

**Urban Renewal:**  
*The Huntington Experience*

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**by**

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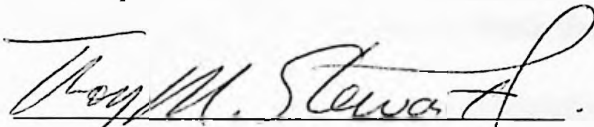
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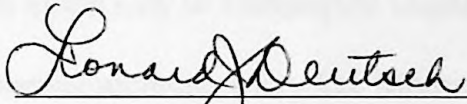
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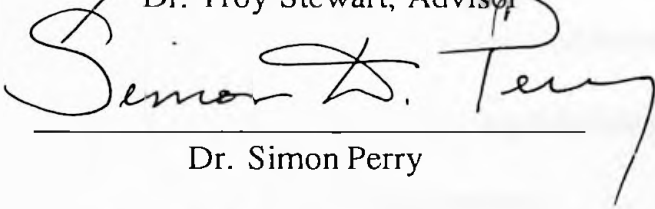
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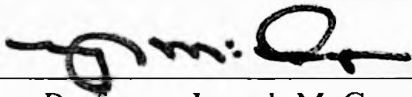
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## Abstract

This study is based on the premise that restrictive regulations of the Huntington, West Virginia Urban Renewal Authority had a detrimental effect on new development in the downtown area of that city during the period between 1958 to the present. Background research was conducted on the history of urban renewal at the federal, state, and local levels to better understand the setting for events that occurred during the stated time frame. Using mostly urban renewal documents and interviews with local community leaders, an analysis was made of each urban renewal project undertaken in Huntington. Individual requirements of the Urban Renewal Plan were compared to what was actually constructed, to determine if the Plan's requirements had been met. The results of this study indicated that in fact the local Urban Renewal Authority did not in many cases follow its own rules when it came to approving projects; therefore, the hypothesis that the Authority's restrictions delayed or stopped development is false.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### *Huntington, West Virginia*

Huntington, West Virginia, a community of approximately 53,000 residents in Cabell County, is located on the Ohio River in the southwestern part of the state. It is situated near where Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky meet at the junction of the Big Sandy and Ohio Rivers. The community is located primarily on the flood plain of the Ohio River and is a relative late-comer as a city in the Ohio Valley. Huntington is the primary and central city in a six- county metropolitan statistical area with an estimated population of over 300,000.<sup>1</sup>

Located on the south bank of the river, Huntington is the most extensively developed and largest area located on a river terrace extending approximately for a mile southward from the river. The flood plain is predominately a level area formed by siltation deposits of soils, gravel, and sand from the river during long alternate periods of deposition and erosion. The city is now protected by an extensive floodwall which has been in place since a flood in 1937.

The city is located approximately 565 feet above sea level and is bound by a series of sharply rising hills and valleys. Because of the terrain, development of this surrounding area is difficult and hazardous. Landslides, erosion, and construction costs limit development in much of the area.

Huntington has historically been a traditional river community but was created by Collis P. Huntington, a railroad man. Collis Huntington had amassed a fortune in operating stores in the

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall University Center for Regional Progress, *Challenge 2000: An Economic Adjustment Program for Huntington, West Virginia* (Huntington, West Virginia, 1988), 17.

California gold fields during the gold rush days. He joined with three others to finance the Central Pacific Railroad and selected the present Huntington site to serve as the western terminal of the railroad that extended east to the Chesapeake Bay area. The city was laid out and incorporated in 1871.<sup>2</sup>

At first Huntington was a railroad hub, but it developed into a manufacturing center for the tri-state region. During the development of the city, several subareas emerged. Among these areas were the water-rail transfer area in the vicinity of First Street and Second Avenue; the retail core between Sixth Street and Tenth Street and Second Avenue and Third Avenue; the "patch" consisting of company houses for railroad workers along Eighth Avenue and Twenty-First Street; the east end commercial center along Twentieth Street; the neutral strip around St. Cloud; and central city in the west end of Huntington near Fourteenth Street West. The town of Guyandotte was annexed in 1911. The railroad was not only the influencing factor in the location of the city, but it was also instrumental in the internal regionalization of the industrial clusters and retail concentrations. The railroad also helped shape the city into neighborhoods by providing boundaries.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Roots of Urban Renewal*

Throughout most of its history, Huntington's central business district enjoyed the absence of significant competition from any area within the tri-state. Residents shopped in Huntington, coming from parts of eastern Kentucky, southern Ohio, and Cabell and Wayne Counties in West Virginia. This pattern continued until 1981 when the business district was impacted by the opening of the Huntington Mall. The mall, which contains over 135 stores,

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<sup>2</sup>Marshall University Center for Regional Progress, 18.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

began siphoning off downtown business, and several of the downtown's major stores relocated there.<sup>4</sup>

Long before the mall began to pull business from the downtown area, Huntington began to embark on an urban renewal program. Urban renewal in Huntington has been a topic of general conversation, newspaper articles, television and radio news, and general speculation since its beginnings in the mid-1960s. Almost everyone in the community has an opinion as to the success or lack thereof of the urban renewal process in Huntington.

In recent years, most of this attention has been directed toward blocks four and five of the Urban Renewal Plan ("Plan"), known somewhat unaffectionately now as the "superblock". These two blocks, located between Second Avenue and Third Avenue, from Eight Street to Tenth Street, were identified in the original Urban Renewal Plan as being "extremely important blocks" that would be used for retail, office commercial, and pedestrian malls and plazas.<sup>5</sup> With one small exception, this 300,000 square foot parcel of land remains undeveloped over 27 years after the original Plan was published.

It is not surprising that the casual observer who is unfamiliar with the total urban renewal experience in Huntington would conclude that the urban renewal process in this community has been a failure when observing the undeveloped "superblock" in the center of the city. A closer examination of the entire urban renewal experience in Huntington, however, provides evidence that urban renewal development has had some positive effects on the central business district.

This thesis seeks to accomplish two missions: (1) to chronicle the urban renewal experience in Huntington; and (2) to evaluate the success of the program in terms of

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<sup>4</sup>Marshall University Center for Regional Progress, 20.

<sup>5</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan* (Huntington, West Virginia, 1968), 10.



accomplishments, taking into account the changes that occurred in the urban renewal plan over the past 27-year history.

### ***Thesis Statement***

It is the hypothesis of this thesis that the original Plan was so restrictive as to limit the development of specific parcels of property by the available developers of the time. The hypothesis specifically states: "The Huntington Urban Renewal Authority's ("Authority") stringent restrictions on development delayed and, in many cases, stopped the development of property."

This study is important for several reasons. First, an overall analysis of the history and success of the urban renewal experience in Huntington has not been completed. This analysis is needed to give a historic perspective to recent or current urban renewal discussions. Second, decisions being made today that concern the final remaining parcel of urban renewal property (blocks four and five) are as important as any made since the inception of the Plan in 1968. These decisions, which more often than not are political in nature, need to be made in the context of the entire urban renewal experience, not just the current political climate. A thorough review of the Authority's work in Huntington may help justify the decisions that remain to be made today. And finally, the urban renewal experience in Huntington can be a tool to learn how government can succeed, or fail, in changing the economic health of a city. This paper will seek to answer these questions and provide some evidence of what happened in Huntington with regard to urban renewal.

## Chapter II

### History of Urban Renewal

#### *The Housing Act of 1949*

The roots of urban renewal began in the early part of the Twentieth Century as American cities began to change. The change involved the suburban areas of major cities which developed faster than the cities themselves. The trend had many fundamental and far-reaching effects on cities and suggests a deterioration in the quality of life in the city.

The development of cities in America is typically a reflection of changes in modes of transportation. As the trolley and automobile came into use, the development of cities changed. The fastest development in cities was along vehicle and trolley routes, farther and farther away from the central city. But post-war traffic planning, even though seeming quite modern in a technological sense, over-valued the role to be played by automobiles in inner cities.<sup>6</sup> According to Wilson, during the decade of 1910 to 1920, the fastest growth around cities occurred in a five-mile ring. From 1920 to 1950, this growth ring extended outward to ten miles.<sup>7</sup> By 1956, according to Wilson, over seventy-five percent of a major metropolitan area's new dwellings were located outside of the central city.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, "Artery: Urban Reconstruction and Traffic Planning in Postwar Germany," *Journal of Urban History* (1989): 15(2): 131-158.

<sup>7</sup>James Q. Wilson, *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 5.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*, 9.

At the same time, retail jobs have also moved away from the central city. As shopping malls around suburbs were constructed, more and more retail jobs left the central city.<sup>9</sup> Industrial jobs also moved out of the central city during the period; however, it was a concern for the physical condition of housing, not jobs, that started the Federal Urban Renewal Program.<sup>10</sup> The concern began in the 1930s as a program directly related to slum clearance and public housing projects.<sup>11</sup> It is also demonstrated by the three primary objectives of the Housing Act of 1949, which established the program for urban renewal. The primary objectives were to:

1. Eliminate substandard and other inadequate housing through clearance of slums and blighted areas.
2. Stimulate housing production and community development sufficient to remedy the housing shortage.
3. Realize the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.<sup>12</sup>

These priorities assumed that there was an inordinate amount of inadequate housing that should be eliminated, and that there was also a shortage of affordable housing. According to Mangum and Mangum, there are four possibilities for the central city underclass: (1) leave them as they are; (2) create jobs to fit them; (3) fit them for existing or emergency jobs; (4) and provide reverse community opportunities in the suburbs.<sup>13</sup> Urban renewal proponents argued that there were two obstacles that prevented private enterprise from rebuilding in the urban core: (1) the

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<sup>9</sup>Wilson, 77.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal 1949-1962* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964), 4.

<sup>11</sup>C.A. Doxiadis, *Urban Renewal and the Future of the American City* (Chicago: Public Administration Services, 1964), 8.

<sup>12</sup>Anderson, 4.

<sup>13</sup>Garth Mangum and Stephen Mangum, "Human Renewal in the Revitalization of the Industrial City," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1986): 488(11): 157-176.

lack of power in local government to control land use; and (2) the land costs in slum and blighted areas which were frozen at a high level.<sup>14</sup> There are two primary public responsibilities in urban development. The first is to create a physical setting that is attractive and promotes productivity. The second is to create a civic climate that evaluates development opportunities and focuses on resources.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, many politicians at that time felt that government had to step in to save the core of American cities.

The history of the specific legislation that became Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 began in 1945 in the 79th Congress. The 1949 bill was one of a long series of companion or rival bills which successively and almost continuously occupied Congress from 1945 to 1949. The bill that finally passed had most of the major provisions of the legislation proposed in 1945 except for the funding mechanisms. Title I of the 1949 act authorized financial assistance by the Housing and Home Finance Administrator to a local public agency for projects consisting of the "assembly, clearance, site-preparation, and sale or lease of land at its fair value for uses specified in a redevelopment plan for the area of the project." The funds could not be used for construction or improving any buildings.<sup>16</sup>

The Housing Act was revised in 1954. The principal revisions dealt with having private enterprise do a greater share of the total job of removing and preventing blight, especially in the area of building renovation. The 1954 revision also required cities to take greater responsibility for meeting their overall problems of slums and blight. It also provided stimulus for private developers to build low-income housing for those displaced by urban renewal projects. While contention over public housing delayed passage of the bill, participants in the debate agreed that

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<sup>14</sup>Wilson, 163.

<sup>15</sup>Sheldon Hackney, "The University and Its Community: Past and Present," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1986): 488(11)135-147.

<sup>16</sup>Wilson, 94.

the cornerstone of the act, the goal of providing a decent home for every American, meant a decent home in a planned neighborhood.<sup>17</sup>

The Housing Act provided federal funding on a two-thirds federal, one-third local ratio, and it also prescribed other conditions including:

1. Redevelopment plans had to be approved by the local governing body.
2. The local governing body had to assure that any individual development plans had to conform to the overall development plan.
3. The purchaser or lessee of the land was to be obligated to develop the property for a specific purpose in a reasonable length of time.
4. There had to be a method of relocating persons displaced by the development to a place of "decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings, at prices and rents within the financial means of such families."
5. No land in the project area could be acquired by the local governing agency without a public hearing.<sup>18</sup>

Over the years, there have been several amendments to the Housing Act of 1949, most of which deal with two issues. The first of these issues is the one that requires that urban renewal projects be in "predominantly residential" areas. Later amendments allowed exceptions to this requirement. The second issue that caused the act to be amended was the federal-local sharing of cost. The federal government and the Eisenhower administration wanted to reduce the federal share gradually to fifty percent. However, local agencies and mayors were pushing to have the federal share increased to eighty percent. Although some changes were made in what types of

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<sup>17</sup>Wilson, 104-110.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 94-95.

projects would be funded and in what manner, the original two-thirds/one third funding pattern continued.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Urban Renewal in West Virginia***

West Virginia jumped on the urban renewal bandwagon in 1951 with the passage of Chapter 16, Article 18 of the Official Code of the State of West Virginia. Article 18, titled "Slum Clearance," set forth the authority and methodology for urban renewal programs in the state. Section 16-18-2 of the legislation found that "there exists in localities throughout the state, slum and blighted areas (as herein defined) which constitute a serious and growing menace, injurious and inimical to the public health, safety, morals, and welfare of the residents of the state." This section went on to describe the kinds of "menaces" that were caused by these "blighted and slum" areas such as the spread of disease and crime, treatment of juvenile delinquency, inadequate police, fire and accident protection, arrested growth of the community, social liabilities, and inadequate housing.<sup>20</sup>

A "slum" area was defined by Article 18 in Section 16-18-3, paragraph (j) as an area "in which there is a predominance of buildings or improvements (which is predominantly residential in character) and which, by reason of dilapidation, deterioration, age or obsolescence, inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, or open spaces, high density of population and overcrowding, or the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or any combination of such factors, is conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, infant mortality, juvenile delinquency and crime, and is detrimental to the public health, safety and

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<sup>19</sup>Wilson, 115-118.

<sup>20</sup>State of West Virginia, *Official Code of the State of West Virginia*. Chapter 16, Article 18. (1951): 393.

morals or welfare." <sup>21</sup> To apply this Charles Dickens-like view of slum life to the Huntington of the 1950s certainly would have been a stretch. However, the paragraph was loosely worded enough, by citing "any combination of such factors" would allow almost any community to classify an area as a slum area.

Article 18 went on to describe a "blighted" area in paragraph (k) as an "area (other than a slum area) which by reason of the predominance or inadequate street layout, faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site improvement, diversity of ownership, tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land, defective or unusual conditions of title, improper subdivision or obsolete platting, or the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or any combination of such factors, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the community, retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare in its present condition and use." <sup>22</sup> This definition of "blighted" area gave urban renewal authorities in West Virginia a tremendous amount of discretion in identifying areas to be included in a project area. It is also a little difficult in the 1990s for the writer to imagine an area in Huntington in the 1950s that really qualified to any great extent under these guidelines.

Article 18 gave local communities the power to create urban renewal authorities (Section 16-18-4) provided that the local community adopted the state's guidelines and provided that "slum or blighted" areas existed in the community. The state act established that urban renewal commissioners would receive no pay for their work and that a commissioner "who owns or

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<sup>21</sup>West Virginia, *Official Code*, 394.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 394.

controls any interest, direct or indirect, in such property shall not participate in any action by the authority affecting property."<sup>23</sup>

Article 18 gave the local Authority the power to sue and be sued, to prepare and recommend redevelopment plans, to enter into contracts for infrastructure changes, to purchase, lease, or obtain options on property, to invest funds, to borrow money, makes surveys, and generally supervise the carrying out of the Urban Renewal Plan.

The state statutes also provided that the governing body of the community had to approve all plans developed by the Urban Renewal Authority and approve all sales of property to developers. The Urban Renewal Authority was given the power of eminent domain, the power to relocate utilities (at the Authority's expense), and the power to issue bonds.

The state legislation, which is patterned after the Housing Act of 1949, identified the public welfare as the prime reason to select an area to be targeted as an urban renewal area. Wide discretion was given to communities to allow them to justify an area as fitting the criteria of the state and federal guidelines. That discretion along with the proliferation of federal money available for these programs, as established by the Housing Act of 1949, was just too much to resist for community leaders in the 1950s.

### ***Urban Renewal in Huntington***

The urban renewal program in Huntington, West Virginia was established by an act of the Huntington City Council on October 10, 1958. The ordinance is three simple paragraphs, which simply reference Chapter 16, Article 18 of the State Code. The ordinance gave the mayor or city manager the authority to appoint a board of commissioners.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>West Virginia, *Official Code*, 399.

<sup>24</sup>City of Huntington, *Resolution No. 6-58*, (Huntington, West Virginia, 6 October 1958).



At the same meeting, the city council approved the appointment of the first commissioners who had terms ranging from one to three years. The original Huntington Urban Renewal Authority Commissioners and their terms of office were:<sup>25</sup>

<b>Original Urban Renewal Authority Commissioners</b>	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>
Mrs. Douglas Tomkies	1 year
Mr. John Quarles	2 years
Dr. A. E. McCaskey	3 years
Mr. Lawrence Rogers	3 years
Mr. Don Leckie	2 years
Mr. T. F. Burris	2 years
Mr. Thomas Gibson	1 year

Less than two years later, a new board of commissioners was appointed, and the entire original board replaced, some with unexpired terms of office. No record could be found to explain why the change was made. However, Mary Lee Moore, long time Urban Renewal Authority Secretary, believes that the first board was a temporary one that was only to serve until a permanent one could be appointed.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>City of Huntington, *Resolution No. 7-58* (Huntington, West Virginia, 6 October 1958).

<sup>26</sup>Mary Lee Moore, Secretary - Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 15 March 1995.

