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Tallahassee Central City Planning Study

Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department

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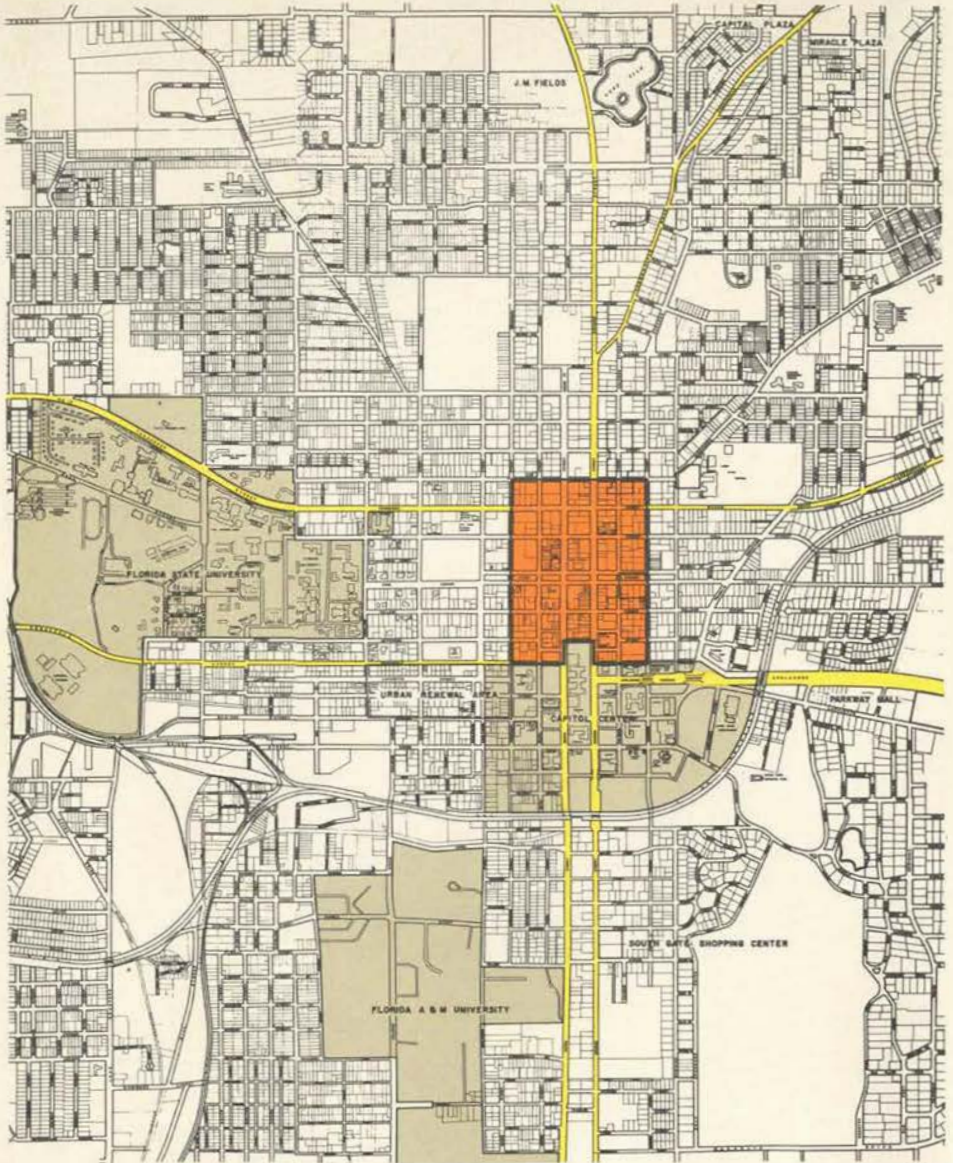
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YEAR ONE

TALLAHASSEE CENTRAL CITY PLANNING STUDY



TALLAHASSEE - LEON COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



STUDY PROGRAM

Downtown Tallahassee is rapidly approaching a turning point which could lead to a major revitalization of the 31-block area bounded by Virginia Street on the north, Gadsden Street on the east, Pensacola Street on the south, and Bronough Street on the west. To understand, guide, and assist in this transformation, the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department has undertaken and completed a comprehensive study of the area with the assistance of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. (PMM), planning consultants of San Francisco, California.

