A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF SELECTED PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND ADJACENT LAND USES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF DETROIT

Thesis for the Degree of M. U. P.

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ABSTRACT

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF SELECTED PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND ADJACENT LAND USES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF DETROIT

by Richard Doughty Johnson

The arrangement of land uses is a basic urban planning consideration. Often land uses are analyzed within planning districts. One such common district is a central business district. Within the Detroit, Michigan central business district a variety of land uses have existed for many years.

Using a historical approach, this thesis explores the relationship between public open space and other land uses. The proportionate amount of public open space diminishes as the district develops. The physical characteristics of public open space have a bearing upon how other land uses locate and arrange themselves within the district.

Three types of source data were utilized (written reports, maps, and personal observations) in order to cover the range of time under consideration. A brief explanation of the above generalization would suggest the following. The early historical records of the Detroit area settlement are not as well documented with accurate maps as the later years. From approximately

1880 on the number and accuracy of the maps available for reviewing is much improved over the earlier era starting in 1701. In contrast to the early and middle periods of time covered, the latest developments of concern warranted actual field inspection trips.

The basic methodology in preparing the paper was to record and classify land uses throughout the central business district into concise and meaningful categories. The categories are commercial, industrial, residential, utilities, institutional, and public. The land uses were recorded on work maps covering numerous time periods in the history of Detroit. From these, several representative periods in time were chosen which reflect the over-all district growth pattern.

Once the map series was determined to represent the historic growth and change of the district, a selection of representative public open spaces was performed. The selection was based on several criteria: (1) in existence for a sufficient period of time to allow historic comparison, (2) a portion of the public open space is reserved exclusively for pedestrians, and (3) the selection should represent the variety of geometric shapes of space in existence.

Five of the public open spaces selected were created as a direct result of the historic Governor and Judges Plan. A sixth public open space (Clinton Park)

is of slightly more recent origin, while the Civic Center has been developed since World War II. All of the selected public open spaces excepting Cadillac Square are predominantly pedestrian oriented. Cadillac Square is a boulevarded street with a sizable portion of its right-of-way used by pedestrians. Geometric shapes included are triangular, circular, and rectangular.

Historic changes of land uses were then observed for all of the selected public open spaces and those properties immediately surrounding them. Changes in the vicinity of the selected areas were compared to the overall district changes.

The selected public open spaces have proven to be stable in their respective shape and size. The majority of the selected public open spaces were intended as sites for public buildings. By the twentieth century all but one of the public buildings which existed on them had been removed, and the sites were used as downtown parks.

In the early and developing years of the district a variety of land uses bordered the open spaces. Today commercial uses are the predominant adjacent land uses. Specialization within commercial land uses is typical in the pattern around the selected public open spaces. Campus Martius is bounded by financial institutions, while Capitol Park is bordered by retail commercial.

Grand Circus Park is a focal point of numerous personal services establishments, and Clinton Park was the nucleus for governmental and hospital facilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The development of cities occupies space, and most of the development includes buildings. As more and more development occurs, less and less open space is left within the city. "The great cities of the world are remembered most for the quality of their usable urban open spaces."[1] The decision to be concerned with open space and more particularly the public portion is that with the passage of time, this particular land use becomes less abundant in proportion to the totally developed urban area. Further, it is felt that public open space may be a determinant type of land use, with reference to other land uses which follow thereafter.

Public open space can typically be found in all parts of the city. The determination to single out the central business district area of the city for inquiry is based upon the following pervading influences. The aggregate committment of human resources, monies and

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[1] The Nation's Capital, A Plan for the Year 2,000, National Capital Planning Commission and The National Capital Regional Planning Council, 1961, p. 75.

inherited economic investment in the central business district precludes forsaking this portion of the city; hence, adequate concern for the planning of same is essential. John Rannells in an article published in the American Institute of Planners Journal summed up the need for concern succinctly by stating, "whatever our intentions respecting the central business district, we must recognize that it is a vital component of the total urban structure."[2]

Objective of the Thesis

The objective of this thesis is to present in a chronological manner a review of the land use changes which have occurred within the City of Detroit, Central Business District, and to trace possible relationships between public open space land use and "other" land uses within the district.

It is intended that the following questions will be answered by the research and observations made during the course of this study. Have the public open spaces remained relatively unchanged, or are they unstable? What "other" land uses have been attracted to the major public open spaces? Are particular groupings of land uses found to predominate adjacent to particular portions of public open space?

