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Downtown Portland Planning Concepts

Portland (Or.). City Planning Commission

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STAFF REPORT - SEPTEMBER 1964

A PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE DOWNTOWN
PLAN--NOT TO BE QUOTED OR PUBLISHED
UNTIL ACTED UPON BY THE PORTLAND
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION.

DOWNTOWN PORTLAND PLANNING CONCEPTS

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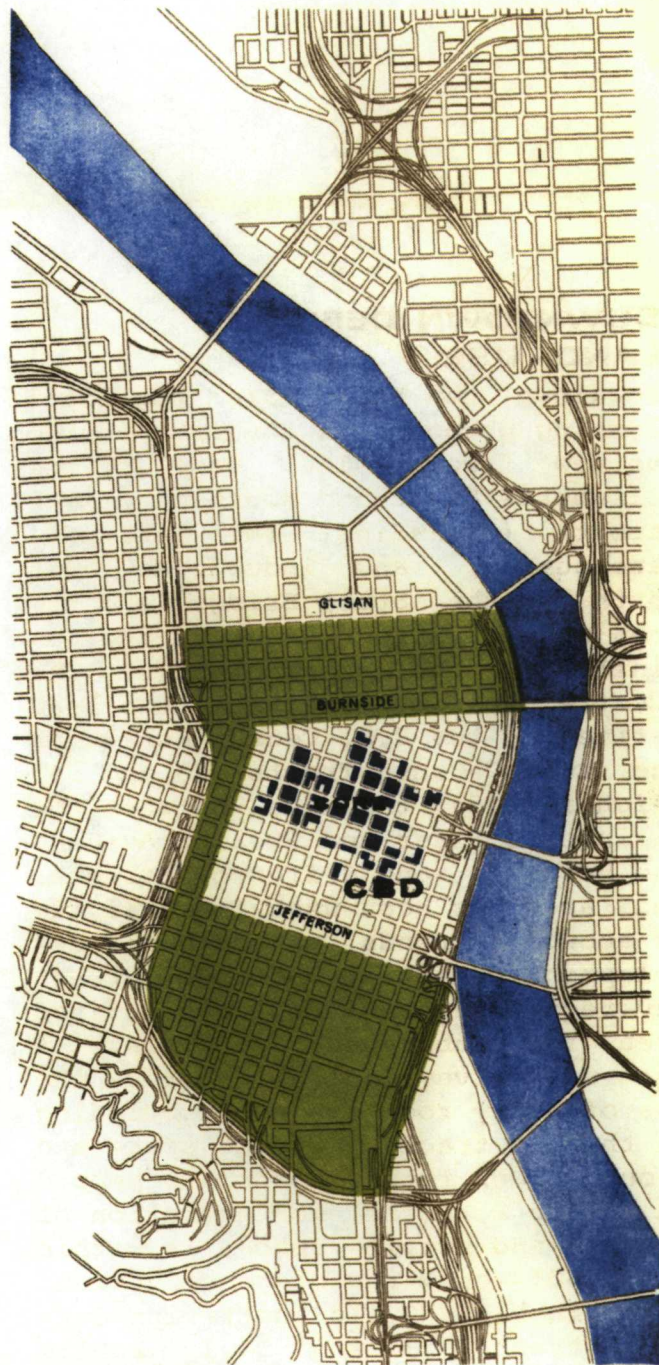
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DOWNTOWN PLANNING-- THE NEXT TWO DECADES

A continuing goal of the Planning Commission is to encourage land development which will create a better environment in every area of the city. The development of downtown has been guided in the last several years by the 1959 Zoning Ordinance (which includes design and sign control as well as commercial and apartment zones); by the Skidmore Fountain Design Zone; by plans approved for the South Auditorium Renewal area; and by other plans for trafficways and parking (a new Morrison Bridge location, Burnside-Couch couplet recommendation, a phased parking program for Downtown Portland, Incorporated, etc.).

The Planning Commission approved plans for the downtown freeway loop which is now under construction. The Commission will soon be asked to approve a proposed extension to the South Auditorium Renewal area. Renewal, freeways, and other private construction are rapidly creating a new downtown. Since the functions of trafficways and the uses of land are inter-related, it is urgent to plan now for the expected changes in access to downtown and to integrate traffic, renewal, and overall planning. A land-use plan and a complete circulation system which would be workable for at least a twenty year period are needed. A conceptual plan is a first step toward their formulation.

Downtown is only one part of central Portland. New development in the Lloyd Center area and possibly redevelopment of the north-of-Burnside Street, east bank, and south river-front industrial areas have not been studied. A local-area plan is presented, based on local trends; when a regional plan is developed and the

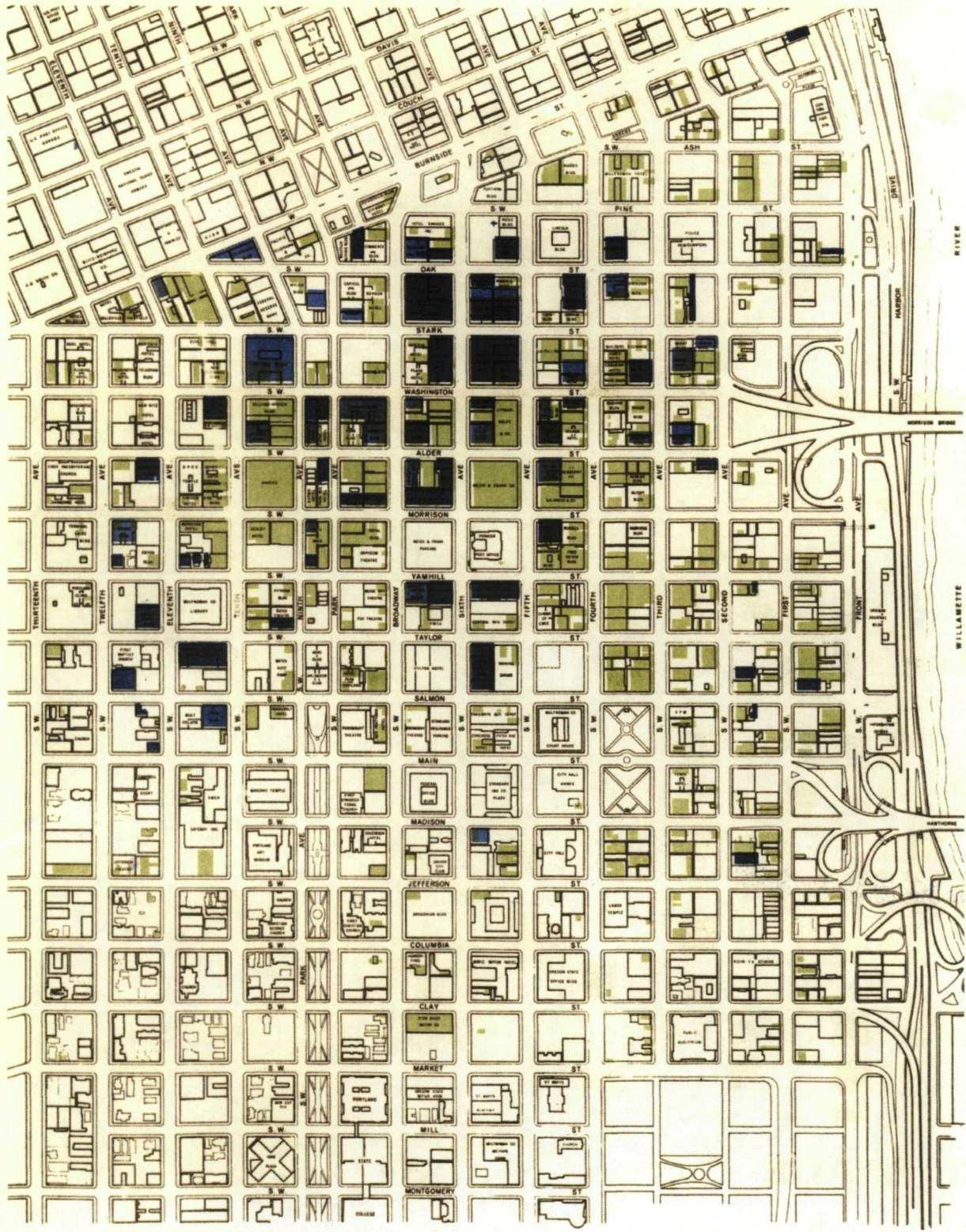


**DOWNTOWN
PORTLAND**

Community Renewal Program evaluation of overall city needs is complete, a comprehensive plan for the entire central area can be completed.