Initiated in July of 1971, the Central City Planning Area (CCPA) Study has involved four phases of work:

- PHASE I. Inventory and analysis of economic, social, physical, financial, and management conditions and trends that currently prevail in the CCPA. Key Downtown problems and opportunities were identified as part of the analysis, which relied heavily on more than 40 in-depth interviews with knowledgeable representatives of all CCPA interests (property owners, businessmen, professionals, churches, government, universities), as well as a special survey of some 250 citizens actually "using" the Area.
- PHASE II. Determination of the most suitable role or function for Downtown Tallahassee to fulfill during the next 25 years or so. Five possible functions were tested and evaluated on the basis of specified assumptions, objectives, and planning guidelines in order to discover which of these functions best resolved the problems and took advantage of the opportunities identified in Phase I.
- PHASE III. Development and selection of a CCPA Concept Plan which best serves the functional purpose worked out during Phase II. The agreed upon Concept Plan represents a logical, workable, and desirable "public framework" which both permits and encourages private interest, investment and involvement in the improvement of Downtown Tallahassee.
- PHASE IV. Preparation of the selected Concept Plan in final form. This part of the Study Program concentrated on ways and means to implement the Plan, including the identification and assignment of tasks that need to be carried out in the near future. The particular document presented here represents one end product of this stage.

PROBLEMS

The wide variety of Downtown problems revealed during Phase I stems from several causes: (1) Tallahassee's rapid metropolitan growth—a population of over 100,000 today and perhaps 250,000 by the end of the century; (2) Downtown's changing role—pressure to assume new functions and give up old ones; (3) need for an organization to devise and implement problem-solving plans that can really work. Of the major problems identified, the following are of greatest importance:

- **TRAFFIC**—Through the years the automobile has been accommodated at the expense of pedestrians, resulting in an inadequate walkway system and an excess of street right-of-way relative to total land area. Even so, vehicular traffic is characterized by poor traffic flow and inadequate, inefficient parking.
- **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**—Downtown's main thoroughfares—particularly Monroe Street—tend to separate rather than unify the area. Hilly topography tends to discourage walking, especially on hot summer days. Many buildings have not aged gracefully. The area is characterized by sign clutter and the virtual absence of any planned landscaping.
- **PUBLIC FACILITIES**—Downtown still has an ancient water and sewer system. Storm drainage problems exist in certain locations. Sidewalks along many streets require repair and/or modernization.
- **ECONOMIC SITUATION**—The role of Downtown Tallahassee is undergoing change in response to rapid growth and strong competition from new outlying shopping center and office developments. Traditional markets are evaporating. Some businessmen are hanging on but many are unable to do so. The pattern of small fragmented ownership in the Central Business District (CBD) inhibits creation of new large-scale developments that could revitalize Downtown.
- **MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**—Absence of an organization (until recently) to guide overall development of the CBD in the same way that large projects such as major shopping or office centers are successfully promoted and managed. Need for an updated system of public services and facilities. Disagreement among property owners, businessmen, and others as to function of Downtown.

OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown Tallahassee clearly has the physical setting, economic potential, and strong leadership required to permit this important area to once again function as a popular "gathering place" for local citizens and visitors alike. Even in condensed form, the list of opportunities associated with the CCPA is impressive. For example:

- **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.** Numerous large, attractive trees still in existence, together with an unusual amount of desirable open space. The presence of an abundant, easily tapped water resource. A hilly topography that has not been utilized to its fullest advantage as yet. The capability of many old structures to be attractively rehabilitated. An excellent chance to provide a more fitting, pleasing orientation and setting for both the State Capitol and the CCPA. The real possibility that through traffic can and will be removed from Monroe Street, thus permitting the creation of full or partial pedestrian-oriented malls. Good potential support for an up-to-date transit system that appears to be capable of early implementation.
- **SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.** Strategic location of the CCPA adjacent to the State Capitol Center and only a few blocks from Florida State and Florida A&M Universities permits property owners and related interests within the Area to capitalize on specialized office, business, and residential markets. Growth-oriented university and State Capitol plans, as well as continued population and job growth in Leon County. Presence of many "first" churches in the CCPA, together with the aforementioned university and state government complexes, provides rare opportunity to evolve an exciting people-oriented social environment.
- **FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT.** Excellent financial condition of the City of Tallahassee permits agreed-upon public improvements within the CCPA to be accomplished when and as required. Newly formed Downtown Improvement Authority (DIA) and a special tax assessment throughout much of the Area provides both the management vehicle and funds needed to properly guide improvement activities. Re-surgence of enthusiasm, pride and genuine interest in the role Downtown will play in the future evolution of Tallahassee and Leon County.