The original "permanent" board of commissioners were:

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<b>Permanent Urban Renewal Authority Commissioners</b>	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>
Mr. Robert Brown	1 year
Mr. Francis Price	2 years
Mr. R. O. Robertson	3 years
Mr. William Varnum	4 years
Mr. Kermit McGinnis	5 years
Mr. Verlin Childers	5 years
Mr. Tom Powell	5 years

Unfortunately, few if any records remain of the Authority's activities during the years 1958 until 1968 when the Urban Renewal Plan was first published. However, there is a record of City Council Resolutions from 1960 to 1967 that indicate that most of the work being done during those years was "survey and planning" for various areas. Project L, the downtown area, is the primary focus of this study; although, it must be noted that the Authority also looked at other areas of the community outside the downtown area. The resolution to approve the filing of an application for federal funds to defray costs associated with undertaking surveys and the development of the Plan was passed on November 8, 1965. The resolution established the urban renewal boundaries as they currently exist and estimated the cost of surveys and the development of the Plan at \$367,141.<sup>28</sup>

A "*Land Utilization and Marketability Study*" ("Study") developed by Hammer, Green, Siler Associates in February, 1968 does provide many insights as to the justification for the

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<sup>27</sup>City of Huntington, *Resolution-no number given* (Huntington, West Virginia, 19 July 1960).

<sup>28</sup>City of Huntington, *Code No. R-145* (Huntington, West Virginia, 8 November 1965).

development of the Urban Renewal Plan. The Study focused on the loss of population that the city was experiencing at the time, and it indicated that Huntington had experienced a 3.2% population loss over the period from 1950 to 1960. The census population according to the Study was 83,627 in 1960. The Study anticipated that Huntington's population would stabilize, however, and projected a 1985 population estimated at 80,000. The report also projected that the Metropolitan Statistical Area ("MSA") would grow from 245,795 in 1950 to 353,000 in 1985. The Study also referenced unemployment data for the MSA and indicated that unemployment during the period 1960 to 1969 declined from 10.99% to 6.4% which was still over the national average at the time.<sup>29</sup>

The report listed per capita income for the area at \$2,232 and per household income of \$7,552. Additionally, the Study stated that 25.6% of the families in Huntington at that time had an income of less than \$3,000.<sup>30</sup> This percentage of low-income families was the highest of any metropolitan area in West Virginia, and appreciably above the national average at the time.

The report concluded that the growth of Huntington "has not kept pace with many competing areas, either in population or employment, and that attempts should be made to promote future growth of the area's economy." Hammer, Green and Siler predicted that Huntington had a "bright" future because, "The community's leaders are acutely aware of the economic problems and are taking measures to improve the socio-economic atmosphere. Moreover, an aggressive promotion effort is underway to induce industry to locate in Huntington."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Hammer, Green, Siler Associates, *Land Utilization and Marketability Study* (February, 1968), 23.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>31</sup>Hammer, 25.

On November 12, 1968, the Huntington City Council approved the Urban Renewal Plan that was the product of the report by Hammer, Green, Siler Associates. The Plan, developed by Simonds and Simonds, Planning Consultants, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has been amended fifteen times from February 1971 to March 1, 1981.<sup>32</sup> Details of the Plan and its amendments are contained in Chapter IV of this study.

In July of 1969, the International Appraisal Company provided the Urban Renewal Authority, which had commissioned the appraisal company, a valuation of the property in the urban renewal area. The total appraised value of the property in the urban renewal Area L was listed at \$11,258,600.<sup>33</sup> The appraisal identifies several "major retail stores and large office buildings" that "have substantial remaining lives and are scheduled to be excluded from project acquisition." The International Appraisal Company also stated that "most other area structures are over fifty years old and are very near the ends of their economic lives." The appraisal additionally identified an area along Second Avenue and Third Avenue (west of the project area) that contained deteriorating commercial and industrial properties that affected the value of some of the project property and that should be slated for "future removal."<sup>34</sup>

Lack of adequate parking was mentioned in the appraisal as a problem that needed to be addressed; but the appraisers felt that the project area is one that is in definite need of revitalization, but the prospects for successful redevelopment were extremely bright. Surely this is exactly what community leaders wanted to hear, and the Authority moved on with its plan to acquire property and transfer ownership to developers willing to build.

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<sup>32</sup>City of Huntington, *Code No. R-302* (Huntington, West Virginia, 12 November 1968).

<sup>33</sup>The International Appraisal Company, *First Reuse Valuation Report, Downtown Renewal Area 1* (Columbus, Ohio. July 1969), 2.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

## Chapter III

### The Huntington Urban Renewal Mission

#### *Basic Objectives*

The mission of the Huntington Urban Renewal Authority is expressed in the Urban Renewal Plan dated October 1, 1968. The mission of the Authority is stated as Urban Renewal Plan Objectives. The objectives are expressed generally, specifically, and as design criteria.

The basic objectives of the Plan as stated in the planning documents are to "eliminate severe conditions of blight, deterioration, obsolescence, traffic congestion, poor pedestrian circulation and incompatible land uses which are present to a degree that the area's important role in the community is being jeopardized." The document also promises that the Plan "will facilitate orderly growth, achieve commercial, institutional, and light industrial stability, and provide the opportunity for maintaining the central business district as the commercial, cultural, and civic heart of Huntington."<sup>35</sup>

It is against these objectives that the success of Huntington's urban renewal effort must be measured. Since the Plan states seven specific objectives that are to be accomplished, these objectives can be used to establish a benchmark against which to gauge the success of the program. By looking at the process that took place and the results evident today, a sense of what has or has not been accomplished can be obtained.

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<sup>35</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 2.

### *Specific Objectives*

The specific objectives of the Huntington Urban Renewal Plan according to the 1968 planning document were:<sup>36</sup>

1. "Through clearance, redevelopment and renovation, promote and expedite private and public development within the commercial heart of the city." This is the heart of an urban renewal plan. Clear, redevelop and renovate and promote private development in a central city area.
2. "Strengthen the physical pattern of public and commerce activities through integration of new development in appropriate locations which will complement existing development that remains." Throughout the Plan, it is directed that new development must be integrated with existing structures. The criteria for design in almost every urban renewal block states, "It is highly desirable that all new structures constructed on these blocks achieve a high level of architectural unity with major emphasis on the frontage...."
3. "Provide a vehicular circulation system that will separate internal and external traffic flows and facilitate free and safe flow of traffic into, through, and around the central area." This objective sets the stage for a "bypass" around the urban renewal area, while still providing access.
4. "Provide certain urban amenities within a framework of positive environmental conditions to meet the requirements of a healthy,

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<sup>36</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 2.

contemporary downtown area." This was to be achieved by requiring developers to invest one-half to one percent of the total construction costs to provide street furniture, sculptures, pools, landscaping, or other physical amenities to enhance the development.

5. "Promote a cohesive and compatible urban design for the area through the provisions of architectural design, site planning and landscape design of the highest quality in the treatment of buildings, open spaces and the streetscape." This objective was apparently to be achieved by design criteria and restrictions as to the use of property. Also, the master Urban Renewal Plan designated certain areas for certain types of development, allocating different parcels of land to different uses.
6. "Insure the public health and safety." Several regulations were placed in the criteria designated for each block of the urban renewal area that pertain to public health and safety. Some of these included night lighting that "shall be shielded to prevent glare to motorists and pedestrians" and minimum building set backs to reduce traffic hazards. Also, loading bays for developments were required to be constructed so as not to require on street maneuvering by trucks.
7. "Strengthen and expand employment opportunities in the downtown area; and improve the real property tax base of the city."

This apparently, was to be accomplished as a result of the Plan being successfully implemented.

### *Design Criteria*

To achieve these seven objectives, ten design criteria were developed and detailed in the Plan. These design criteria became the framework out of which the restrictions and uses of each block in the urban renewal area were developed. The ten design criteria were detailed in the 1968 Urban Renewal Plan as follows: <sup>37</sup>

1. "Visibly strengthen the retail and office hard core area in such a way that necessary expansion will occur within certain physical limits which will not destroy the basic fabric that exists." This provision provided for a central office and retail area within the urban renewal area. The effect here was to try to direct office and retail development to a specific area of the downtown.
2. "Incorporate an important design feature which creates positive impact within the retail and office core." This provision most likely was the birth of the Ninth Street Plaza along with the fountain and sculpture located there.
3. "Provide major east-west arteries to serve the perimeter of the central business district, thereby returning Third Avenue and Fourth Avenue to their function as shopping streets." This provision made the assumption that the reason that these avenues were failing as

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<sup>37</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 3.



- "shopping" streets was due to high traffic volume in those areas that was essentially moving traffic through town instead of into it.
4. "Realize the potential public use and impact of the river and riverbank as they relate to and support the downtown environment and, in fact the total community." The creation of Harris Riverfront Park was the result of this planning provision.
  5. "Insure protection of the entire downtown urban renewal area from the blighting influences of obsolete and deteriorating industries and warehousing facilities and the presence of rail facilities which presently penetrate deeply into the central business district." The Plan saw the encroachment of industrial and warehousing which had developed naturally along the railroad and the river as a detrimental influence on the downtown area. It was clearly the Plan's objective to reduce or eliminate these influences. This meant implementing a major change in the utilization of property in the downtown area.
  6. "Encourage new library facilities and other cultural and civic facilities which are activity generators to locate within or adjacent to the area, providing important focal points at specific locations." Both a new library and civic center were located within the urban renewal area to satisfy this provision.
  7. "Provide off-street parking facilities of sufficient quality and quantity to meet long range projections, easily accessible from major perimeter access streets and ringing the central business

district." To accomplish this design criteria, certain blocks, or parts of blocks were set aside for parking facilities. In addition, specific design requirements for many blocks required off-street parking being provided in the design for new development.

8. "Provide for all streets a high level of public and private improvements, including street lighting, underground utilities, and landscape development." The design criteria for each block included in it a percentage of total construction costs that had to be used for landscaping and other outside amenities. Also, operations such as trailer sales and scrap yards were prohibited, and buildings were required to "be designed to be compatible with the adjacent structures and landscaping shall be provided." In addition, a landscaped electric substation was included within the urban renewal area.
9. "Incorporate a center for distributing goods to retail uses adjacent to, but not in conflict with the functions normal to the central area." Clearly, warehousing was to be allowed, but only on the edges of the urban renewal area.
10. "Provide improved pedestrian circulation and open space." The design criteria for most blocks required that coverage by buildings should not exceed 95% of the total site, and that the remaining space be dedicated to "landscaped pedestrian plazas or other landscaped areas."

### *Structure of the Urban Renewal Authority*

The bylaws of the Huntington Urban Renewal Authority are quite short and deal mainly with officers of the Authority and how and when meetings are held.<sup>38</sup> The officers of the Authority consist of a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer. In 1972, the Authority amended its bylaws to allow for the hiring of an executive director. An earlier amendment in 1966 allowed for the city finance director to actually keep the books and accounts of the Authority and report that information to the treasurer. The Authority has the power to set the salaries of the executive director and any paid staff of the Authority. Meetings of the Huntington Urban Renewal Authority are held the second Tuesday of each month, and an annual meeting is held on the second Tuesday of December. The Authority may also call special meetings at the request of two members. The Authority has the power to hire legal counsel to prepare all legal instruments required during the course of the its business.<sup>39</sup>

A quorum of four members is required to do business and the bylaws require that minutes of each meeting be kept and all votes be recorded by roll call.

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<sup>38</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Bylaws(Huntington, West Virginia, 19 July 1960).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

## Chapter IV

### Urban Renewal Methodology

#### *Project Boundaries*

The Huntington Urban Renewal Plan describes the urban renewal area and sets forth the types of action that the Urban Renewal Authority will take to accomplish its goals. The urban renewal area is described in legal terms in the Plan, but as shown on Appendix 1, it is an area in the central downtown business district that is bordered on the north by the Ohio River, on the west by Sixth Street to Fourth Avenue, and then Seventh Street to Fifth Avenue. The southern border of the urban renewal area is generally Fourth Avenue and Fifth Avenue, and the area's eastern border gradually tapers to the river from Eleventh Street to Fifteenth Street. The area originally contained approximately seventeen square blocks, along with the land between the flood wall and the Ohio River from Sixth Street to Fifteenth Street.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Urban Renewal Activities*

According to the Urban Renewal Plan, the action to be taken in the urban renewal area was to be a combination of clearance and redevelopment activities, changes in land use, public improvements to include streets, utilities and rights-of-way, zoning changes, and other rehabilitation activities. The Plan called for the Authority to acquire property, clear structures from land, temporarily manage property, relocate residents displaced by the acquisition of

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<sup>40</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 1.

property, and dispose of land acquired for development. According to the Plan, rehabilitation activities included enforcement of rehabilitation standards to "feasible economic limits," technical assistance, acquiring and disposing of land and real estate in accordance with the goals of the Plan, and "acquisition, retention, management, rehabilitation, disposition or clearance of real property which is not made to conform to rehabilitation standards set forth in the Urban Renewal Plan."<sup>41</sup>

Public improvements mentioned in the Plan included the "addition, alteration, abandonment, improvement, extension, reconstruction, construction, and installation of open spaces and recreation areas, pedestrian malls and plazas, rights-of-way, streets, and sidewalks, tree planting and other landscape development, underground placement of utilities, traffic signals, street lighting systems, and parking facilities."<sup>42</sup>

### ***Permitted Property Uses***

Provisions were provided in the Urban Renewal Plan that dictated permitted uses of property. Permitted uses were divided into seven categories as detailed below:<sup>43</sup>

1. Commercial: Retail and office use to include financial and public service uses but to exclude car washes and drive-in restaurants (Appendix 2).
2. Light Industry: Warehousing operations and television and radio broadcasting facilities. Distribution centers were included in this category (Appendix 3).

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<sup>41</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 4.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

3. Apartments: Multi-family residential use buildings, with some limited office use permitted (Appendix 4).
4. Parking: Parking buildings, lots, and in building parking were permitted in this category (Appendix 5).
5. Public and Semi-Public: This category included government office buildings (whether local, state or federal) along with public and private utilities (Appendix 6).
6. Recreation: Parks, open spaces, commercial recreation or water recreation uses were to be permitted in this category (Appendix 7).
7. Pedestrian Mall: These areas were to be restricted to pedestrian traffic and emergency vehicle use only (Appendix 8).

Virtually all of the revisions to the original Urban Renewal Plan were to accommodate changes in the permitted uses detailed in the original Plan. There have been fifteen amendments to the Plan since the original document was prepared in 1968. The last amendment occurred in March of 1981.

### ***Plan Amendments***

To assist in reviewing the change in thinking of the Urban Renewal Authority over the first thirteen years of its existence (when the fifteen amendments were added to the Plan), it is beneficial to review each of these amendments individually and to try to determine the purpose of each. Block designations are referred to in Appendix 9.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan, Revised* (Huntington, West Virginia, 1981).

**Amendment No. 1 - February 1, 1971:**

The first amendment identified a building at the northeast corner of Ninth Street and Third Avenue (a part of what is now called the "superblock") that originally was designated to remain but slated in the amendment as a building to be acquired and removed.

**Amendment No. 2 - September 1, 1972:**

The second amendment strengthened the restrictions on the development of blocks four and five (superblock), adding some language to the description of types of development permitted and "unity of structures." Also, part of block 20 was changed from municipal parking to covered parking, and allowed "drive-through" financial institutions.

**Amendment No. 3 - April 15, 1973:**

The third amendment adopted a sign ordinance into the Plan. The original document just referred to "local sign ordinances."

**Amendment No. 4 - June 1, 1974:**

The fourth amendment revised the parcel that is now Harris Riverfront Park, and it allowed for of a civic center on this parcel (block 1-A).

**Amendment No. 5 - June 1, 1974:**

The fifth amendment permitted the restoration of Heritage Village and mentioned its placement on the National Register of Historic Places. This area had originally been designated as the location of the civic center.

**Amendment No. 6 - December 1, 1974:**

The sixth amendment changed the use of block 1-C from light industrial use to public service facilities, institutional, office, retail and service commercial uses. Block 1-D was changed from light industrial to industrial use. It also detailed types of environmental screening required for industrial use.

**Amendment No. 7 - March 10, 1975:**

The seventh amendment added to the original planned use of multi-family, commercial, and office uses, "transient retail and related parking uses."

**Amendment No. 8 - December 1, 1975:**

The eighth amendment established block 3 as the location for the civic center.

**Amendment No. 9 - March 15, 1976:**

The ninth amendment changed the designation for removal of the parking garage at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Tenth Street to a rehabilitation project (block 14). It allowed for public parking on block 20.

**Amendment No. 10 - November 15, 1976:**

The tenth amendment added the requirement to the "superblock" (blocks four and five) that 1,800 parking spaces be provided. It also allowed some buildings on block 18 to remain if they were rehabilitated.



**Amendment No. 11 - May 23, 1977:**

The eleventh amendment made several changes to the original Plan. First of all, block 1-D, classified for light industry, was amended to include institutional, commercial, office, and public service facilities. Also, buildings on certain lots of blocks 4, 15, 16, 18, and 19, originally scheduled for acquisition and demolition, were allowed to remain and be rehabilitated.

**Amendment No. 12 - September 10, 1979:**

The twelfth amendment deals with the western edge of the project area, blocks 1-B, 2, and 17. Originally, the Plan allowed for automobile sales and service. However, this was deleted in the 1979 amendment.

**Amendment No. 13 - September 24, 1979:**

The thirteenth amendment cancelled Amendment No. 4.

**Amendment No. 14 - September 22, 1980:**

The fourteenth amendment changed the uses of part of block two to support the civic center on block three.

**Amendment No. 15 - March 1, 1981:**

The last amendment allowed for municipal parking on block 15, the corner of Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue, and was not contemplated in the original Plan.

