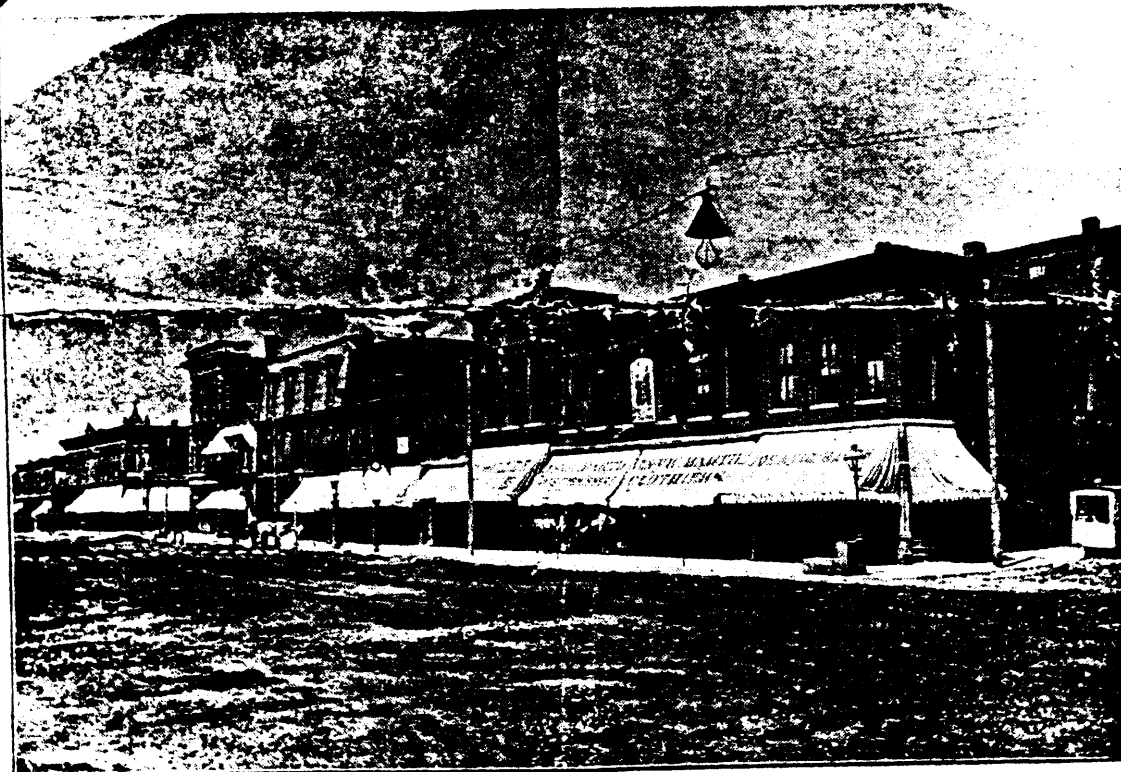
One of the most uniform design elements found in Columbia's Victorian construction was the cast-iron storefront. This storefront came in with Italianate construction and was to be the standard storefront design for well over half a century. The columns were usually cast in St. Louis and often had the foundry and location stamped on the base. When glass was placed between the columns a very attractive, tall expansive window space was created. These tall windows, along with the first floor arched windows present on the other facades, provided sunshine and light to what were often dingy working conditions. Broadway was once a solid street of these facades. Today only one cast-iron storefront on Broadway survives: the McKinney Building,



OLD COLUMBIA—NORTH SIDE OF BROADWAY FIFTY YEARS AGO

GARTH & CLINECALES, HOONE COUNTY NATIONAL BANK, T. B. GENTRY'S STORE, EXCHANGE NATIONAL BANK, GILMAN & CO. (BANK)  
J. T. SINGLETON'S TAILOR SHOP, DR. W. T. LENOIR'S OFFICE, G. M. BAUMGARTNER'S BARBER  
SHOP AND DR. S. H. VICTOR'S DRUG STORE





BROADWAY-LOOKING WEST.

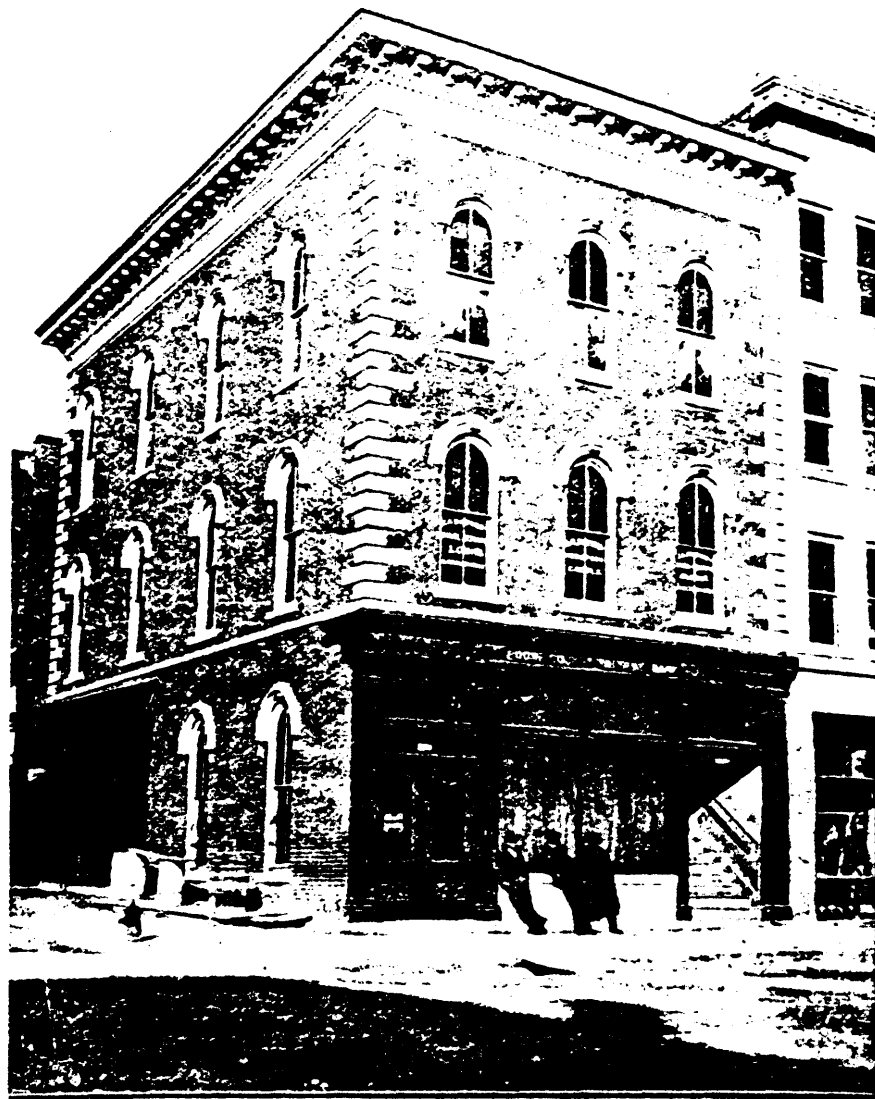
Note the cast-iron storefront, so prevalent in downtown Columbia in the 1880's.



BROADWAY, COLUMBIA, MO.

*John Charles*





BOONE COUNTY NATIONAL BANK BUILDING

and a more intimate acquaintance are accustomed to look upon Ohio  
at Cincinnati and Kansas

built as late as 1917. It has been beautifully restored and is now the home of Ansel Richards. A few others that are still intact off Broadway include the Columbia Art League, Horton's Antiques, and the Wabash Arms block (once the Athens Hotel.) These storefronts should be preserved. Bits and pieces of other old storefronts survive after drastic alterations: lonely columns can be seen at David Paine, Fox Photo, and the Acacia Lodge on north Ninth Street and Walnut.

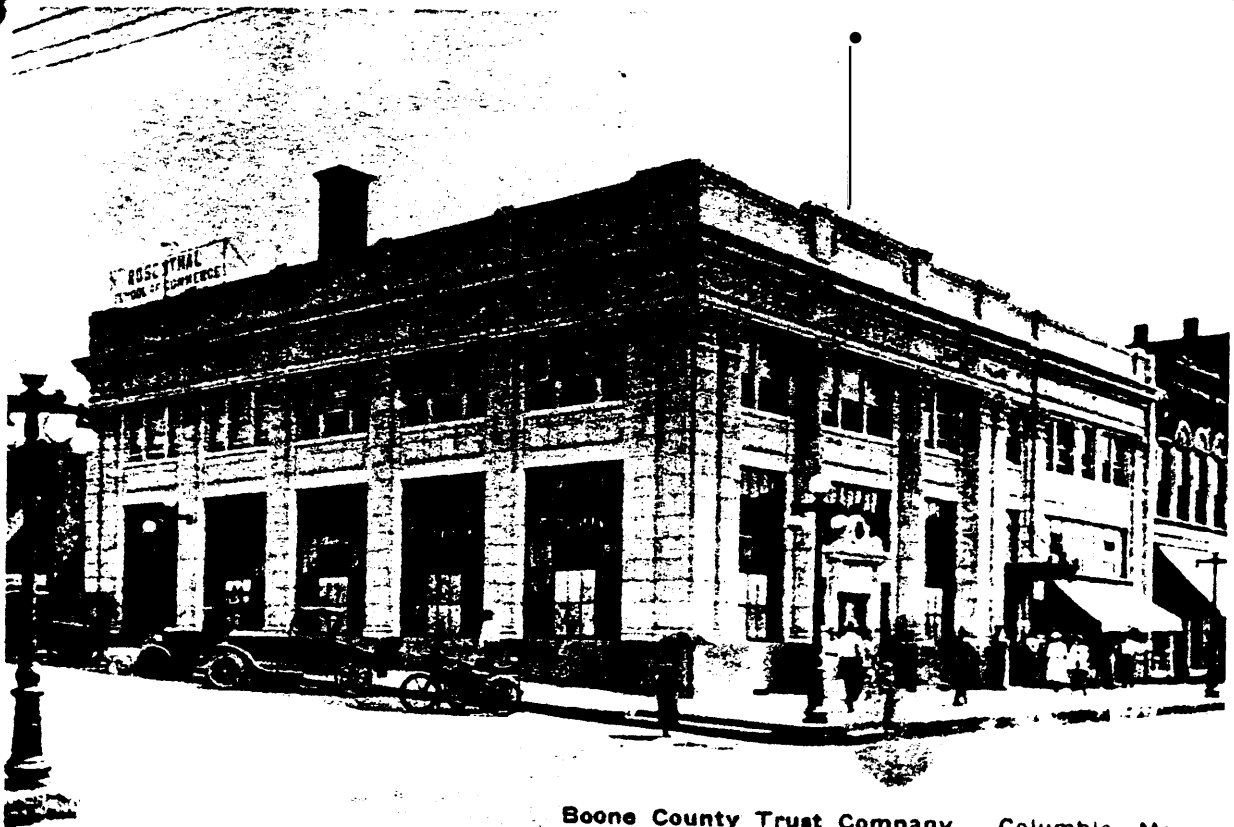
In the 1880's fires continued to destroy many of Columbia's pre-Civil War buildings; in 1886 the entire 900 block excepting the very western-most end of Broadway burned, including many buildings to the south. In 1895 several buildings at Tenth and Broadway on the north side burned; these fires give us the exact dates of the blocks that are there today. Through the 1890's a more ornate victorian influence was discernable in new construction: decorative details of stained glass, slate roofs, iron cresting, bevelled doors, carved stonework, and pressed tin gable ornaments exhibiting the building's name and date were common. Perhaps the most victorian of all Columbia's buldings of this era is the Herald-Tribune building (today Lucille's), built in 1893 by Morris Frederick Bell, the architect of Jesse Hall.

By the turn of the century a distinct classicizing influence was beginning to be seen in downtown Columbia. The new century brought in even more income for Columbia merchants and expensive materials such as cut stone and decorative brick were used. The Parker Brothers furniture store (today Harzfeld's) is a good example of this transition style. Built in 1906, the fancy cut stone ornamentation and decorative cornice treatment have been applied to red brick and the cast-iron front of the old school. As the first decade wore on, bricks of different eo10rs and textures began to be seen, combined with such classical elements as scroll-like supports and square window treatments (the Kress Building, 1909, today Mehornay's Furniture.) Around 1910 terra cotta came into use and from that point on was to dominate architectural detailing in Columbia well into the 1930's. One of Columbia's finest examples of commercial architecture in 1910 is the C.B. Miller building with its outstanding terra cotta crnamentattcn, made by Jim Ryan and Steve Blue of Columbia's Stewart Bros. Construction Company.

The late teens, 20's, and 30's saw little real change in Columbia's architectural styling from 1910. A period of great wealth and rapid growth, it was during these three decades that Columbia's most monumental civic, commercial, and theatrical structures were erected.

The Boone County Bank, constructed of Carthage stone and built in 1916 by the Chicago firm of Weary and Alford, received nationwide acclaim as lithe best among current notable architecture! in 1924. The Daniel Boone Tavern was constructed in 1917, and in the 20's fine terra cotta work reached its peak in the Boone National Savings and Loan building (S.L. Shepherd, 1921), and in the Central Dairy Building (Harry Satterlee Bill, 1927.)

Terra cotta became the predominant mode of decoration in the art deco style. Two fine art deco buildings in downtown Columbia include the present Record Bar building and the Novus Shop. The fine polychromatic terra cotta decoration on the Record Bar was placed on an older building as part of a new façade in the early 30's. The Novus Shop on south Ninth Street, built in 1936, perhaps best exemplifies the sunrise and floriated patterns of the art deco. The style of Beaux-Arts Classicism was also exhibited in this era in two Columbia landmarks: the Municipal Building (1932) and the Tiger Hotel (1926.) The Municipal Building, with its decorative stonework and classical lines has been called Columbia's "capitoline hill." The Tiger Hotel still sports much of its original interior Beaux-Arts decoration.



Boone County Trust Company. Columbia, Mo.



Also during the early teens architecture with a new purpose was being introduced to downtown Columbia: entertainment. The new theatres and moving picture houses were enthusiastically received. The Columbia Theatre, built in 1906, was one of the first of such buildings and was eventually followed by such fine buildings as the Hall Theatre, the Missouri Theatre, and the Varsity Theatre. It was about this time too that the automobile came, and Broadway sported a line of roadsters parked diagonally down its center line. With the cars came garages, and many corner sites were cleared of their older structures for gas stations and repair shops. The building perhaps best exemplifying this service station ethic was the Alton Garage, built in 1927 and exhibiting small terra cotta decoration at the cornice level (today Bullwinkle's.)

#### From the 40's to today

The 1940's saw a great change taking place in downtowns throughout the nation. The war brought a need for austerity, and few buildings were constructed during the early 40's. This trend was completely reversed with the post-war boom. With great migrations of families now turning to urban centers, small towns with attractions such as industry or educational facilities experienced an unprecedented population boom, a boom which many of the small traditional downtown areas were not capable of handling. A new demand for services coupled with new opportunities for profit often tended to completely submerge design, quality, or service considerations, all of primary concern in the old school of business, in a rush for the dollar.