GUIDELINES

As part of the CCPA Study, a number of important objectives and assumptions were agreed upon and adopted as guidelines for plan development:

- The Central City Planning Area should be a pleasant, safe, and stimulating place to visit and/or be in.
- The CCPA should be a "center of activity" in the future even more so than in the past.
- Since Tallahassee is Florida's Capital City, the Planning Area should clearly reflect this important consideration to visitors and residents alike.
- Any plan of improvement should capitalize on the fact that a substantial majority of employment in Tallahassee and Leon County is located within or close to the Area.
- Any improvement program should take full advantage of the Area's topography and tree cover.
- The Area should be compatible with surrounding sections of the City and good transition should exist to and from nearby activity generators such as the Capitol Center and the universities.
- Existing activity generators (e.g., the Capitol Center, FSU, and FAMU) will continue to function in their present locations.
- A civic center will be built within the presently designated Urban Renewal Area.
- The City and County seats of government will remain in the CCPA.
- The "climate" for change and improvement in the CCPA is and will remain favorable.
- Access to the Area will continue to be via personal automobile for most users.
- Realistic and logical public improvements to the Area can be financed from public sources.
- Zoning can and will be used to effectively guide future development for the Area.
- Tax assessment policies will accurately reflect zoning regulations and guidelines for the Area.
- Improvements will take place within the Area in accordance with an orderly, staged program over time, rather than in a short period.
- Metropolitan Tallahassee will continue to grow toward the 250,000 population level during the remainder of this century.
- Church facilities will remain in the Area as generally located at present.

- Historic structures in the Area will also be preserved in their present locations.