The amendments listed above for the most part are not major in nature, and in some cases just allow for changes in the original Plan that speculated on the location of major facilities such as the civic center. It is also obvious from some of the amendments that the decision to tear down some buildings was revisited, and building owners or developers were allowed to rehabilitate instead of demolishing them. This brings up an interesting point, however: if these buildings had originally been identified as "blighted" and "at the end of their useful life," as described in the Hammer, Green, Siler Associates appraisal, how did they get reclassified as buildings that could be rehabilitated? It would appear that the decision to include a property on the original list to be acquired for demolition was based on some criteria other than the actual condition of each individual structure. This would lead me to believe that other structures that could have been economically rehabilitated, may in fact have been torn down as buildings that were "at the end of their useful life."

This idea is not surprising in that the urban renewal process looked at an area, not necessarily individual properties. Because of this, some structures that could have been rehabilitated were sure to be included in the original project. It is notable that the Urban Renewal Authority apparently recognized this fact and amended the original Plan in some instances to allow old buildings to remain and be rehabilitated.

It also should be noted that fifteen amendments to a Plan as comprehensive and large as this one over a ten-year period is not unusual. This indicates to me that the original Plan represented somewhat of a consensus of community leaders as to what should be done. If this consensus had not been in place, surely many more amendments would have been issued. Some of the amendments were obviously a concession to developers; however, no drastic changes in land use were made. That indicates that the Urban Renewal Authority was at least somewhat sensitive to market conditions at the time. Also, as it became apparent that a large developer was

not going to come in and redevelop a majority of the downtown, adjustments certainly had to be made to accommodate the development that was available at the time. As we look back, some of these decisions can be questioned, but it is easy to see how officials at the time were anxious to get development moving on urban renewal property. Recent decisions concerning the "superblock" and the construction of a small hotel have been criticized; however, the same pressures that early Authority officials were under are still prevalent today. In general, however, it can be said that the Urban Renewal Authority had essentially followed its original Plan.

## Chapter V

### The Urban Renewal Projects

#### *The Early Years*

Since its inception in 1958, the Huntington Urban Renewal Authority has sold property to developers for a total of fifty-four projects. With the exception of blocks four and five (the superblock), all urban renewal property has been sold and developed. The first project was built on property sold by the Authority in October of 1971, and the last parcel was sold in March of 1990.<sup>45</sup> A sale on a portion of block four for a hotel has also been recently completed.

To be able to evaluate the success of the urban renewal process in Huntington, it is necessary to look at each approved project to see if it complies with the stated land use in the Urban Renewal Plan. Furthermore, it is important to see if the development was the type of project that the Plan had anticipated would be beneficial to the overall mission of urban renewal.

The first three projects were developed after urban renewal property was sold in 1971. The first project was a sale of property to the Huntington Municipal Parking Board for public parking on block six (Appendix 10, Item 1). Public parking was stated as a primary use of this parcel in the Plan. Project two was the sale of part of block 16, also to the Municipal Parking Board for a parking garage (Appendix 10, Item 2). The northern part of block 16 was designated for parking in the original Plan. The third project (Appendix 10, Item 3) was on block 13 and was for the construction of a Holiday Inn high-rise hotel. This block had a designated use in the Plan

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<sup>45</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map(Huntington, West Virginia, 1971).

as retail, commercial, restaurant, and transient housing. All three of these projects seem to accurately fit the criteria in the Urban Renewal Plan.<sup>46</sup>

In 1972, three more projects were initiated by the sale of land by the Urban Renewal Authority to developers. The first of these (Appendix 11, Item 4) was a power substation built by Appalachian Power, now American Electric Power. This area was already designated in the Plan as a location for a utility substation, most likely due to information gathered during the development stages of the Plan. The Plan calls for the utility substation to be constructed with "particular attention...to the design of the [substation] and its relationship to adjacent sites." The substation does have an attractive brick wall around it which at least attempts to comply with this provision. Project five, on block 13, was the Huntington Trust and Savings Bank (Appendix 11). Like the hotel mentioned earlier on block 13, this was appropriate land use according to the Plan. The sixth project was a shoe store on the Ninth Street Plaza, Frank's Shoes, located in block 14 (Appendix 11). The Plan identifies this location for retail use; however, it requires that structures be "comparable with surrounding structures." The Frank's Shoes building is more modern than the surrounding buildings, and at two stories, is lower than most of the adjacent three and four-floor buildings.<sup>47</sup>

There were also three projects begun on property sold in 1973. The first of which (Appendix 12, Item 7) was on block 1-D at the east edge of the urban renewal district. The development, Schon-Stephenson, a wholesale food distributorship, met the criteria in the Urban Renewal Plan for light industry. The second project that year, Mack and Daves', a variety department store, was built on block six along Third Avenue (Appendix 12, Item 8). Although this block had a retail designation, Mack and Dave's is a one-story structure, running two-thirds

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<sup>46</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (1971).

<sup>47</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1972).

of the block on a major central business district street. It is not comparable with the adjacent structures, a three-story building just to the west, and a high-rise hotel across the street. It seems that a smaller parcel of land could have been sold to Mack and Dave's for a multi-story building which would have been more comparable with the surrounding landscape. However, it is important to remember that in the early 1970s, downtowns were still trying to look like shopping malls, and a single-story structure better fit that concept. A third project in 1973 was the Consumer's Gas building, on block 1-D next to the food warehouse (Appendix 12, Item 8-A). This particular structure did fit the light industry land use designation for this block.<sup>48</sup>

In 1974, there were only two projects; however, both of them have to be considered major additions to the urban renewal area. Harris Riverfront Park was developed on the parcel along the entire north edge of the District between the Ohio River and the flood wall, and First Huntington National Bank (now Bank One) was built on Fifth Avenue between Tenth Street and Eleventh Street. Both of these projects met the Authority guidelines (Appendix 13, Items 9-10).<sup>49</sup> The next year, however, included four projects that were marginal as far as producing development that resulted in major structures. Conner Steel (now West Virginia Steel) occupied property at the north-east end of the urban renewal area (Appendix 14, Item 11). This property was designated for light industrial use; however, nothing substantial was built on the property. The property was screened from the remainder of the downtown area as required by the Urban Renewal Plan which at least reduced the intrusion of an industrial area on the downtown. Project 12 (Appendix 14) was the Huntington Water Corporation (now West Virginia-American Water Company) built on the former site of a hotel. The water company building, built on a prime site just across Fourth Avenue from the Cabell County Courthouse, is a modern one-story building. It

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<sup>48</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Huntington Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1973).

<sup>49</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1974).

is located next to three buildings that have three stories, and it does not blend very well with the existing structures as required by the Plan. The site was designated for this type of office use however. A new downtown branch of the United States Post Office was built as project 13 at the intersection of the new Veterans Memorial Boulevard and Third Avenue (Appendix 14). Again, although the land use was as designated in the Plan, the structure is a small, single-story building that has a strip mall appearance. The final project of 1975 was placed on a very focal piece of land across from the post office at Veterans Memorial Boulevard and Third Avenue. This development (Appendix 14, Project 14) was a large music store, Pied Piper. Once again, the land use application was provided in the Plan and a one-story building was built, but the architectural design resembled a cross between an English manor house and a Swiss chalet. This was only the second truly retail development in the urban renewal experience in Huntington, and the developers were obviously given wide latitude in interpreting the Plan's language about structures complementing other development.<sup>50</sup>

In 1976, the second busiest year of urban renewal in Huntington, nine projects were initiated. The first project, Presbyterian Manor (Appendix 15, Item 15), was a high-rise residence-care facility for the elderly. This facility was the first to fulfill the basic premise of urban renewal, that of providing affordable housing. It is unlikely however that many, if any, of the residents of Presbyterian Manor lived in the area prior to the establishment of the urban renewal area. Therefore, the claim that this project helped fulfill the basic urban renewal mission is tentative. Nevertheless, the project did meet the criteria of the Urban Renewal Plan, and at least complimented the skyline of Huntington, being a multi-story building. The next 1976 project, Boggess Drugs (Appendix 15, Item 16), reverted to the one-story type building in a prime location across from the Cabell County Courthouse. Although it met the Urban Renewal

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<sup>50</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1975).

Plan criteria for "retail, office, and transient housing" it certainly did not fulfill the requirement of achieving a "high level of architectural unity with the courthouse located immediately south, and other buildings to remain." This project resembled a strip mall building and is another example of construction that forever altered Huntington's skyline.<sup>51</sup>

One of the most important projects of 1976 was the Huntington Civic Center located on Third Avenue (Appendix 15, Item 17). The original Urban Renewal Plan called for this parcel to be used as parking. However, Amendment 8, dated November 21, 1975, changed the designation of this block for use as "public facilities and improvements such as may be deemed feasible by the City Council of Huntington." The civic center is a typical urban renewal-type project and certainly boosted the economy of the central business district. Project 18 in 1976, Wise Jewelers (Appendix 15), again reverted to the one-story structure, with a shopping center-type appearance on the Ninth Street Plaza. The Urban Renewal Plan designated this area for commercial use, but it also required that "new structures constructed on this site achieve a high level of architectural unity. This may be accomplished through the use of similar materials, roof profiles, scale of openings, treatment of details, etc." Clearly, the developers were given a lot of latitude in their interpretation of this provision. Existing buildings on this block typically have at least three to four floors, so a one-story building, which was disguised to look a little higher with a false front, was a stretch of the rules. Most of the development in the rest of 1976 occurred in the eastern area of the urban renewal project. A small one-story dental office (Appendix 16, Item 19) was constructed on a small site next to a multi-story apartment building. This parcel was designated by the Plan to be used for "multi-family residential with office use incidental, office commercial and semi-public use to include institutional uses." A dentist office could be categorized in this

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<sup>51</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1976).



group; however, the Urban Renewal Plan for this block only addressed criteria for housing, and clearly did not anticipate land use for a separate structure used as office space.

Another project that used a prime location was the Huntington Trust and Savings Bank (now Bank One Plaza Branch (Appendix 16, Item 20)). This block, like the one previously discussed, was designated in the Plan to be used for multi-family residential with "incidental" office use. Although the Plan does allow for commercial uses for this block, as mentioned with project 19 above, it did not set any criteria for office or commercial construction. This would lead one to believe that the space was intended primarily for residential use. The existing building on this parcel is a small one-story structure with a large parking area. It is more of a suburban-type development and is not suited to the downtown area. The development clearly does not blend with any of the surrounding architecture and further diminished the downtown skyline. It would appear that this may have been one of the most serious deviations from the original Plan to this point, and it may have signaled a measure of desperation to begin to fill urban renewal land.<sup>52</sup>

If the bank building was not bad enough, the project next to it was worse (Appendix 16, Item 21). A Ponderosa Steak House, built to resemble a ranch building, was placed on another piece of prime property along Third Avenue. Although this development did meet the Plan's criteria for a commercial development, it has absolutely no architectural unity with anything else downtown except Pied Piper which at least shares its architectural theme. Again, one can begin to sense some willingness of the Urban Renewal Authority to "bend" the rules slightly to get some development started. The next project to take place in 1976 was the Red Cross building (Appendix 16, Item 22). This area was originally designated to hold the civic center but was moved to its current location as a result of Amendment Eight. The Urban Renewal Plan also

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<sup>52</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1976).

allowed for retail and office commercial on this parcel, and the Red Cross building, a large multi-story structure fit the criteria both in use and architectural unity. The last project in 1976 was a CPA office, located at the east edge of the urban renewal district (Appendix 16, Item 23). While the structure was a small one-story office which met the Plan's criteria, it certainly did nothing to diminish the trend towards making the area look more like a suburban office park than a downtown.<sup>53</sup>

The year 1977 was the one in which the most urban renewal projects were initiated. Fourteen projects, ranging from small commercial and office space to a new library, were initiated. The first of these projects, Forest City (Appendix 17, Item 24), was a high-rise building containing apartments for the elderly. This structure met all the criteria for a project on this parcel, and it helped to fulfill the Authority's mission to provide affordable housing. However, like the Presbyterian Manor project, it is unlikely that many of the residents of Forest City were previous residents of buildings removed during the urban renewal process.<sup>54</sup>

The second project of 1977 was a dental office (Appendix 17, Item 25). This was a one-story structure located in an area at the east end of the urban renewal area designated for commercial development. Again, it was not exactly the type of building that one would want to replace multi-storied structures, but at this juncture in the process, this type of development was routinely being approved. The next project in 1977 was the Salvation Army building (Appendix 17, Item 26). This project was located in an area designated for semi-public use, but again was a single-story structure and did not blend architecturally with the surrounding high-rise buildings. The fourth project of 1977 was the Model Furniture building (Appendix 17, Item 27). This two-story structure had a modern look and was located in the heart of downtown Huntington on

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<sup>53</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1976).

<sup>54</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1977).

Fourth Avenue. The Plan designated this block as commercial and stated that, "It is highly desirable that all new structures constructed on this site achieve a high level of architectural unity. This may be accomplished through the use of similar materials, roof profiles, scale of openings, treatment of details, etc." The Model Furniture building has an all glass store front on the first floor and is solid brick on the second floor, with no windows. It looks like a shopping center type building and blends with nothing in the area. Again, this development would appear to be a stretch of the rules to allow for construction of a building on urban renewal property. The inappropriateness of this building has recently been made even more evident with the restoration of the old buildings just to the east at the other end of the block.<sup>55</sup>

A small remodeling project, an extension of the Bath Shoppe on the Ninth Street Plaza (Appendix 17, Item 28), was the next development in 1977. The sixth project of that year, however, was another major apartment complex for the elderly, Riverview Manor (Appendix 17, Item 29). Like any other apartment complexes built on urban renewal property, it was located in a area designated in the original Plan as multi-family residential. However, there is no evidence that the persons living in this high-rise building had been displaced by the original acquisition of property by the urban renewal process.<sup>56</sup>

In July of 1977, the Cabell County Library was designated to go on block 18 (Appendix 17, Item 30). This parcel had been designated for the construction of a library in the original Urban Renewal Plan. Unfortunately, the Authority did not enforce the guideline for this block that required "a high level of architectural unity." The library building, although attractive and functional, is a modern structure with the second and third floors covered in roofing material instead of a facade that in any way complements the surrounding buildings. Another departure

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<sup>55</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1977).

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

from the original spirit of the Urban Renewal Plan occurred with the construction of a Wendy's fast food restaurant (Appendix 18, Item 31). Third Avenue, one of the main thoroughfares in the downtown was quickly becoming a strip of one-story buildings.<sup>57</sup>

The next five projects initiated in 1977 were not noteworthy in their scope or impact on downtown. These projects included Dickinson Furniture's expansion (Appendix 18, Item 32), a CPA office (Appendix 18, Item 33), Keen Jewelers on the Ninth Street Plaza (Appendix 18, Item 34), another dental office (Appendix 19), and a parking lot operated by the Huntington Municipal Parking Board (Appendix 19). However, the final project of 1977, the historical restoration of an old train station and associated buildings, (Appendix 19, Item 37) was unusual. This development met the Plan's criteria for that block and was also the only development in the project area that made any attempt to save and restore an existing structure.<sup>58</sup>

Seeming to begin as a good year for urban renewal, 1978 offered Huntington a new federal office building (Appendix 20, Item 38). Although it was another long, low building of only two stories, it did have the substantial look of a government building. Additionally, it was developed on a block designated by the Urban Renewal Plan for that type of use. Another successful building, Buckeye Insurance (now Huddleston, Bolen, Beatty, Porter, and Copen Law Firm) was built on Third Avenue (Appendix 20, Item 39). This three-story building was definitely an asset to the skyline of Third Avenue, and it met the Plan's criteria for commercial establishments. Another 1978 project, an annex for Pied Piper, was constructed at the east end of the urban renewal district (Appendix 20, Item 40). A warehouse-type structure, this development did meet the Plan's criteria for that location which was designated for light industry. The Huntington Municipal Parking Board established a parking lot on vacant property located on

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<sup>57</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1977).

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

Fourth Avenue as an urban renewal project (Appendix 20, Item 41). This was obviously anticipated when the Plan was developed as this site is noted in the Urban Renewal Plan as being designated for municipal parking only. Although parking is needed in that area, the parking facility has the appearance of a vacant lot.<sup>59</sup>

The last two projects of 1978 continued the trend of single-story restaurants with parking lots around them to locate on urban renewal property. The first was the Steak and Ale Restaurant (Appendix 20, Item 42), and the second, Bob Evans Restaurant (Appendix 20, Item 43). In fairness, the original Urban Renewal Plan allowed for these types of development under the land use category of "eating and drinking establishments" and "related off street parking." Furthermore, there were requirements on building type and height for these blocks.<sup>60</sup>

By 1979, it was clear that the flurry of development projects was over. There were only two minor projects that year: Veteran's Hospital Employee Credit Union (Appendix 21, Item 44), and a Rax fast food restaurant (Appendix 21, Item 45). The credit union, another one-story building, met the criteria of the Plan, as did the Rax restaurant. Clearly, urban renewal planners did not feel that this block would play an important role in the look of downtown Huntington. Had they foreseen the construction of the new Sixth Street Bridge along that block (replacing the old bridge that was one block east at Seventh Street), they might have been a little more restrictive in the allocation for land use on that block.<sup>61</sup>

### *The 1980s*

Introducing a new decade, 1980 marked the beginning of the end of urban renewal development in Huntington. Although, three projects were approved that year, none of them had

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<sup>59</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1978).