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[2]John Rannells, "Approaches to Analysis," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Volume XXVII No. 1 (February, 1961), p. 17.

The author was attracted to the subject originally as a life long resident of the City of Detroit. Later as an employee of the Detroit City Plan Commission, he became more keenly aware of the physical composition of the Detroit Central Business District by daily encounters with the immediate environment. It has been possible for the author to observe and record events within the district which have taken place over the past several years.

Methodology

Considerable portions of the information utilized in this thesis were gathered and partially compiled while the author was on the staff of the Detroit City Plan Commission. Additional published and unpublished materials were made available to the author by other Plan Commission staff members at a later time to augment the initial data.

One other particular source of information was essential to provide sufficient data to document the changes which have occurred in the district. This source is the Detroit Public Library system. Two divisions within the system should be mentioned: the Burton Historical Collection and the Municipal Reference Library unit.

The primary procedure followed in preparing the data, has been to review mapped sources of land use data

within the district. The second major source of land use data are journals without maps. Land use changes which ensued over a time period of approximately 150 years were explored. Some of the data presented herein has been gathered through personal observation of the district.

Determination of the precise area to be reviewed was resolved by making reference to the definition of the Central Business District as documented in the Central Business District Technical Report #7, Series Two of the Master Plan, 1956. The area as described by the technical report definition, is bounded by the encircling freeway system on the north, west and east sides of the district and the Detroit River on the south side.

After an extensive exploration of the subject matter it became apparent that the amount of public open space even within the central business district was quite extensive. In order to better accomplish one task the following determination was made: to be more concerned about public open space used by pedestrians, rather than by vehicles, consequently, emphasis is placed on public open space other than streets.

By its very nature, a historic review may include everything pertinent that has transpired up to and including yesterday. A reasonable point in time must

be established for the purpose of terminating the exploration process of the research. Such a date was determined by the time lag between data being published and being available for review. The latest published data available for review of this particular subject are dated in the year 1966.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

Physical Setting

Detroit, the largest and oldest city in the State of Michigan, is situated on a connecting link of the Greak Lakes waterway system of shipping. The connecting link, the Detroit River, lies between the upper Great Lake of Huron and the lower Great Lake of Erie. The initial site of the city proper is situated on the only high bank of land between these two Great Lakes. Travelling along the shore to both the east and west marshy conditions were to be encountered. The area was generally wooded throughout. The topography of the area is relatively flat, the plateau being interrupted at an average distance of 850 feet from the river's edge where the land slopes down to the water.

Inhabitants

The site of Detroit was initially inhabited by several different tribes of Indians. It is believed that permanent settlements were not a general rule of the various Indian tribes. Numerous trails were in existence which the Indians had developed to accommodate travel

from one seasonal encampment to another. The routes of these trails generally followed the high ground along the banks of rivers or ridges of high ground left by glaciers. Figure 1 shows the general location of these Indian trails in the Detroit region.

With the exploration and settlement of the North American continent by Europeans moving in a westward direction, the French were the first white men to arrive on the scene. A relatively small group under the direction of Cadillac founded a village, originally called Fort Pontchartrain, in 1701 and named in honor of the French Minister of Marine. The decision of where to locate the new outpost by the French was directly related to the purpose of the waterborne trip. The object was to strategically control the Great Lakes waterways, and hold supremacy in the conquest of economic trade with the Indians. In light of this, Detroit was "established on the only high bank between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, over looking the narrowest section of the river. . . . where no islands intervened to obstruct the view of passing voyagers."[3] The land elevation attains a maximum of forty-five feet above the river.

Cadillac's purpose in establishing the post called "Detroit" (The Strait) was to make it sufficiently