In this period of rapid growth older downtowns began to deteriorate. Victorian buildings began to be considered unsightly. The hodge-podge face of Main Street, which by now consisted of buildings of various styles and traditions, many in deteriorated states, and many sporting 1940's neon signs and other unsightly additions, was not attractive. In the name of modernization many beautiful buildings were defaced and disfigured with new storefronts and additions such as shingle or concrete canopies, meant to make Main Street more consistent in design.

Another important change taking place in the 1950's and continuing on into the 60's was a sweeping change in ownership. It was during these decades that buildings began to lose their original ownerships, often sinking into second or third generation estates or being sold to owners from outside the community. These new owners did not have a strong sense of responsibility, pride, or tradition for the buildings their fathers had built, and neglect and haphazard remodelling and maintenance was the result. This new ownership was often coupled with an increase in real estate values in older downtown areas--an increase that did not always reflect actual rent and realistic square-footage leasing. Therefore the paradox arose of having the land upon which the older building rested being worth far more than the building itself.

And, with the 60's, of course came the great competition--first shopping centers and then shopping malls. The advantages of unlimited parking and new, shiny, easily accessible shopping areas put the older downtowns at a distinct disadvantage. By this time all of the factors mentioned: neglect, deterioration of the buildings themselves, a lack of cooperation between the various owners and proprietors, and an ever-increasing confusion between these proprietors as to handle the predatory malls--came close to destroying many of America's traditional central business districts. Many downtown areas, in a feverish rush to compete and to play the shopping mall game, destroyed

the very resource that was capable of saving them: their distinctive architectural tradition. And so black asphalt contributed even more to a shabby "old" downtown image. This decline, with its various symptoms, can still be seen happening today, all over the country.

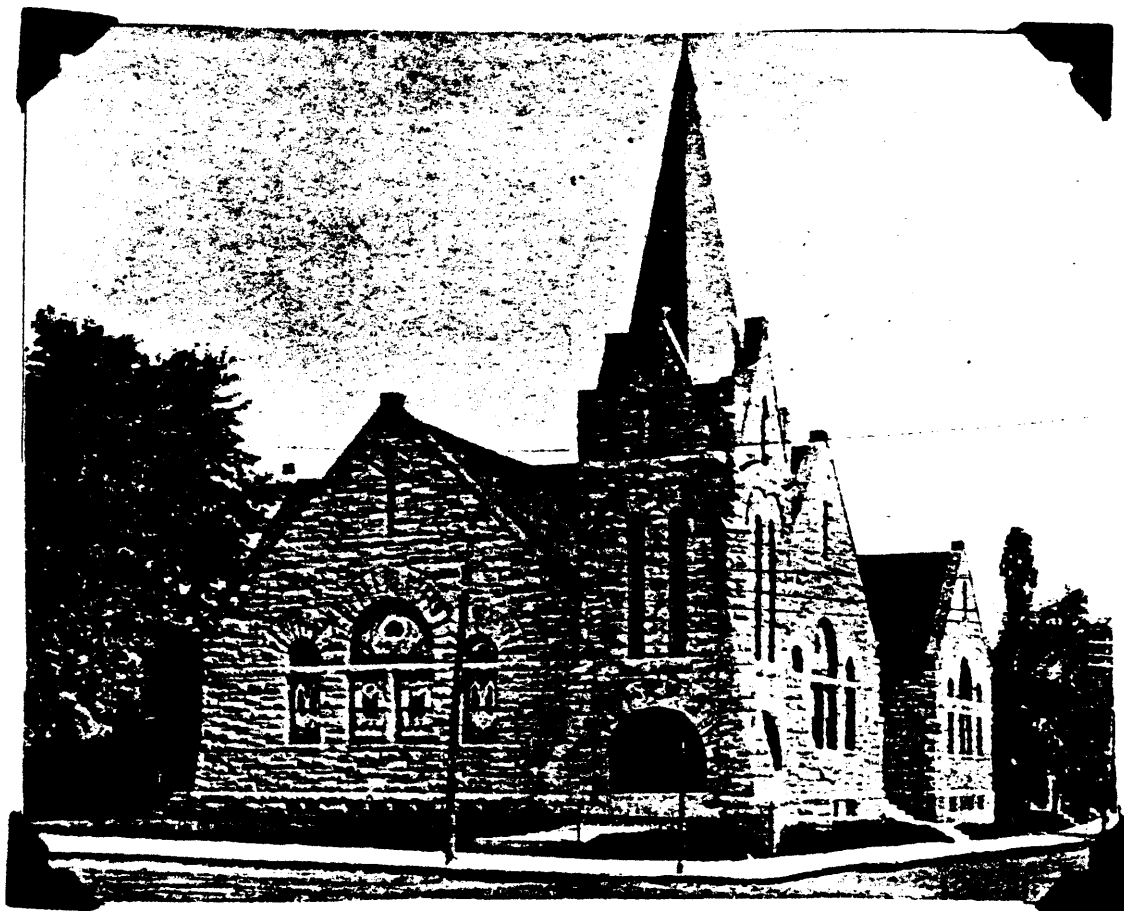
Columbia was to follow all of these trends, and, because of the colleges here, received even bigger doses than the average community. By 1940 the face of downtown Columbia had been drastically altered from its victorian days. Many of the nineteenth century buildings survived but were radically changed. Many new facades had been placed over the old round-arched storefronts (Neate's, 1927; Mueller's Florists, 1930). Few of the original cast-iron storefronts remained. In the early 1940's new flashy signs had appeared; although new construction was scarce during the war era, the streamlined shiny chrome and neon sign of Max Gill's pharmacy typifies the 1940's design element.

After the war downtown Columbia changed even more. As has been stated, the single-most disastrous influence on areas of historical value has proven to be an uncontrolled sudden population growth, almost always accompanied by an unprecedented boom in real estate development and, subsequently, a tremendous injection of money into the business market. Columbia went from a provincial town of 14,967 in 1930 to a bursting-at-the-seams educational and medical center of 36,650 in 1960. The largest increase occurred between 1940, population 18,399 and 1950, when the population nearly doubled to 31,397.

Sociological, economical, and environmental factors all contributed to the loss or drastic alteration of many of downtown Columbia's old commercial buildings. Many older structures could not compete in a real estate market calling for more space and astronomical square footage rents. Columbia began to lose. In 1957 the First Baptist Church, built in 1891, was demolished, including the famous Prewitt stained glass windows, for a new church. In 1966 the Presbyterian Church, another fine Romanesque 1894 building of native stone was demolished for a parking lot. The Presbyterians then built directly north demolishing one of Columbia's most fabulous residences, the Garth home. In 1973 the M.E. Church South was demolished for a donut shop and pizza parlor.

Drastic alterations on the exterior and interior destroyed craftsmanship worth thousands of dollars: in 1968 Boone County Bank's marble floors, black walnut panelling, chandeliers, and solid bronze doors were all torn out for red carpet and black and white wallpaper. Many buildings had the old round-arched windows filled in, and the decorative cornice removed (The Stephens Endowment Building, Greenspon's.) Sandblasting without professional guidance completely destroyed the brick on several buildings (Columbia Mercantile, Daniel Boone Tavern.) Second stories, when they became difficult to maintain, were simply whacked off (The Cheese Villa building, Best Tapes and Record building.) And, in an age where money became the predominant concern, there was no place for fantasy. Even the castles could fall, and they did: in 1972 the magnificent Seth Thomas clock and tower were removed from the Herald Tribune building.

In the late 1960's when victorian architecture came to be considered unsightly and outdated, Columbia's canopy was erected in an effort to "modernize." The canopy provided a concrete, solid barrier whose main purpose was to establish some order and consistency to Columbia's main street--a main street that had become a patchwork of unmatched first floors, deteriorating second floors, tacky signs, and boarded up windows. The new canopy effectively enabled the merchant to concentrate on only the lower floor of his building, both inside and out. Unity of design, architectural appreciation, pride of ownership--all were abandoned in a rush to multiply net sales.



Above, the First Presbyterian Church. Below, the Garth Home.



In constructing new storefronts merchants did not bother to coordinate design or aesthetic values with the upper stories. The canopy also allowed the property owner to neglect his second story facade and allow it to disintegrate; when repair work was done it was often done without any design consideration and often actually depreciated the value of his building in aesthetic and therefore monetary terms. When tragedy struck and a building burned the canopy allowed the contractor to completely ignore aesthetic and architectural design and simply construct a one-story plain brick storefront. Consequently new buildings on Broadway erected since the canopy are now at a distinct disadvantage to the older structures. These buildings, when placed in a block of two-story structures, can completely destroy the block's sense of rhythm and proportion. They do not function as architectural entities but rely on the canopy for their existence.

While the buildings in downtown Columbia changed, Columbia's dedicated "old guard" began to disappear. Men such as Odon Guitar, W.H. Hetzler, Emmett Clinkscales, W.L. Stephens and C.B. Miller not only were successful businessmen but were strong community leaders and philanthropists. The Columbia Commercial Club was established in the early 1900s: its sole purpose was to promote Columbia and to contribute to its growth and well-being. Perhaps this example is most indicative of the changes Columbia has undergone: the classical 1910 mansion and home of the Columbia Commercial Club is now the site of a Jack-in-the-Box.

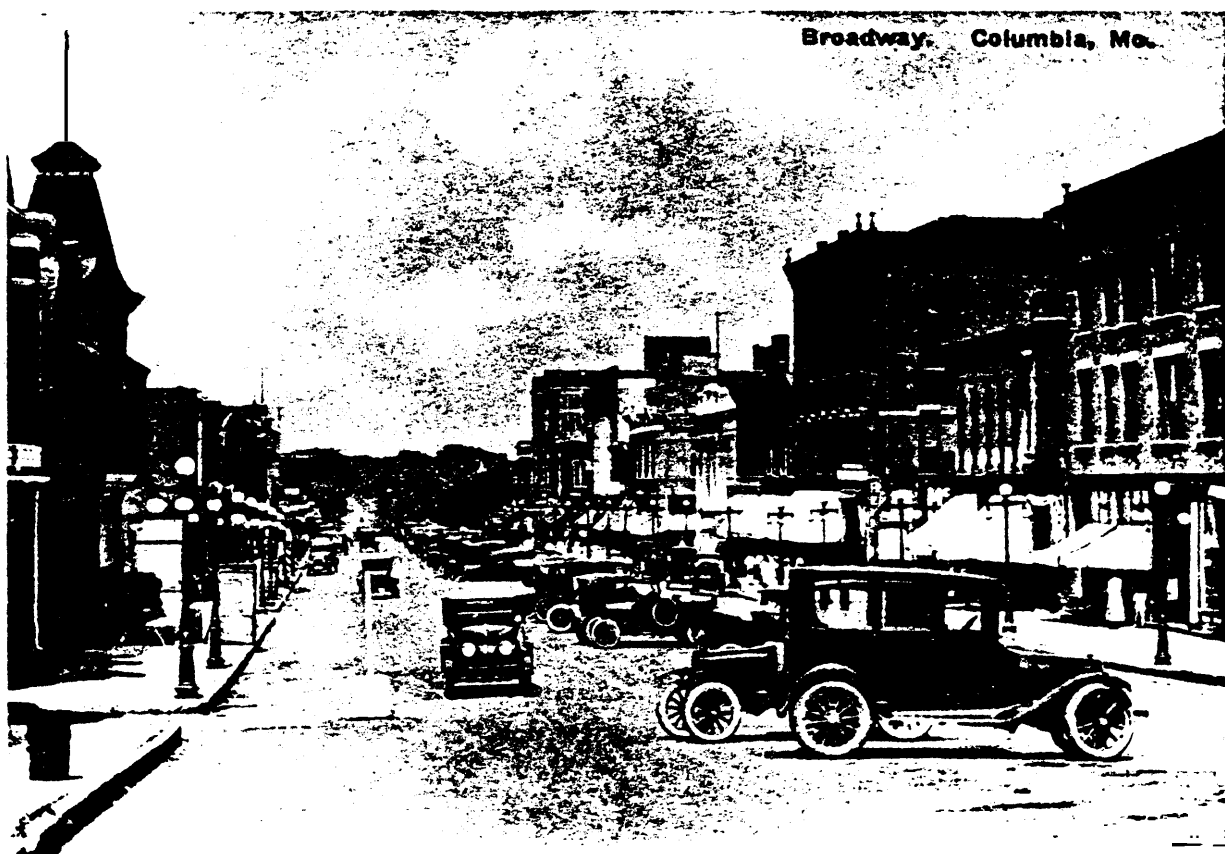
When these great men died there were no other civic-minded leaders quite like them to take their place. Consequently absentee ownership and properties administered through estates are not in touch with the working machinations of a healthy business community. Younger men in the families tended to join with the new league of outside developers/entrepreneurs in investing in more profitable enterprises such as subdivision speculation and shopping center/mall development. This dearth of natives left Columbia with an ever-increasing loss of identity which continues to this day.

Columbia as an individual entity, as having a "history, an identity, a culture, and a heritage of its own, separate and apart from the colleges, has become submerged. Stephens College and the University cannot be expected to consider Columbia's architectural heritage as important--therefore all of Columbia's historic properties (such as the Sanborn house) close to these ever-expanding entities are endangered. Because of the transient population of Columbia, often only the lucrative needs of special interest groups get fulfilled. Things have however begun to change: Stephens Park and West Broadway are two recent manifestations of this native discontent.