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1979).

any major significance on the city. All three were located at the west end of the urban renewal district. The first project in 1980 was Nationwide Insurance (Appendix 22, Item 46). The next project that year was the International Union of Operating Engineers (Appendix 22, Item 47). Both of these buildings met the Urban Renewal Plan's criteria, but were small buildings of two floors or less. The last project in 1980 was listed as a support facility for the Huntington Civic Center (Appendix 22, Item 48). This development was really nothing more than a storage yard and parking lot for the maintenance of the civic center. No real development occurred on the property.<sup>62</sup>

The next year, 1981, also brought about little activity. A small, one story office building which is now Ferris, Baker, Watts Investment Firm (Appendix 23, Item 49), was built on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Seventh Street. The only other project that year was the establishment of a parking lot by the Huntington Municipal Parking Board on the corner of Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue (Appendix 23, Item 50). Interestingly, the original Urban Renewal Plan did not allow parking to be developed on this block on the street level. However, Amendment 15 (dated March 1, 1981) changed the designation of this block to allow for the parking lot. This revision may have been a late attempt to utilize prime downtown space that had previously been undeveloped for parking, thus allowing the Urban Renewal Authority to "mark off" another piece of property as being developed, especially since most urban renewal development had stopped by this time.<sup>63</sup>

In the years 1982 to 1990, only three projects were developed. The first was another apartment complex for the elderly, Westview Manor (Appendix 24, Item 51). The second project, another high-rise complex, contributed favorably to the skyline of Huntington and met the

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<sup>62</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1980).

<sup>63</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1981).

criteria of the Urban Renewal Plan for that block. But, one still has to be suspicious that few, if any, of the residents previously resided or were displaced by the urban renewal process. And, another popular restaurant, Red Lobster, was located on urban renewal property (Appendix 24, Item 52) in an area that had originally been designated as part of the civic center complex. As mentioned earlier, an amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan moved the civic center designation first to the river front, then to its present location at Third Avenue and Eighth Street. The redesignation of this parcel allowed for this type of development; however, the area has now become a collection of mismatched buildings, both in architectural styles and building heights.<sup>64</sup>

### *The Last Project*

The last urban renewal project occurred in 1990 and was very controversial. Blocks four and five, known as the "superblock" (Appendix 25) were designated as "extremely important blocks" that will provide the northern "anchor to the hard core area of the central business district." The Urban Renewal Authority approved the construction of a Chi-Chi's Restaurant on the corner of the "superblock" (Appendix 24, Item 53). This development was probably politically motivated by public pressure to see some sort of development on these blocks which had been empty since the beginning of the urban renewal program. With the successful development of other urban renewal property in the area, it became increasingly noticeable that the "superblock" remained undeveloped. The restaurant did not really meet the guidelines of the Urban Renewal Plan in that the height and building requirements were stated as "comparable, in terms of material, detail, scale, with adjacent commercial structures." If you consider buildings

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<sup>64</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, Urban Renewal Map. (Amended 1990).

across the street as adjacent (and no others could be considered since this was a vacant block), all of them were between three and six stories high.<sup>65</sup>

As a postscript to urban renewal development in downtown Huntington, the Urban Renewal Authority approved another project on the "superblock" late in 1996. The construction of a Holiday Inn Suites Hotel to be located at the west end of the block at Eighth Street and Third Avenue is planned. This project, too, has not been without controversy. An out-of-town developer has charged that the Authority has not dealt fairly with him and has given unfair advantage to a local developer. In addition, the start of construction on this facility has been delayed several times. However, as of this writing, it appears that this major development on the "superblock" will most likely begin this year. Also, according to reports from city officials, negotiations are under way for other major development on the "superblock".

One other positive note on the urban renewal projects, is that most are still in their original use although not necessarily by the original owners or businesses. Three of the buildings are vacant: Franks' shoes (Appendix 11, Item 6); Boggess Drugs (Appendix 15, Item 16), and Wise Jewelers (Appendix 15, Item 18). Two facilities are for sale but still occupied as of this writing: Bank One (Appendix 13, Item 9) and Ponderosa Steak House (Appendix 16, Item 21).

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<sup>65</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 10.



## Chapter VI

### Analysis

#### *Review of the Mission*

Before any conclusions can be drawn from Huntington's urban renewal record, one must first look once again at the original mission of the Authority. A review of the seven objectives in the Authority's Plan should be compared to each project to determine which, if any of the Plan's objectives were satisfied by that particular project. The seven objectives can be found beginning on page 20, Chapter III of this paper. In summary form, the objectives were:

1. Promote public and private development, redevelopment, and renovation within the heart of the city.
2. Integrate new development, redevelopment, and renovation with existing structures by requiring architectural unity.
3. Create a bypass around the central business district.
4. Provide urban amenities by requiring street furniture, sculptures, pools, landscaping, or other physical amenities.
5. Promote cohesive and compatible urban design, site planning, and architecture, by requiring the highest quality in the treatment of buildings, streetscapes and open spaces.
6. Insure public health and safety by creating non-glare night lighting, minimum setback requirements, and off-street loading and unloading areas for truck traffic.

7. Strengthen and expand employment opportunities downtown and improve property tax base.

It is fairly obvious that all but one of these seven basic objectives can and should be applied to each and every urban renewal project. Objective number three was a specific project involving traffic flow, but the rest of the objectives can be applied to each building constructed or renovated on urban renewal property. A project that met most or all of these remaining six objectives could be said to contribute to the Plan's objective.

The Plan's design criteria, detailed on page 22, Chapter III, was really a design plan of the overall urban renewal area, rather than criteria by which individual projects can be judged. Because of this, the Plan's criteria cannot be used as a tool by which to examine each project to see if it contributed in a proper way to the achievement of the Authority's objectives. As mentioned beginning on page 27, Chapter IV, various land uses were permitted on different parcels of urban renewal land. This is where I believe the critical flaw of the Plan occurs. Within the detailed descriptions of permitted land uses on urban renewal property were statements of design criteria that related to the original objectives of the Plan. Most of these criteria that did not deal with actual land use pertained to architectural unity, compatibility of design, street and landscaping, and the other basic design principles contained in the Plan's objectives. Yet it was the land use on which the Authority seemed to concentrate their efforts. The evidence of this is found in the Plan's fifteen amendments. Not one of the amendments pertained to a change in the design criteria for buildings; instead, they all pertained to land use changes.<sup>66</sup> It would appear that the priorities of the Authority were first of all to have development on the Authority's land;

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<sup>66</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan, Revised* (Huntington, West Virginia, 1981), Amendments 1-15.

secondly, to have the type of development or land use being considered to fit the Plan's requirements, and lastly, to have the development adhere to the Plan's requirements for design. The Authority apparently spent some time analyzing the land use criteria for each project, and in some cases, changed the Plan to incorporate the type of development being considered. On the other hand, when it came to architectural design considerations, the Authority was apparently willing to look the other way.

As mentioned above, examination of the amendments to the Plan demonstrate the Authority's willingness to change the land uses contemplated in the original Plan when necessary. A review of the individual projects in Chapter V shows that the Authority was not too particular in approving designs. However, a closer examination of each project, with respect to its contribution to the original objectives also shows however a cavalier attitude in many cases toward meeting the spirit of the original Plan objectives.

### ***Projects and Objectives***

Several urban renewal projects were municipal in nature and were obviously contemplated when the original Plan was developed. These projects include the civic center, Ninth Street Plaza, Harris Riverfront Park, the public library, a utility substation, various municipal parking lots and garages, the Veterans Boulevard bypass, and quite possibly some of the high-rise housing projects. The design criteria was written to incorporate many of these projects. Some of these municipal projects, as well as all the other private development, may be compared to the original objectives of the Plan to determine if those objectives were met.

The table below lists each of the fifty-four projects and an indication of what original objectives were met by that project with respect to the review conducted in Chapter V. The first

column on the left lists each project in the order it is discussed in Chapter V. The remaining columns numbered one through two and four through seven refer to the six original objectives of the Urban Renewal Plan in the order listed beginning on page 20, Chapter III. Objective three, the one calling for the construction of a bypass around the central business district has been omitted from the table since none of the 54 projects involve a new roadway. The "X's" indicate that the project met that particular objective.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Project 1							
Project 2							
Project 3							
Project 4							
Project 5							
Project 6							
Project 7							
Project 8							
Project 9							
Project 10							
Project 11							
Project 12							
Project 13							
Project 14							
Project 15							
Project 16							
Project 17							
Project 18							
Project 19							
Project 20							
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Project 38							
Project 39							
Project 40							
Project 41							
Project 42							
Project 43							
Project 44							
Project 45							
Project 46							
Project 47							
Project 48							
Project 49							
Project 50							
Project 51							
Project 52							
Project 53							
Project 54							

Projects and Plan Objectives						
Projects	Plan Objectives					
1971-1974	1	2	4	5	6	7
Municipal Parking						
Municipal Parking						
Holiday Inn	X	X	X	X	X	X
AEP Substation			X		X	X
Huntington Trust Bank	X	X	X	X	X	X
Frank's Shoes	X					X
Schon-Stephenson	X	X	X	X		X
Mack & Dave's	X				X	X
Consumer Gas	X	X	X	X	X	X
First Huntington National Bank	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harris Riverfront Park	X					X
1975-1976	1	2	4	5	6	7
Conner Steel	X		X	X	X	X
Huntington Water Corporation	X		X		X	X
Pied Piper	X		X		X	X
Presbyterian Manor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boggess Drugs	X				X	X
Civic Center	X		X	X	X	X
Wise Jewelers	X					X
Dental Office	X					X
Huntington Trust Bank	X		X			X
Ponderosa Steak House	X		X			X
Red Cross	X	X	X	X	X	X
CPA Office	X		X			X

Projects and Plan Objectives Continued						
1977	1	2	4	5	6	7
Forest City	X	X	X	X	X	
Dental Office	X					X
Salvation Army	X					X
Model Furniture	X					X
Bath Shoppe	X					X
Riverview Manor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cabell County Library	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wendy's Restaurant	X		X			X
Dickinson Furniture	X	X		X		X
CPA Office	X		X			X
Keen Jewelers	X	X		X		X
Dental Office	X					X
Huntington Park Board						
Heritage Village	X	X	X	X	X	X
1978-1981	1	2	4	5	6	7
Federal Office Building	X	X		X		X
Buckeye Insurance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pied Piper Annex	X					X
Municipal Parking						
Steak & Ale	X		X			X
Bob Evans	X		X			X
Credit Union	X	X	X	X		X
Rax Restaurant	X		X			
Nationwide Insurance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inter. Union of Op. Engineers	X	X		X		X

<b>Projects and Plan Objectives Continued</b>						
<b>1978-1981 Continued</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
City of Huntington					X	
Office Building	X		X		X	X
Municipal Parking						
<b>1982-1990</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Westview Manor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Red Lobster	X		X			X
Chi-Chi's	X		X			X

A quick review of the previous table indicates that about one-third of the projects met most of the original Plan objectives. Only 22% of the projects met all six objectives, and less than half of them (46%) met four or more of the objectives. Almost 32% of the projects met two or less of the objectives, but that includes five parking lot projects which were not mentioned in the original Plan. However, as mentioned earlier, the Authority was very willing to bend its criteria to a great degree for architectural unity and compatibility. Also, requirements for parking, streetscaping, and landscaping were very loosely interpreted. This was demonstrated by almost 55% of the projects meeting three or less Plan objectives.

It is in this loose interpretation of the design criteria for projects, however, that we get our best indication as to whether or not the rules of the Authority were so restrictive as to inhibit development. From the changes contained in the amendments, it is obvious that the Authority has been willing to change land use designations from the original Plan. Because of this, it is with great difficulty that one could make a case that the land use provisions of the Plan inhibited development. One exception to this, however, is blocks four and five known as the superblock (Appendix 25). The Plan called these two blocks the anchor of the central business district, and

from the very beginning, the Authority has looked for one developer to design and build a large project on these two blocks as the central showpiece of the urban renewal program. An entire thesis could easily be written on the history of these two blocks. Many developers have presented plans to the Authority in the past twenty-five years, and all have failed to materialize for various reasons, mostly due to financing.<sup>67</sup> There was no change in the Authority's thinking on these blocks until 1993 with the exception of the construction of Chi-Chi's Restaurant in 1990 which was discussed on page 45, Chapter V.

### ***1993 Subcommittee Report***

In September of 1993, a subcommittee of the Urban Renewal Authority was appointed to propose a strategic plan for the development of the superblock. The subcommittee members were David Harrington, Arna Shaffer, Ronald Smith, all Authority members, and Mary Lee Moore, the Authority secretary. The subcommittee held nine weekly meetings with groups representing landowners, retail operators, office/apartment developers, restaurant owners, light industry managers, economic development officials, urban designers, recreation/tourism officials, hotel/motel operators, and parking officials. The writer participated in one of these weekly meetings as President of Huntington Main Street, a downtown economic development group.<sup>68</sup> The subcommittee report lists nine "common themes" that were recommended by the various groups. These commonalties included:<sup>69</sup>

1. Phased and partial development of the two blocks with multiple investors.

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<sup>67</sup>City of Huntington, Department of Development and Planning, *Subcommittee Report, Parcel 4-5* (Huntington, West Virginia, December 1993), 3.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>69</sup>City of Huntington, Department of Development and Planning, *Subcommittee Report, Parcel 4-5*, 4.



2. Local ownership and development.
3. Uses should include hotel, residential, and commercial.
4. Multi-floor structures.
5. Parking a key component of development.
6. Development should be linked and integrated with the downtown and the riverfront park.
7. Overall design should be flexible but complement existing downtown design.
8. Roles and responsibilities of players must be defined.
9. An incentive or financial package is important for developers and should be assembled.

The subcommittee report clearly states that its purpose was not to supersede the original Urban Renewal Plan. According to the report, one of the goals of the subcommittee was to define the role of the Authority as "facilitator of a phased development employing multiple developers." Additionally, the issue of multi-story versus single-story development was in need of clarification. The original Plan needed review because, according to the report, "Various plans had been proposed which included multi-story office towers, hotels, entertainment and retail centers. Each proposal carried the expectation that development would occur through one developer at one time. Each of these grandiose plans ended in disappointment."<sup>70</sup>

Some of the highlights of the report that led to the nine recommendations listed above include:

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<sup>70</sup>City of Huntington, Department of Development and Planning, *Subcommittee Report, Parcel 4-5, 3.*

1. A mixed use development including a hotel, residential, office, parking, recreation, and retail should be built in a phased development.
2. The Authority should remain flexible in the type of hotel to be built and a suites-type hotel should be considered.
3. The hotel should be built on the west end of the property near the civic center.
4. The long-term plan for parking for the property should not be surface parking.
5. A multi-story residential building should be located on the north-east corner of the property, directly behind Chi-Chi's.
6. Stricter zoning was recommended to prevent professionals from moving to residential properties near the downtown.
7. The construction of new office space should be primarily to attract out-of-town businesses to locate here.
8. A minimum of 1,800 parking spaces are needed to support the complete development on the superblock and parking should be phased.
9. Retail development should be the last component of the development and no single stand-alone buildings should be permitted.

As a result of this report, the Authority decided to take on the role of developer and actively market the property and review whatever proposals were submitted. The Authority also elected to look for and hire a developer to work with to develop the property. The report also

states that as far as design considerations, the Authority should utilize the Huntington Main Street Design Guidelines so that any prospective design would fit the established profile of downtown architecture.<sup>71</sup>

The Authority set goals with timetables accordingly. During year one, site improvements were to be made to the superblock that would include a landscaped parking lot and sidewalk improvements along Third Avenue. The site was to be marketed and a market strategy developed. Emphasis would be placed on obtaining a hotel for the site. Future goals (one to five years) were to have the hotel built along with office and residential developments. A parking garage was to be built in the time frame, and improved connectivity with downtown and Harris Riverfront Park established.<sup>72</sup>

In light of recent developments on the superblock as of this writing, it is interesting to note that some of the items above are being incorporated into current urban renewal strategy and activity, although obviously the Authority's timetable for the most part will not be met. Many of the other recommendations also have not been implemented. A new suite-type hotel is to be built on the western edge of the property, and a developer has been found who is currently negotiating an option to purchase the remaining land for a mixed use development. A parking garage is planned, but it will not be built for several years. The emphasis now seems to be on retail, rather than other uses of the property, and current negotiations for business office space continue with current local business owners rather than out-of-town companies.

However, the subcommittee report did accomplish one thing: it got government and business leaders interested once again in pushing for the final development of the superblock. At

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<sup>71</sup>City of Huntington, Department of Development and Planning, *Subcommittee Report, Parcel 4-5*, 14.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

this time, the chances for development to actually occur seem to be more likely than ever before in the twenty-five year history of the block.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion

#### *Objective Analysis*

The hypothesis of this thesis was that the original Urban Renewal Plan was so restrictive as to limit the development of specific parcels of property by the available developers of the time. This study's purpose was to determine if these restrictions delayed, or stopped development of property.

In the examination of the Authority's actions, it was hoped that evidence would be found that would demonstrate by objective data that development did not take place or was delayed due to the restrictive nature of the Urban Renewal Plan. Conclusions could then be drawn from objective data on the success of the urban renewal experience in Huntington. But the success of the Urban Renewal Authority can be judged on both objective and subjective levels. It was found that the success of the program is not only very difficult to measure, but there is a wide range of opinions on whether or not the Authority was successful in its mission.

This thesis addresses conclusions on several levels of perceived success of urban renewal in Huntington, both objective and subjective. On the objective level, the first examination of the success should be to determine if the Urban Renewal Plan was so restrictive as to hinder development on the Authority's property. This is the heart of the thesis statement, and an answer is rather clear on all but a small part of the urban renewal district.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, the 15 amendments to the Plan demonstrate that the Authority was more than willing to amend the Plan to accommodate a particular development. Permitted uses of property were changed in several instances to allow for development that was not contemplated in the original Plan. If the Authority was being restrictive to the point of slowing or stopping development, these amendments would not have been enacted. Clearly, the Authority was trying to amend the original Plan to accommodate a developer's wishes. Because of this, we now have structures such as the Pied Piper building on the corner of Third Avenue and Veterans Boulevard, in a location originally designated for the Civic Center. It is evident by the amendments changing property uses that the Authority was not tied to its original Plan on the subject of property use.