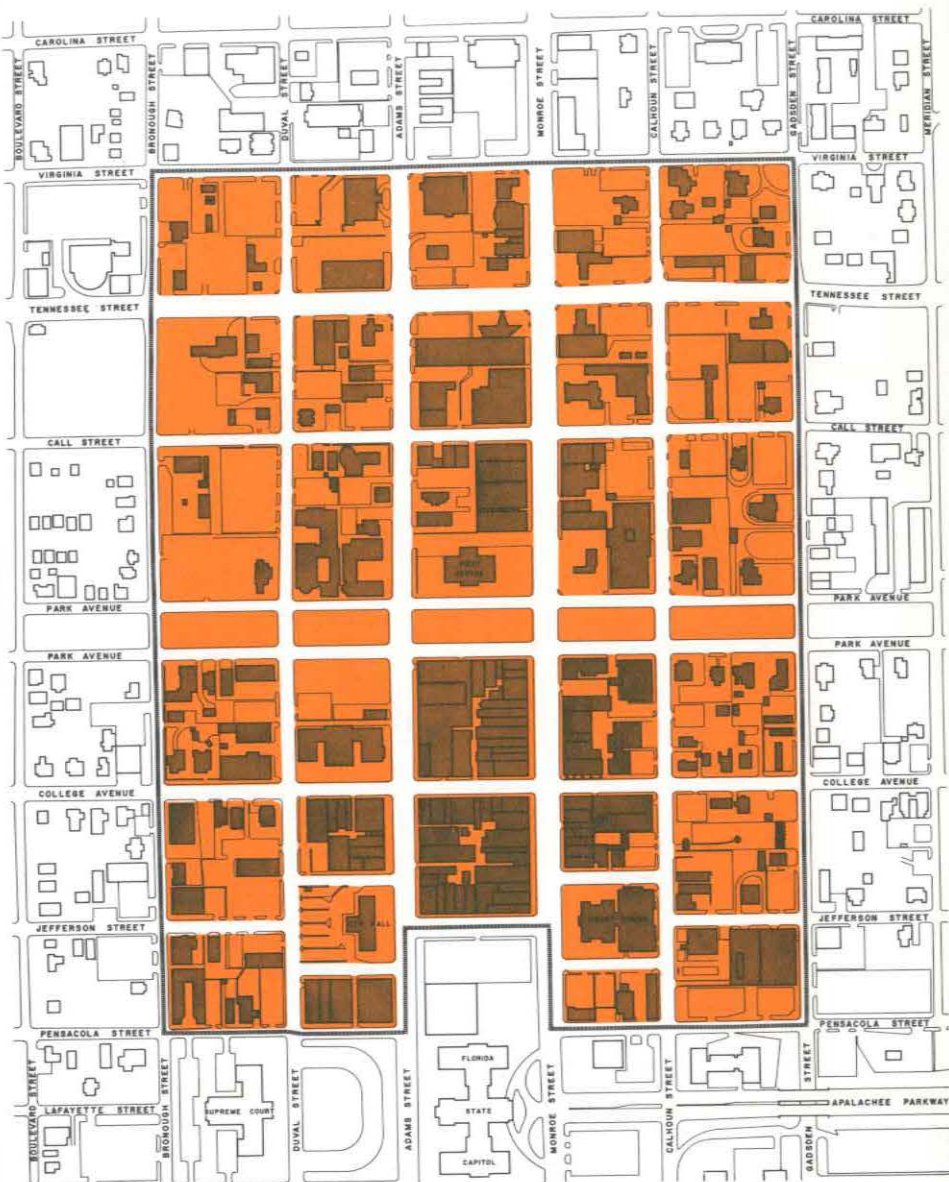
FUNCTION

Five alternative functions that the Tallahassee Central City Planning Area might fulfill in future years were analyzed in detail during Phase II of the Study Program. This in-depth functional analysis not only proved to be of great value in determining what to plan for, and when, but it also encouraged participation in the planning process by virtually everyone with a direct stake or interest in the Downtown Section. The five alternatives considered, as listed below, all reflect the Planning Area's strategic location within the City of Tallahassee:

1. Continuation of the CCPA as **Central Business District (CBD)** for the Tallahassee Metropolitan Region.
2. Redevelopment of the CCPA as an **Office Center** oriented to state and local government.
3. Redevelopment of the CCPA as a combination **Office and Residential Center** oriented to nearby Florida State and Florida A&M Universities, as well as to state and local government.
4. Redevelopment of the CCPA as the **Regional Entertainment Center** for the Tallahassee area.
5. Redevelopment of the CCPA as a **Multi-Purpose District** comprised of office, shopping, residential, entertainment, government, and related uses.

Extensive outlines as to the manner in which the CCPA could be expected to look, operate, and be if fully developed in accordance with each of the five functions were prepared to serve as a base of comparison for the analysis. These "word pictures" included physical, economic, social, and management characteristics associated with the various alternatives. They were drawn on the general assumption that each possible function could be successfully realized if appropriate plans and action programs were vigorously pursued by all parties of interest.

After due consideration, it was determined that Option 5 above represented the most logical and best overall role for the CCPA. If redeveloped over time to function as a **Multi-Purpose District**, the Planning Area's full potential can best be realized according to the analysis. Moreover, this alternative also fulfills the stated objectives more effectively than the other four and also affords almost limitless possibilities for imaginative planning within the Area.



EXISTING STRUCTURES & STREETS

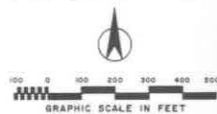


LEGEND

- STUDY AREA BORDER
- STUDY AREA TOPOGRAPHY
- PROPOSED PRIMARY COMPONENT
- PROPOSED SECONDARY COMPONENT

PROPOSED COMPONENT USE:

- M** MULTIPURPOSE
- M-C** MULTIPURPOSE / COMMERCIAL
- M-R** MULTIPURPOSE / RESIDENTIAL
- P** PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC



CONCEPT PLAN COMPONENTS

CONCEPT PLAN

A variety of possible plans for the comprehensive improvement of Downtown Tallahassee were developed and comparatively evaluated during Phase III of the overall Study Program. Each potential plan was tested for compliance with previously specified assumptions and objectives. The Concept Plan ultimately selected by this method successfully passed all tests. It also fulfilled the desire for a "public framework" plan that fosters private interest and investment in the Central City Planning Area.

The underlying premise of the favored concept is important; that is, the Plan in its entirety consists of logical sub-areas or "**components**," each of which is capable of being developed in response to market demand by means of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. The latter refers to an optional zoning procedure perfected in recent years to permit complex, multi-use land projects under unified control or ownership to be creatively designed and developed as a single unit.

As shown by the accompanying illustrations, the recommended Concept Plan identifies twelve distinct, inter-related components that can and should be considered as potential planned unit developments. The illustrations also point up the fact that the Plan retains most of the "gridiron" street system now in existence. However, it is envisioned that many of these rights-of-way will be utilized differently in the future.

Portions of Adams, Monroe, and Park Avenue, for example, are slated for conversion to a pedestrian-oriented semi-mall tentatively named the "**Community Commons**." Such a conversion obviously cannot be effected unless and until north-south through traffic is moved to a widened Boulevard Street on the west, as well as the Gadsden-Meridian one-way pair along the CCPA's eastern boundary.

Other existing streets (Virginia, Call, Jefferson, Pensacola, Duval, and Calhoun in particular) will primarily function to provide access to individual parcels of property if the Concept Plan is carried out as proposed. Still others, such as College Avenue and South Park Avenue (in addition to Adams and Monroe Streets) will be extensively used by new mini-bus transit systems designed to connect the CCPA with the Capitol Center, Florida A&M University, the Coliseum-Urban Renewal Area, and Florida State campus. The entire circulation system reflects an intent to freely move and accommodate people rather than private automobiles. This includes a novel suggestion that automatic escalators and/or ramps be installed along portions of Jefferson Street and College Avenue (see sketch) to assist pedestrians in the negotiation of steep grades associated with these locations.