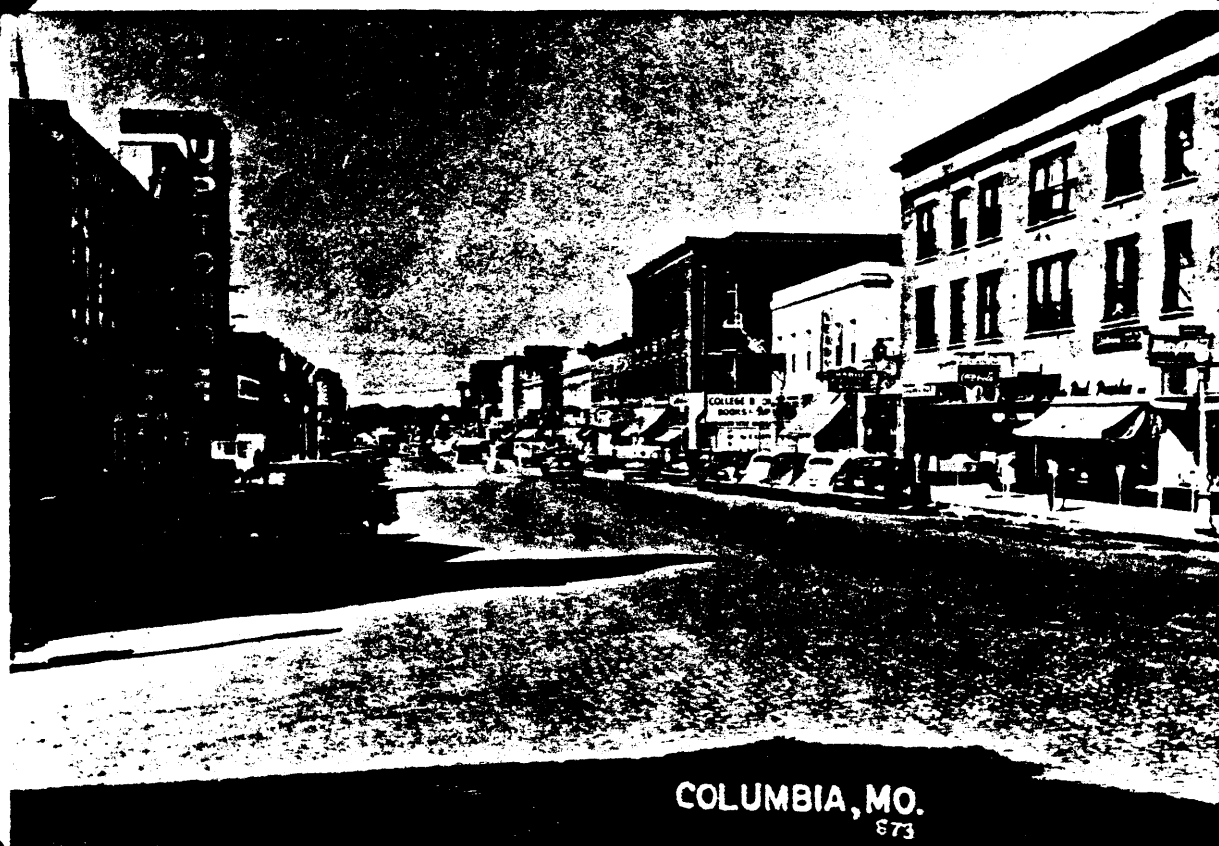
### Downtown Revitalization

In order to counteract the destructive forces leading to the decline of America's traditional downtown areas, many small towns and larger cities are turning to downtown revitalization. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, in recognizing the dire need for a model for such a program and for "tried and true" methods of revitalization, sponsored a project entitled "Main Street" in 1977. Choosing three towns across the Midwest, the Trust began full-scale revitalization efforts in each. The initial findings have recently become available (See appendix.) The Main Street project is therefore the major reference source for the revitalization of an older central business district. In combating the various detrimental trends in downtown decline, it is important to recognize an older downtown area as a distinct, cohesive unit. Even though ownership is varied and there is no central management (the case with shopping malls), traffic control, promotion,





Above, downtown Columbia, circa 1925. Below, circa 1945.



marketing, land use, housing, design, building maintenance, and general appearance all contribute to one entity in the consumer's mind: downtown. It is for this reason that downtown Columbia should first and foremost be considered as a single entity. By this reasoning, any action pertaining to the downtown, whether it be in the form of tax assessment, parking, building alteration, traffic, development, etc. should carefully be considered for its impact on the entire downtown area and not just on individual businesses or on any one section of downtown Columbia.

The National Trust, in investigating the various reasons for downtown decline, found that merchants tended to panic in the face of impending shopping mall disaster and tried to compete with the malls on their terms: parking in particular became the general outcry. The real fact is that it is not necessary for older central business districts to do this. Downtown Columbia has such a vast resource potential that in actuality there is no need to compete with a shopping mall mentality. Location, history, experience, diversity, tradition, architecture, heritage--and most recently, the gas crisis--these are all inherent in downtown Columbia, characteristics that shopping malls will never have. And it is this vast resource potential that merely needs to be tapped to create a beautiful, healthy, and lucrative shopping experience in downtown Columbia.

The primary reason any downtown area is failing is an economic one, and should be realistically treated as such. Any downtown revitalization plan should start with a complete marketing and economic study of the downtown area. How many second floors are vacant? How much space is parking and what are pedestrian traffic patterns? How much square footage is not being utilized? What gaps are there in general customer service in terms of shopping variety? What do customers really think about the downtown area in terms of parking, convenience, prices, etc.? How much downtown business comes directly from the student population? What type of residential housing surrounds downtown? The economic study should be conducted, analyzed, and then specific recommendations given to make the downtown economically healthy. For example, Columbia now does not have a desirable living residential community on its borders. Such a community, once established and once given good access to the downtown area, could be a major turn towards a healthy economic status if basic services such as laundry, grocery, social security, and park space were integrated into the downtown.

Such an economic study should carefully consider land use, all areas open for future development, and accessibility to these areas. If a competent traffic and pedestrian plan were devised to link the central downtown area to its immediate environs from College to Providence to Park to Locust, there would be ample space for parking, new development, and park areas.

Downtown revitalization is an expansive project that should be undertaken on every level of community involvement. Downtown businessmen need to unite in a single organization that operates and manages downtown Columbia as a single entity. The unified promotional and marketing results of such an organization has potential for tremendous success. This group of gentlemen, somewhat reminiscent of the old Columbia Commercial Club, would be in charge of and privy to any action, plan, proposal, or design, whether public or private, whether monumental or incidental, that would affect downtown Columbia. This group, in conjunction with the city, would also be responsible for implementing a downtown revitalization plan. After an economic study has been conducted and a major plan laid out, complete with consultants' recommendations, this business organization should hire a full time coordinator to carry out these recommendations. Only when positive action is taken immediately are



The home of the Columbia Commercial Club, today the site of a Jack-in-the-Box.

consultant's services effective. This coordinator would be charged with dealing with the problems of individual merchants, overseeing and organizing community support, interacting with the city, and implementing the consultant's economic and design recommendations. The coordinator would effectively unite all of these forces and individual efforts into a single, encompassing objective: revitalization of Columbia's downtown.

### The Columbia Survey

In any downtown revitalization effort economics is the number one consideration. Running a very close second to economics is making full use of the one tremendous asset that most traditional downtowns have: its architectural heritage. Tree-lined streets, park areas, vendors with flowers and popcorn, benches, bands playing music in the summer--all these things are desirable interactions in a downtown where its history and its heritage is reflected in its beautiful architecture. The maintenance, careful renovation, and pride once exhibited downtown, coupled with an inherent respect for its buildings, must again be restored.

The primary goal of downtown Columbia's architectural survey was not to find out historical information on its old buildings; nor was it to contrast the present sad state of affairs with "then and now" photographs. The primary goal was to find the necessary archival information to restore the buildings' original design elements and to coordinate their renovation, preservation, and reintroduction into the economic community as a primary overriding objective in Columbia's downtown revitalization program. Unless the economic stability of downtown Columbia is assured, its historic buildings, whether renovated or not, will not be preserved.

The architectural survey was begun in May of 1978 and completed in May of 1979. It was funded jointly by the State Office of Historic Preservation and the City of Columbia. It cost a total of \$4000. The original area designated as downtown Columbia from College to Providence and Park to Locust and Elm was completely surveyed site by site. One hundred buildings and sites were chosen for in-depth historic and archival analysis. These 100 sites were mainly on Broadway, but also included one block north and south on Ninth Street. The concrete material derived from the survey is as follows:

1. 100 in-depth historic and architectural inventory sheets
2. 221 summary sheets, including photographs, of all the surrounding area
3. 209 color slides of downtown Columbia, including archival views as well as present views
4. Recommendations for a slide show presentation: "Pride and Tradition: the Story of Downtown Columbia through its Architecture."
5. Distribution of over 100 archival photographs to downtown merchants as a part of preservation week
6. Organization of a downtown walking tour, also as a part of preservation week
7. A final report with recommendations to the City Council, including a map labelling the 100 sites according to their significance as determined by the Historic Preservation Commission.

## Final Recommendations

Although there are many buildings in downtown Columbia significant in terms of history and architecture, there are some that stand out as being more significant than the rest. Although economic feasibility and land use planning are important aspects in proposing potential National Register designation for downtown Columbia's buildings, there are those buildings whose loss would be especially tragic. Since Broadway was Columbia's original muddy street from which the city sprung, those buildings on Broadway in terms of age and history as well as architectural significant stand out. For this reason a Broadway Street Historic District should be established. This district would include only those buildings facing Broadway of some historical or architectural value and those with restoration potential. This district is identified in the appendix.

The National Register program, besides the obvious honor of having a building so designated, does two things: number one, it protects the building from adverse federal intervention. This means if the building is threatened by a project using any type of federal funds, a review process must take place. The building can at any time be torn down by private, state, or city funds with no restrictions placed upon it whatsoever. Since the Tax Act of 1976 was passed another important element was injected into the process: that of providing economic incentives to owners of commercial National Register properties who wish to conduct certified rehabilitations of the properties. The Tax Act is involved and is explained in the appendix. However, a brief explanation might be warranted at this time.

If an owner of a building in the Broadway Street Historic District had the building recognized by the state as being significant, i.e. certified, then he could undertake a renovation project on the interior or exterior. This renovation should be coordinated with the State through an architect to insure that the rehab was consistent with the original architectural character of the building. Restoring storefronts, painting, cleaning, refinishing--these are qualified rehabs. Sandblasting, filling in second story windows, altering old storefronts, severely altering the facade--these are not. Although the rehab does not have to be an archivally correct restoration of the original building, it should be a renovation as opposed to a remodelling.

The Tax Act of 1976 then allows the owner of the building (and in some cases the long-term leasee) to deduct these expenditures from his taxes for a period of five years. For preservation development, the Tax Act has been the major key to many successful financial renovation projects. It is becoming a primary area of interest to those owning older buildings in a trust or to older owners with tax problems who wish to invest or simply wish to fix up their building. Two disincentives go along with the Tax Act: (1) The cost of building demolition cannot be deducted from taxes and (2) Only straight-line depreciation may be used in new construction.

There are of course other buildings in downtown Columbia that are also considered important to its heritage, not on Broadway. These buildings should be placed in a separate National Register district after a competent land-use feasibility study has been conducted as part of an overall revitalization plan. These buildings are identified in the appendix. There are other buildings or blocks in downtown, not shown, that might be considered eligible if (1) the owners were interested in the Tax Act and (2) if the areas in which they were located were designated for commercial use in a land use plan.

These buildings are important, but in levels of significance are more expendable than those on Broadway or the other buildings so designated.

In consideration of a comprehensive revitalization program a cohesive design master plan is essential. In order to restore downtown's older buildings so that they are aesthetically complimentary to the newer buildings (and vice versa), in order to incorporate the proper signage recommendations, in order to provide a cohesive landscaping and service item design, an architect should be part of a revitalization plan--an architect that can visually design an area block by block. For this reason it is important those buildings designated as being historically and architecturally significant not undergo drastic alterations by individual owners until such a comprehensive plan can be implemented. Therefore one of the most important actions that the council could take at this time is to pass the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Passage of this ordinance would insure that the canopy would remain and that no major design alterations or demolitions would take place that might destroy the building or its participation in a revitalized downtown Columbia. This review is entirely controlled on a local level with competent professionals in the fields of architecture, design, business, development, etc. being appointed by the Council.

Final recommendations to the Council include using the Columbia survey material to its full potential for the public body. Towards this goal I would suggest:

1. A publication
2. A slide show
3. A Phase II historic and architectural analysis of those buildings of importance outside the Broadway Street Historic District.

During Preservation Week I received many inquiries as to whether or not the city would publish the historical and architectural information on the Broadway Street Historic District. Because of the bulk of the individual inventory forms and because some of the information contained therein is a realistic and therefore at times blunt assessment of certain remodellings or maintenance of some downtown structures, I would also recommend that the actual inventory forms be restricted to research and developmental use. For the general public I suggest a good publication of the survey, including any old photographs, and several paragraphs of historical interest. Perhaps at the time the Broadway Street Historic District is designated a publication of this type would be in order.

A well organized professionally coordinated slide show should be produced and made available for general public use. A film might also be considered.

### Closing

Downtown Columbia, because of its heritage, its history, and its tradition, belongs to all Columbians. Its architecture is the most significant visual manifestation of all these elements and should be preserved as such. Downtown Columbia, as a shopping and recreation center, by its very definition is a public domain. The general public should recognize this resource and promote and make use of it accordingly. The private sector should support historic district designation and the passage of the local ordinance. The Boone County Historical Society, from the survey information could easily provide walking tours of the downtown areas for schools, clubs, church groups, etc.

The merchant and building owner in downtown Columbia has nothing to lose and everything to gain in recognizing that his building is of historical and architectural value to Columbia's past. With the Tax Act historic district designation can now be financially lucrative as well as a tremendous asset in terms of good PR. Columbia merchants standing together in a unified downtown revitalization effort have the opportunity for increased financial returns while participating in a project that can provide a very satisfying personal sense of achievement as well as being great fun. Revitalization can and would pull together some of Columbia's diverse community factions, creating interaction and cohesive objectives for the old and the new, the transient and the stable Columbia citizenry.

The City should recognize downtown as a city-wide resource rather than a narrowly defined private interest. Supporting a downtown revitalization proposal, cooperating with the downtown merchants and the general public towards the achievement of a common goal, is a very important role the city should accept. Historic district designation, economic feasibility studies, overall downtown beautification, local legislation--these are elements which the City should carefully coordinate in a cohesive downtown revitalization plan.

Columbia as a city has a tremendous amount of time and money invested in the traditional business district. This investment, when combined with the outstanding debt Columbia owes to Broadway Street and its founding commercial fathers should insure a genuine concern and commitment for the future of the downtown area. Commitment to a well-planned and well-coordinated revitalization effort is the only worthy response to that investment and to that debt.



# APPENDIX

## 1. Key to inventory sheets

\* denotes Broadway Street Historic District.