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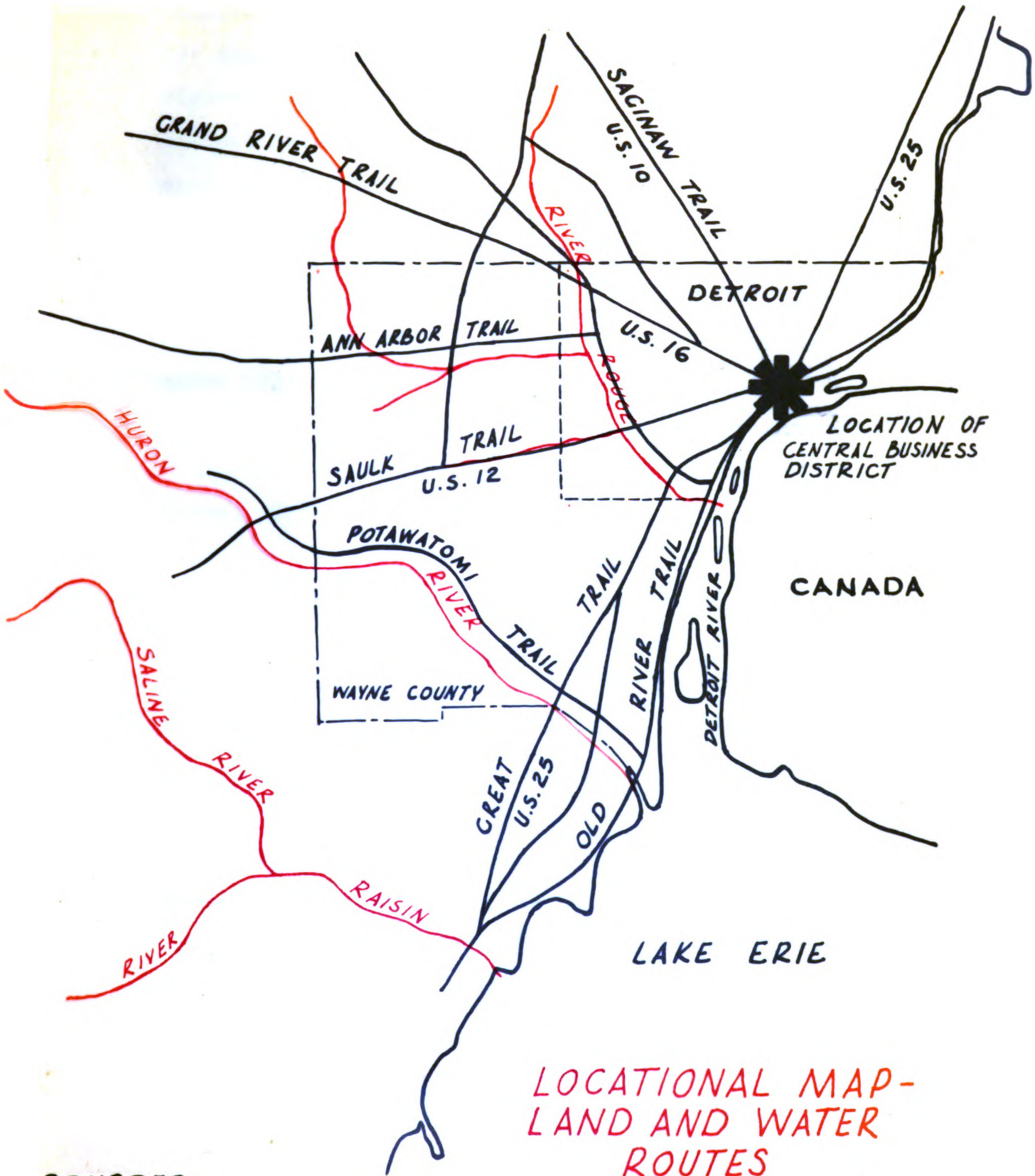
[3]Sixty Years: 1881-1941 (Detroit: J. L. Hudsons, August, 1941), p. 6.