With regard to future land use, the Concept Plan includes sub-areas or components that are suitable for multi-

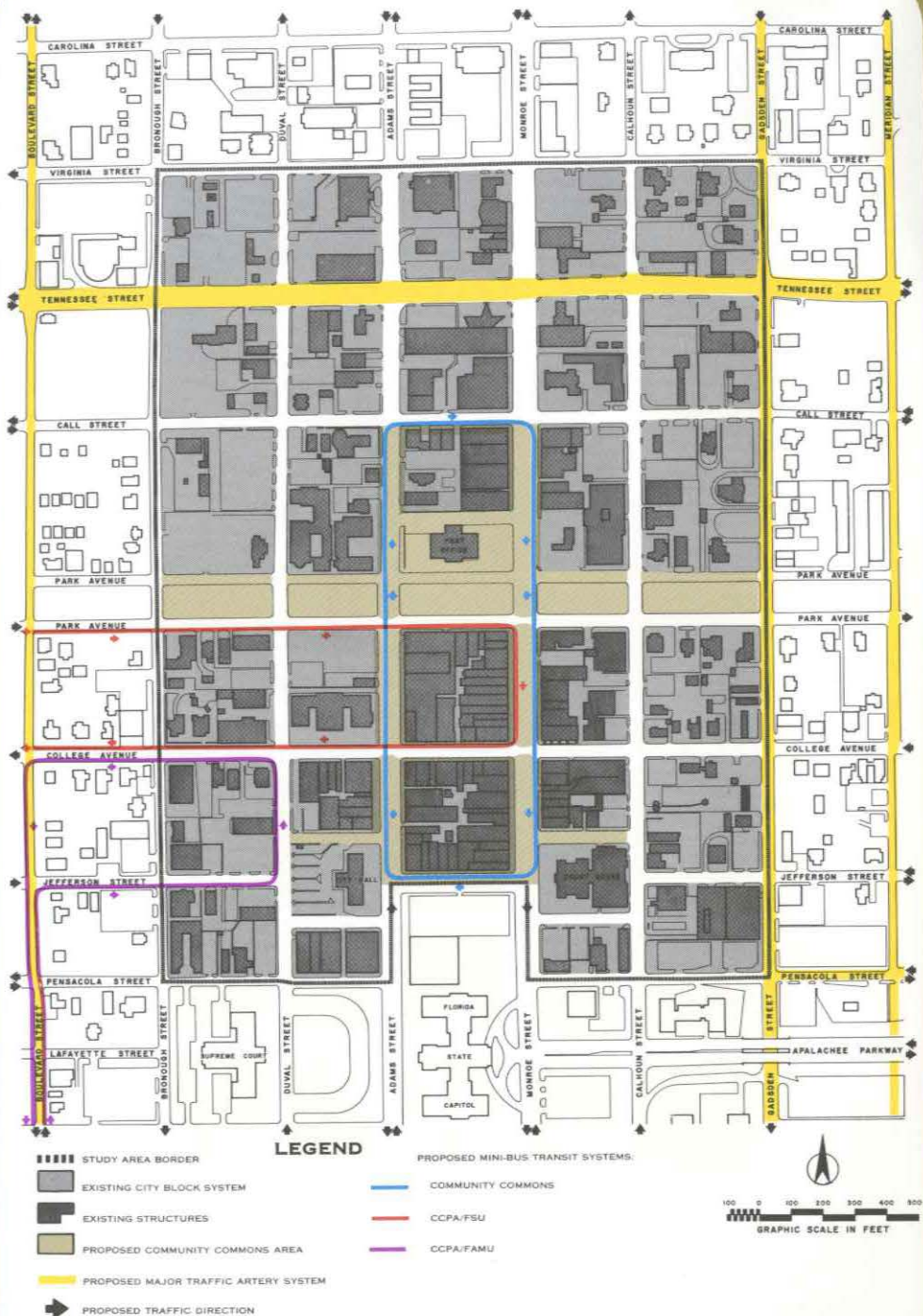
purpose (commercial, residential, public, and related uses) PUD projects designated by the symbol M; multi-purpose projects with an emphasis on commercial activities (M-C); multi-purpose projects oriented to residential uses (M-R); and public or semi-public projects (P). Among the latter category is a special transitional component designed to properly relate the Capitol Center to the CCPA.