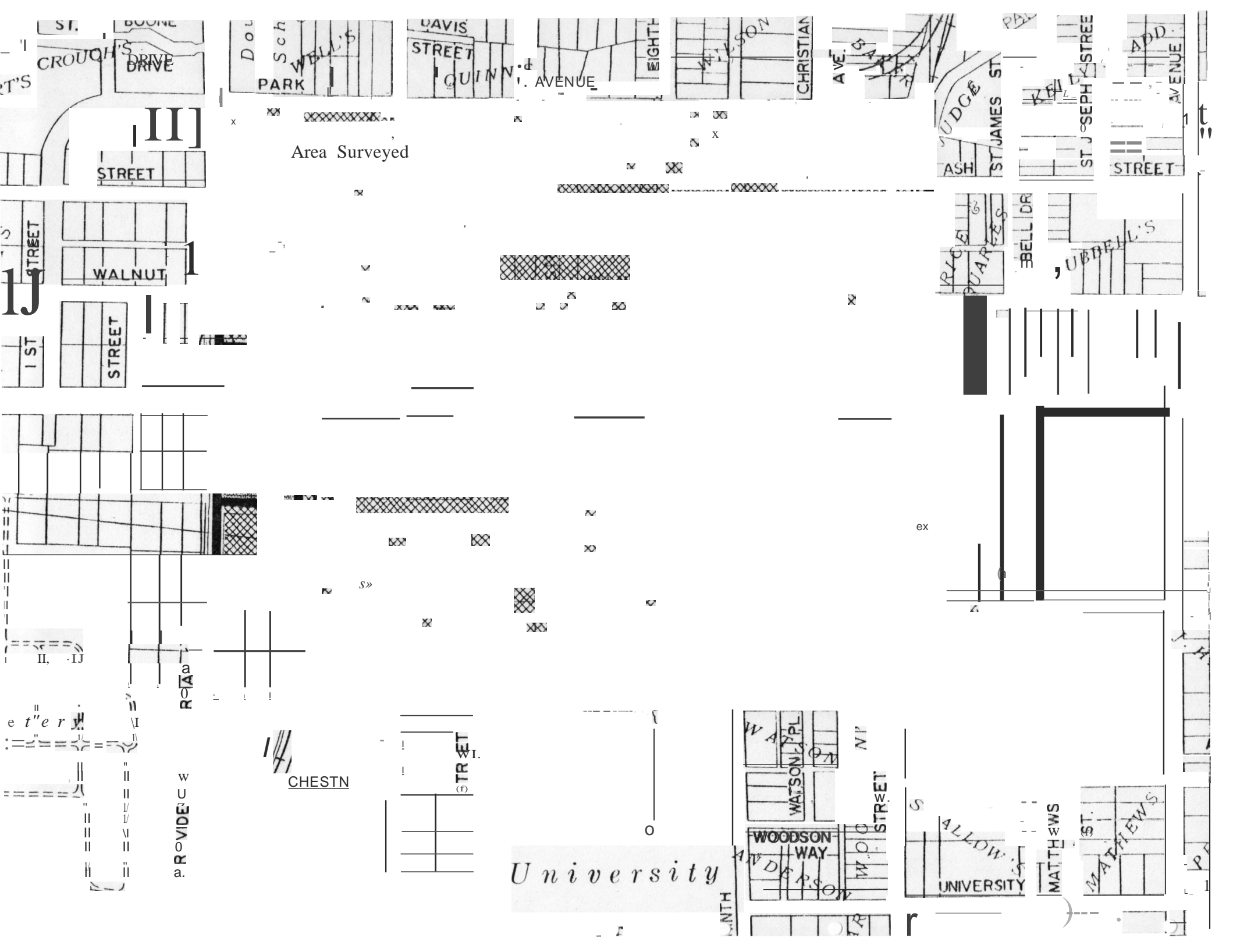
- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1• Jack Lampert Auto Center      | * 51• Gibson's Boutique           |
| 2. MFA Service Center            | * 52. Puckett's                   |
| * 3. Second Baptist Church       | 53. Dean's                        |
| * 4. Ansel Richards              | * 54. Greenspon's                 |
| 5. Goodyear Tire Center          | * 55. Neate's                     |
| 6. Harold Lake Standard Center   | * 56. Neatels                     |
| 7. Commerce Bank of Columbia     | 57. Various-Saffee's              |
| 8. Parking lot for Commerce Bank | * 58. David Paine                 |
| 9. Executive Building            | * 59. Record Bar                  |
| 10. Bear, Hines & Thomas         | * 60. Kirlin's                    |
| 11. Tina Fabrics                 | * 61. Chapter One                 |
| * 12. Boone Building             | * 62. Boone County Bank           |
| * 13. Daniel Boone Tavern        | 63. Park's                        |
| * 14. Guitar Square              | * 64. Susie Scott's               |
| 15. Farm & Home Savings          | * 65. Green Cross                 |
| * 16. First National Bank        | * 66. Pizza Inn                   |
| * 17. Jean Prange's Boutique     | * 67. Parks & Recreation          |
| * 18. Barth's                    | * 68. Municipal Building          |
| * 19. Boone National Savings     | 69. Daniel Boone Coffee Shop      |
| * 20. Taum Sauk/Mr. Penguin      | 70. The Bakery                    |
| * 21. Pen Point                  | 71• Andrews Furniture Company     |
| 22. Cheese Villa                 | 72. Columbia Auto Parts           |
| * 23. D and M Sound              | 73. Ed's Cafe                     |
| * 24. Columbia Photo             | 74. Block Income Tax              |
| * 25. Elvira Building            | 75. Lacrosse Lumber               |
| 26. Buchroeder's                 | * 76. KATY Station                |
| * 27. Mehornay                   | 77. Columbia Ice and Cold Storage |
| * 28. Rome Pizzeria              | 78. VAcant lot                    |
| 29. Columbia Theatre             | 79. Mound City Nuts               |
| 30. Bullwinkle's                 | 80. E. Paull's                    |
| 31. Columbia College Art         | 81• Ladigo Lady                   |
| 32. Sheraton Inn                 | 82. House Beautiful               |
| 33. Mr. Donut                    | 83. Dean's                        |
| 34. Missouri Arts & Crafts       | 84. Libson Shop                   |
| 35. Columbia Travel              | 85. Novus Shop                    |
| 36. Stephens Alumni              | 86. Carousel                      |
| 37. Site of Barth residence      | 87. Lamb's                        |
| 38. First Baptist Church         | 88. Jim's Paint                   |
| * 39. Educational Building       | 89. La Brue Jewelers              |
| 40. My Sister's Circus           | 90. Fredendall's                  |
| * 41. Central Dairy              | 91. The Fly                       |
| 42. Campus Cinema                | 92. Columbia Opticians            |
| * 43. Lucille's                  | 93. Max Gill's                    |
| 44. Chocolate Shop               | 94. Dryer's                       |
| 45. Coyote Imports               | 95. Hickory Stick                 |
| * 46. Uptown Theatre             | 96. Horton Antiques               |
| 47. St. Louis Federal            | 97. Cheese Board                  |
| * 48. Columbia Mercantile        | 98. Rainbows                      |
| * 49. The Shoe Loft              | 99. Rock Hutch                    |
| * 50. Suzanne's                  | 100. Acacia Lodge                 |

Buildings to be included in later district nomination:

- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. E. Paul's                  | 17. Armory                        |
| 2. Ladigo Lady                | 18. 110 Hitt Street               |
| 3. H.R. Mueller's             | 19. Beverly Apartments            |
| 4. House Beautiful            | 20. Hall Theatre                  |
| 5. Dean's Town and Country    | 21 • Cavalry Episcopal Church     |
| 6. Libson Shop                | 22. Missouri Theatre              |
| 7. Novus Shop                 | 23. Federal Building              |
| 8. Carousel                   | 24. Niedermeyer Apts.             |
| 9. Hickory Stick Bar B Que    | 25. Deja Vu                       |
| 10. Horton Antiques           | 26. General Telephone Bldg.       |
| 11. Cheese Board              | 27. Toni Somers                   |
| 12 • Rainbows                 | 28. Columbia Art League           |
| 13. Boone County Court House  | 29. Harzfeld's                    |
| 14. Wabash Apts.-entire block | 30. Wabash Depot                  |
| 15. First Christian Church    | 31 • Walnut and Short (residence) |
| 16. Guitar Bldg.              | 32. United Methodist Church       |
|                               | 33. Tiger Hotel                   |

Buildings determined to be of primary significance by the Historic Preservation Commission:

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Second Baptist Church | 5. Boone National    |
| 2. KATY Station          | 6. Boone County Bank |
| 3. Municipal Building    | 7. Chapter One       |
| 4. Central Dairy         | 8. Lucille's         |

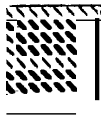


Area Surveyed

University

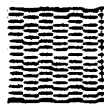
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I.

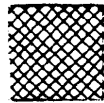


The Historic Preservation Commission rated the buildings in the inventoried area according to each building's historical significance, architectural significance and renovation potential.

II.

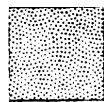


III.



Buildings were rated I, II, III & IV, with I ratings given to those buildings most worthy of preservation. Buildings not shaded are either modern or possess little or no noteworthy historical or architectural significance.

IV.

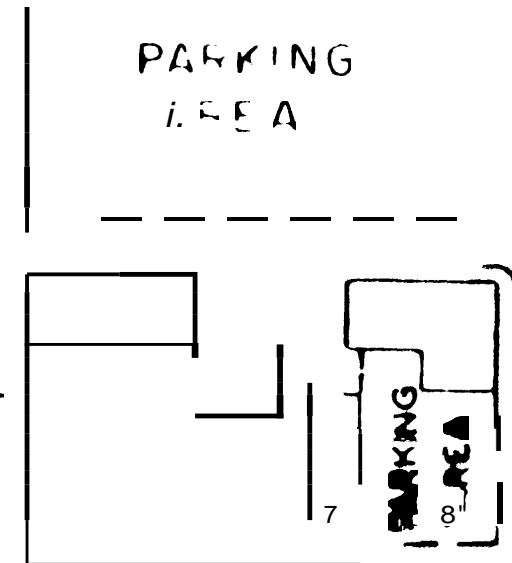
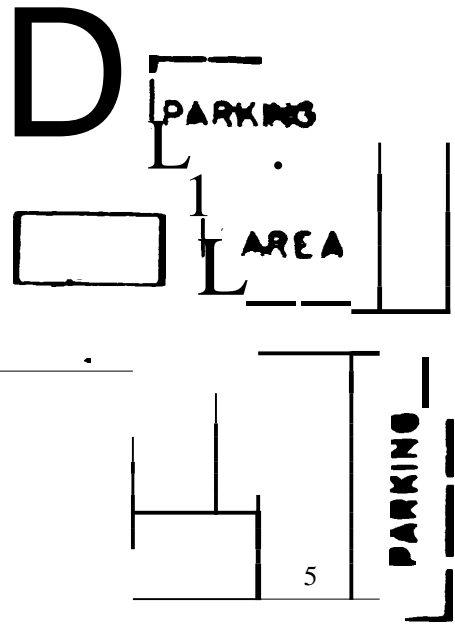
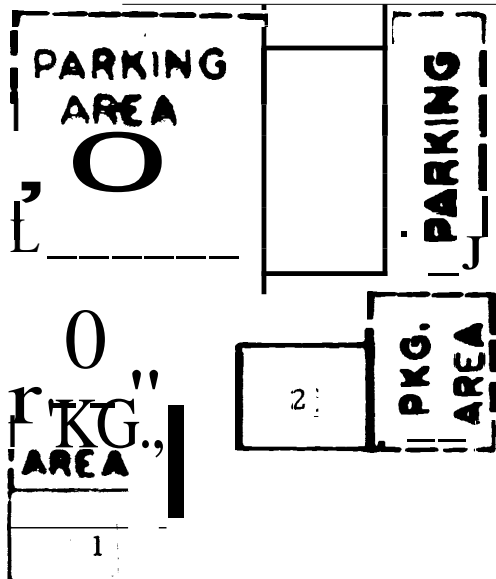


Buildings marked with a ✓ are included in the proposed Broadway Street Historic District.

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W. L. R. J. J. !

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BROADWAY

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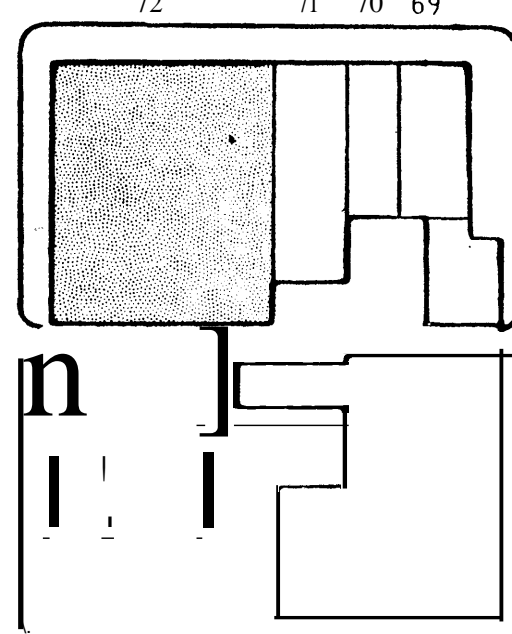
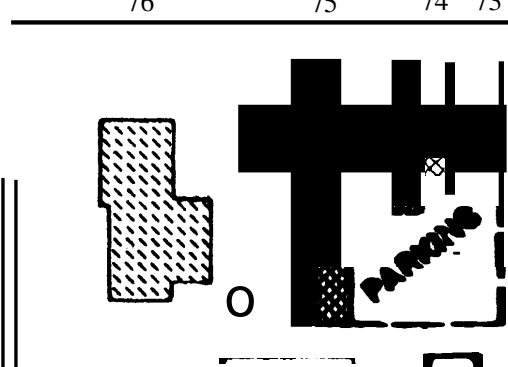
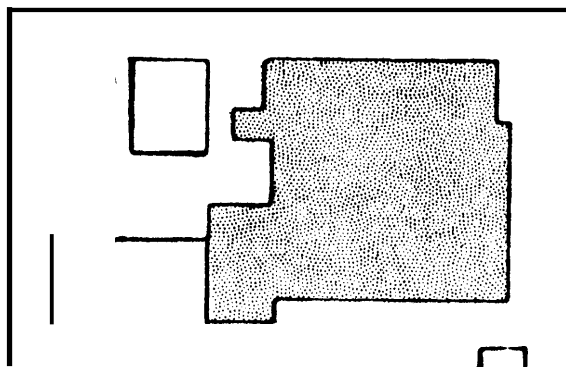
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1. Jack Lampert Auto Center (1940c)
2. MFA Service Center (1970)
3. Second Baptist Church ✓(1894)
4. Ancel Richards ✓(1917)
5. Goodyear Tire Center (1965)
6. Harold Lake Standard Service (1970)
7. Commerce Bank of Columbia (1925)
8. Commerce Bank Parking Lot