Did the Authority's Plan have restrictions that kept developers from building the type of structures they wanted to build? It would appear that was not the case, since restrictions in the Plan that dealt with architectural details such as "similar materials, roof profiles, scale of openings, treatment of details, etc.," were for the most part ignored in many of the examples given in Chapter V. Examples of waiving of these provisions of the Plan are rampant in downtown Huntington. Mack and Daves, Huntington Water Corporation, Pied Piper, Boggess Drugs, Ponderosa Steak House, and various other fast food and chain restaurants are good examples of deviations from the restrictions found in the Plan and described in Chapter V.

The only place that the Authority held out for development of the type originally called for in the Plan was on parcels four and five, the superblock. On these still essentially vacant parcels, the Authority insisted on a single large development as the "centerpiece" of the urban renewal area. This restriction on how these parcels of property was to be developed surely delayed any development on the superblock. It was only with the 1993 Subcommittee Report which is described in Chapter VI, that the Authority changed its strategy toward the superblock. It now

appears that this change in strategy has had a positive effect, since a hotel is now scheduled for construction on part of parcels four and five. In addition, a developer is working to find tenants to fill a multi-use development that would take most of the remaining property.

So the answer to the question raised by this thesis as to whether or not the restrictive actions by the Authority delayed or stopped development is for the most part, no. In fact, since all but two parcels of the Authority's original Plan area are developed, it is difficult to state that the Authority was anything but cooperative in the development of the property. But the difficulty in the development of non-superblock property probably helped make the Authority more determined to get the kind of development they wanted on the superblock.

Another objective examination can be made by looking at the stated objectives of the Plan, and trying to determine if the 54 projects met those objectives. This analysis was completed in Chapter VI, and summarized in the table beginning on page 51. The analysis determined that only one-third of the projects met most of the stated objectives of the Plan. Almost 32% of the projects met two or less of the objectives. This analysis demonstrates that the stated objectives of the Plan were not used to deter development. It would seem on the other hand, that the Authority rarely if ever even referred to the original Plan objectives when approving a project.

Another critical objective look at whether or not the Authority was too restrictive in its approval of projects is to look back to the original statements made in the Urban Renewal Plan with regard to the mission of the Authority. This mission was stated in Chapter III and promised to "eliminate severe conditions of blight, deterioration, obsolescence, traffic congestion, poor pedestrian circulation and incompatible land uses" <sup>73</sup> in the downtown area. The Plan also promised to "facilitate orderly growth, achieve commercial, institutional, and light industry stability, and provide the opportunity for maintaining the central business district as the

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<sup>73</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 2.

commercial, cultural, and civic heart of Huntington." <sup>74</sup> Although whether or not the mission as stated in the Plan was achieved is certainly a matter of subjective discussion, there is no evidence that the mission of the Plan in any way restricted the development of property. In fact, if the Authority had followed its Plan to the letter, much of the property developed might still be vacant.

This study was formulated with two perceptions in mind. First of all, the perception that the restrictive nature of the Urban Renewal Plan slowed or prevented development of urban renewal property is shared by many Huntingtonians, possibly because of the varied nature of the projects that ended up being developed over a very long period of time on urban renewal property. But it is the varied nature of the developments that indicate the Authority was not restrictive in the development of the property. This perception was the foundation for this thesis, and it proved to be for the most part, false. The second perception that caused my original interest in the subject of urban renewal in Huntington is the seemingly general agreement that the urban renewal experience in Huntington was a dismal failure. This belief is most likely based on the undeveloped superblock, the most visible long-term reminder that not all urban renewal property was successfully developed. However, many city officials, including Mayor Dean <sup>75</sup> and Department of Planning and Development Director Cathy Burns, <sup>76</sup> feel that the Authority has been very successful. They point to, and in one sense quite correctly, the fact that all of the Authority's original property, with the exception of the superblock, has been developed.

Judging the success of the program in Huntington thus becomes a subjective call in many respects with wide disagreement as to the success or failure of the program. In an effort to determine why there such a widespread feeling that the urban renewal program was unsuccessful in Huntington, there are several comparisons that can be made between the original purposes of

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<sup>74</sup>Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, *The Urban Renewal Plan*, 2

<sup>75</sup>Mayor Jean Dean, interview by author, Huntington, West Virginia, 21 February 1995.

<sup>76</sup>Cathy Burns, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 11 March 1995.



urban renewal in the federal legislation explained in Chapter II, as well as the reasons stated in the original Plan as to why urban renewal was needed in Huntington. Many of these comparisons become subjective, but are useful in explaining why there are so many differing views on the success of the local urban renewal program.

### *Subjective Analysis*

In following the progress of urban renewal in Huntington, it is easy to forget the original goals of the Housing Act of 1949 which established urban renewal programs. A review of the three objectives of the Housing Act, as discussed in Chapter II were to: (1) eliminate slums; (2) stimulate housing production, and (3) realize the goal of a decent suitable living environment for every American family.<sup>77</sup> It is more than difficult to look at the Huntington urban renewal program and equate anything that happened there to the three goals established by the Housing Act of 1949. But that is not a condition that is unique to Huntington. The revised Housing Act of 1954 established conditions under which cities could qualify for federal and state funds for urban renewal. These conditions were discussed in Chapter II, pages 10 and 11. Urban renewal programs, such as the one established in Huntington, were created to access these federal and state funds.

The West Virginia State Code described beginning on page 12 in Chapter II, made it easier for cities in the state to qualify for funds by listing various conditions that might exist in a city or town and stating that "any combination of such factors" could be cited to establish the need for a urban renewal program.<sup>78</sup> In the end a carefully written Plan, citing the right

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<sup>77</sup>Wilson, 94-95.

<sup>78</sup>West Virginia, *Official Code*, 393.

conditions that would probably exist in almost any city, would qualify a community for an urban renewal program, and the federal and state funds that would come with it.

Huntington followed this formula and in the end established a plan, purchased property, cleared land, sold parcels, and saw development. There is no evidence that the overriding factor at work in Huntington was the establishment of decent housing for low income families. In fact, almost all the housing created in the Huntington urban renewal area are for the elderly or special care facilities. This is not by any stretch of the imagination providing decent housing for families.

There is no record of how many families if any were displaced by the urban renewal program in Huntington. Long time resident, A. Michael Perry, stated that although there were people who lived in the upper floors of some of the buildings in the urban renewal area, the area was not known as a housing district.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, according to Lisa Caldwell, Property Manager for the J.H. Caldwell Company, only part of the area in the major portion of the urban renewal area was blighted. Most of the buildings, according to Caldwell, were good structures that could have been rehabilitated.<sup>80</sup>

So why were all those buildings in the downtown area of Huntington razed? The answer probably lies in two areas. First of all, there was money to be had for the purchase of properties that were most likely under-utilized, and unsellable under most circumstances. This appealed to both the property owners of the time and community officials who had money to spend. But the downtown of the 1960s in Huntington was starting to feel the effect of the loss of population that would occur over the next two decades, and everyone wanted to do something about it.

As merchants began to move to shopping centers, cities began to look for ways to make their downtowns look more like malls. This was the age of pedestrian malls in downtowns, and

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<sup>79</sup>Michael Perry, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 8 March 1995.

<sup>80</sup>Lisa Caldwell, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 16 March 1995.

slipcovers over the upper floors of old buildings to try to make them look more modern and "mall-like." It was this desire to compete with the malls that most likely drove the Authority to accept one-story buildings that did not go with the surrounding structures as new development. Unfortunately by the time civic leaders realized that they could not compete with the malls by trying to create a similar atmosphere, much of the damage had been done.

But the urban renewal program in Huntington may have been doomed to fail, not because of action taken by local authorities, but due to outside forces local officials could not control. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time in America when people were moving to the suburbs, and shopping centers were creating new retail centers. The population of Huntington was declining, and the city found itself in an economy that was shifting away from manufacturing to service industries. Land was cleared for development, but developers were not knocking down the community's door to build.

Huntington was not alone in the controversy over urban renewal. As early as 1961, there was resistance nationally to what was occurring in the area of urban renewal. Cities all over America had jumped on the urban renewal bandwagon to "get their share of federal money to get their cities moving again."<sup>81</sup> But cities had become discouraged over the time it took for development to take place. The urban renewal program sought to change land-use patterns in cities, and because this forced change was not easy to make, it took an average of 12 years for a particular project to be completed.<sup>82</sup> This was especially true in Huntington.

The Urban Renewal Authority was established by an act of City Council in 1958. The Urban Renewal Plan was not adopted until 1968, a decade later. It is this sequence of events that Robert Trocin, current chairman of the Authority, feels is central to the problems Huntington has

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<sup>81</sup> Anderson, 217.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

experienced. According to Trocin, by the time the Plan was in place, all the property had been purchased, and buildings torn down. It is obvious, says Trocin, that the creators of urban renewal in Huntington did not have a plan when they started the program.<sup>83</sup> The plan was apparently developed to fit the property purchased. It follows to reason that urban renewal planners of that time were most interested in participating in the program, and the federal dollars that accompanied it, rather than any grandiose plan to save the downtown.

It was this lack of an advanced plan that in part may have caused the Authority's deviation from the standards set forth in the Urban Renewal Plan. Trocin believes that most of the one-story structures found on the Authority's property were "acts of desperation" in an effort to take the money offered by developers. Little care was given to the character of the buildings surrounding the new development.<sup>84</sup>

It appears that poor planning, or a lack of planning, did more to slow the development of urban renewal property in Huntington than any strict guidelines that had to be followed. However, there were outside influences that also caused major problems and lost opportunities. The greatest lost opportunity happened in the early 1970s, when Buddy Haden, then publisher of the Herald Dispatch, Coleman Trainor, President of First Huntington Bank, and Robert Trocin, who was at that time President of the Huntington Chamber of Commerce, approached the chairman of the J.C. Penney Company (who happened to be a West Virginian) about building a shopping center on the superblock. According to Trocin, the J. C. Penney Chairman told the group that they did not usually develop shopping centers in downtown areas, but he would send a survey team to review the potential. The survey team made a recommendation that the shopping center would work, if the city would complete a list of 25 items they believed necessary for the

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<sup>83</sup>Robert Trocin, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 22 January 1997.

<sup>84</sup>Trocin interview.

development to be successful. The most major of these items was the construction of a bridge across the Ohio River, in east Huntington. Trocin says the group went about meeting all of the 25 demands, including getting a commitment from then-governor Arch Moore to build the bridge. The J.C. Penney Company then honored their agreement with the city, and obtained commitments from three other anchor stores, including Kaufmanns and Sears.<sup>85</sup> J. C. Penney had hoped to recruit an additional 100 stores that would complete a very large downtown shopping center. Trocin goes on to tell that Governor Moore announced the bridge, and pilings to start construction were actually begun in the river. According to Trocin, within a week of J.C. Penney signing the anchor stores to the project, a resident who lived along the river, Ruth Sullivan, filed suit to stop construction of the bridge because it blocked her view of the river. The matter was tied up in court for years, and as a result the J.C. Penney Company and other participants in the shopping center pulled out, not willing to wait out the court battle to see if the bridge would be built.<sup>86</sup>

Trocin feels that a lack of vision and the fortitude to drive a major project by city officials resulted in a lost opportunity on the scale of the loss of the recent Toyota plant in Cabell County.

Not everyone agrees with Trocin's view of the problems caused by early local urban renewal planners. Gary Bunn, who was in the City of Huntington Planning Department at the time of urban renewal's formation says that there was a development plan in place, which was included in the original application to the federal government for the urban renewal program. According to Bunn, the 1968 Plan was developed from and did not deviate much from the plan presented in the original project application.<sup>87</sup> The original Plan application or the study that apparently preceded that application are not available from the urban renewal office.

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<sup>85</sup>Trocin interview.

<sup>86</sup>Trocin interview.

<sup>87</sup>Gary Bunn, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 22 August 1995.

The differences in opinion between these two individuals who were intimately involved in the early years of urban renewal serves to point out why there is still so much controversy today over what has occurred. In the end, it is differing expectations of what urban renewal was going to do for Huntington that must color many citizens' view of the experience here.

The question could really be asked if Huntington would have been as well off or even better off if the urban renewal program had not been undertaken. Many of the stated goals of the federal urban renewal program, such as providing decent housing for poor people; were certainly not accomplished here. But that experience also was not unique to Huntington. In fact, the legislation for the most part did not benefit poor people, instead it helped the upper income population and property owners.<sup>88</sup> Locally, urban renewal sparked controversy that is not unlike more recent projects such as school consolidation and the location of the regional jail in Cabell County. Local columnist Dave Peyton may be correct when he states that Huntington "may be one of the few places in America where a thousand people can have two thousand different opinions on any topic."<sup>89</sup>

### ***Further Study***

As with many research projects, as the study progresses information is obtained that can lead the researcher to believe that their study is aimed at a target that is not what was expected. Such is the case in this project. The assumption about what caused the problems with urban renewal in Huntington turned out not only to be false, but for the most part unimportant. Trying to keep the focus of this study was very difficult, because there are so many different aspects to the urban renewal experience in Huntington. Complete studies could be done on just the

<sup>88</sup>Anderson, 220-221.

<sup>89</sup>Peyton, Dave, "Disagreements Are a Way of Life Here," *The Herald Dispatch*, 24 February 1997.

acquisition of property or the major developments that never made it past the proposal stages. A study could possibly be done on local initiatives such as the J.C. Penney project mentioned earlier in this chapter. Research into the origin and use of the buildings torn down in the urban renewal process would make an interesting project, or a study of housing in the area and what happened to those displaced by urban renewal. It is unfortunate that many of the records that would answer many of these questions are no longer available. A purge of City Department of Planning documents in the 1970s destroyed many of the documents that would be useful in a further examination of what happened.<sup>90</sup>

The urban renewal story in Huntington is about over. With the plans under way currently, it is possible that within five years, there will be no more vacant urban renewal property to be developed. Given the current trend of renovating buildings, with a kinder view of preserving our architectural heritage, it is unlikely that another urban renewal type project will ever take place in the central business district.

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<sup>90</sup>Mary Lee Moore, interview by author, 15 March 1995.

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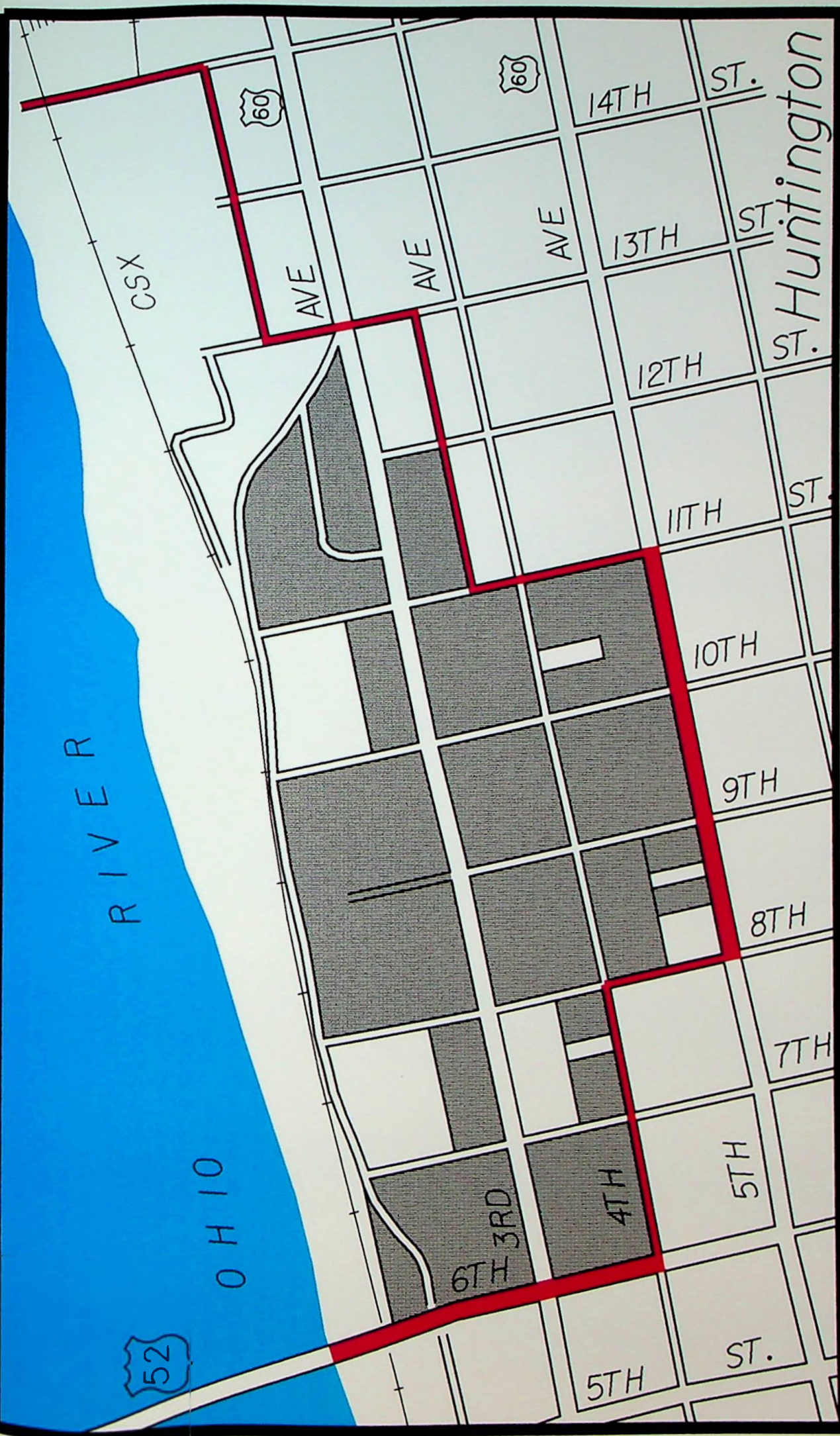
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Appendix 1