Full and careful implementation of the "**Community Commons**" idea would provide the central gathering place or focal point required to permit the Downtown Section to regain its traditional role as *the* center of activity for all of Tallahassee and Leon County. The "**Commons**," in combination with nearby multi-purpose projects, would also stimulate establishment of an "18-hour environment" (6 a.m. to 12 midnight), in contrast to the present 8-hour business-oriented environment.

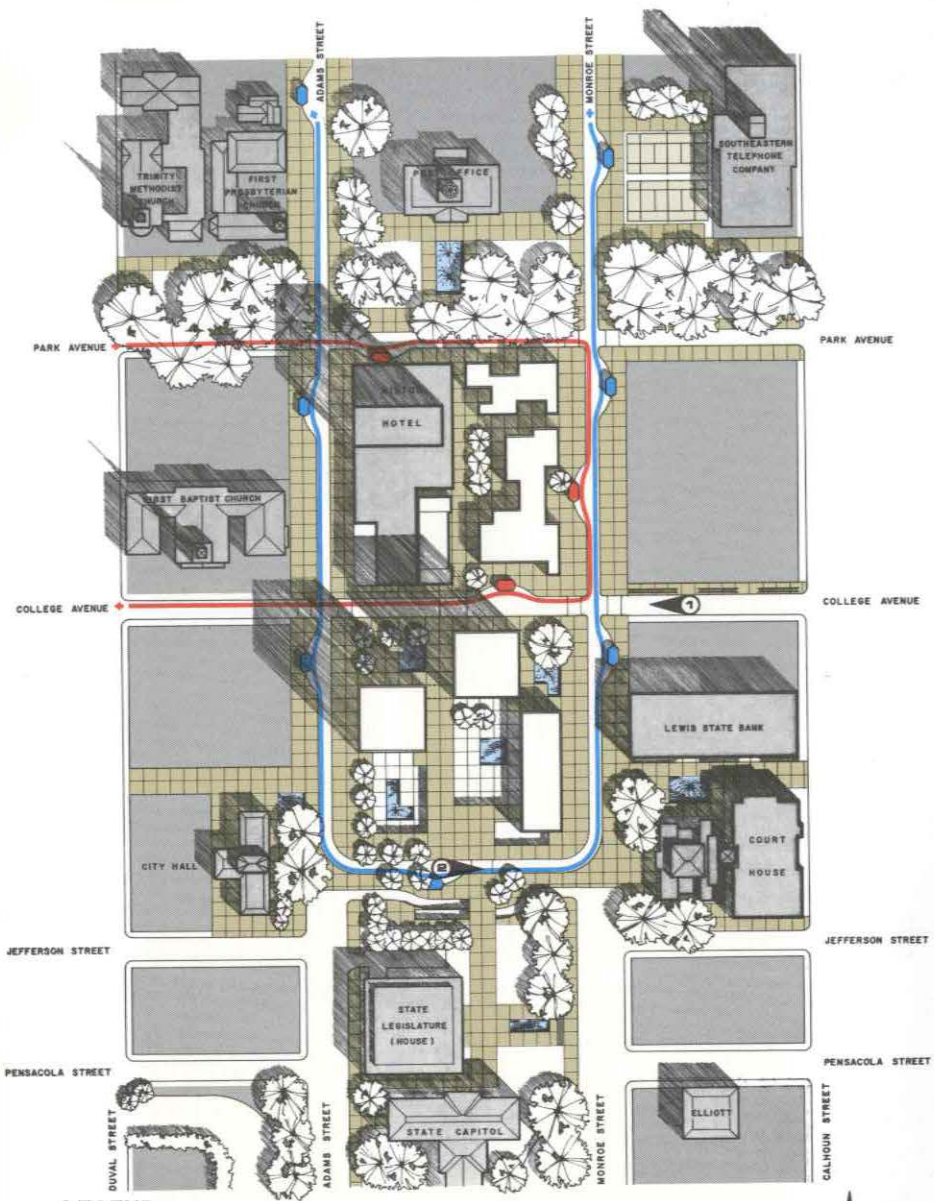
It is anticipated that the present use of streets for the temporary storage of automobiles (e.g., on-street parking) will decline over time and may disappear altogether if and as the various components are redeveloped by means of the PUD process. Each component or PUD would be expected to incorporate appropriate parking space within the land area it occupies. Such space may be provided on the surface or in the form of parking structures that are adequately screened from view. Parking facilities for visitors, shoppers, and others who do not live or work within the CCPA should be handled by the Downtown Authority. The latter could build/lease and manage parking accommodations within either public or privately-held PUD complexes.