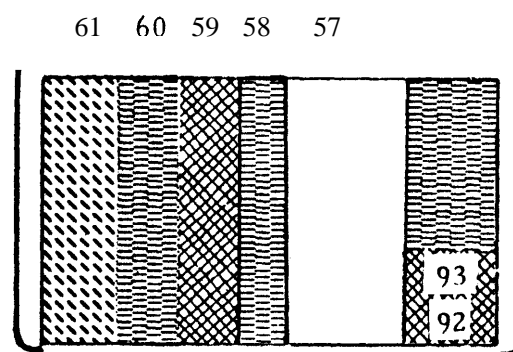
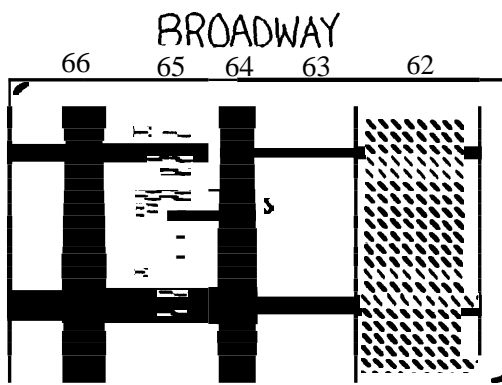
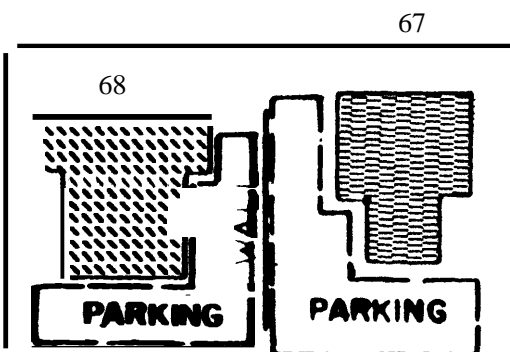
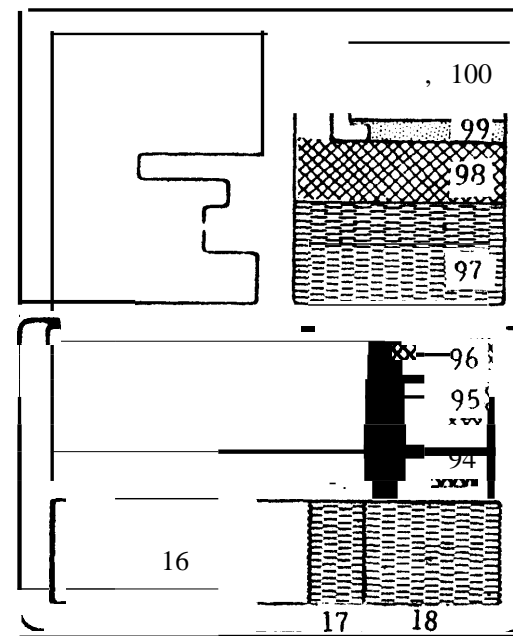
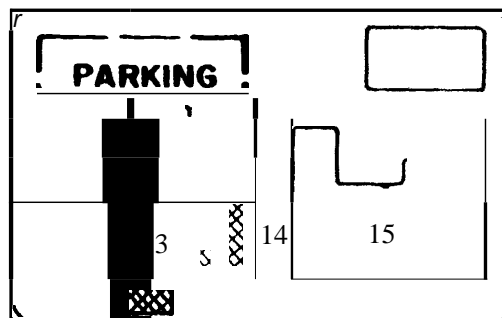
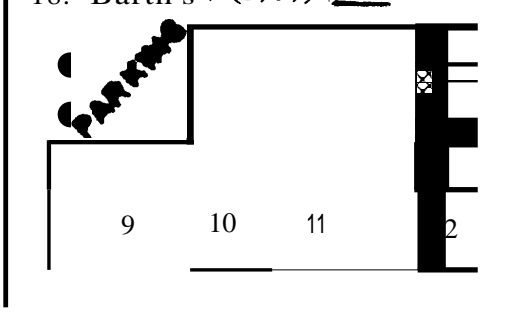
69. Daniel Boone Coffee Shop (?)
70. The Bakery (1923c)
71. Maxi's (1936c)
72. Columbia Auto Parts (1925c)
73. Ed's Cafe (1918c)
74. H&R Block (1913c)
75. Lacrosse Lumber (1908)
76. Katy Station ✓(1909)
77. Columbia Ice (1900c)
78. Vacant Lot'

9. Executive Building (1968)

(2)

10. Bear Hines & Thomas (pre 1900)
11. Tina Fabrics (1912c)
12. Boone Building ✓(1912)
13. City County Building (1917)
14. Guitar Square (platted 1829)
15. Farm & Home Savings (1961)
16. First National Bank. (973)
17. Jean Prange's (Pre 1883)
18. Barth's ✓(1909)

94. Dryer's Shoe Store 0892c)
95. Hickory Stick (I892c)
96. Horton Antiques (927)
97. Cheese Board (1927)
98. Rainbows 0911c)
99. Bookseller (1905c)
100. Acacia Lodge (1904c)



55. Neate's ✓(Pre 1883)
56. Neate's ✓(1892c)
57. Skylight Square (976)
58. David Paine ✓(pre 1883)
59. Creative Audio/Record Bar ✓(pre 1883)
60. Kirlin's ✓(pre 1883)
61. Chapter One ✓(1910)

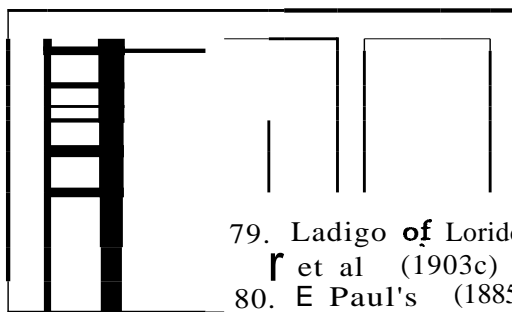
62. Boone County Bank (916)
63. Park's (1917)
64. Susie Scott's ✓(1917)
65. Green Cross ✓(916)
66. Pizza Inn ✓(1900c)
67. Parks & Recreation ✓(905)
68. Municipal Building ✓(932)

89. H.R. Mueller's (1890)
90. Fredendall's (895)
91. The Fly 0892c)

92. Columbia Opticians (1886)
93. Max Gill's Pharmacy (1898c)

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BROADWAY



79. Ladigo of Loride n,  
et al (1903c)

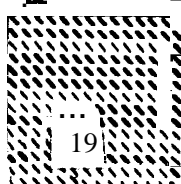
80. E Paul's (1885c)

81. Ladigo Lady (1898c)

82. House Beautiful (1905)

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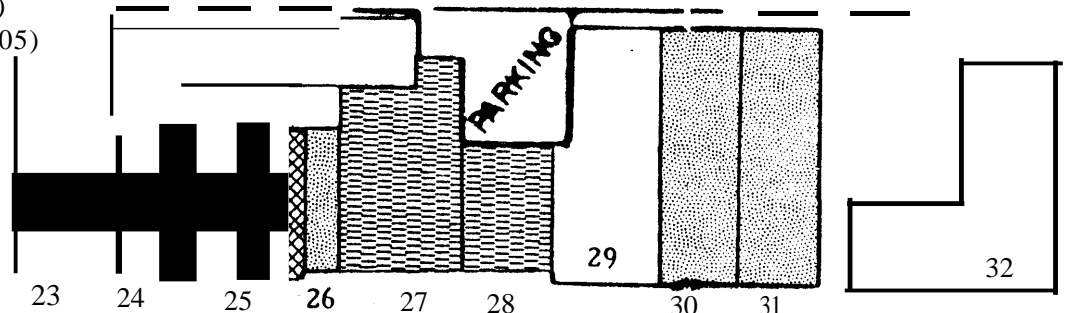


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19. Boone National Savings & Loan ✓(1921) -  
20. Taum Sauk ✓(1895)  
21. Pen Point ✓(1895)  
22. O'Rear Block (1895)  
23. D&M Sound ✓(1892c)  
24. Columbia Photo ✓(1902)  
25. Elvira Bufling ✓(1905)  
26. Buchroeder's (1911)  
27. Mehornay ✓(1911)  
28. Rome Pizzaria ✓(1927)  
29. Columbia Theatre (1906)  
30. Bullwinkle's (1923)  
31. Columbia College Art Center (1918c)  
32. Sheraton Inn (1965)



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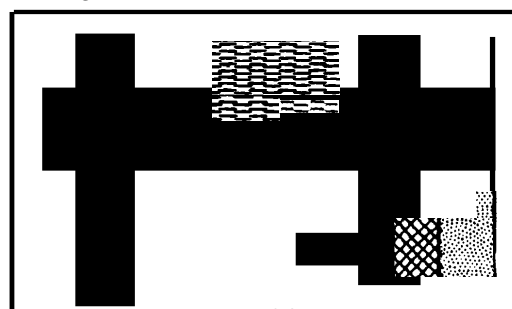
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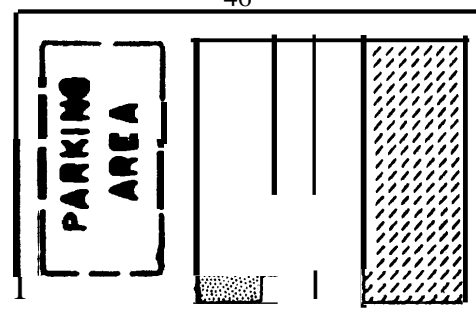
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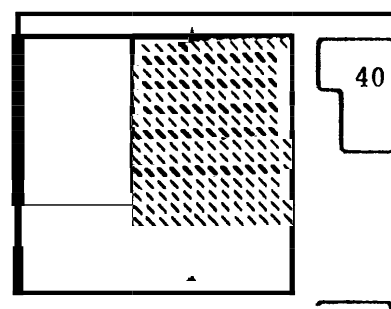
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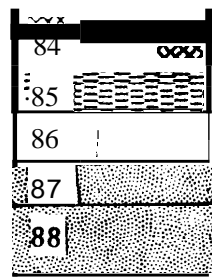
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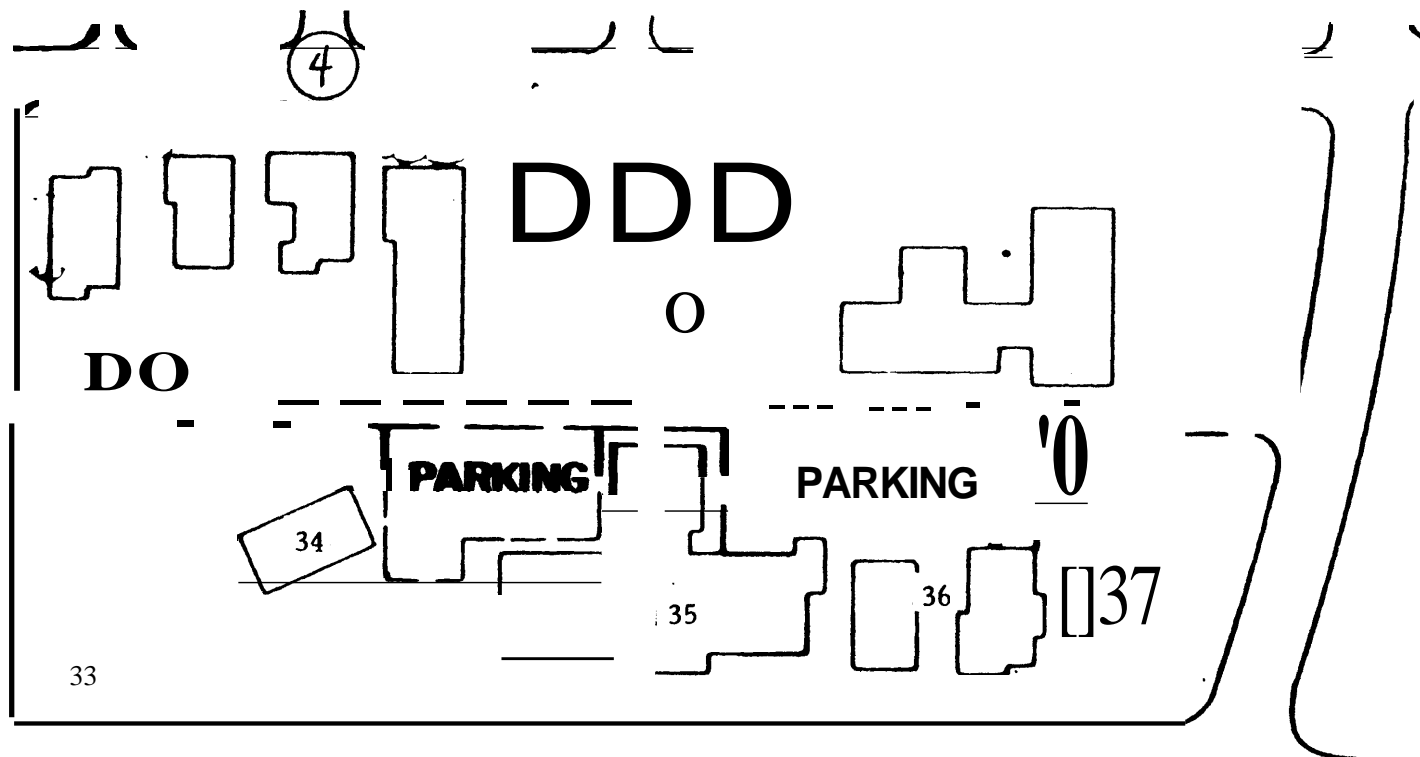
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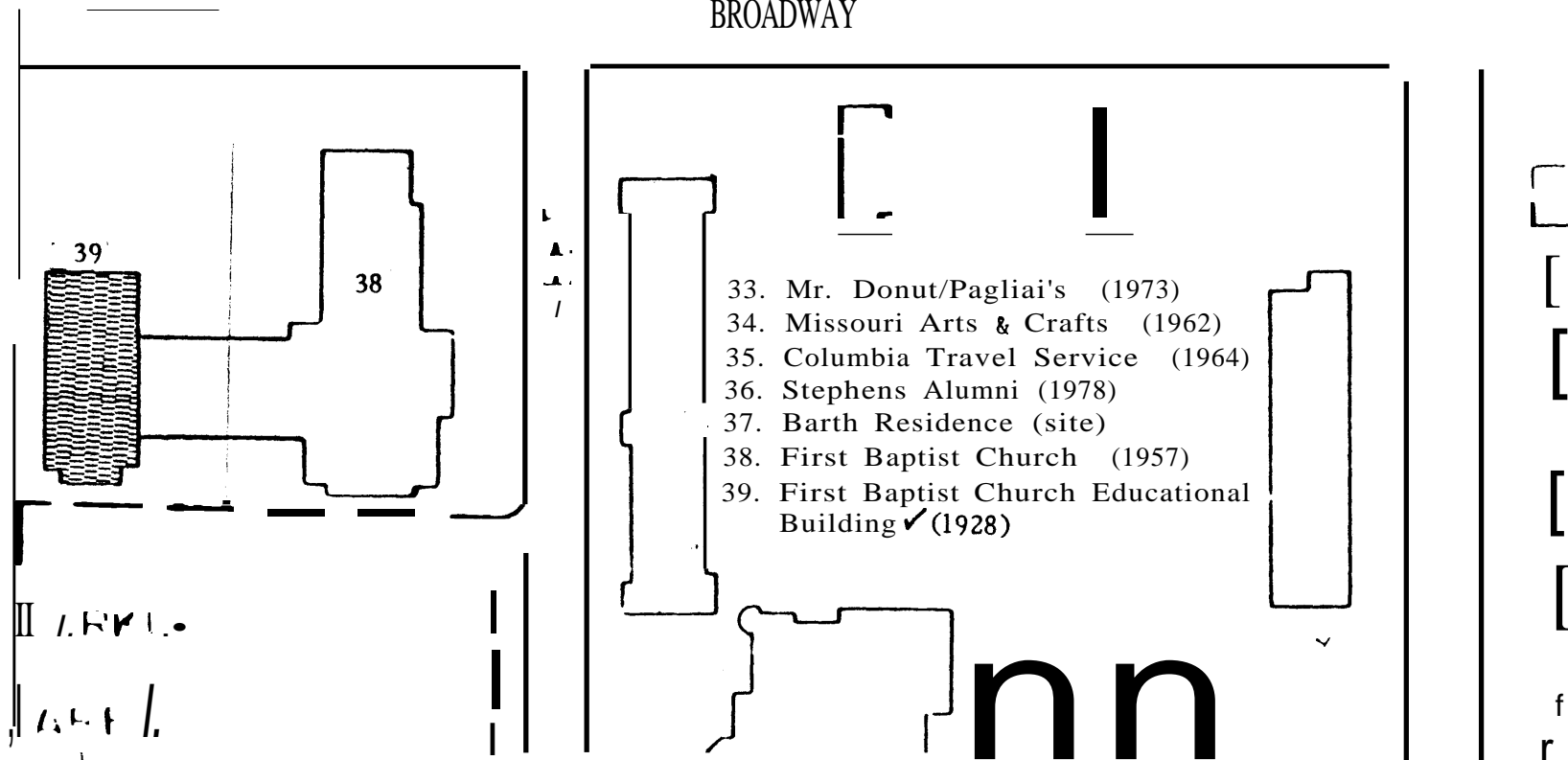
STREET

(1975)

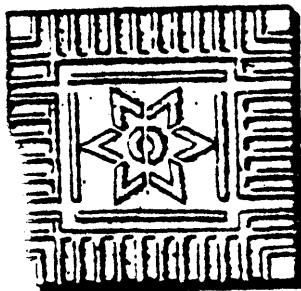




BROADWAY



- 33. Mr. Donut/Pagliai's (1973)
- 34. Missouri Arts & Crafts (1962)
- 35. Columbia Travel Service (1964)
- 36. Stephens Alumni (1978)
- 37. Barth Residence (site)
- 38. First Baptist Church (1957)
- 39. First Baptist Church Educational Building ✓ (1928)



# MAIN STREET

MAIN STREET Project, Midwest Regional Office  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
407 South Dearborn Street, Suite 710, Chicago, Illinois 60605  
(312) 411-1930

A demonstration project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to encourage downtown economic development within the context of historic preservation

## THE MAIN STREET PROJECT:

### ECONOMIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepared as a **summary** of three in-depth studies completed by Shlaes and Company on the National Trust Main Street Project demonstration communities: Hot Springs, South Dakota, Madison, Indiana and Galesburg, Illinois.