DOWNTOWN DEFINED: LAND - USE

"Downtown" can be defined for local planning purposes as the area inside the new freeway loop west of the Willamette River and south of Glisan Street (excluding the railroad, warehousing, and industrial area north of the Steel Bridge and the area east of Harbor Drive in the vicinity of the steam plant). The "Central Business District" has been defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the two Census Tracts 53 and 54, which include the area between the Willamette River and Twelfth Avenue, and Burnside and Jefferson Streets. This area has been used for analysis of economic trends, although new development south of Jefferson Street may require expansion of the defined area for subsequent analysis. A land-use survey in 1961 recorded the use of every room in every building in the two tracts. Office space and ground-floor retail space are mapped in Plate 2. (The concentration of office and retail space is within the "CBD"--only recent construction, shown in Plate 5, is scattering outside tracts 53 and 54.) Public buildings and open space are mapped in Plate 3.



- RETAIL** GROUND FLOOR
- 2/3+
- PRIVATE OFFICE**
- 1/3 TO 2/3 OF BLDG.

LAND USE - 1961



- PUBLIC**
- BUILDINGS
 - OPEN SPACE
- SEMI-PUBLIC**
- THEATRES
 - OTHER

PUBLIC SPACE

3

A PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A framework for planning is defined by buildings, parks, and streets within downtown which are likely to retain their usefulness for a twenty to thirty year period. A determination of the condition of buildings should be completed in conjunction with Portland's Community Renewal Program. Building age is a fairly good indicator of condition, at least on an area basis. Buildings built before 1940 are shown on Plate 4, and after 1940 on Plate 5. Presently known sound development and other new construction include:

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS (See Plate 3.)

- Parks, including the Park Blocks along Park Avenue, the two blocks adjacent to the County Courthouse, and the esplanade north of the Journal Building.

- Government buildings (grouped southeast of the core):

Federal buildings (the existing building and a planned new building between Madison and Jefferson Streets and Second and Fourth Avenues), State building, County Courthouse, City Hall, and a possible future County-City building between the Courthouse and City Hall (site acquired).

- Other public buildings:

Art Museum, Library (expansion required), Pioneer Post Office (an historically significant building), Auditorium.

- Freeway loop under construction, including its ramps and collectors for these ramps.
- Bridges (except possibly Hawthorne).

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT (See Plate 6.)

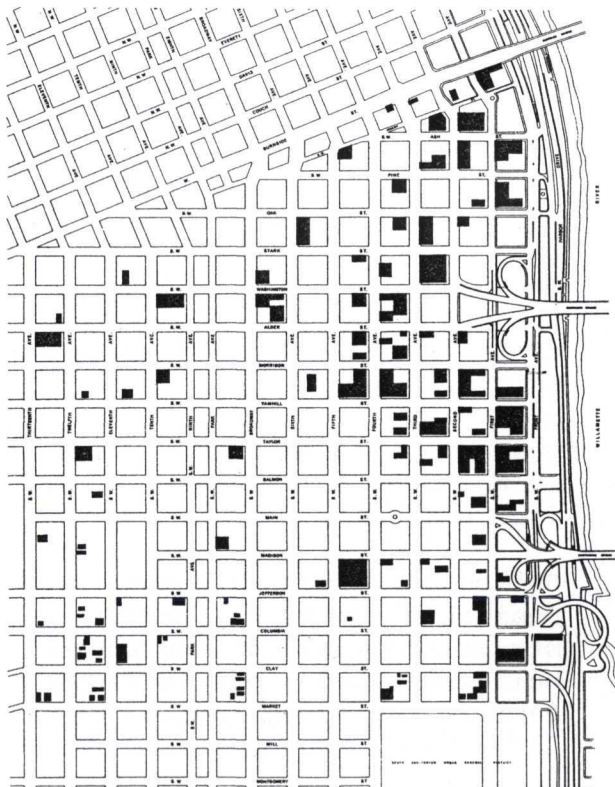
- Core area (approximately between Oak and Taylor Streets and Third and Tenth Avenues) contains stable concentrations of office buildings, retail stores, and theatres (the latter concentrated on Broadway between Morrison and Main Streets).

- New or proposed construction in or adjacent to the core includes (see Plate 5):

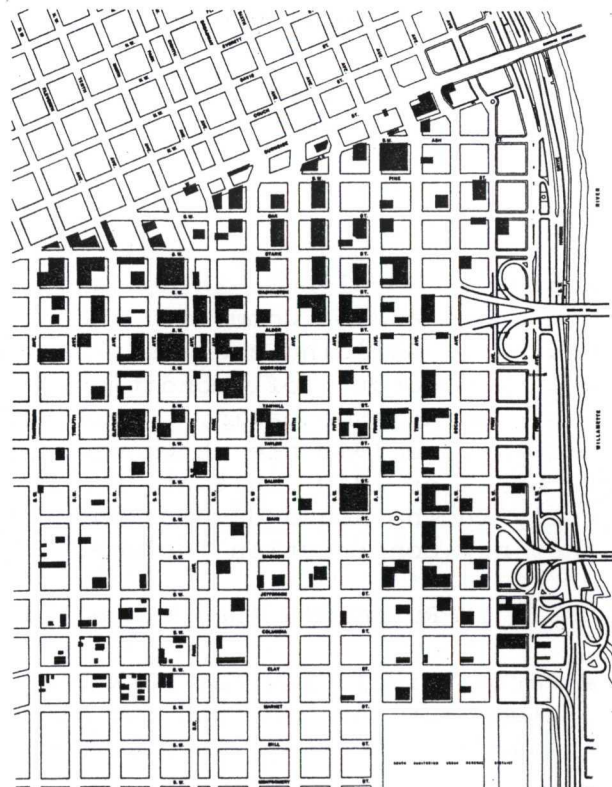
Office buildings--Standard Plaza, Equitable Building (under construction east of the Oregonian building), and a possible Georgia Pacific Building north of the Courthouse. The Portland Federal Savings Building was recently completed in the north-core or financial district, and a new building for the Bank of California is planned for this area in the block between Stark and Washington Streets and Broadway and Park Avenue.

Retail store--I. Magnin recently opened a branch store in the Public Service Building.