Other features of the Concept Plan that should be noted include:

- The provision of active recreation facilities—such as lighted tennis courts and children's play areas—for the day and nighttime use of CCPA office workers, residents, and visitors.
- The expected need for "neighborhood" type facilities as new housing becomes available within the Downtown Area. At least one community center which might offer such things as day care services for working mothers; game rooms and library facilities; counseling services for senior citizens; and out-patient health services will be required if the CCPA increases its present population level from about 200 full time residents to some 2,500 or more by the year 2000.
- A preliminary forecast that total assessed values will increase from \$22,400,000 in 1971 to more than \$92,000,000 if all components are redeveloped as designated by the Plan. This four-fold plus increase would yield approximately \$325,000 in tax revenues at present rates in contrast to the \$80,000 now collected annually from CCPA property owners.



PROPOSED CIRCULATION SYSTEM



LEGEND

- PROPOSED COMMUNITY COMMONS
- PROPOSED COMMUNITY COMMONS MINI-BUS ROUTE
- PROPOSED CCFA / FSU MINI-BUS ROUTE
- EXISTING BLOCK DEVELOPMENT

SKETCH VIEW

PROPOSED COMMUNITY COMMONS

IMPLEMENTATION

The Concept Plan produced as a result of the Tallahassee Central City Planning Area Study can best be implemented through use of the Planned Unit Development (or PUD) process. This process permits unified multi-purpose land projects to be developed in accordance with (a) contemporary design standards and principles (b) a publicly approved and officially recorded project master plan; and (c) an acceptable timetable for the staging and provision of all improvements.

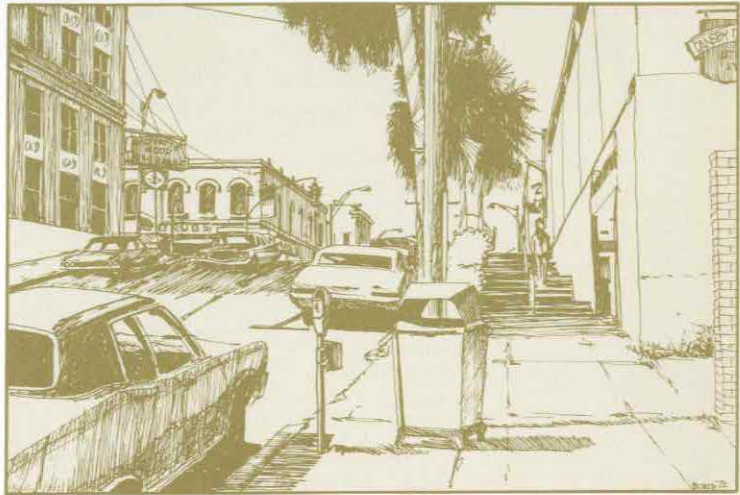
Since greater costs are involved in the preparation of required master plans and related documents, PUD zoning regulations often specify special benefits that may be realized by the developer if he chooses to use this optional, voluntary approach in order to secure all necessary development approvals. Among other things, these benefits often involve density, open space, parking or building coverage arrangements that are advantageous to the general public and, at the same time, generate higher dollar returns to the developer than would otherwise be possible.

It is suggested that three kinds of benefits be established to encourage individual property owners to appropriately band together and carry out the Concept Plan via the PUD process. In addition to **planning and zoning** bonus provisions similar to those listed above, **tax assessment** benefits should be identified and made available for this purpose, and the staging of future **public improvements** within the CCPA should be so organized as to expedite the accomplishment of logical planned unit developments wherever and whenever possible.

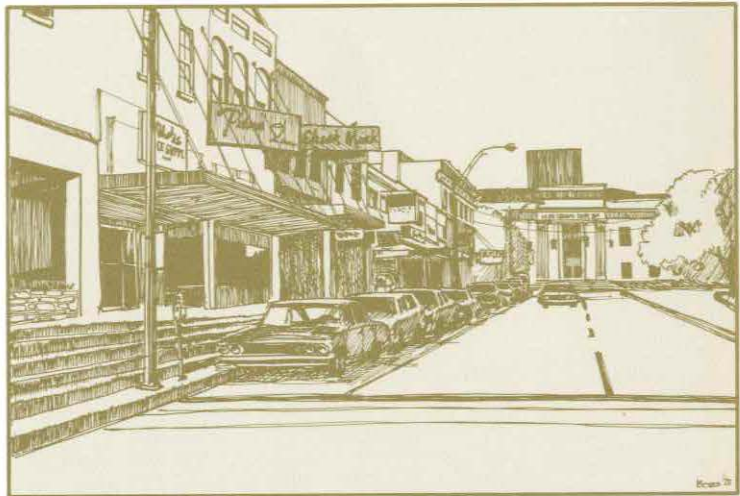
While specific details relative to such benefits must be worked out in the coming year, the use of PUD procedures to implement Concept Plan recommendations promises to be more acceptable, and thus more feasible, than any other Downtown improvement technique yet devised. If this is indeed the case, the Tallahassee effort will be emulated in many other cities that also have an ailing but potentially vigorous central business district.