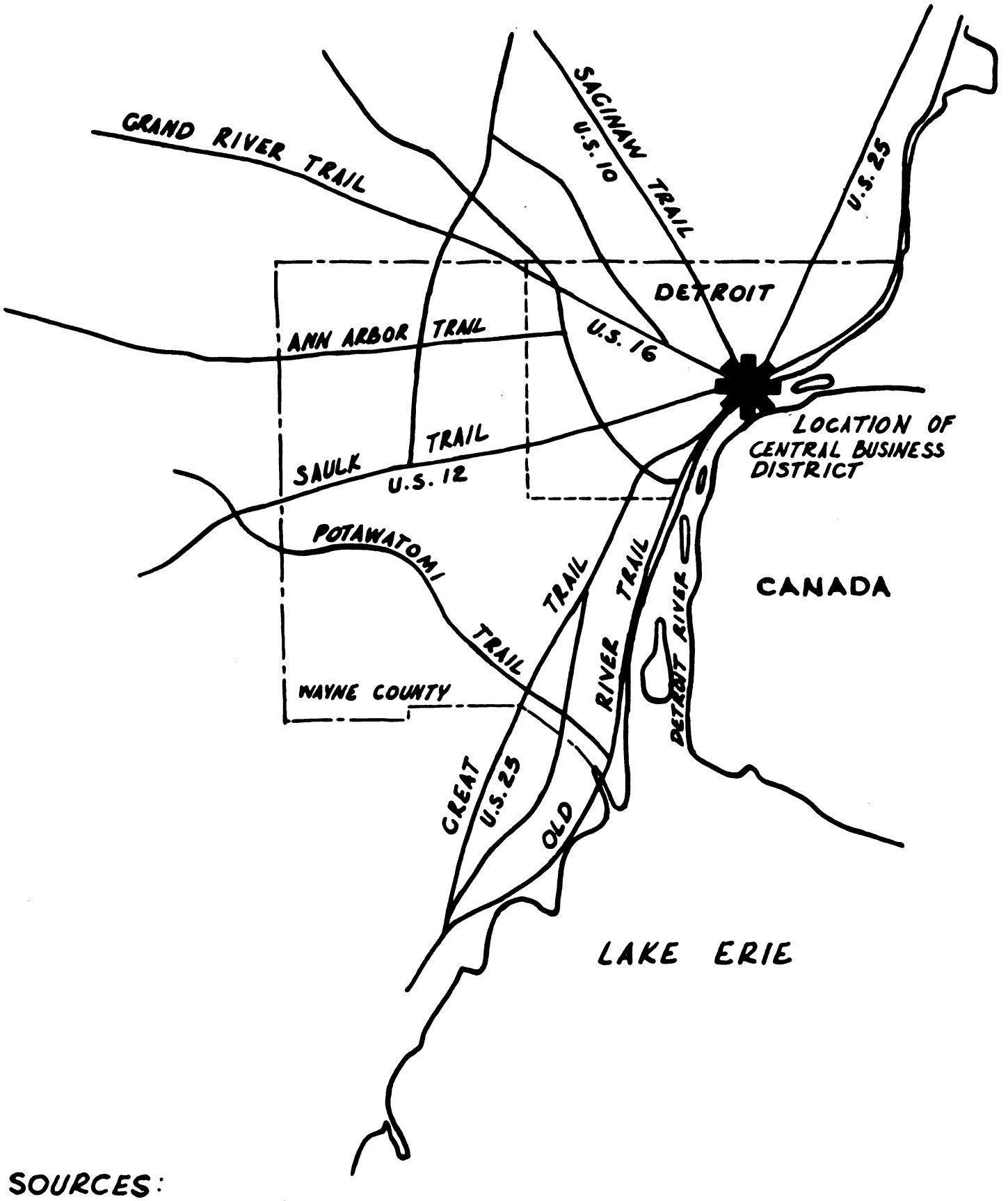


LOCATIONAL MAP-
LAND AND WATER
ROUTES

SOURCES:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATLAS
OF MICHIGAN-1931 (PLATE 6)
OFFICIAL HIGHWAY MAP-1966

FIGURE 1

LOCATIONAL MAP-
LAND AND WATER
ROUTES



SOURCES:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATLAS OF MICHIGAN-1931 (PLATE 6)
OFFICIAL HIGHWAY MAP-1966

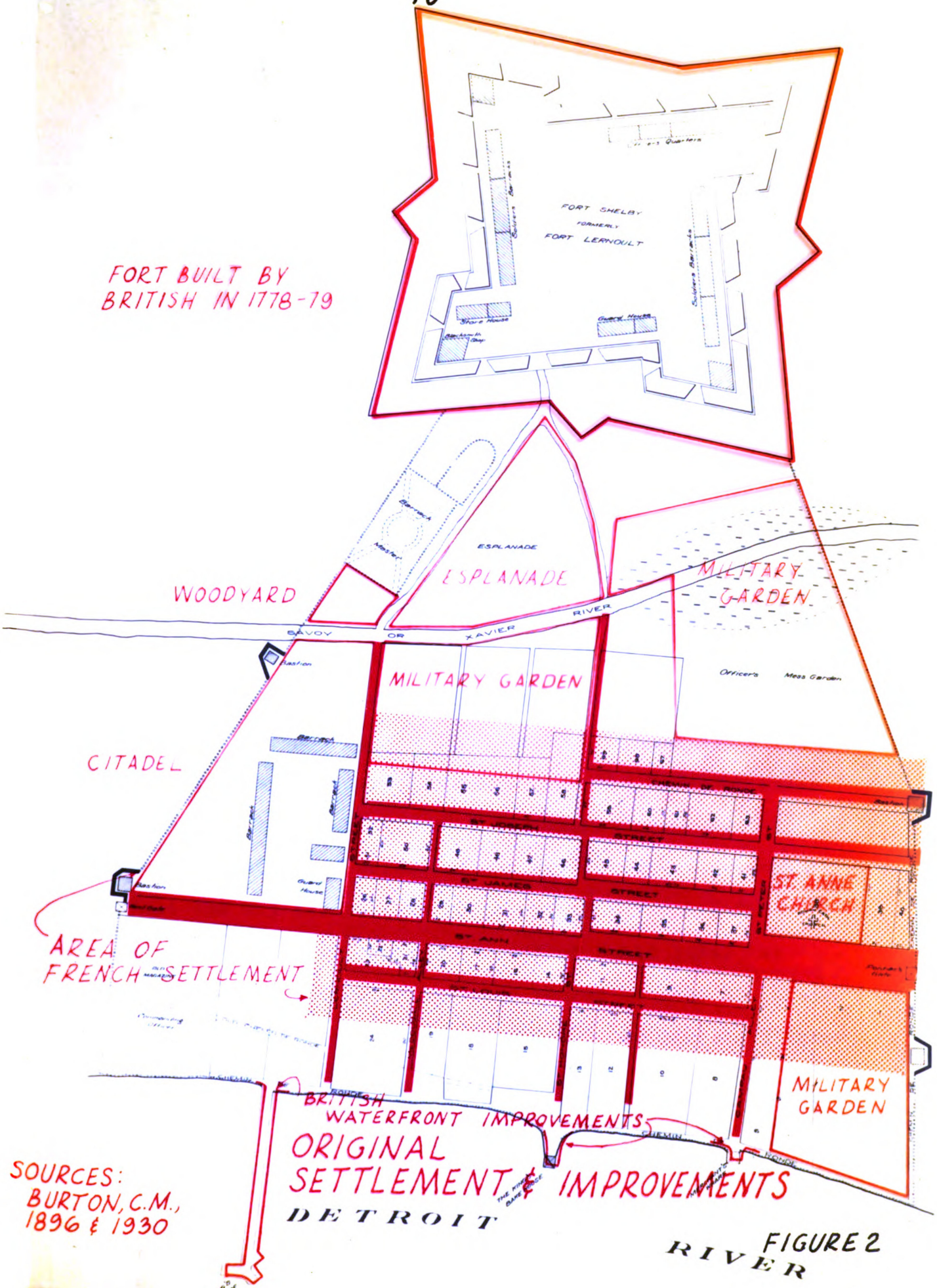
FIGURE 1

powerful to check the aggressive campaign of the English for trade with the Indians in the upper lake country. Figure 2 shows the layout of the settlement near the Detroit River. The area which is shaded represents the original French village.

Fort Pontchartrain

The first recorded evidence of a specific tract of land is entitled "Plan from Conveyances of Cadillac" dated 1707 and 1708. This tract of land is referred to as Fort Pontchartrain. That area is now bounded by the present or relatively recent streets of Woodbridge, Larned, Griswold and Wayne. Woodbridge Street in this area today is now a part of the Civic Center and Wayne Street has been realigned as an extension of Washington Boulevard. At this time there were six named streets in use: St. Joachim, St. Anne, St. Louis, St. Antoine, Recontre and St. Francois. McDougall alley was opened at a later date and is also shown on Figure 2. This record also shows the location of St. Anne church and various lots and their respective numbering. The first principle street of the settlement was St. Anne Street, which ran approximately parallel to the present Jefferson Avenue and occupied land near the northerly line of said thoroughfare.

The tract of land comprising the various lots and five of the six streets previously mentioned was enclosed by a palisade enclosure. St. Antoine Street to the west



SOURCES:
BURTON, C.M.,
1896 & 1930

FIGURE 2

FORT BUILT BY
BRITISH IN 1778-79
MILITARY
GARDEN
ESPLANADE
WOODYARD
MILITARY GARDEN
CITADEL
ST ANNE
CHURCH
AREA OF
FRENCH SETTLEMENT
MILITARY
GARDEN
BRITISH
WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS
ORIGINAL
SETTLEMENT & IMPROVEMENTS
SOURCES:
BURTON, C.M.,
1896 & 1930