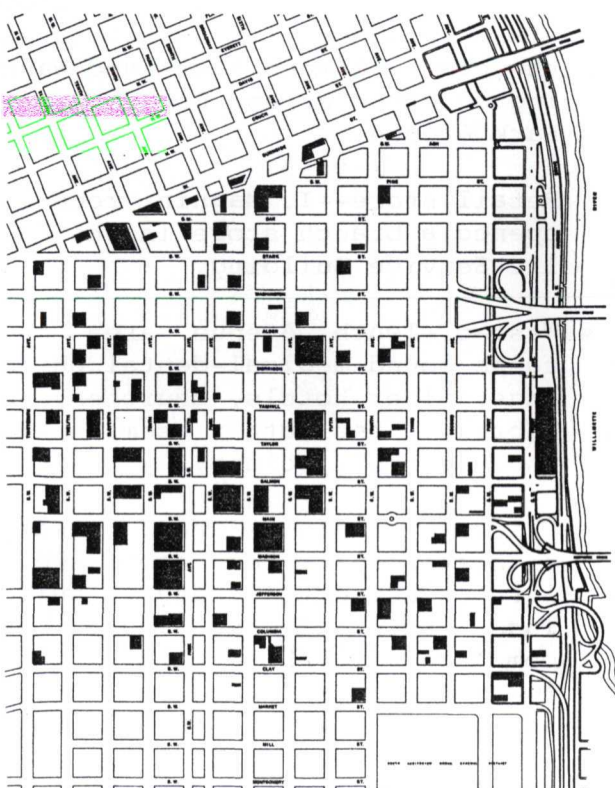
- West-of-Tenth Avenue area contains sound medical-dental buildings, older hotels, churches, the Library, and other semi-public uses (schools, clubs).
- Skidmore Fountain area, an area of historic interest comprised of late nineteenth century buildings, some of which have been completely rehabilitated.
- South Auditorium Renewal Area. Will be an area of new medium density buildings conforming to an existing land-use plan.



PRE 1900

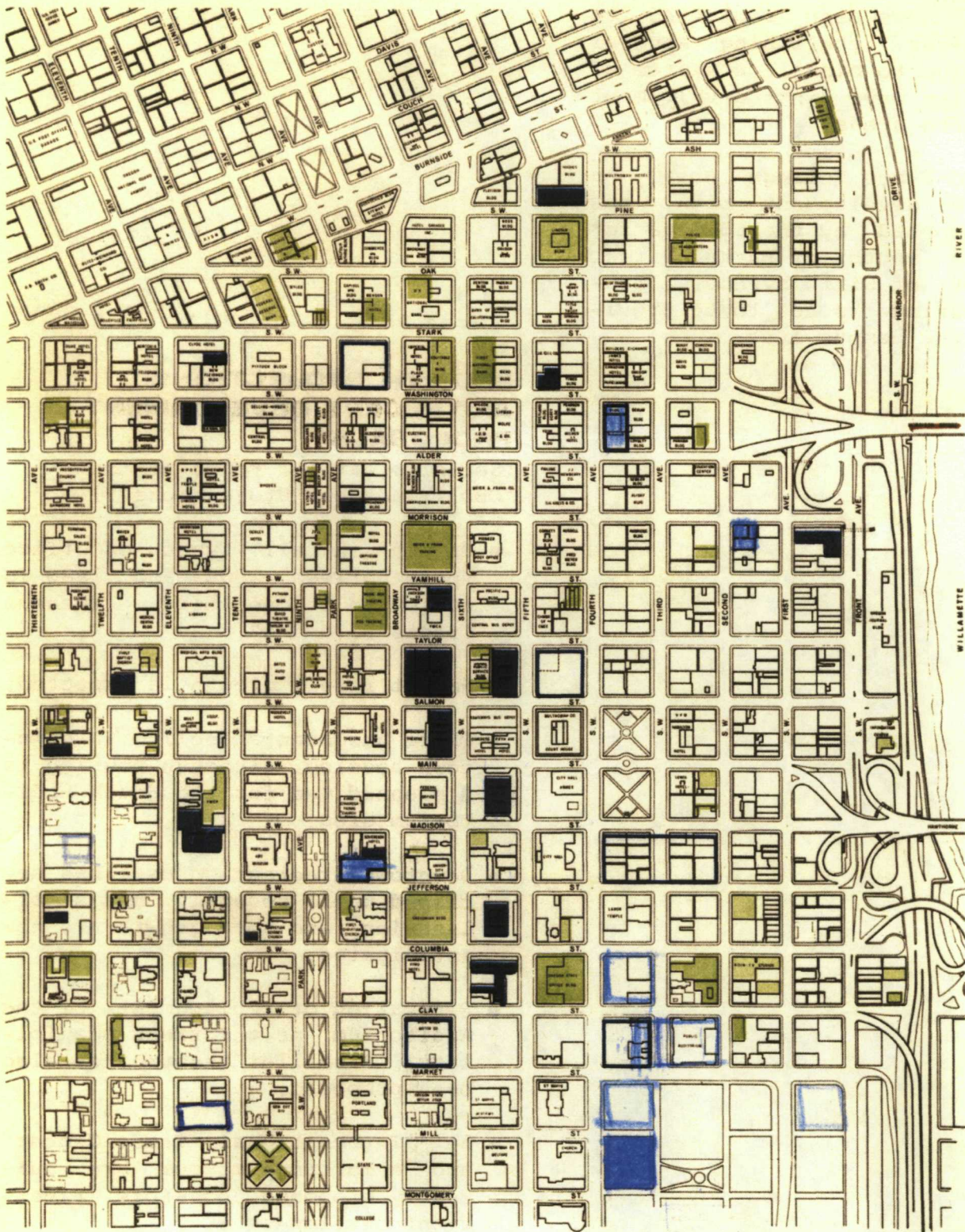


1900 - 1920



1920 - 1940

**PRE - 1940
BUILDINGS**



1940 - 1964 AND PROPOSED BUILDINGS

- 1940 - 1950
- 1950 - 1960
- 1960 - 1964
- PROPOSED

Streets have been replatted to form areas containing several blocks (up to nine); a system of pedestrian ways links development within the areas.

- Portland State College area. An ultimate development plan has been proposed by the college for the area south of Market Street and west of Sixth Avenue. Student housing is not to be provided in the campus area.

GROWTH PROJECTIONS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

(See also earlier report:
"CBD Trends and Projections".)

- Growth in all types of office space between 1960 and 1980 is estimated at one third. (Census Tracts 53 and 54.)
- No net retail growth is expected.
- There has been a decline in downtown housing, although housing is a planned use for the South Auditorium area.
- Downtown recreation use has declined until recently, but stabilization and some growth are now anticipated.
- Renovation or replacement of the Auditorium is a current possibility. A smaller theatre has also been proposed.
- An "International Trade Center" and a maritime museum are currently proposed possible river-front developments.
- It is probable that new bus terminal facilities will be required fairly soon. Present locations are too close to a developing high rent area.

LAND - USE POLICY AND PROPOSAL

POLICY

- The maximum projected growth in office space should be accommodated. High density development can be permitted in the existing and south core areas but not without provision of adequate open space and light. A maximum floor-area-ratio of six is tentatively recommended for these areas (excluding parking). This ratio would allow, for example, a twenty story building covering thirty percent of its site area.
- Existing retail strength should be maintained. Regional specialty shopping and local-resident convenience shopping should be encouraged. The regional shopping area should be compact and contained in the present core.
- Housing should be encouraged, especially near the riverfront (including middle-income family housing in a suitable environment).
- Cultural and recreational use should be encouraged. Housing and these uses will expand nighttime activity downtown, making fuller use of private and public investment in the area.
- More usable, active open space in plazas, setbacks, widened sidewalks, decks, malls, and in new parks should be provided.
- Parking should be provided as close to destinations as possible--preferably immediately adjacent or under--but should not separate related uses. (See Circulation.)
- The development flexibility provided by the existing grid street system is desirable and should be retained in a modified street system.
- Land-uses should be mixed and not segregated, although there may be predominant uses in certain areas. (Single-use areas, often proposed in "land-use plans", may be inactive much of the time, or may not include all services needed regularly by users.)
- The best use of the Willamette River as an important natural asset should be made. Pedestrian access to the river should be facilitated.
- Focal elements such as Pioneer Post Office, the riverfront, Park Blocks, etc. should be tied together in a network which could relate the various sub-areas of downtown, and could provide pedestrian linkage between them. Focal points themselves create interest through variety in an otherwise near-homogeneous area, and provide reference points for easier orientation.
- Improvements in amenities -- fountains, trees, sign control, covered walkways for rain protection, etc.--should be promoted.