TALLAHASSEE

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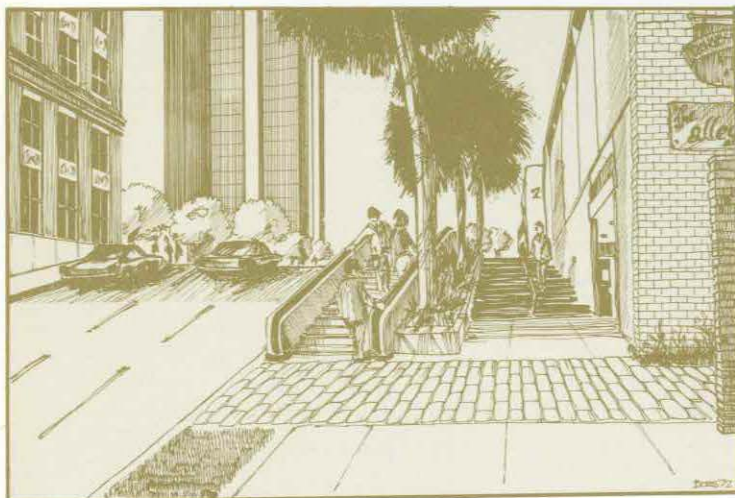
1 COLLEGE AVENUE-EXISTING



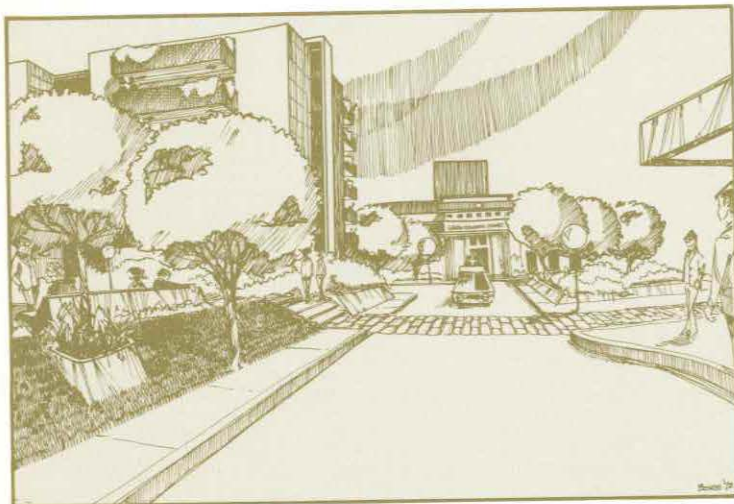
2 JEFFERSON AVENUE-EXISTING

TALLAHASSEE CENTRAL

**PREPARED
TALLAHASSEE - LEON COUNTY
TALLAHASSEE,**



1 COLLEGE AVENUE-POTENTIAL



2 JEFFERSON AVENUE-POTENTIAL

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YEAR TWO

Much has been accomplished during "**Year One**" of what is now known and referred to as the CCPA Improvement Program. Much, of course, remains to be done if the momentum gained over the past 12 months is to be sustained and extended. To assist in the latter objective, a prescribed set of activities and corresponding responsibilities has been identified. These activities should be initiated as soon as possible during "**Year Two**" of the Program.

ACTIVITY	PRIME RESPONSIBILITY
1. Business Market Analysis ..	Planning Department
2. Housing Market Analysis ..	Planning Department
3. Development Standards ...	Downtown Authority
4. Zoning Procedures	Planning Department
5. Assessment Procedures ...	County Tax Assessor
6. Special Mini-Bus Study	Planning Department
7. Interim Parking Program ..	Downtown Authority
8. Information Program	Downtown Authority
9. Preparation of Capitol Center Plan	Capitol Center Planning Commission
10. Construction of Central Bus Shelter Facility	City of Tallahassee
11. Public Building and Site Needs Study	City of Tallahassee and Leon County
12. CCPA Water/Sewer Study ..	City of Tallahassee
13. Preliminary Engineering ..	State Department of Design for Boulevard St.... Transportation
14. Preparation of Capitol Center-CCPA Transition Component Plan	Capitol Center Planning Commission and Plan- ning Department

ING STUDY

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