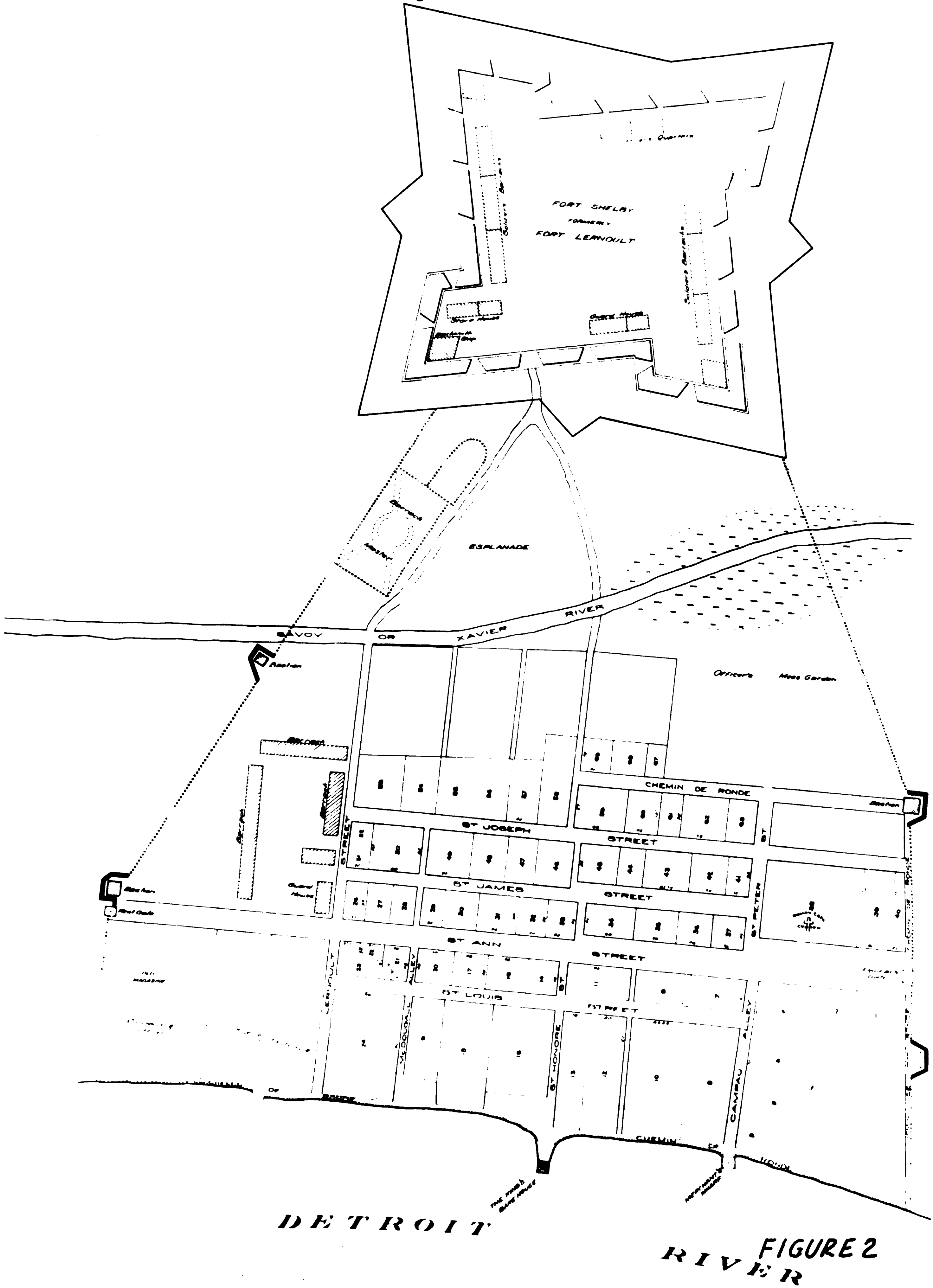

FORT SHELBY
FORMERLY
FORT LERNOULT
Soldiers Barracks
Store House
Guard House
ESPLANADE
SAVOY OR XAVIER RIVER
Officer's Mess Garden
Bastion
CHEMIN DE RONDE
ST JOSEPH STREET
ST JAMES STREET
ST ANN STREET
ST LOUIS STREET
LERNOULT STREET
McDOUGALL ALLEY
ST HONORE ST
CAMPAU ALLEY
ST PETER ST
Guard House
CHEMIN DE RONDE
DETROIT RIVER

FIGURE 2

was the only street exclusively outside of the enclosure. Part of St. Joachin Street extended westerly outside of the fort enclosure. By mid century (1749) the following public open spaces were also features of the village: Cemetery, King's Garden and the Public Gardens. In the first nine years of the post's development some sixty-eight lots were conveyed to private citizens. The lots within the fort were small by today's standards--25 x 25 feet in dimension.