SUSTAINING EXISTING PATTERNS

Certain existing development patterns within downtown should be sustained. (See Plate 6.) They include:

- Core area (the area predominantly north of Pioneer Post Office)
- Portland State College area
- Skidmore Fountain area
- South Auditorium Renewal area
- Government buildings area.

Groups of blocks comprising these areas which contain strong internal pedestrian linkages should be planned as consolidated units of a size larger than 200' by 200' to permit better land development and to reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflict. This unitized development can be effected either by horizontally separating groups of blocks from heavy vehicle traffic, or by allowing traffic to pass under decked pedestrian areas. One or both solutions might be used in any one area.

- Core area. Pedestrian traffic is heaviest in this area. To eliminate pedestrian-vehicle conflict, vehicular arterials could rim the area, but preferably should be decked or bridged where conflict occurs.

Since the CBD's heaviest traffic flows through this area on about ten avenues or streets, it would not be possible to redistribute this traffic to a few peripheral arterials without provision of an excessive number of lanes (assuming the continuation of the present peak hour percentage of daily traffic: 12 to 14%). In addition, for parking to be located

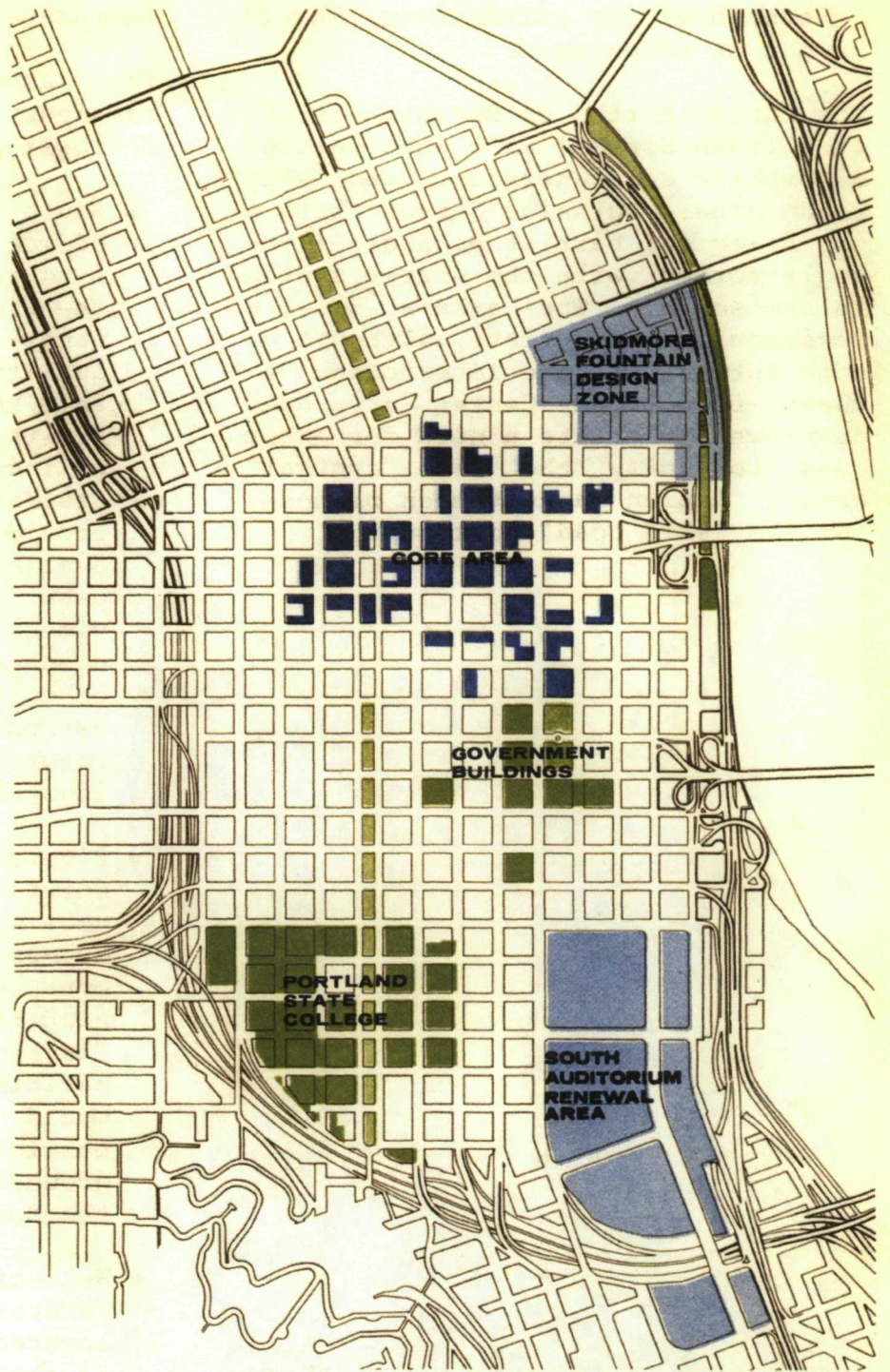
immediately adjacent to uses, access streets could not be separated by more than one or two blocks. This spacing would not be sufficient to include half of the core in a traffic-free area. For these reasons, street decking or bridging is recommended rather than horizontal separation--except where limited street closure is clearly possible -- together with traffic reduction on streets where decking is not economical.

Continued retail use would be encouraged in this area. The north portion or financial district, which has a high proportion of newer buildings, can desirably remain in office and banking use. It is not probable that significant new housing or recreation use will be added to the core area. However, these uses are desirable, provided that retail concentration is not reduced.

- Portland State College area. Pedestrian traffic is also heavy in this area. To develop homogeneity of the campus and to discourage through-traffic, this area is planned principally as a horizontal unit.

Other groups of downtown blocks may not have significant pedestrian traffic, but because of dominant land-use characteristics they form reasonable development units:

- Skidmore Fountain area
- South Auditorium Renewal area
- Government buildings area (see Plate 3). A possible grouping could include all of these buildings and the two adjacent park blocks, although exclusive gov-



EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

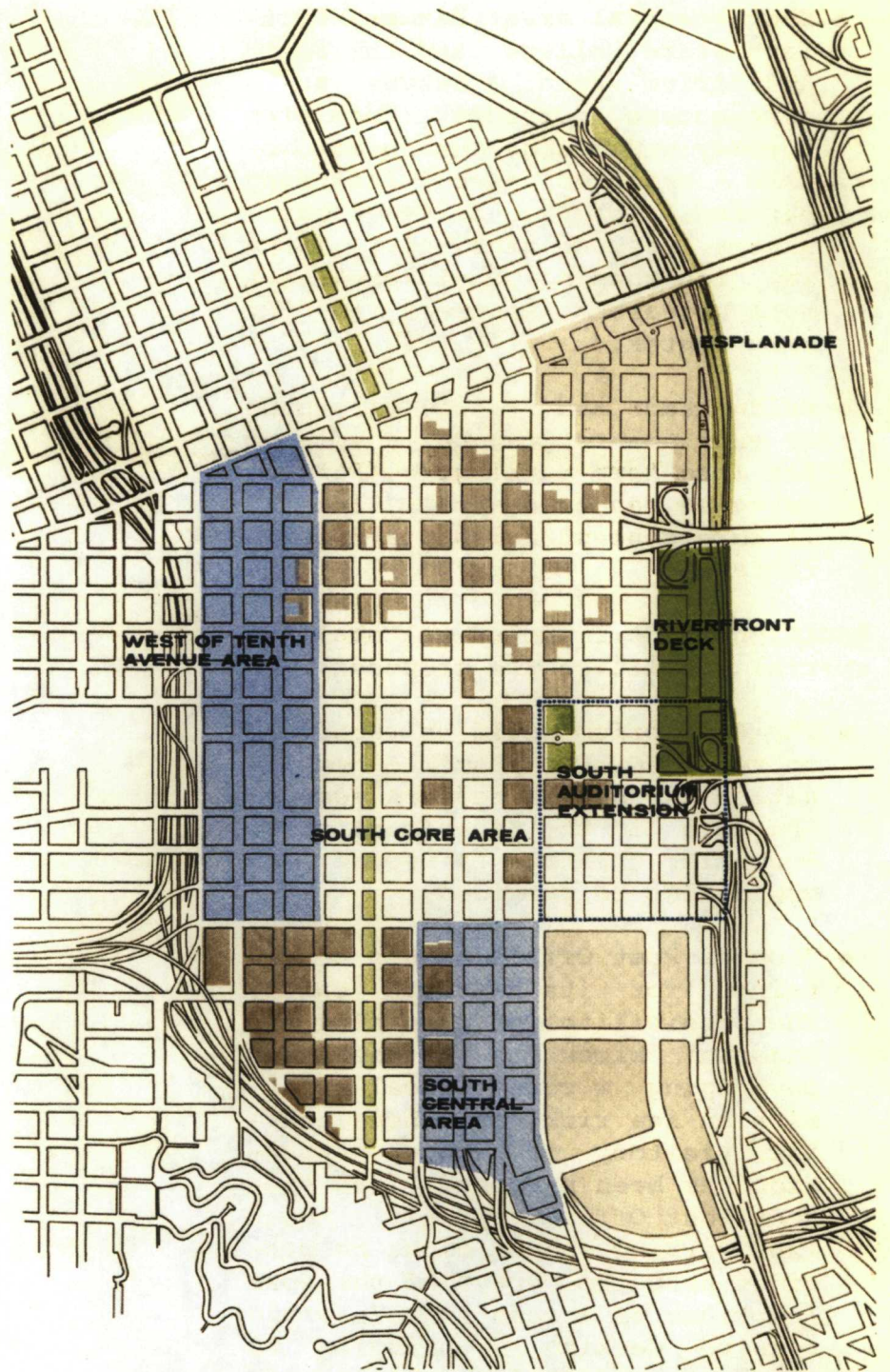
ernmental (or office) use should not be encouraged.

The area north of Burnside Street (to Glisan Street) is a wholesaling, automobile sales-service, and "skid road" area. Burnside Street forms a psychological barrier because of the angle formed with the street system to the south. The area's service function is appropriate, although at some future time the interaction between the Lloyd Center area and downtown may create a need for other uses to unify the two "central" areas. A plan has not been proposed for the "skid road" portion.

PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

The land development plan for the remainder of downtown is proposed as follows:

- South core area. Expansion in office and hotel space is occurring rapidly in the area south of the Pioneer Post Office, predominantly along Sixth Avenue. Good quality central sites are available here without Urban Renewal. Growth in office space downtown will continue to be rapid and can desirably continue in this area, provided sufficient space is also available for necessary related uses (restaurants, personal services) and for other desirable uses (some housing, entertainment or cultural facilities). The location of these varied uses within or adjacent to office buildings should be encouraged.
- Riverfront area. Between the Morrison and Hawthorne Bridges uses would include a park having access to the river by decking over Harbor Drive, middle and high-income housing, a possible "International Trade Center", and maritime museum. Harbor Drive would be moved as far west as possible to create a wider ground-level esplanade north of the Morrison Bridge.
- West-of-Tenth Avenue area. An interstate bus terminal could be located adjacent to the west side of the core in an area which is close to the core center and has direct freeway access. Existing moderate-price hotels would provide convenient transient housing. The YMCA could be encouraged to move to this area (the YWCA is already in a new building in the vicinity). Low density commercial service uses are appropriate.



**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
AREAS**

- South-central area between Portland State College and the South Auditorium area. Serves as a core-access corridor from the freeway and could contain automobile - oriented uses including parking, motels, drive-in businesses, service stations. Parkway landscaping could provide a more pleasant approach to the city center.
- Bridgeheads and freeway air-space or exit points can be developed for long-term parking. (Parking garages can be centrally located if core concentration is not affected.)

Additional or improved cultural and special facilities are proposed:

- The Auditorium would be remodeled or replaced. A possible new location is at the eastern edge of the core in the riverfront area. A smaller theatre is needed and could also be provided.
- Pioneer Post Office should be retained for its historic value. The possibility of acquiring the adjacent block to the west and developing a core "focal point" with an ice rink or other tourist, visitor, or shopper attraction has been proposed (see Pioneer Post Office report). About 1200 parking spaces might be provided near the center of the core (portions of access streets would require decking or bridging to eliminate pedestrian-vehicle conflict).

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION POLICY AND PROPOSAL

POLICY

- Automobile commuting should not be discouraged--the automobile will continue to be the primary mode of transport to downtown in the next two decades.
- Transit use should be encouraged, but only if smokeless, quiet, comfortable, and uncrowded busses can be provided.
- Commuting time during the peak hours should not increase (or the percentage of daily traffic arriving or leaving during the peak hour should remain the same: 12-14%).
- To reduce cross-traffic to a minimum, traffic destined for downtown should be routed circumferentially so as to enter the area on the side nearest its destination. Circumferential freeways or arterials and their necessary connections should form a complete near-circular system serving all sectors of downtown.
- The best use of downtown land should be promoted by consolidating traffic on fewer arterials where possible (without increasing commuting time).
- Conflict between vehicles and pedestrians should be reduced by decking or bridging arterials in heavy pedestrian-traffic areas, or by routing traffic around some of these areas where decking is not needed (peripheral, lower-density areas only).
- Parking should be provided as close to destinations as possible--preferably immediately ad-

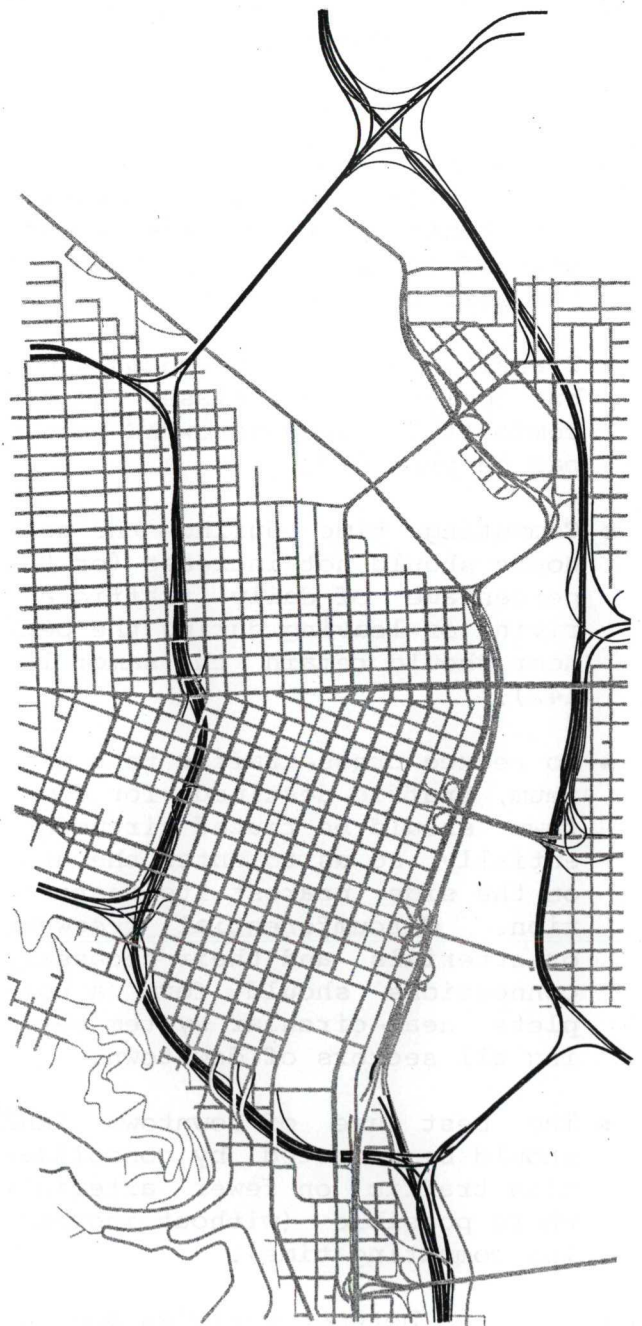
jacent or under--but should not separate related uses. Height above ground should preferably not exceed two stories (deck or bridge level), except in freeway air-space or adjacent to other barriers such as bridgeheads.