Edited by Mary C. Means, Regional Director of the Midwest Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, from material written by Michael Nicols of Shlaes & Company.

November 15, 1978

What is Main Street? Main Street is a place in people's minds as well as a physical entity. For decades it was the town's central place of commercial and social activity. It was the backbone of the marketplace in cities and towns across the country, the place where most of the goods and services people needed could be found. When someone said that they were going into town or going downtown, everyone knew where they were headed: Main Street. Today Main Street is in part a memory, and often only one among an increasing number of alternatives for local shopping, business location and social interchange.

How & why has Main Street changed? Suburbanization has exploded the city, scattering not just the houses but all components of the city, including places of business and manufacturing, across a broader landscape. All the roads which once led to Main Street and the central business district have become two-way streets. These now carry traffic away from the downtown area, and connecting with surrounding roads to serve newer commercial developments. No longer does Main Street have an exclusive claim to being a town's main business district.

Main Street usually retains at least some of its former preeminence, particularly as the location of government offices and financial institutions which are still well served by a central location. But the fact is that older downtown commercial centers across the country find themselves in various stages of a common transition: each is losing its preeminence as a central place and its relative monopoly on the local trade area; each is falling back to a position where it is only one among a growing number of alternative commercial opportunities. Few merchants know where the transition will lead, or what direction they should take in order to find a better future.

What is historic preservation? Historic preservation is the conservation of structures of historic significance or architectural value for future generations to enjoy. More recently, preservation has been directed toward continuing the lives of structures which were once commonplace elements in the lives of past generations - Main Street's older commercial buildings, for example. Neglect, abuse and demolition have together made such buildings increasingly scarce, and they are largely irreplaceable due to the economics of the modern construction industry and the scarcity of the needed skilled craftsmen from the building trades.

What is economic revitalization? Economic revitalization is the reviving of a sluggish or declining economy. Basically this entails making a given commercial area more productive, or doing more business within that fixed area. This requires coordination of a wide variety of improvements—in physical appearance, organization, advertising, merchandising, operations, and all the other actions that fall under the heading of "doing business." Success does not simply mean bigger profits for the business person, but better business, something which both businesspeople and their clientele can enjoy.

But haven't some towns made an effort to keep up? The retailer's instinctive response is usually to try to keep up-to-date, but too often without a thorough understanding of the market and what "keeping-up-to-date" means. Some individual

building owners have looked to newer commercial areas for cues and have decided to compete by modernizing older downtown buildings. Following examples from the commercial strip and the suburban mall, people have taken shops constructed anywhere from the 1900's to the 1920's and decked them out in shiny aluminum frames, plate glass windows, cedar shake shingles, expanses of false screen to hide an upper story facade, aluminum or rough sawn siding, and stucco veneers.

If the inspiration to modernize had been applied thoroughly and consistently to Main Street, Main Street would at least have a clear marketable identity. In most cases this attempt to compete by imitating the building style of the highway's commercial strip or that of more elaborate contemporary shopping centers would ultimately be a vain effort. Main Street cannot compete on the same terms with new commercial development because it simply does not have all of the features which make for success in newer planned shopping alternatives: immediate major highway access, prominence on the landscape, large amounts of free parking space, proximity to affluent suburban households, unified management, and so on.

What is the Main Street Project? The Main Street Project is a major effort of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide assistance to the many cities and towns whose older central business districts retain some vestige of their visual character yet whose economic position is slipping. The premise of the Main Street Project is that economic revitalization can take place within the context of historic preservation, that indeed historic preservation is in many cases the best approach to the problems of Main Street.

To put this proposition to the test and to develop strategies for successful application, the National Trust competitively selected three towns to serve as demonstration models. They are Galesburg, Illinois, Madison, Indiana and Hot Springs, South Dakota. Teams of nationally known consultants in real estate, architecture, landscape architecture, marketing, merchandising and graphic design have been analyzing the towns and developing with local leaders a realistic and appropriate action plan for implementation. To help develop local leadership, the Trust has placed a professional staff member in each town to serve for two years as Project Manager.

Over the next two years the Trust will produce a number of educational materials to disseminate the findings. These include a 28-minute film, a handbook on Main Street revitalization and specialized papers on aspects of the project, such as innovative commercial financing techniques, building improvement suggestions, signs and graphics, window display, etc.

The Main Street Project is made possible by a major corporation. Bird & San, inc., East Walpole, Massachusetts, manufacturers of building materials, have to date given nearly \$300,000 to support the project. Additional grants have been received from the Bush Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. In addition, local sponsors in each of the local communities contributed.

Who are the economic consultants? To assure uniformity of method in base data collection and consistency in monitoring progress, and to heighten credibility within the financial community, the National Trust chose to use a single economic consulting firm for all three towns. Under contract to the National Trust, Shlaes and Company of Chicago have been studying Madison, Hot Springs and Galesburg for ten months; they have recently completed their analyses and submitted written recommendations. The company is headed by Jared B. Shlaes, CRE, MAIA. Mr. Shlaes, nationally recognized real estate counselor who has advised and consulted on major commercial and residential development projects, many of which involve older buildings, was formerly senior-vice president of Arthur Rubloff and Company. He is one of the nation's few experts on the economic aspects of landmark buildings. In addition, he is the editor of Real Estate Issues. Much of the Main Street Project economic analysis was prepared by Michael Nichols of Shlaes and Company. Mr. Nichols, a specialist in urban studies, did his graduate work at the University of Chicago and was associated with the center for Urban Affairs at Northwestern University. At Shlaes and Company his work has been in the broad categories of market and economic analyses, feasibility, forecasting and land use.

How did the economic consultants collect data? The assignment was to examine and analyze real estate conditions and economic aspects of defined project areas, corresponding to the commercial core of each town's central business district. The consultants also examined each town's trade area and the position of the Main Street commercial district within that trade area, the project area's legal and institutional framework, its role in local government finance and recent public works investments in the area. Main Street was investigated both as a real estate and as a commercial entity.

Shlaes & Company employed federal, state and local data sources, regional planning agency documents, sources customarily used in the trade to assess local economies and retail trade conditions, and other government, private research institute and trade publications. Additional local data were collected from a variety of sources, including newspaper accounts, individual interviews, and formal surveys. A separate analysis and very specific report was prepared for each of the three towns. However, from the three analyses many observations can be made about older towns in general. The following is a summary of the generally applicable observations.

Today the competitive pressure is felt not so much within the Main Street business community as between the older commercial area and the new commercial strips, convenience centers and malls that have sprung up along the major roads and highways designed to meet the needs of the contemporary consumer and the private car. This has resulted in a change in the scale and organization of retailing operations. Downtown building owners and merchants are now faced with the need to join together in order to compete as a cohesive unit with the newer, centrally organized outlying commercial concentrations. People do not come downtown to shop as automatically as they used to. Downtown is no longer the only choice, and the members of the Main Street business community now find that they must make a greater effort to attract and court the buying public.

How can Main Street compete with the shopping center? There are three key words that will serve to summarize and help people remember what downtown needs to do in order to improve its economic position, and how it is to go about accomplishing this: ORGANIZATION, IMAGE, and PEOPLE.

ORGANIZATION is the key element in the formula for success in the contemporary shopping center. The older downtown area can never be and should not try to be a shopping center; it was not built for a singular purpose, and only radical changes can alter its given physical structure to conform to the pattern of the shopping center. Nevertheless, downtown can learn a great deal about modern retailing methods and shopper behavior from this major merchandising phenomenon.

Essential among the shopping center's distinctive features is unified management and the resulting high level of organization and integration of retailing operations within the shopping center. In the shopping center, each tenant's lease contains binding agreements requiring the merchant to follow explicit design standards in the finish of interior space and signage, to conform to the established hours of operation for the center (including extended weekday and weekend hours), to participate in the center's joint advertising campaigns and major promotions, to join and pay dues to the shopping center's merchants' association, and to pay for regular maintenance of the shopping center's public spaces. Failure to live up to these requirements can be grounds for evicting a tenant from the shopping center.

Imposed regulations such as these run against the grain for the traditionally independent downtown business operator. But downtown merchants can improve their ability to compete with this newer shopping alternative by emulating the highly integrated organizational style of the shopping center. This is a formidable task because on Main Street it must be accomplished on a voluntary basis, but the incentives are substantial. Organizing in order to pool resources for better and more widely distributed advertising is a necessary element in revitalizing the downtown economy. Organizing to extend store hours should be less difficult once merchants examine some of the area shopping centers more closely and realize that the periods of greatest shopper activity are weekday evening hours and weekends.

Many downtown business people still think that the large volume of free parking at a shopping center *is its most important asset.* This is largely a matter of the grass being greener on the other side of the fence. Recent studies indicate that most shopping centers have in fact over-built for their parking needs, and it has long been common knowledge in the trade that it is how well a shopping center operates internally and not the size of its parking lot that is a major determinant of success.

Main Street must learn to compete as an organized whole.

What is meant by "image" and how does it relate to Main Street? IMAGE refers to the driving aim of modern product marketing: consumer recognition. Hundreds of millions of dollars are pumped into the daily barrage of advertising that attempts to implant the identity of various products in the consumer's mind. Additional hundreds of millions of dollars are poured into the design and manufacture of packaging that does more than simply sit on the shelf: today's boxes, cans, and bottles actively compete for the shopper's reach. There is virtually no limit to what people will do to make a product identifiable and to get the consumer to recognize the product at the potential point of purchase.

The marketing of an old downtown area can take the same approach in a lower key, and capitalize on a host of built-in advantages. Every Main Street is different, and each one's distinctive package is its older commercial structures and their surrounding environment. The keys to the successful marketing of Main Street are the exploitation of its distinctive structures and consistency in presenting this readily identifiable place to potential shoppers. This does not mean that the downtown area must conform in every respect to a common theme. Rather, it means that the different physical elements and commercial activities downtown must work well together, and that they must be presented to the public consistently in order to be identified as a recognizable entity.

Where does historic preservation come into the picture? In aiming to build upon the characteristic assets of a given downtown area, HISTORIC PRESERVATION MAKES BETTER ECONOMIC SENSE THAN VIRTUALLY ANY OTHER APPROACH TO MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION. And it is for this reason as well that modernization of structures in an older downtown setting is not the logical route to better business. The typical approach to buildings on many Main Streets seems to have been to modernize the facade at ground floor level to "improve" the storefront and to cover up or to neglect the upper story facade. Add to this a multiplicity of oversized and otherwise inappropriate signs, and you have a downtown product which is identifiable only by virtue of its manifest identity crisis.

How can the image of Main Street be developed and communicated? If Main Street cannot recapture its former position as a town's main or sale shopping district, it can at least recapture its position as a clearly identifiable and attractive place by uncovering, improving, restoring and maintaining its older commercial structures. Various shoppers will know and recognize individual stores by each one's individual appearance, good or bad. But in order to reach and attract the trade area shopping public upon which Main Street once had almost exclusive claim, Main Street's identifiability and quality must be greatly improved and communicated to consumers throughout the trade area and beyond.

Following the all-important principle of consistency in achieving product identity, the physical restoration and preservation of Main Street's structures must be emphasized in both individual and joint advertising in the trade area, and presented in a similarly consistent manner in special promotions to more distant area residents and potential visitors through periodic advertising in out-of-town newspapers, in major magazine feature stories, and in state tourism literature.



But attracting potential customers to the downtown area is only half the battle. What gets them into the stores and spending money? Individual business operations also need to establish their own identities in order to get the customer to the place of business once they have been drawn downtown. Consistency in identity and quality must be visible in every aspect of operations: having what the customer wants, treating the potential customer as a friend, making the sale, continuing with follow-up service to the customer, and so on.

PEOPLE and the way they react to Main Street as customers are one of the few constants in the downtown economy. For the merchant, looking out for Number One means making the customer think that he or she is the most important person on Main Street. Businesspeople downtown need to be constantly aware that all of their visible actions are messages to this attentive customer.

Every action *is* a gesture to the buying public. Inactivity or inattentiveness is interpreted as neglect, and will be reciprocated by the public. Everything the merchant does, from building maintenance (or lack of it) to clearing the sidewalk of snow (or the failure to do so), from window displays to customer service, is registered and interpreted by the shopper. Downtown economic revitalization therefore depends in large measure on each merchant's taking every opportunity to make positive symbolic gestures to each and every potential customer.

Merchants and building owners in the Main Street Project demonstration cities have discovered for themselves the symbolic role of their actions. Merchants moving onto Main Street, fixing up their storefronts or improving their signs have been surprised by the number of shoppers coming in to say how glad they are to see them downtown and how much better the store looks than it did before. People are still people, and the Golden Rule still operates, especially on Main Street.

#### Recommendations for action

The economic consultants studied each town in great detail. Collectively the three towns represent conditions, problems and opportunities common to most smaller cities and towns, and most of the Main Street recommendations and findings are applicable elsewhere. Again, many of these recommendations can be grouped under the three headings: image, organization, and people.

#### General appearance

Today's successful shopping malls share at least this characteristic with the Main Street of yesteryear: its function is not simply to meet the basic material needs of the consumer, but to serve as a social and recreational amenity for the community as well. (This was and continues to be particularly true of the open shopping mall.) Today's consumer frequently expects to be able to do more than meet basic needs on a shopping trip; shoppers have the time and opportunity to do much more browsing and comparing before making a purchase, and they expect to be able to do more than simply make the purchase.

To improve its competitive position in today's market, Main Street must make itself a more thoroughly inviting place, an attractive multi-purpose destination where people will want to walk and wander along, shop, browse, eat and relax - in the most general terms, to enjoy themselves. Main Street's general appearance must tell the public that this is a place where these activities can be enjoyed.

This recommendation is an outgrowth of the recognition of a new phenomenon that shopping itself has become a significant recreational activity for the American family. The image of the destination, whether it be a "shopping" or an older Main Street, therefore becomes of crucial importance: it is the total experience which the consumer is seeking, not just specific merchandise.