Also granted for personal use were a number of tracts for agricultural purposes, which over the years have been referred to as the "French Farms" or "Private Claims." These tracts of land ran perpendicular to the river shore line, with a narrow frontage along the river. The bulk of these lay west of what is now Cass Avenue and east of what is now Brush Street. These two streets received their respective names from the farms of which they were an original part. The French settlement in the form of farms bordering the Detroit River extended "all the way (west) from the mouth of the Rouge River east to the great swamp just east of Belle Isle. As more French came they lined the shores of Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River to Lake Erie."[4] As discussed later

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[4]Trafficways for 3 Million People (Detroit City Plan Commission in cooperation with the Detroit Streets and Traffic Commission, October 1954), p. 6.

in the paper these French Farms had a direct influence on the configuration of the city's layout.

Trade with the Indians in this area, continued to be dominated by the French for close to sixty years. France's principal competitors the British, in 1760 over powered French control in the region and eventually took possess of the Detroit outpost. This conquest was the result of military conflicts between these two nation's forces at places other than Detroit. The British colors replaced the French flag at Fort du Detroit without a local battle.

British Rule

Detroit as a strategic outpost was recognized by the British government in 1774 when it established the position of Lieutenant Governor for Detroit. First to fill the position was Henry Hamilton, whose name is closely linked with Detroit during the American Revolution. The population in 1774 was 1,357 people, of which 222 lived within the stockaded village, and the balance resided on farms north and south of the village. During the British reign of power at Detroit, physical improvements were concentrated on two aspects of the outpost. These were the fort and the waterfront facilities.

First of these to receive attention was the fort. Construction of the fort was accomplished during the winter of 1778-1779, using all able-bodied men available. The fort was completed by April of 1779 and

named in honor of its commander: Lernoult. Mention of the fort is made here since later on its location and physical size did have a bearing on ensuing urban development. The earthen ramparts of the fort were eleven feet high, twenty-six feet thick at the base and twelve feet wide at the top of the parapet. The plan of the fort was geometric in layout: a four pointed star with intermediate projections at mid-point on each side. The area occupied by the military fort was approximately equal to two-thirds of the area utilized by the civil settlement. The relationship of the civil settlement and the fort is shown on Figure 2.

As Figure 2 depicts, immediately north of the civil settlement a modest stream known as the Savoy or Xavier River paralleled the Detroit River. A portion of the land area adjacent to this stream was marshy. Between the marshy area and the village an officer's mess garden occupied a plot of land. The village was completely surrounded by a palisade of stakes. To the north this palisade crossed over the Savoy River and converged on the embankments of the Fort.

The other major concern of the British was the improvement of the waterfront area. The apparent intention was twofold: improve the docking facilities for trade and make the existing settlement safer with respect to possible fire damage. Therefore three

structures were erected, projecting out into the river. Two of these, the King's wharf and the Merchant's wharf were to better accommodate waterborne shipping; while the third projection provided a more isolated location for the bakehouse. This function previously had been a constant fire threat within the palisaded village. Thus the general character and purpose of the strategically located outpost continued in much the same manner as when the French had been dominate.

In summarizing the physical layout of the settlement from a land use disposition, three constituent parts dominate the scene. Starting at the river's edge and moving inland the parts are as follows: docking facilities, the village proper and the fort.

Public open space land uses as a component of the total development are evident in two types: circulation (streets) and military originated purposes. In the latter case, an officer's mess garden occupied land extending from the northeast corner of the civil settlement north toward the fort and an esplanade laid out due north of the civil settlement was bounded by Lernoult Street on the west, St. Honors Street on the east, the fort on the north, and the Savoy River on the south. It is assumed that the primary purpose of the esplanade was for the drilling of the troops. Both of the above mentioned spaces were within the confines of the palisades

joining the civil settlement with the fort. These two spaces covered a land area of approximately 30,600 square feet or two-thirds of one acre.

Land within the three acre village proper was principally used by the settlers as places of residence and work. Various occupations took place on the numerous individual parcels, so the land use pattern of the village can be said to be residential with commercial-industrial uses intermixed. Evidence of the above condition of mixed land uses is provided by documentation assembled in one of Clarence Monroe Burton's many writings about Detroit.