CONCEPTS

It has been estimated by the City Traffic Department that traffic will increase about 10% on downtown streets by 1980 (based on 30% growth in trips to the area less a 20% diversion of through and cross-traffic to the freeway loop). It may be possible to reduce the 10% increase BY IMPROVING CIRCUMFERENTIAL DISTRIBUTION and BY REDUCING CRUISING TRAFFIC THROUGH THE ELIMINATION OF CURB PARKING. (Reducing conflict between pedestrians and vehicles will not reduce traffic, but will increase street efficiency.) If commuting time is to remain constant and if parking convenience is to be at a maximum, the number of existing lanes traversing the core area probably cannot be reduced significantly. It may be possible to close selected low-volume streets in peripheral areas (Portland State College, the areas west of Park Avenue and east of Fourth Avenue, Skidmore Fountain area, etc.), but street decking and bridging is the preferred solution to provide pedestrian-vehicle separation and increased development space in the central heavy traffic area.

Initially, limited parts of central east-west and north-south streets could be bridged and possibly tied to a decked Pioneer Post Office complex. As curb parking is removed and as pedestrians and vehicles are separated, it may be possible to eliminate some traffic lanes by narrowing pavements on selected unbridged streets. Narrowed streets would permit local access for parking and loading, would be suitable for bus use, and, without bridging, would be less formidable barriers to pedestrians. The number of full-width arterials could not realistically be reduced by more than one third. If more arterials are needed, they would require decking or bridging where conflict occurs.

Sound existing buildings having ground-floor access are most easily adaptable to horizontal separation; new development can better include decking and upper-story access. The street system should allow normal functioning of existing buildings, but should favor new development if some compromise is required. Narrowed streets in ground-level-oriented areas (e.g., the existing core), which would provide incomplete pedestrian-vehicle separation, can later be decked or bridged as redevelopment occurs. Extensive decking could be proposed now for redeveloping areas: the south core, and the riverfront area--especially over Harbor Drive and adjacent arterial streets.



**EXISTING AND COMMITTED
STREETS**

IMPROVING CIRCUMFERENTIAL DISTRIBUTION

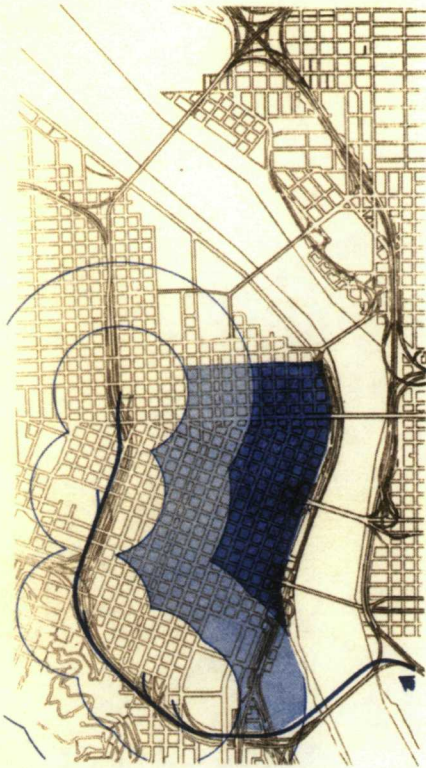
To reduce internal cross-traffic to a minimum, all traffic destined for downtown should be circumferentially routed so as to enter on the side nearest its destination. This will be accomplished by the freeway loop which is under construction, with certain exceptions.

The maps on the top half of Plate 9 show areas which will not be conveniently served by the freeway system: traffic destined for shaded areas will cross downtown on local streets rather than circle a much longer distance on the freeway. The maps on the bottom half show improvement in distribution resulting from the following additions to the traffic system:

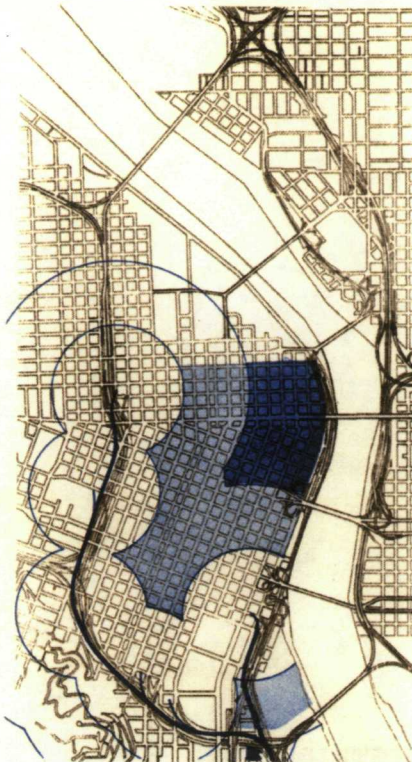
- A high-volume one-way couplet using Flanders and Glisan Streets to provide access to the north downtown area and to complete the loop formed by Harbor Drive and the Foothills-Stadium Freeway. Complete connections would be

provided to the Stadium Freeway and to the Steel Bridge. A one-way couplet has been proposed instead of an expressway or freeway since the functions of the north-of - Burnside Street area may change, and, therefore, a less rigid solution is preferred.

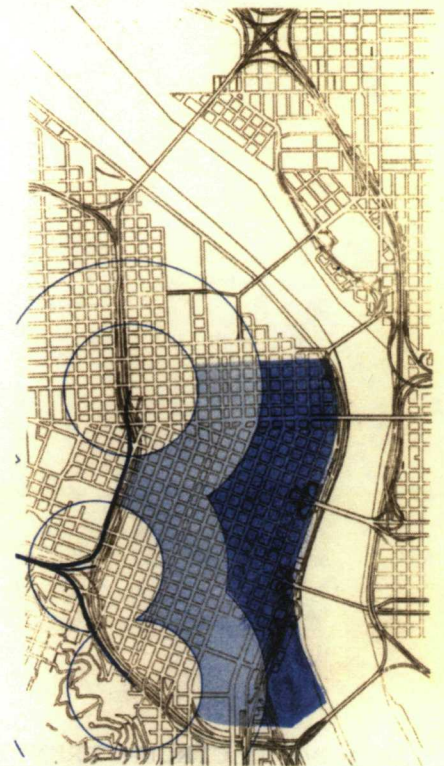
- A complete interchange between the Steel Bridge and the Eastbank Freeway.
- Connections between the Hawthorne Bridge and the freeway spur to the proposed Mt. Hood Freeway (without access to the Marquam Bridge).
- North-bound and west-bound connections between Harbor Drive and the Foothills Freeway.
- Connections between Harbor Drive and Salmon and Taylor Streets (north and south) and Stark and Oak Streets (north only).