Outward appearance of Main Street's buildings is one of the most significant early contacts between merchant and potential customer. Each merchant and building owner should examine his or her structure both from a distance and at close range, remembering that the potential customer's first impression is based upon all the visible signals that a building offers. One of the first things to be noticed is that there is usually excessive competition among storefronts for the shopper's attention. This distraction makes it difficult both to comprehend Main Street as a whole and to locate individual destinations within the whole. The general appearance of the downtown area will be enhanced to the extent that variety generates interest; excessive competition for the consumer's eye produces confusion.

#### Maintenance of buildings

Each building has at least four sides, and often more than just the building's main facade is visible. The quality of maintenance of any visibly exposed structural walls, even if they are only common brick, is a subtle signal telling a customer something about how much a particular operator cares about his or her business and about the customer. Every visible exterior aspect of a building should be examined for opportunities to make potential customers aware that the structures along Main Street are still serving an active and useful life, and not merely waiting to fade into the past. To the prospective customer, every minor, routine housekeeping effort indicates that someone cares about the clientele.

The consultant recognized that not every merchant or building owner will see the importance of careful upkeep and charged the local downtown business organization with the leadership role to persuade the majority of businesses to do so, perhaps arranging for regular wide-scale maintenance to keep the costs down.

#### Maintenance of public spaces

In addition to the municipality continuing to perform its regular maintenance functions, downtown businesspeople need to make their own efforts toward encouraging pedestrian traffic along Main Street. Two strategies which are applicable to a wide variety of downtown business problems apply to the treatment of streets and sidewalks as well: the eradication of barriers or nuisances, and the creation of incentives.

In addition to making sure that municipal departments perform their housekeeping responsibilities in the downtown area, it is up to each individual business operator to take a direct role in making sure that curb and sidewalk areas in the vicinity of his or her particular business are kept clear of obstructions and clean. The area in front of each business's place of operation is a part of that operation, and regardless of who is technically responsible it is in the business's best interest that the operator assume direct responsibility for it in the sidewalk and curb area swept (including the clearance of snow in the winter months).

Merchants in a shopping center are required by the terms of their lease to pay for housekeeping services which center management provides. There is no comparable enforcement mechanism for making downtown merchants support similar housekeeping operations. The only demand that this be done comes from good business sense, and downtown merchants have the option to perform these tasks individually or to make joint arrangements for such services.

There are ample reasons for the merchant or business operator to undertake these tasks directly. As is the case to some degree with virtually every action the business person takes, this upkeep function is a direct gesture to the customer. Letting refuse or snow accumulate in front of the storefront is a gesture of negligence toward the potential customer, who will respond in kind.

#### Encouraging pedestrian traffic

In addition to making sure that there is nothing that actively detracts from the public's shopping experience, downtown businesspeople must also work toward creating further inducements to shopper traffic. Often merchants complain ineffectively about the futility of trying to fight the climate controlled conditions of the enclosed malls, but our experience has been that pedestrians do not demand that they be enclosed, artificially lit, heated and air conditioned as a rule. What they do want is simply some marginal protection from the elements.

One of the chief problems along Main Street is the exposure of sidewalk areas and the absence of protection from heat and direct sunlight in the hotter summer months. This exposure cannot be alleviated completely, but there are a number of approaches which can be taken toward providing some relief.

Awnings (and in some cases canopies) have long been the most conventional means of giving the pedestrian protection from the sun and rain. Although their usefulness has tended to be forgotten, awnings are still one of the most economical ways of providing pedestrian protection. An additional factor of particular importance today is the role of the awning in shading interior space, thereby increasing the efficiency of air conditioning systems. Selective use of canvas awnings along Main Street along with appropriate design and color choices can also provide attractive elements of variety and visual relief from continuous rows of building facades.

Tree cover provides protection and variety in residential areas, which cannot really be duplicated along most Main Streets. However, efforts should be made

to provide some landscape amenities to link parking lots to the main shopping areas. Landscaping and sidewalk improvements should be more than a matter of superficial cosmetics if they are used correctly. They should make sound economic sense in their ability to increase the attractiveness and drawing power of the downtown commercial area by encouraging pedestrian circulation.

Perhaps the chief disadvantage of the enclosed shopping mall is that its only outward sign of life consists of vehicular traffic. Older, open central business districts have the advantage in this case of being able to display their shopping traffic to additional customers. Sidewalk and street activity serve a very important role in generating additional consumer traffic.

The chief example of this for downtown business people is within their own first-hand experience, evidenced in the popularity of downtown sidewalk sales. A good part of the attractiveness of sidewalk sales is the consumer's knowledge that this is likely to be the time to find the best bargains. A less measurable but highly significant factor in contributing to the popularity of such events is the attraction of a high volume of sidewalk activity in the downtown area.

Merchants can take an additional direct role in increasing the everyday level of street activity, without having to cut prices, by promoting street and sidewalk vendor operations. Although such operations have in fact been actively discouraged by officials in many cities and by merchant associations throughout the country in recent decades, the fact is that pushcarts are on the comeback and can enhance the retailing trade of the permanent operators. To cite only the most dramatic example, the Quincy Market redevelopment project in Boston has shown that pushcarts make a substantial contribution to the Market's ability to generate annual sales of more than \$300 per square foot of leasable area. The developer has discovered that these are more than a mere novelty and is moving toward including pushcart operations in a large number of his other shopping mall operations.

It is clear that pushcarts make the vitality of a commercial area highly visible and attract additional activity as a result. Operating under the sanction of municipal authorities and with appropriate regulation, this type of activity can be promoted by downtown businesspeople both individually and as a group. The flower cart is probably the most obvious example, but a variety of specialty goods or special types of smaller items are similarly appropriate for a mobile operation. Of particular importance is the potential for outdoor food sales.

"A shortage of restaurants in the downtown area can be substantially overcome by taking food items already produced or sold in downtown shops (such as bakery items) and additional items (hot dogs, sandwiches, ice cream, etc.) directly to the consumer on the street. Seen from another angle, such operations are also a logical extension of some of the more popular public events downtown which involve fundraising food sales such as corn roasts, fish fries, bake sales and the like. Merchants associations can play a vital role in ensuring clean-up, paid for by the license to vend.

## ORGANIZATION

The primary responsibility for realizing the goals of a Main Street revitalization program rests upon the downtown business community. The implementation phase depends largely upon local initiative and what the business community does for itself, not primarily upon what any number of other parties can do for it. Therefore, the existing downtown business association or Chamber of Commerce has a major role in promoting the program and fostering recommended business improvements among downtown's individual owners and operators. The merchants group has a number of special roles to perform in promoting extended hours of operation, better building maintenance and storefront rehabilitation, better promotional activities, and improved advertising and merchandising.

As incentives for undertaking such activities, the merchants group can offer selective joint advertising to promote business for those who participate in extending their store hours and in undertaking preservation work in relation to their businesses. The group could provide incentives for the upgrading of vacant buildings by making its own searches for prospective tenants. Another incentive could be direct merchants group participation along with local financial institutions in creating an interest subsidized loan pool for owners and tenants to upgrade their buildings and operations in ways consistent with the revitalization program goals.

The merchants association can play a strong role in organizing joint promotional activities for downtown, particularly for major seasonal events, such as Christmas. Marketing and promotion consultants to the Main Street Project have recommended a number of activities which focused on preservation and traditional promotions for the Christmas season. These included a number of street events, such as an evening of caroling with popcorn wagons, puppet shows, costumed characters, extended evening hours, and a special Main Street shopping bag.

Early planning (six months at least) is required, with special emphasis given to lining up suppliers of traditional decorating materials for downtown businesses, getting school and church musical groups and service clubs involved, and developing a special advertising campaign which targets major metropolitan areas in the region.

Joint promotional campaigns are generally held too frequently and rely too much on price cutting and sale merchandise. There is no rule demanding that there be a special sale promotion every month of the year. Excessive reliance on price reduction will create an image in the public mind of downtown as the bargain basement of the trade area. Consumers are more likely in this case to use the downtown area on a correspondingly selective basis, watching for special sale announcements like vultures rather than getting to know the broader offerings in the downtown area.

Downtown promotion should be infrequent enough to be special, and should take a very different approach, emphasizing the quality and special features of down-

town that have greater continuity. Advertising and special promotions should serve to increase the public awareness of these features which can serve as a more continuous draw for downtown businesses.

Joint advertising should be undertaken by the merchants association, emphasizing the uniqueness of Main Street. In general, most newspaper advertisements are based on stock copy available free from the local paper's advertising department. Consequently, downtown merchants' advertising (individual as well as group) is often indistinguishable at first glance from ads for businesses in the sprawling commercial strips.

Downtown does have distinctive offerings to make to the buying public and must emphasize these offerings through whatever graphic means the association can muster. These can include anything from old photographs of Main Street commercial buildings to contemporary sketches or line drawings. Joint ads should periodically include maps of major routes to downtown and maps of the downtown area identifying the commercial offerings, major historic sites in the downtown area and parking lot locations.

In the initial stages of implementation, it may be more desirable to target certain businesses and their structures for experimental treatment of this sort. For example, an individual merchant or two could sponsor a competition for renderings of their facades to be used in future advertising and promotion. In order to promote greater awareness of the character of some of the unmodernized commercial structures downtown, the newspaper could probably be persuaded to sponsor an ongoing contest challenging readers to identify photographs of particular architectural details found on Main Street buildings.

There is also an important role to be played by the merchants association in the recruiting of needed new businesses and the filling of vacant spaces. The economic profile developed for each of the Trust's three Main Street towns showed several major business opportunities which were not currently being filled. Specific recommendations were made for each community (i.e. for Madison the need and market exists for quality food operations, clothing, books, records, household items and craft items). With a list in hand the merchants association can actively recruit from nearby towns or metropolitan areas. Often a business in a nearby town can become interested in opening a branch, while the effort to attract a major chain store will probably be wasted. However/ in recommending needed store types, the consultants realistically noted that downtown retailing will probably shift its focus in the future as older downtowns evolve from major central business districts to more specialized shopping districts. It should also be emphasized that; this last term does not refer to the "boutique alley" phenomena of the 1960's (posters, candles, leather, etc.) but to the higher quality, recreational/specialty shopping centers which have emerged in this decade and which show signs of considerably greater economic potential and stability.

If there is anything in the newest retailing developments comparable to the conventional, shopping center "anchor tenant," it is the specialty center's restaurants and other food service operations. This is all the more reason for downtowns to make special efforts to expand restaurant, catering and other food services.

Apart from restaurants, specialty shopping centers do not possess typical "anchors:" all the tenants serve as anchor tenants, working together to draw on their market. Main Street should operate similarly. Vacant space on Main Street should be filled carefully, with new or expanding businesses selected as much as possible on the basis of what they will contribute to the distinctive character of the downtown area which constitutes much of its appeal. This given identity must be upgraded physically. Another way to build upon a given character of the downtown area is to attract business operations which offer goods and services in keeping with this character. Main Street is often a natural area for offering distinctive merchandise, high quality and good services. It can be a particularly strong setting in which to offer goods which are not entirely the product of the production line and which evidence some trace of the human hand in their production.

Among these other things, this means that it is not necessarily the exclusive responsibility of building owners to fill their available vacancies. The downtown business community has a substantial interest as well in seeing that currently vacant storefronts are occupied, and that they are occupied by users whose operations will be productive for the downtown area as a whole. The local downtown merchants association in particular can and should take considerable initiative in finding desirable occupants for available commercial space in the downtown area. A search committee composed of downtown members of the merchants association should be formed to assist building owners and managers in the tasks of tenant selection and placement.

The formation of such a committee formally or informally presents an excellent opportunity to recruit new talent and to involve them in the organization's active committee work. Bank officials are particularly good prospects and have opportunities to see other markets; they also have direct stakes in downtown as a result of their main office facilities and downtown mortgages.

## PEOPLE

The first order of business for any merchant is not tending the store, but attending to the customer. The businessperson who keeps the customer's needs and wants at the top of the list of priorities has found a way of making most of the business take care of itself. This customer-oriented attitude does not mean simply trying to have what the shopper wants in terms of goods and services, but extends beyond this to offering goods in a clean and attractive setting, creating an attractive shopping environment, building good customer relations through sales personnel and special customer services, advertising what is being offered in an attractive and distinctive way, making goods and services available at hours convenient to the customer, and so on.

Many downtown businesspeople have recognized the need for putting the customer first. They also recognize that this is a complex assignment and respond accordingly for the most part. Nevertheless, there are few businesses in any downtown that would not benefit from a full review of their current practices, asking themselves in each case if it is the business or the customer that is more important. Perhaps some stores seem to have all the business that they can handle at present, but this does not mean that the sales could not still be increased by more widespread and better advertising, by giving the business a more attractive shop front to present to the public, by making it easier for more customers to find the

particular place of business, by creating a better shopping environment all along the street, or by any number of other means,

Attracting the customer to the store involves the cultivation of a clear and consistent image for the business operation. Advertising should place greater emphasis upon graphic identification of the place of business and less explicit reliance upon printed advertising text and stock motifs. The character of the place of business should be cultivated directly through the storefront and facade improvements, and should be advertised accordingly.

Having created both a clear general image for the downtown area and an identifiable location for the particular business, the next challenge is to get the customer through the door. In large measure this means reducing the barriers between the attractions of the shopping environment and building facade and the attractions of the store interior. Some stores in contemporary enclosed shopping malls have gone so far as to remove doors and display windows entirely, opening the store interior completely to the street's pedestrian traffic.

Businesspeople in downtown cannot take such dramatic steps to draw customers into their places of business, but they can take a good look at their display windows, asking themselves exactly what it is they are trying to accomplish by their use of the window area, questioning whether or not current displays accomplish their goals, and making necessary changes accordingly.

Although there is no single right way to dress a store window, there are two dominant approaches evident in contemporary retailing, each of which is intended to achieve maximum visual impact as economically as possible. One of these approaches is to screen off visibility of the store interior completely and to use the display window area as a showcase for one or a very limited number of items. The other approach involves minimizing the role of the window as a barrier between the sidewalk and the store interior. This is accomplished by removing display platforms from the shop window area and treating all space up to the window as active retailing space. Display cases, racks or similar fixtures are moved closer to the front of the store and window space is kept free for maximum visibility into the main retailing space.

Both approaches have ample precedent in retailing tradition, but stand out today as a departure from the tendency to try to display as much merchandise as possible in the store's window area. It is well recognized that this last tactic usually leads to clutter and confusion. Each of the two dominant approaches today is designed to make the most of the shop window as a visual element in successful retailing operations, the one serving as a dramatic showcase treatment and the other serving to minimize the distance between street or sidewalk and the retailing operation inside.

Successful store operation depends not simply upon making the sale once the customer is inside, but upon cultivating a relationship with the customer. Having the goods is important, but making the sale often depends upon a host of additional factors, including helpful sales personnel, and the ability to offer additional customer services. Even if the particular item requested by the customer is not available, helpful sales personnel can advise the customer where else to try; this



can lead to a degree of customer satisfaction sufficient to create goodwill and return traffic, and ultimately to the cultivation of a good business reputation based upon the shopper's direct reports to family and friends.