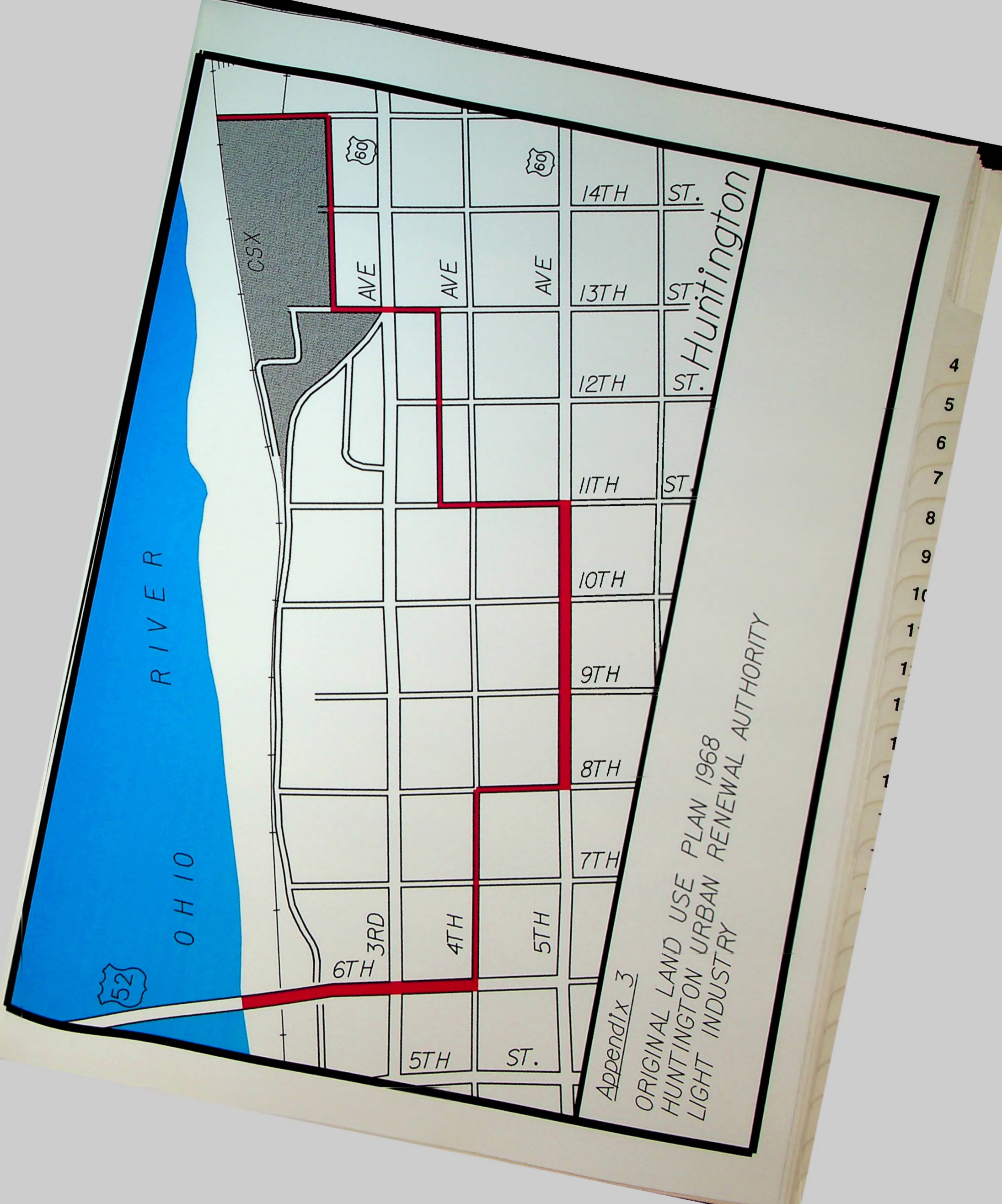
URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT 1968  
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Appendix 2  
 ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
 COMMERCIAL

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Appendix 3

ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
LIGHT INDUSTRY

Huntington

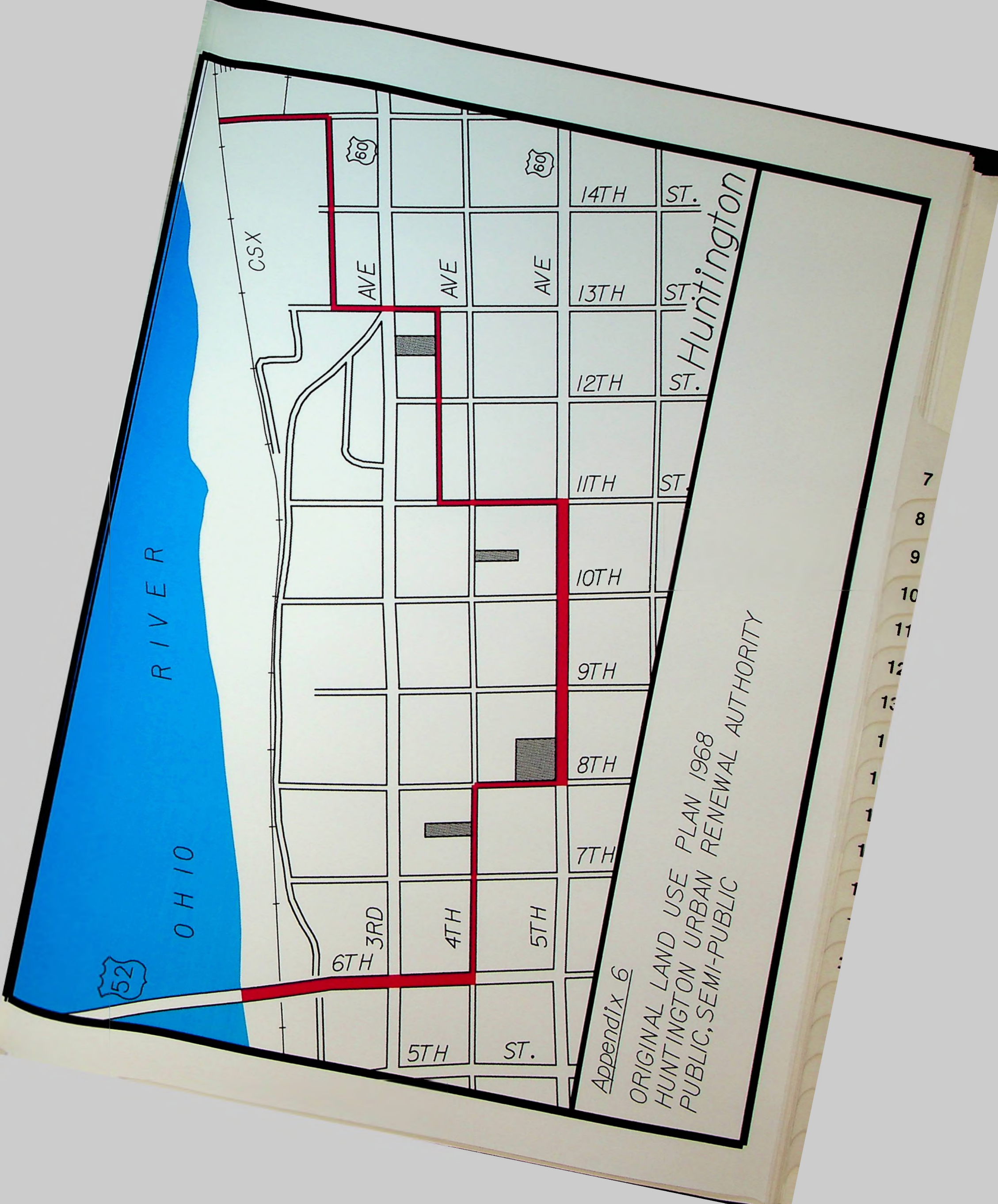
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Appendix 5  
ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
PARKING

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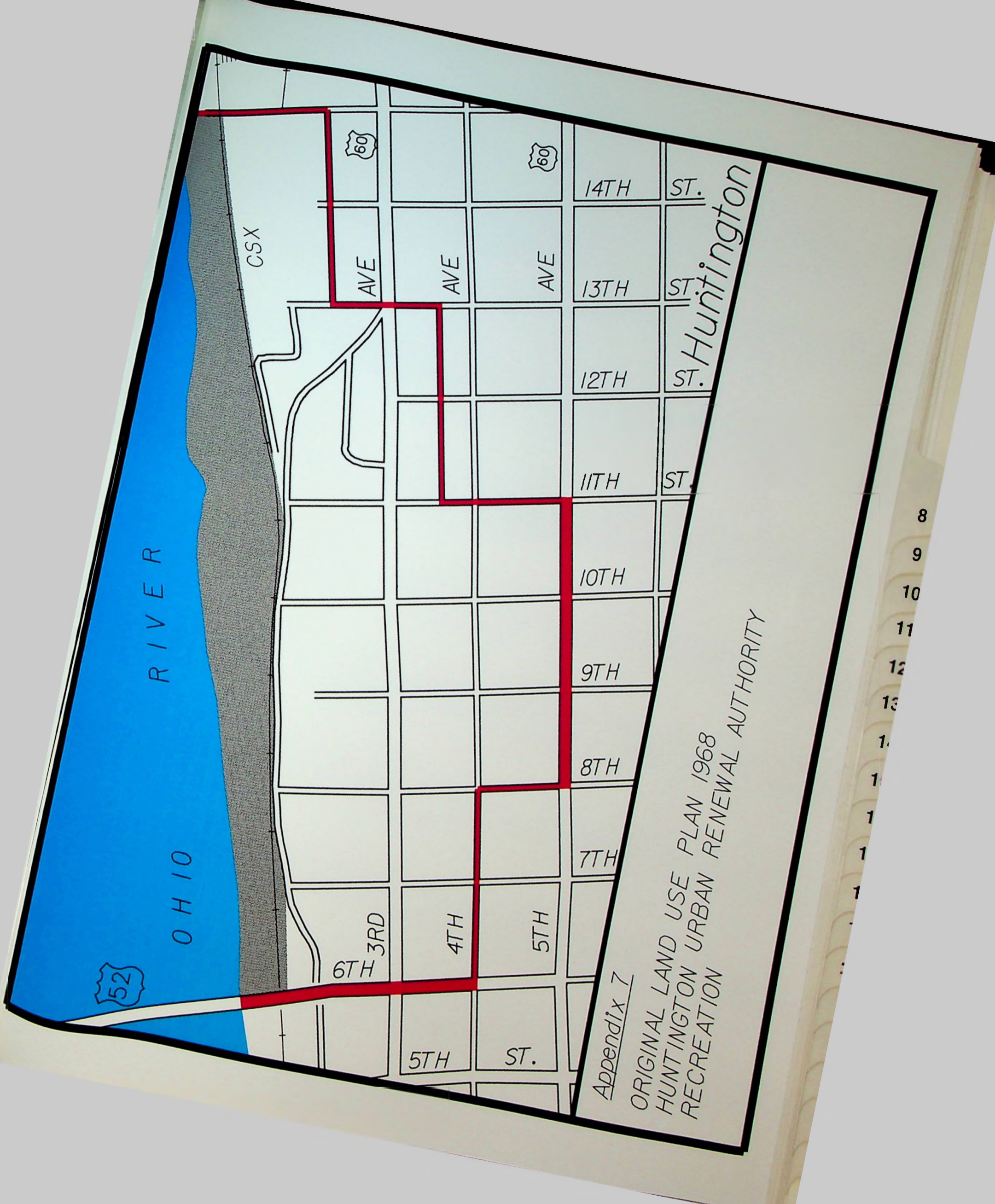
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Appendix 6

ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
PUBLIC, SEMI-PUBLIC

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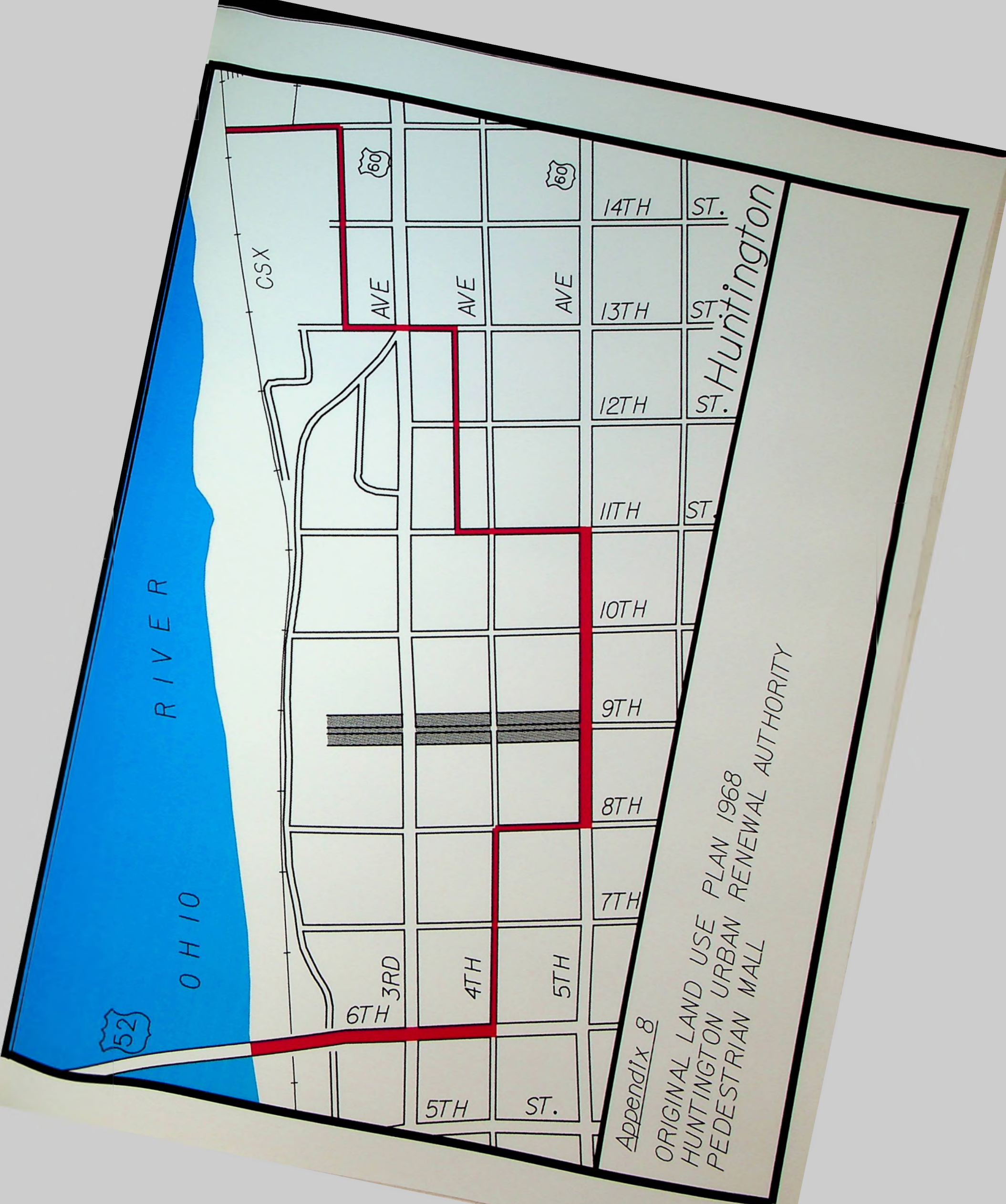
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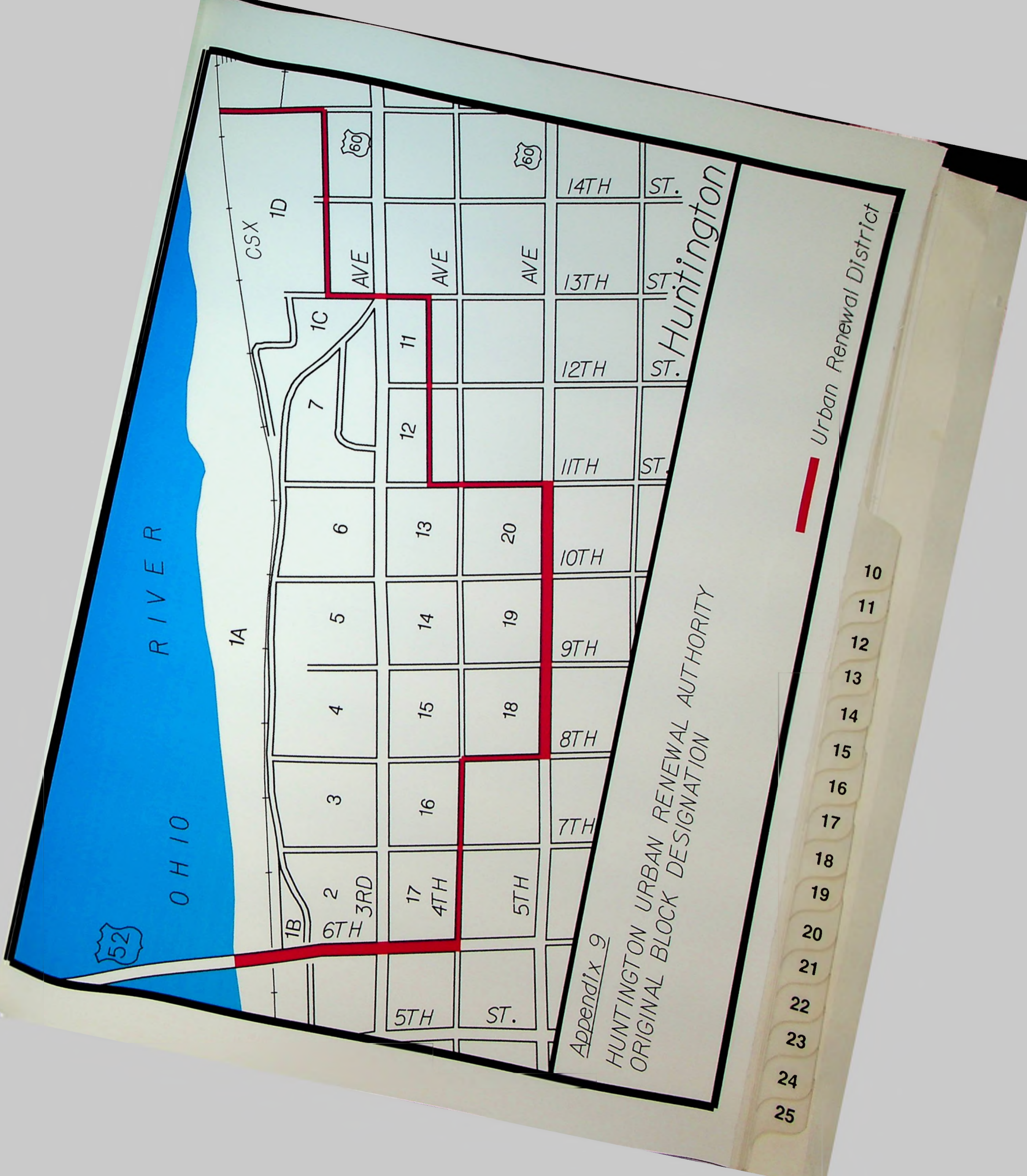
Appendix 7

ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
RECREATION

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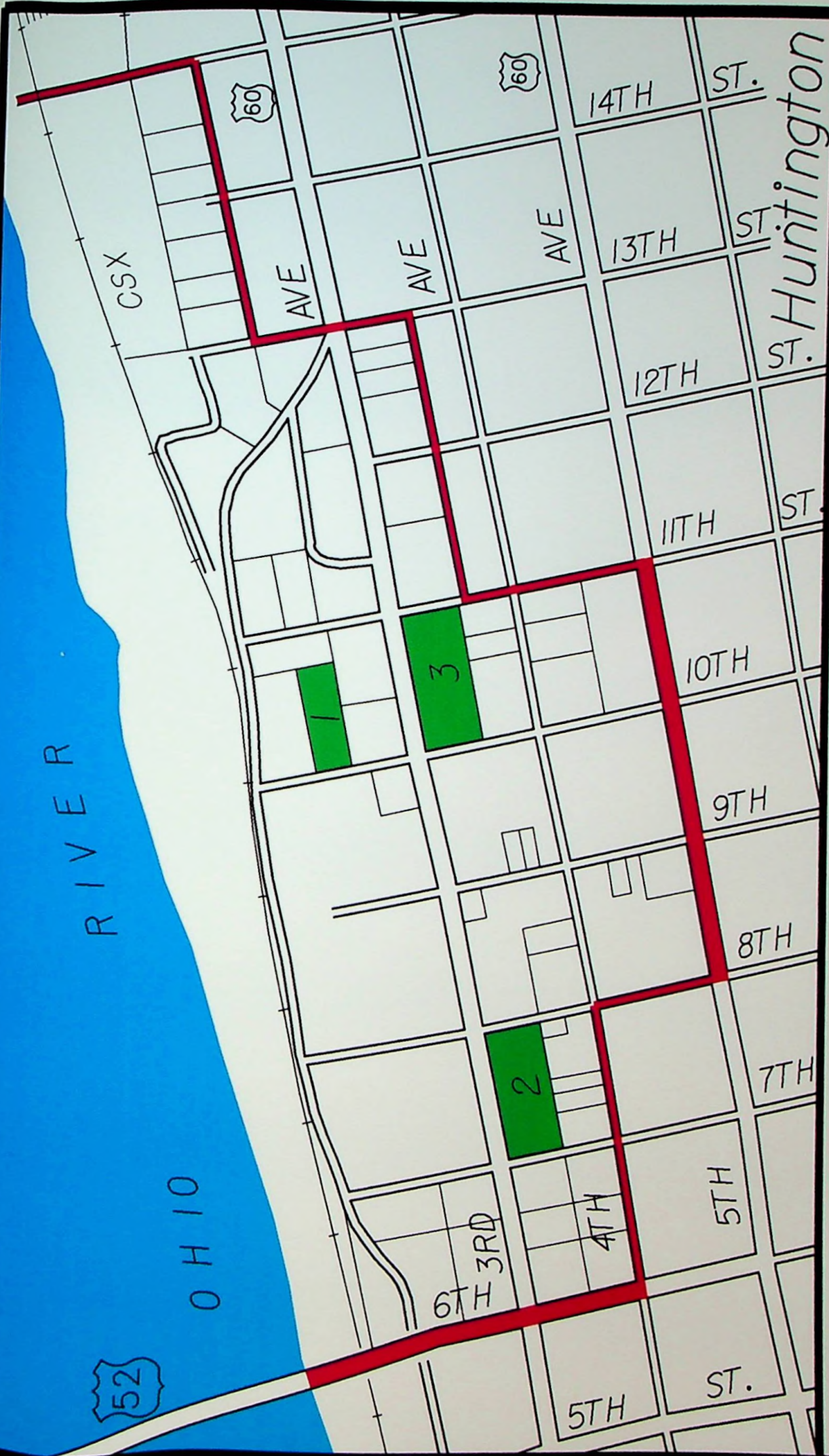
Appendix 8  
ORIGINAL LAND USE PLAN 1968  
HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
PEDESTRIAN MALL



Appendix 9  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY  
 ORIGINAL BLOCK DESIGNATION

Urban Renewal District

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- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.

1. Municipal Parking
2. Municipal Parking
3. Holiday Inn (Radisson Hotel)

Appendix 10  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS - 1971

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 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

Appendix II  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS - 1972  
 4. Appalachian Power Sub-Station  
 5. Huntington Trust and Savings Bank  
 6. Frank's Shoes

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Appendix 12  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS - 1973  
 7. Schon-Stephenson  
 8. Mack & Daves  
 8A. Consumer's Gas

 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

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- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.

Appendix 13  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS - 1974




- 9. First Huntington National Bank (Bank One)
- 10. Harris Riverfront Park

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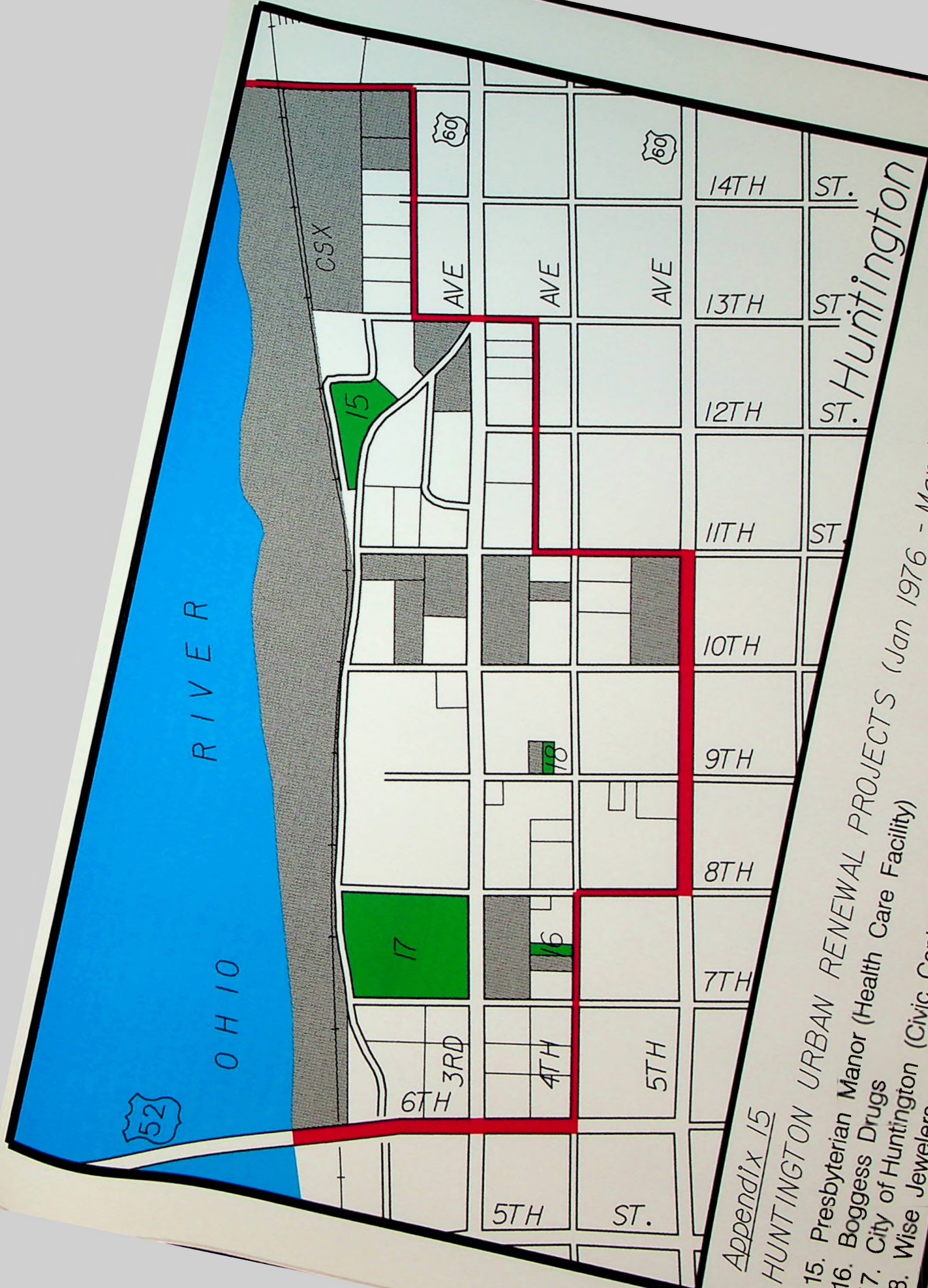
*Appendix 14*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS - 1975**

- 11. Connor's Steel (WV Steel)
- 12. Huntington Water Corp. (WV-American Water Co.)
- 13. U.S. Post Office
- 14. Pied Piper

 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.




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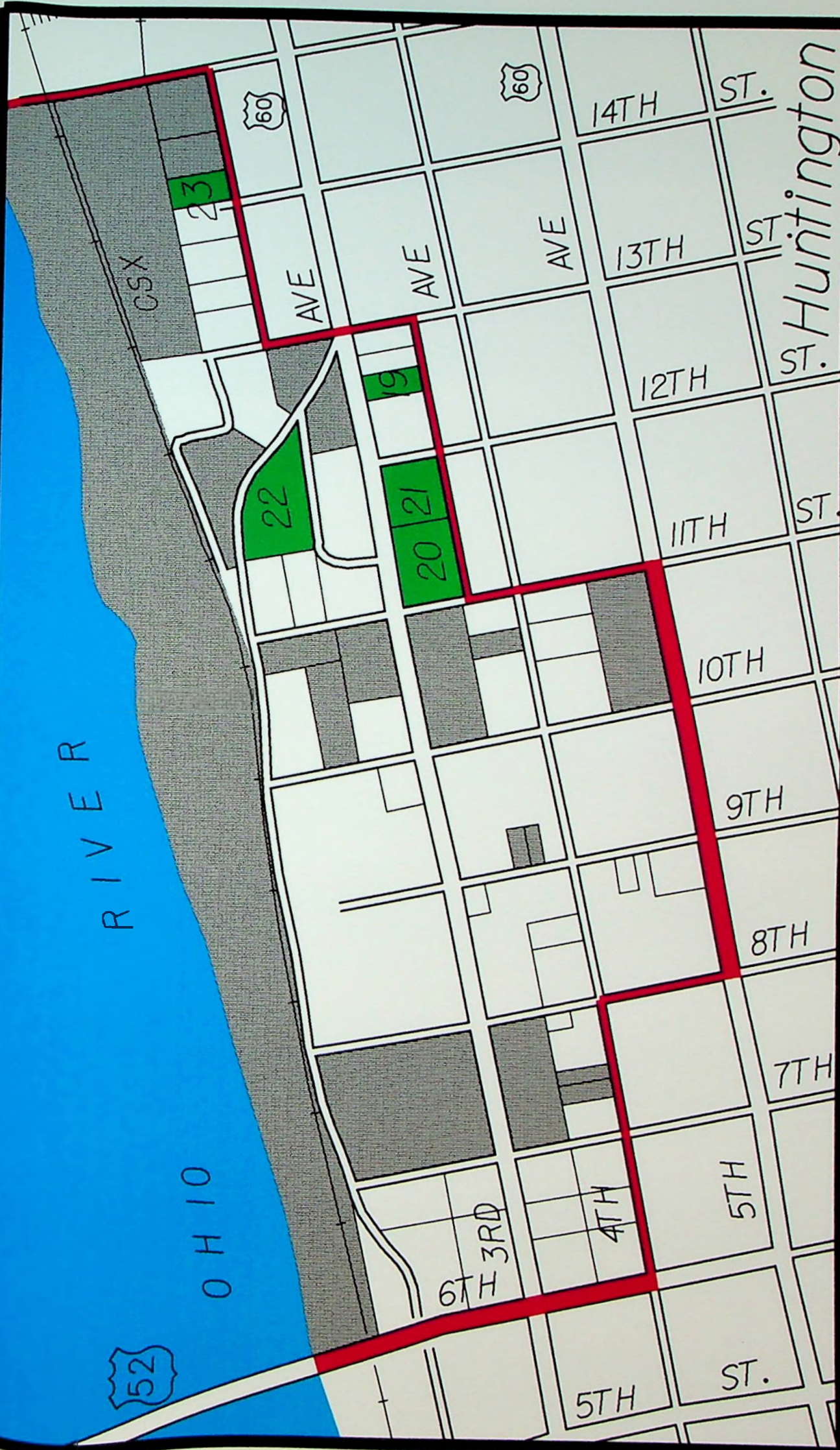




*Appendix 15*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (Jan 1976 - Mar 1976)**

- 15. Presbyterian Manor (Health Care Facility)
- 16. Boggess Drugs
- 17. City of Huntington (Civic Center)
- 18. Wise Jewelers

 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

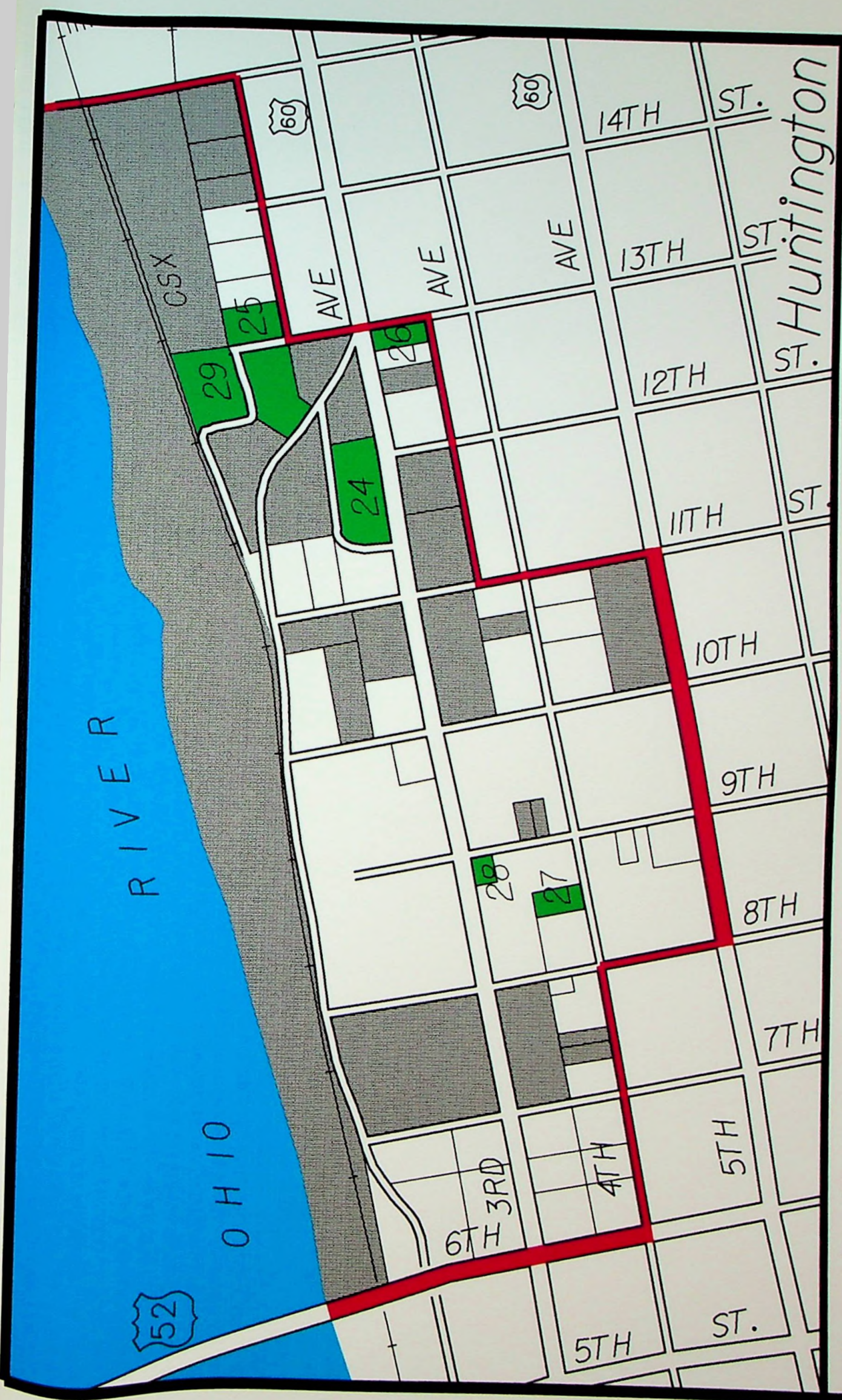


Appendix 16

**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (Apr 1976 - Dec 1976)**

- 19. Dental Office (Richard Oaks DDS)
- 20. Huntington Trust and Savings Bank (Now Bank One Branch)
- 21. Ponderosa Steak House
- 22. Red Cross
- 23. CPA Office (John Bias)