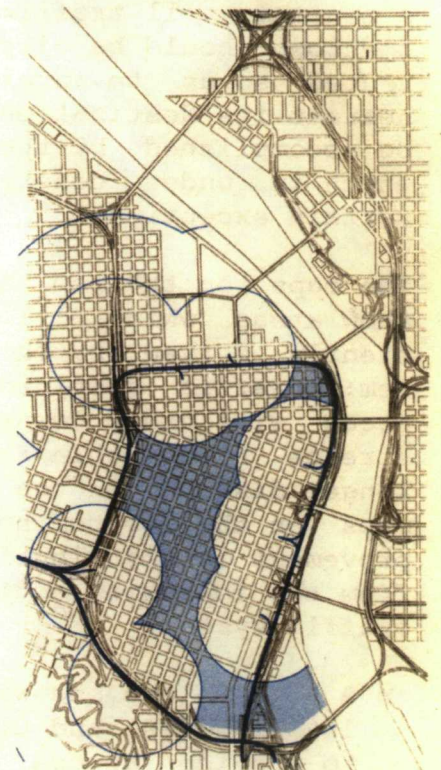
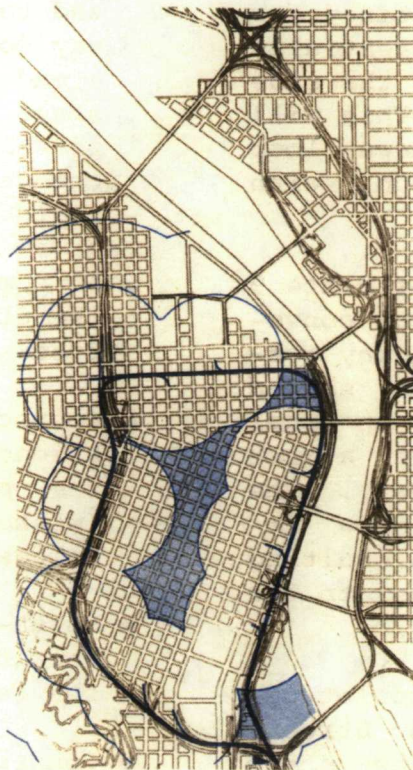
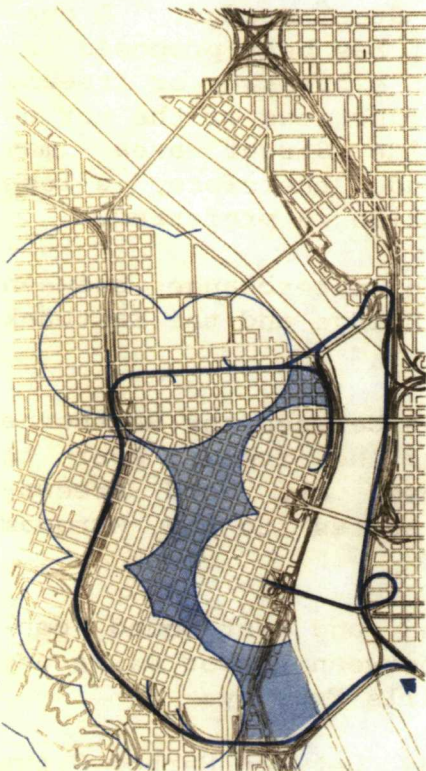
MT. HOOD