Thus the businessperson is the ultimate expert in knowing what the customer wants and what still needs to be supplied by businesses on Main Street. Individual merchants should therefore keep good records of customer needs which they cannot meet individually. Customers should be referred to other merchants in the downtown area as appropriate, and reports of unmet customer demand should be taken as indications of changes to be made by individual merchants or the entire downtown business community.

#### PARKING

For a host of reasons many downtown areas have become marginal attractions for most shoppers. People will come for visits to specific shops or to obtain services or to transact business of other types, but in general they do not come to shop the downtown area as a whole. Because downtown is no longer a coherent attraction, the various inconveniences (in such areas as access, variety of goods offered, available parking, and so on) become exaggerated in their role as liabilities and barriers to potential shoppers. Parking is, for example, one subject which can become a symbolic explanation or excuse for not shopping downtown. Shoppers may well complain at the least inconvenience and use this as an excuse for claiming that they no longer like to shop the downtown area.

In general, however, the amount of parking is not the real issue in most downtowns. The location of that parking is the problem. The chief complainers are almost always merchants, and to a much lesser extent customers, who experience a shortage of parking in the immediate vicinity of particular stores. Unfortunately, there is no inexpensive and practical way to give every merchant parking spaces desired *directly* in front of his or her store. However, there are a number of ways to make the most of available parking elsewhere.

Downtown businesspeople must make the central retailing area more attractive as a general destination and more appealing for the pedestrian. This can only be accomplished by a coordinated program involving the improvement of shopping opportunities downtown, widespread improvements to downtown commercial properties and public improvements along the pedestrian circulation routes both along and adjacent to Main Street, and particularly those pathways between Main Street and public parking lots.

Often access to nearby parking lots is not clear to drivers.

In order to increase usage of lots, better directional signs to the lots should be provided. Such signs should be minimal and strategically located. Merchants can also make directional signs more effective by cutting back on the overabundance of commercial and highway signs which are usually present in the downtown area. Merchants' identities can be established through signs which are considerably smaller and fewer in number than most of these currently in use downtown. Although better signs minimize competition with public informational and directional signs and permit the latter to do their job effectively.

One of the chief tasks in making the best use of available downtown parking space is to separate downtown patrons from employees. Shoppers should have maximum access to close-in, short-term spaces; employees should use more distant long-term parking spaces. One way of regulating the allocation of parking space between these two groups is to establish uniform opening hours for the majority of downtown stores and offices, and to keep at least some of the innermost parking spaces, both on the street and in major lots, closed to vehicle parking prior to these opening hours. The city and the merchants association should experiment with sane alternatives, without fanfare or publicity. At the experimental stages, trial regulations should not be rigidly enforced. Rather, parking duration and the extent of employee abuse of shorter-term shopper parking spaces should be monitored.

The enforcement of parking regulations which are presently in effect and any which may be instituted in the future should be regarded chiefly as a matter of public relations and not primarily as a matter of law enforcement. Along Main Street and major adjacent shopping streets, merchants can also use enforcement of parking regulations as an opportunity to improve customer relations. For example, the business community can provide additional printed information to be passed on to parking violators which thanks them for shopping downtown and informs them of available longer-term parking opportunities. Downtown merchants should also encourage sales people to take up parking issues as a way of showing concern for the customer by asking people if they need change for parking meters or offering to reimburse shoppers for the cost of parking.

If and when the shopper is sufficiently rewarded, parking meters and other psychological barriers will vanish as elements in the consumer rationale for not using the downtown area. Commercial strips and malls are relatively more attractive destinations for shoppers in part because of the relatively better access which they enjoy. If the downtown area exploits fully its given qualities, improves its appearance and increases the quality of its commercial activity, it can induce shoppers and visitors to make that little extra effort in overcoming minor inconveniences.

#### UPPER STORIES

The amount of vacant space in many downtowns expands considerably when one looks beyond the ground floor commercial areas to available space in the upper stories of downtown commercial buildings.

Efforts should be made to relocate ground floor office space users along Main Street into upper story space. There is a double payoff in promoting this type of relocation if commercial (retail) tenants can also be lined up for former ground floor office space opened up by such transfers. A transfer of this sort will also expand the amount of retailing area available downtown. Many professional (legal, medical) occupancies or personal service (e.g., beauty shops) occupants of ground floor storefront space require a certain degree of prominence but do not depend upon walk-in traffic to the same extent as retail merchants. These could be just as well if not better served in renovated quarters in upper floors along Main Street,

In addition to returning interior space in upper stories to active use, renovation would also **promote** upper story facade **improvements** and add interest to the streetscape. There should be no objection to directing attention to **upper story facades** through modest amounts of well-designed signs displayed in conjunction with occupied upper story spaces.

Active commercial use appears to be the least likely alternative for making upper story space in most downtowns more productive. As is generally the case and as examples in the Main Street Project towns demonstrate, the use of second and third floor space as extensions of regular ground-floor retailing area **is** restricted mostly to businesses dealing in large household goods, such as furniture and appliances. Other retailing operations which **expand** beyond the ground-floor area are more likely to use basement space as an initial preference, based upon a fairly well founded assumption that **customers** will take the path of least resistance rather than battling gravity *in* exploring retail areas beyond the ground floor.

The remaining alternative uses for upper-story space in most downtown include apartments and offices. An aggressive search on the **part** of the merchants association and the promotion of negotiations between a prospective tenant and a building **owner** should be pursued. It may simply be the case that few people have given any thought to encouraging the use of upper-floor space by office occupants, with even fewer having made direct efforts toward accomplishing this end. Office **occupants** of ground-floor space are one of the most logical initial targets for use of upper-story space along Main Street.

Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse directed toward the creation of rental apartments in upper-story space in sane downtowns holds considerable promise for being economically feasible. One project of this type in Madison demonstrated that upper-story conversion can be accomplished at or under comparable costs for new construction. Although the motives and opportunity related to this example may not be completely applicable to a large number of other locations, similar downtown housing opportunities could have broad general market appeal. There is also an appeal to "living above the store" for many novice entrepreneurs.'

There are a number of factors which can mitigate this general appeal of living downtown. Most of these factors are related to the street environment. Main Street **generally** does not have many qualities which would characterize it as intimate. Main Street is a thoroughly commercial environment, a fact which is announced by not only its breadth, exposure and numerous storefronts, but also due to the overbearing appearance of **most** of the commercial operations; **much** of this is due to the predominance of oversized and excessive sign **treatments** which expand the scale of the facade by means of siding or screening.

Even though it may now be hidden, upper-story facades have often been unaltered; many represent excellent facade material for residential uses. However in **most** downtowns, spaces currently in active residential use appear to be somewhat marginal and do not contribute much to a desirable residential atmosphere in the **downtown** area. Making the area attractive

to new residential occupants would therefore entail building and sidewalk level improvements on much the same order as will be required for direct commercial revitalization of the downtown.

Downtown housing opportunities are usually seen as appealing chiefly to older resident population. This age group is usually considered a logical target for such housing opportunities because of the shopping convenience and frequently lower rents that downtown housing offers. However, it must be emphasized that other segments of the population, particularly new households and young families, should also be given consideration when trying to envision the potential market for such housing units. In spite of the convenience which these apartments might represent; for older citizens, access by means of typically steep and narrow stairways is a decided disadvantage. Creating additional points of access to upper-story apartments as required by modern building codes may well be feasible, but will not necessarily be more convenient for use by older citizens. Additional access is still likely to be provided by means of additional interior or rear exterior stairways rather than elevators, and this may constitute a barrier for some senior citizens.

#### SOURCE AND METHOD OF FINANCING

Most landscape and parking lot improvements are public responsibilities and should be financed through some combination of tax revenue, bonds and state or federal assistance. Similar improvements along Main Street may be similarly financed if state enabling legislation permits; supplementary funding can come from a special tax levy on property owners in the project area, since they will be some of the chief beneficiaries of public improvements in the commercial district.

It may be possible to reduce the cost of individual building rehabilitation and facade improvements through loans at reduced rates of interest or special preservation grants. Not every local financial institution will be willing to participate in a special loan pool for improvements to private commercial property in the downtown area. However, most institutions recognize the stake they have in the Main Street economy and efforts should be made to organize the banks to form a jointly-funded special loan program for those building owners who are participating in a formal revitalization program.

Most initial downtown commercial improvement projects will probably have to be financed by relatively conventional methods. The National Trust's examination of the Market Street preservation program in Corning, New York, has indicated that many and probably most facade improvements, including storefront rehabilitation, are less costly than might first be suspected. In many cases substantial accomplishments and public impact can be achieved with relatively modest expenditures, covering items such as new signs, awnings, advertisement copy, or improved maintenance. The first projects a community undertakes are therefore likely to be financed through some combination of conventional capital improvement Loans, slightly

increased expenditures for major maintenance and repairs and private business reserve funds.

#### TIMING AND SELECTION OF PROJECTS

Perhaps the most important resource for attracting additional funds for downtown investment will be examples of demonstrable success in each town. The role of the merchants association in monitoring the cost-benefit record of each project will therefore be extremely important. General publicity concerning projects should always be accompanied by available items of hard data concerning the economics of each commercial preservation effort. Additional information should be available in the files on request. Of course the monitoring effort must be maintained for many years, perhaps by the merchants association. This is also one of the most important reasons for a well calculated selection of the first projects to be undertaken. It will be much easier to speculate on the basis of modest successes that it will be to explain what went wrong with a larger and more complicated experiment involving greater risk.

The most important principles to follow in the course of implementing these recommendations are the following: (1) select modest projects with a high probability of completion and success, and (2) maintain continuity by overlapping projects. Particularly regarding the latter, it would be better to have a number of projects in various stages of completion than it would be to have the same number occurring simultaneously with virtually identical starting and finishing dates.

## NEW TAX LAW

by Carol O. Shull  
Historian, National Register

The Tax Reform Act of 1976, recently signed into law by President Ford, provides important new tax incentives for historic preservation, corrects deficiencies in the tax code which have worked against preservation, and places new responsibilities on the Secretary of the Interior to make the tax advantages available to the public.

Commercial or business related structures that qualify as "certified historic structures" are entitled to most of the tax advantages under the new act. A "certified historic structure" is defined in the law as a depreciable structure which

- (A) is listed in the National Register
- (B) is located in a registered historic district and is certified by the Secretary of the Interior as being of historic significance to the district, or
- (C) is located in a historic district designated under a statute of the appropriate state or local government if such statute is certified by the Secretary of the Interior as containing criteria which will substantially achieve the purpose of preserving and rehabilitating buildings of historic significance to the district.

The new tax provisions will encourage rehabilitation and discourage demolition of certified historic structures in several ways. An owner of a certified historic structure may now write off (or amortize) over a 60-month period rehabilitation expenditures which are part of a certified rehabilitation of the property. To take advantage of the provision, the

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taxpayer must make his rehabilitation expenditures between June 14, 1976, and June 15, 1981. Under the act, a certified historic structure which the Secretary of the Interior certifies as being consistent with the historic character of the property or the district in which the property is located.

### Advantages

The advantage of this new provision is that

Before the passage of the Tax Reform Act, he was required to spread his tax deductions over the life of the property, which for most buildings was much longer than 60 months. The act encourages owners to rehabilitate their historic commercial properties.

In the past, the tax code actually encouraged demolition by allowing owners to deduct demolition expenses. A major impediment to historic preservation. Any building or other structure located in a registered historic district is treated as a certified historic structure unless the Secretary of the Interior certifies prior to its demolition, that the historic structure is not of historic significance to the district. The now non-deductible demolition costs must be added to the value of the land on which a historic structure was located. Demolition of certified historic structures is further discouraged under the Tax Reform Act by a depreciation (accelerated depreciation) on any new building, constructed, reconstructed, erected, or used after December 31, 1975, and before January 1, 1981, on the site which was on or after June 30, 1976, occupied by a certified historic structure that was demolished or substantially altered, except by a certified rehabilitation. An owner is limited to using straight line depreciation, and consequently receives smaller tax deductions over a longer period of time, rather than the more advantageous accelerated depreciation allowable on new structures, which provides for larger tax deductions over a shorter time span.

Another more complex provision would allow taxpayers to depreciate "substantially rehabilitated historic property" as though they were the original users of the property, entitling them to use the accelerated depreciation which could previously only be used for new buildings.

The Tax Reform Act also allows income, estate, and gift tax deductions for the transfer of partial interests in property for conservation purposes. A charitable deduction from the income tax is allowed for a contribution to a charitable organization or a governmental entity exclusively for "conservation purposes" of a lease, option to purchase, or easement on historically important land areas or structures of not less than 30 years or a remainder interest (a gift of property the enjoyment and use of which is to take effect after death). These contributions also qualify as charitable contributions and transfers must be made after June 13, 1976, and before June 14, 1977, to qualify for the tax advantages.

### OAHP Role

The Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities under the act will be handled by the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, primarily through the National Register and Technical Preservation Services programs. OAHP is now considering the most efficient way to certify historic structures in National Register districts, approve certified rehabilitations, and review state and local statutes which establish historic districts. In addition, a major new emphasis in OAHP will be providing the public with information about the Tax Reform Act to encourage owners of historic properties to take advantage of the new tax incentives. The act will also have an important impact on state historic preservation programs. The State Historic Preservation Officers are expected to begin receiving inquiries on the act immediately, as well as increased pressures from property owners to have their properties listed in the National Register and requests for technical advice on the rehabilitation of historic structures.

In addition to making the state historic preservation programs more visible, in the states, the act should generate increased interest among government officials at the state and local levels and private citizens in the designation and protection of historic districts. Since having a certified state and local statute is one method of obtaining the tax benefits. Because access to the tax benefits requires that rehabilitation work be certified by the Secretary of the Interior, the act will also assist in raising rehabilitation standards across the country. It also offers the possibility of involving local governments as well as the SHPOs in the certification of rehabilitations for tax purposes.

Although the sections of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 related to historic preservation need further legal analysis to clarify all of the implications of the tax benefits, it is clear that the new provisions make the preservation of historic resources more popular and economically feasible.

*Depreciation* is a reasonable, annual deduction allowed for the "exhaustion, wear and tear" of property except land used in a trade or business or held for the production of income. In the *straightline method* of depreciation the cost or other basis of the property (less salvage value) is divided by the useful life expectancy of the property and the amount so derived is deductible annually. *Accelerated methods* of depreciation, authorized for certain property, allow a more rapid write off in the beginning years of ownership.

*Amortization* allows the taxpayer to write off his expenses in the same manner as depreciation but over a definite period of time regardless of the actual useful life of the property.

*Taxable life of the property* is the estimated life expectancy as used in the particular taxpayer's business generally (20 or 30 years for buildings).

*Taxable basis* for purchased property is the cost of the investment plus subsequent capital expenditures. The basis of property inherited or received by gift is determined differently.

-Joe A. Shull

With the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1976, it will become more important than ever for historic nominations to include photographs, architectural drawings, and sketch maps to contribute to the character of the area. Historic buildings are considered nonconforming intrusions. This consideration requested by the National Park Service since January 1, 1975, will now be requested for all districts nominated to the National Register.

How to Complete the National Register Nomination Form is being reissued in a revised format and will be available from the National Register in early 1977. Further details will be provided in an upcoming issue of the National Register Newsletter.