New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

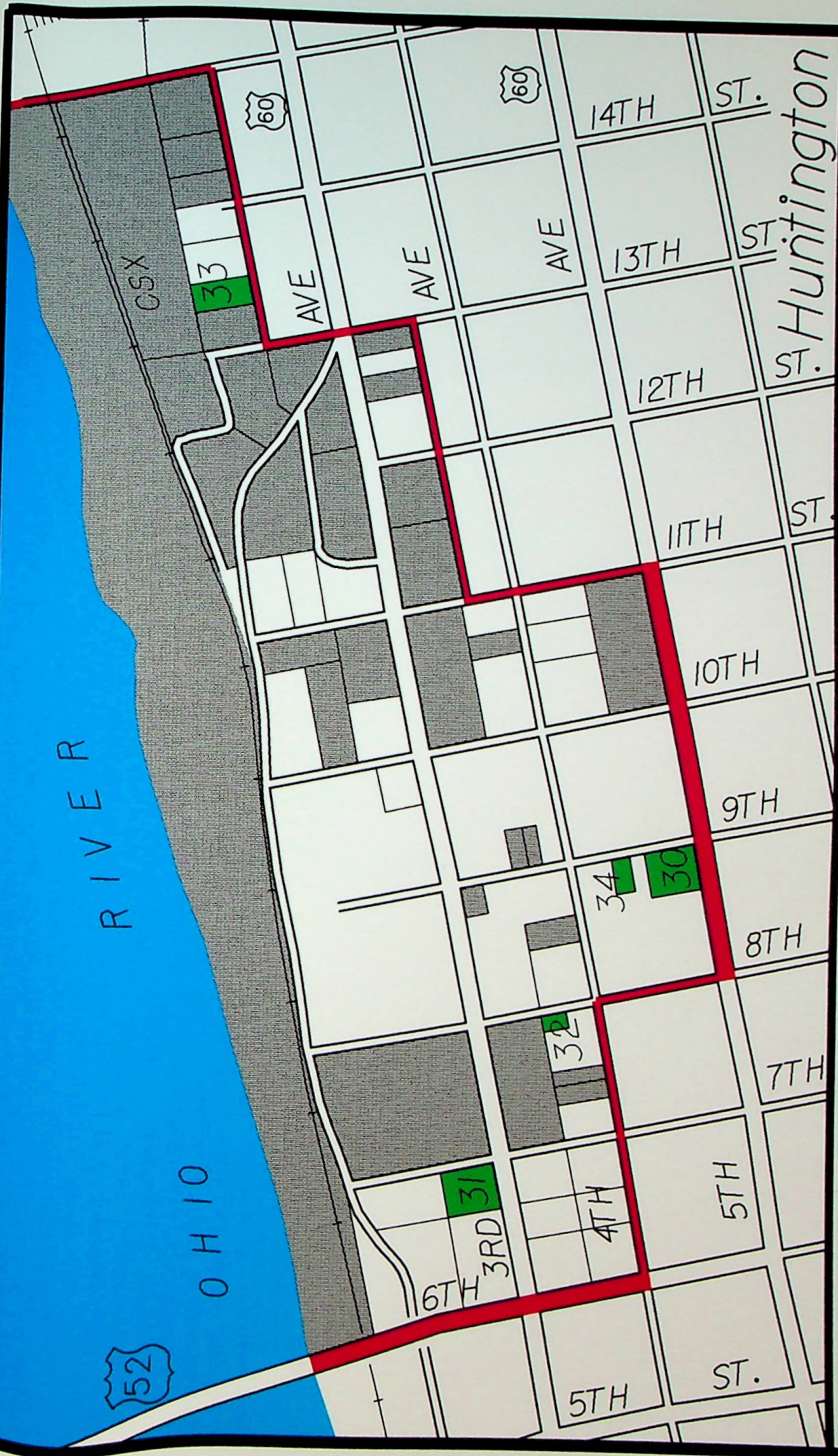


Appendix 17

**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (Jan 1977 - Jun 1977)**

- 24. Forest City (Apartments for Elderly)
- 25. Dental Office (Scott Moore DDS)
- 26. Salvation Army
- 27. Model Furniture
- 28. Bathe Shop (Extension)
- 29. Riverview Manor (Apartments for Elderly)

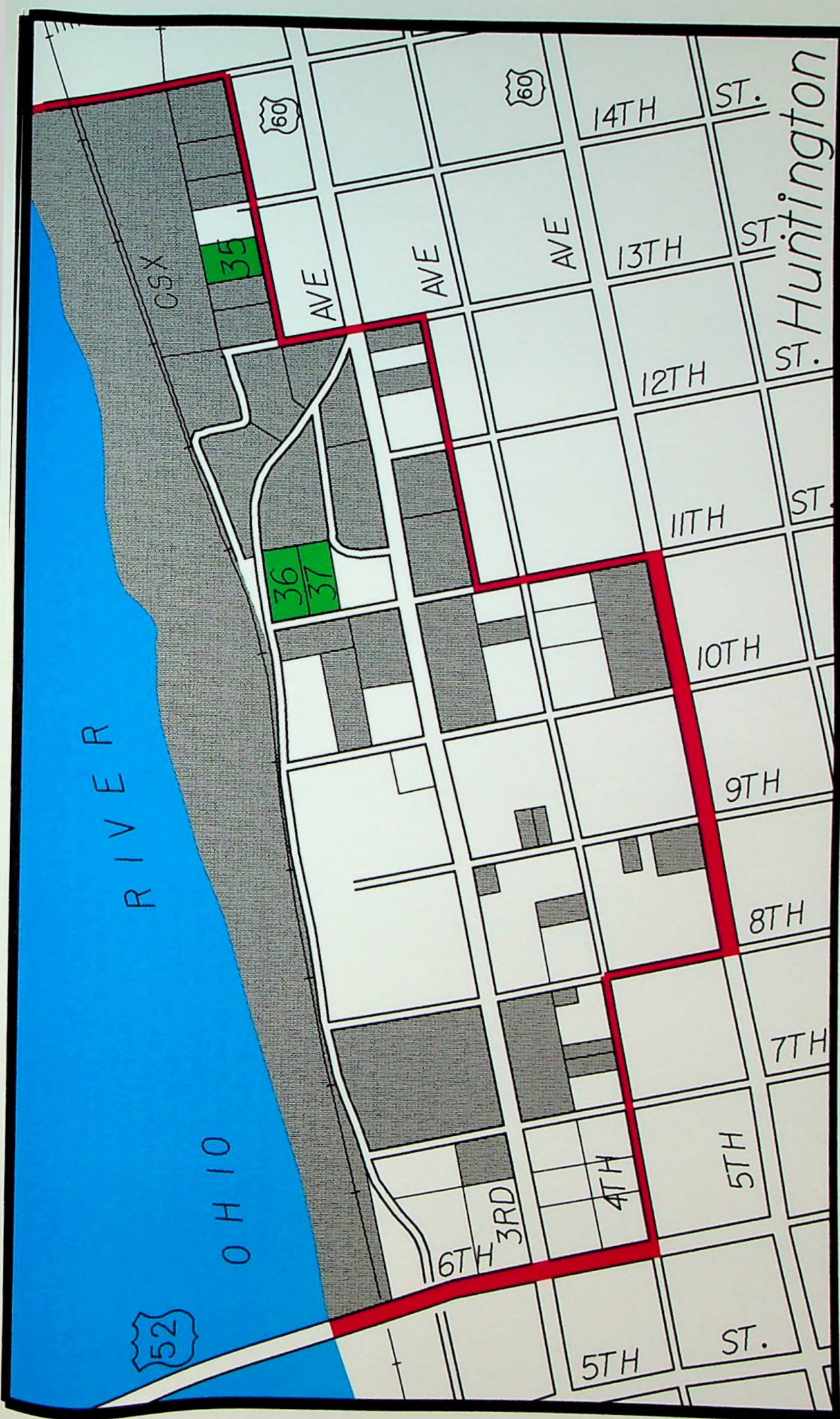
- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.



- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.

*Appendix 18*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (Jul 1977 - Nov 1977)**

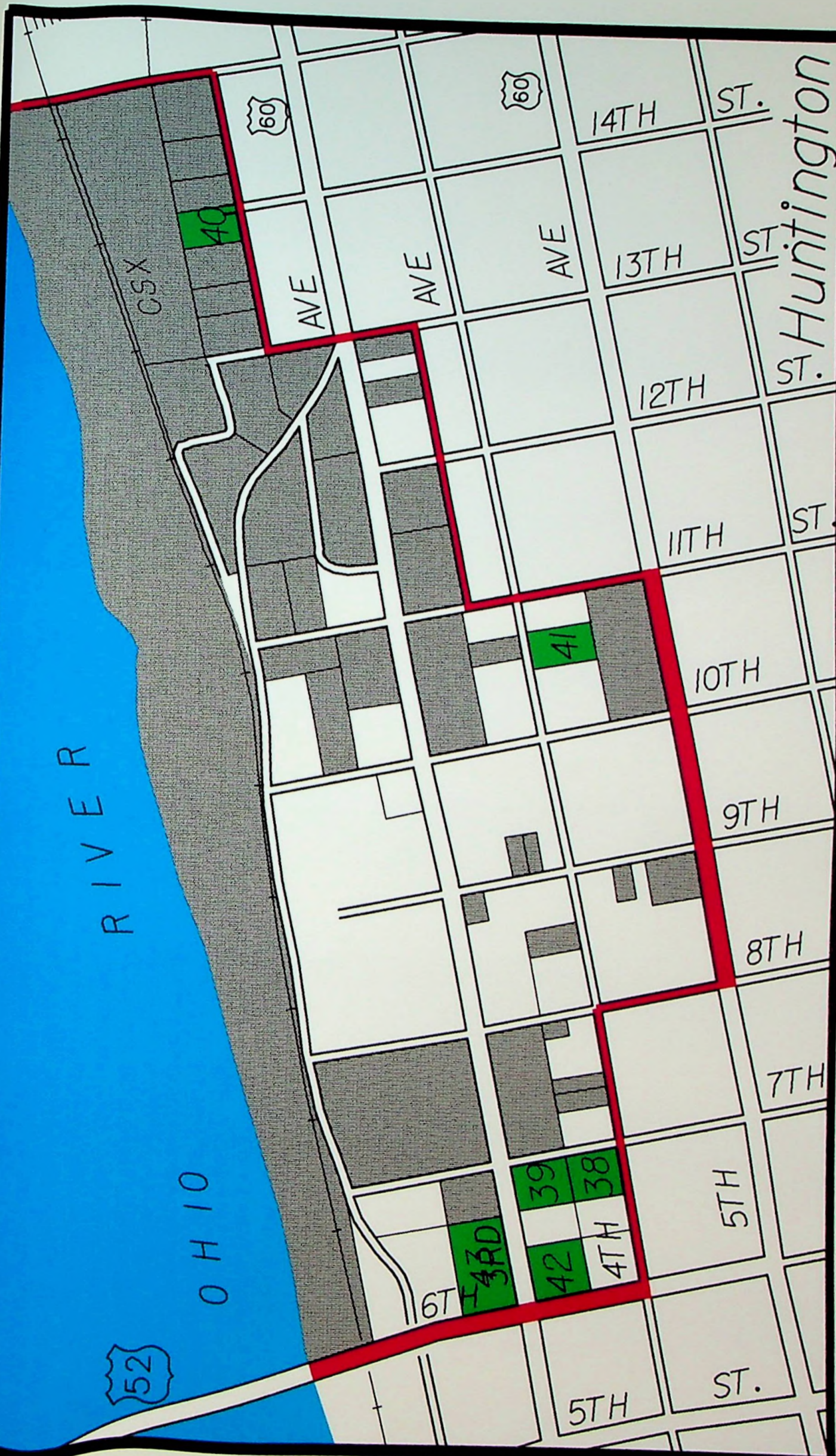
- 30. Cabell County Library
- 31. Wendy's Restaurant
- 32. Dickinson Furniture (Expansion)
- 33. CPA (Callaway, Trainer & Wright)
- 34. Keen Jewelers



*Appendix 19*  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (Dec 1977)

- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.

- 35. Dental Office (William Myers DDS)
- 36. Huntington Park Board (Park & Parking)
- 37. Heritage Village (Historical Restoration)





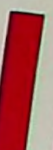
New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

- Appendix 20*
- HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (1978)**
- 38. Federal Office Building
  - 39. Buckeye Ins. (Now Huddleston, Bolen, Beatty, Porter & Copen - Attorneys)
  - 40. Pied Piper (Annex)
  - 41. Municipal Parking
  - 42. Steak & Ale Restaurant
  - 43. Bob Evans Restaurant



*Appendix 21*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (1979)**

- 44. Veteran's Hospital Employee's Credit Union
- 45. Rax's Restaurant (Now the Ribber Restaurant)

 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.



*Appendix 22*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (1980)**

- 46. Nationwide Insurance
- 47. International Union of Operating Engineers
- 48. City of Huntington (Support Facility for Civic Center)




New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.

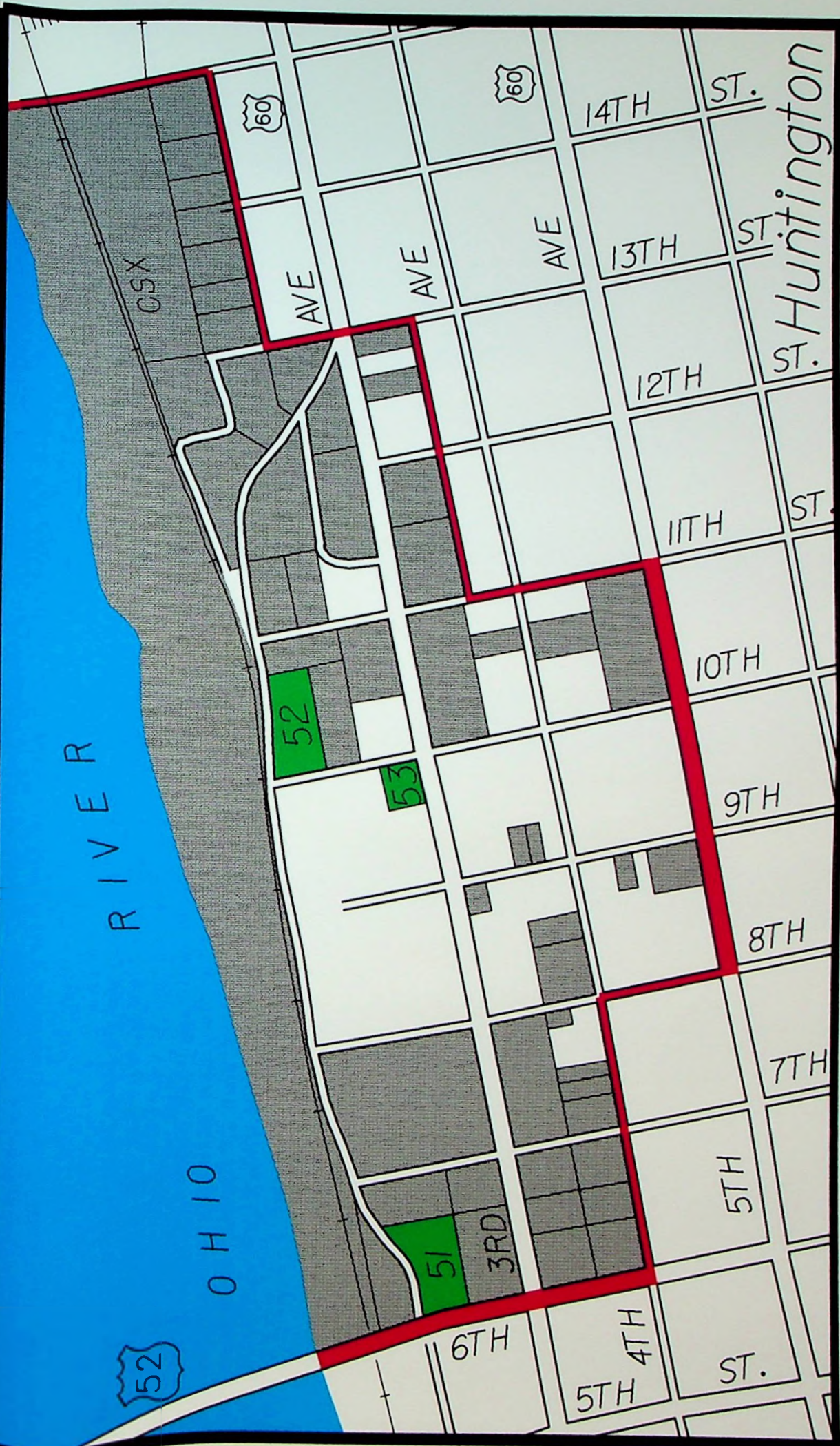




*Appendix 23*  
**HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (1981)**

- 49. Office Building
- 50. Municipal Parking

 New Projects  
 Completed Projects  
 Urban Renewal Dist.



Appendix 24  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS (1982-1990)

- New Projects
- Completed Projects
- Urban Renewal Dist.

- 51. Westview Manor (Apartments for Elderly)
- 52. Red Lobster Restaurant
- 53. Chi Chi's Restaurant



Appendix 25  
 HUNTINGTON URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

- Superblock (Blocks 4/5)
- Completed Projects