BALDOCK

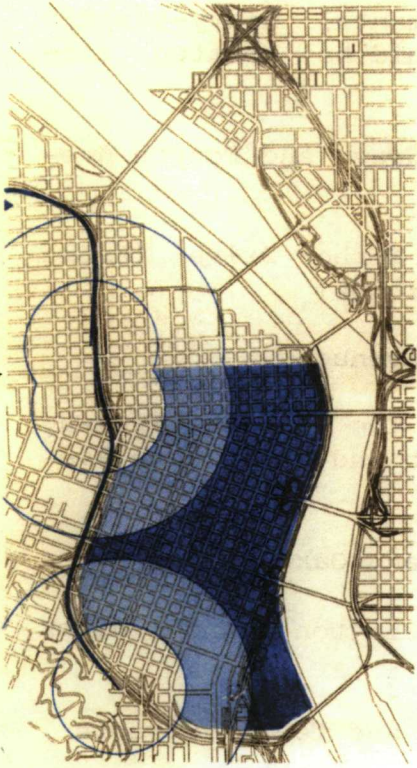


SUNSET

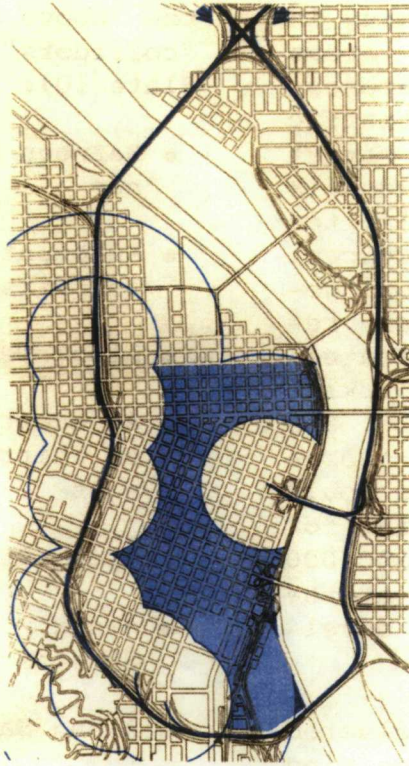


CIRCUMFERENTIAL DISTRIBUTION

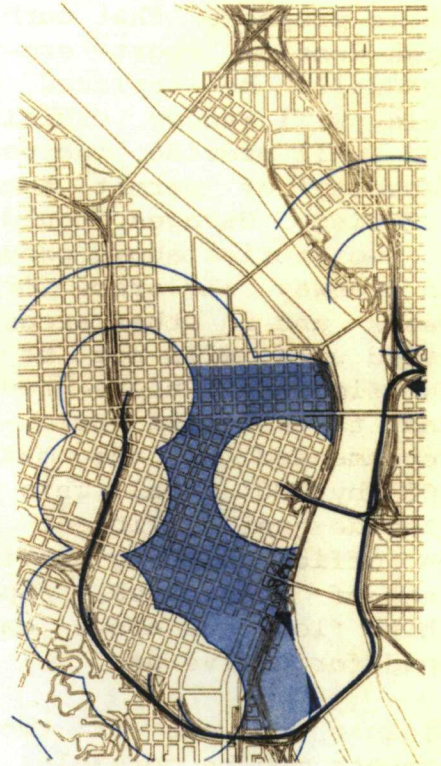
DEFICIENCIES AND IMPROVEMENTS



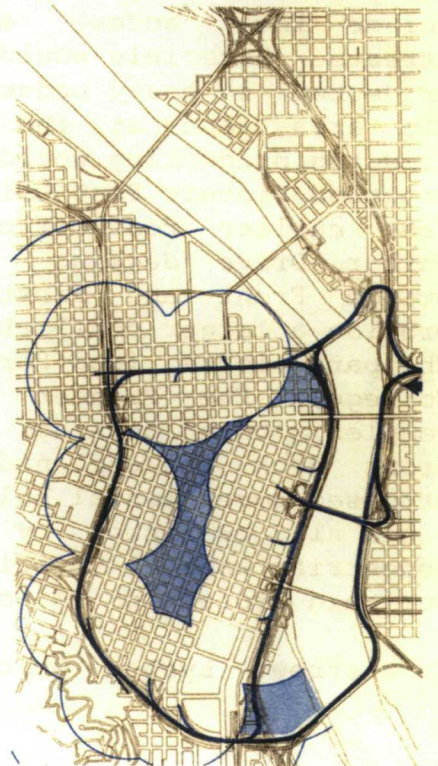
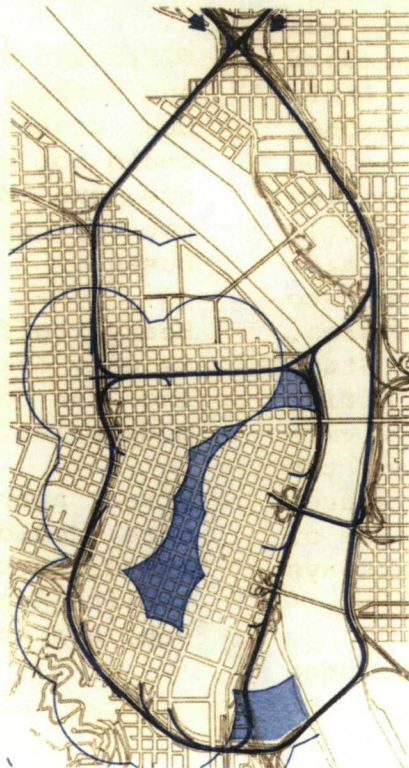
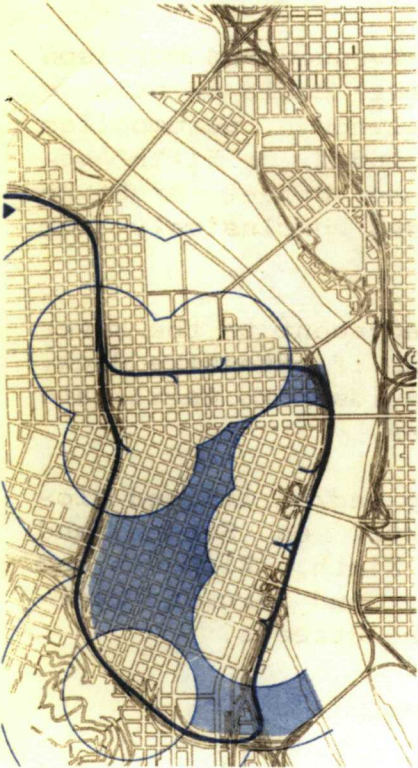
ST. HELENS



MINNESOTA



BANFIELD



INTERNAL CIRCULATION AND PARKING

(See Plate 10.)

It is proposed that curb parking in high-density short-term-trip areas gradually be replaced by garages. This will reduce cruising traffic and will provide increased street capacity or permit some sidewalk widening. Garages should be limited to two stories above ground, except in freeway air-space or at bridge-heads and in other areas where related uses will not be separated. Two floors of above-ground parking and three levels below-ground are recommended as the maximum for a 200' by 200' area. This space would provide just sufficient parking for an office building having 150,000 feet of gross area. Space at the third floor and above can be developed for active use.

Closure of one or two selected streets may be possible. Remaining streets would be differentiated into heavy-volume arterials and lighter-volume local access and/or bus streets. Arterials would be bridged or decked in heavy pedestrian traffic areas and at the riverfront. Bridging or decking would tie to the proposed Pioneer Post Office complex (see earlier Post Office report). Harbor Drive decking could also bridge Front and First Avenues to provide a larger conflict-free area. The park blocks (and Portland State College), the Pioneer Post Office complex, core decking, the riverfront deck and esplanade, and the proposed governmental buildings area would all be linked by a system of pedestrian ways. Covering walkways for rain protection is desirable.

In a street system which includes

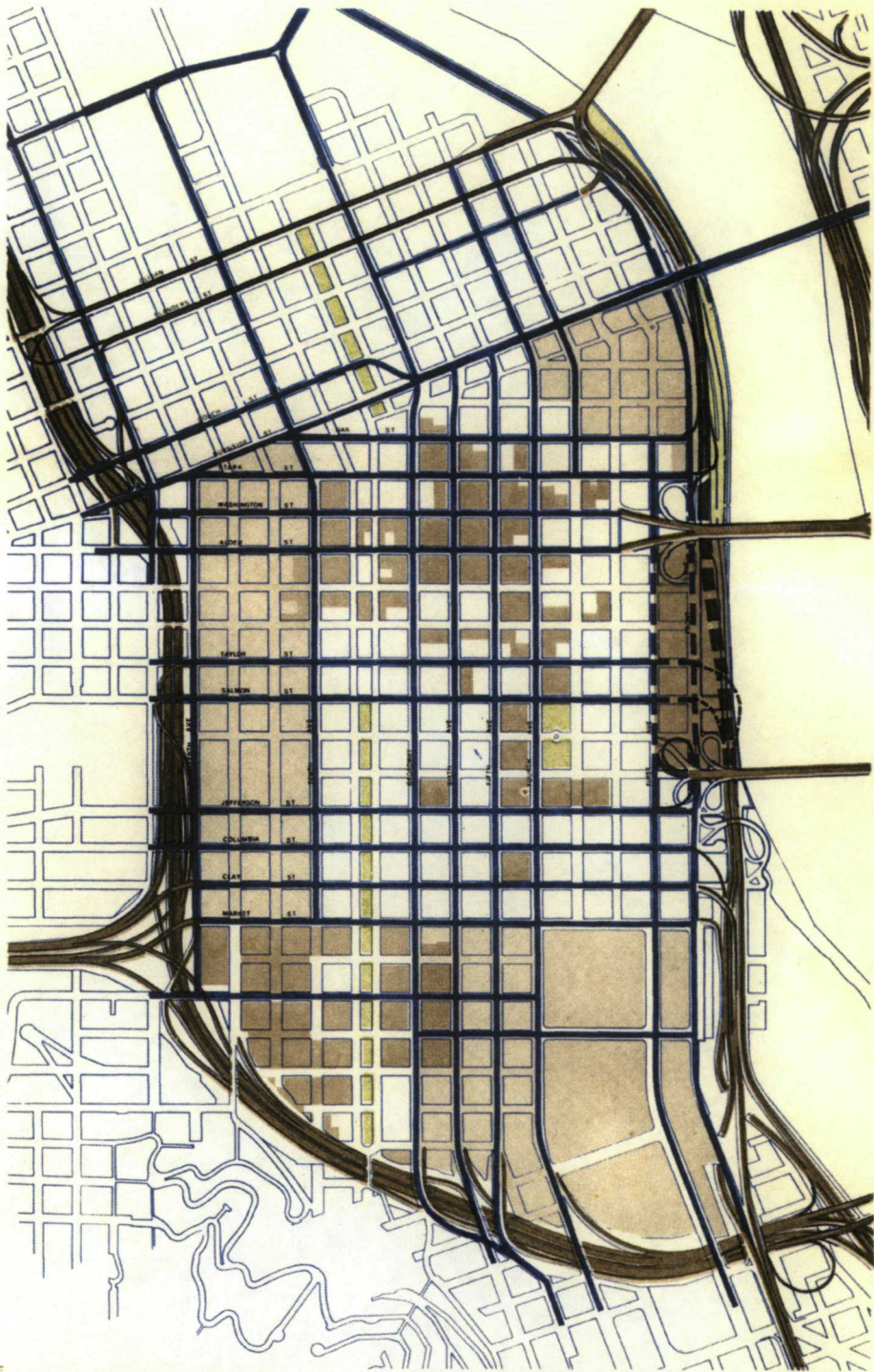
the above elements, heavy-traffic "corridors" could be located (see Plate 10):

- Between Broadway and Fourth Avenue
- Adjacent to Harbor Drive (Front and First Avenues)
- Along Tenth Avenue
- Adjacent to the Stadium Freeway on Thirteenth and Fourteenth Avenues
- Along Stark and Oak Streets
- Along Washington and Alder Streets
- Along Salmon and Taylor Streets
- Between Jefferson and Market Streets.

Fifth and Sixth Avenues and Morrison and Yamhill Streets could be primary bus routes, although automobiles could not be excluded; or Fifth Avenue and Morrison Street might be two-way and used exclusively for busses.

Heavy traffic adjacent to the river is only desirable if extensive decking can be provided to facilitate pedestrian access.

Street narrowing and/or limited closure could occur on Second and Third, Park and Ninth, Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, and Main and Madison, Ash and Pine Streets.



PROPOSED CIRCULATION