> Generally when a parcel of land was conveyed there were two items in the consideration required. First, a fixed rental, . . . and second, a certain sum which Cadillac required for privileges extended to the purchaser, as for instance, suppose the purchaser was a blacksmith, Cadillac having the exclusive right of trading at the post, would grant this purchaser the right of blacksmithing to the exclusion of all others, and would receive an extra compensation for this privilege.[5]

Burton's writings indicate that of the sixty-eight recorded conveyances in 1708 all of them cited an additional fee for other rights. One institutional use (a Roman Catholic Church) faced the north side of St. Anne Street near its eastern end. The only public open space within the village proper was that of streets.

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[5]Clarence Monroe Burton, "Cadillacs' Village," or Detroit under Cadillac, 1896, p. 8.

The widest street (St. Anne) was twenty feet in width by seven hundred feet in length. The balance of the streets averaged ten feet wide and covered one thousand, two hundred feet of linear distance. This area totals 26,000 square feet, or almost twenty percent of the total village area of three acres.

In brief, all public open space accounted for one-fifth of the compactly developed portion of the settlement, exclusive of the fort. The farms extending east and west along the river are not considered as a part of the compact development. The river was used rather than roads to maintain communication between them and the central settlement.

CHAPTER III

TURN OF THE CENTURY

Era of the American Revolution

The outpost village of Detroit was in the hands of the French for sixty years and the British for forty years, a total of one century, before the forces of the American Revolution arrived to change the national colors flying over the fort for a second time. In 1795 twenty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Americans captured the Fort at Detroit, then called Fort Shelby. The area of the city as of 1806 was 213 acres. The actual configuration of this area is not indicated on any known records, although it is presumed to have centered around the original settlement. Probably a portion of the expanded area then known as Detroit, included certain of the farms bordering along the Detroit River. In any case, growth of the community was now accelerating when compared to the original outpost of three acres a century earlier.

Less than a decade after the Americans were in control of the community, the settlement experienced a major fire.

> On June 11, 1805 a fire swept through the frontier outpost of Detroit destroying the fort, barracks,

> and 300 dwellings in the tightly packed village that had grown up from the French settlement originally established in 1701. By one of those accidents of history Detroit's fire coincided with a change in government and the introduction of new personalities into the community. In the preceding January, Congress had established Michigan as a separate territory effective on July 1, and the President had designated the new officials of the government who were to take office in Detroit as the capital of the Territory. President Jefferson appointed General William Hull, a veteran of the Revolution, as governor. Under the system of territorial government three judges formed the judiciary, and the governor and judges sitting together constituted the legislative board. Frederick Bates, a local resident, received one of the judicial appointments. John Griffin of Indiana was also appointed, but he did not actually take office until the fall of the following year. The other judge was Augustus Brevoort Woodward.[6]

Further insight into Judge Woodward is enlightening at this juncture since he will be revealed to perform a most important role in planning the area destined to become Detroit's Central Business District.

> Woodward was a young man of thirty-one at the time of his appointment, but his age was no indication of his accomplishments. At fifteen he had entered Columbia College. In 1797 he came to Washington and four years later was admitted to the practice of law in that city. In 1802 he was elected as one of the twelve councilmen in Washington. Like most Washingtonians he dabbled in land speculation, and among his possessions when he came to Detroit was a small notebook in which were pasted sections of a Washington map with symbols in ink that perhaps indicated property he owned or had sold. He evidently knew Major L'Enfant, since there is some evidence that he performed legal services for him. He became a

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[6]John W. Reps, The Making of Urban America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 264.

> friend of Jefferson and shared the older man's love of philosophic and scientific speculation. In 1801, for example, Woodward published a booklet entitled Considerations on the Substance of the Sun. It was this man--learned, precocious and a little eccentric--who was shortly to focus his numerous talents on the exciting task of creating a metropolis in the west.[7]

From the stand point of establishing a new city plan, the Legislative Board was dominated by Judge Woodward.

> Woodward arrived in Detroit on July 1, 1805, just three weeks after the fire. He found the citizens of Detroit preparing to rebuild the old town, but he persuaded them to postpone this action until the new officials had an opportunity to review the problem. Hull arrived the next day and called a meeting of officials and citizens. For three days talks continued; then, as Hull and Woodward summarized the situation in a report to Congress:
>
> "The result of these discussions was, to proceed to lay out a new town, embracing the whole of the old town and the public lands adjacent; to state to the people that nothing in the nature of a title could be given under any authorities then possessed by the Government . . . but that every personal exertion would be used to obtain a confirmation of the arrangements about to be made, and to obtain the liberal attention of the Government of the United States to their distresses."
>
> Woodward was appointed a committee of one to lay out the new town. Thomas Smith, a Canadian surveyor, was engaged to furnish technical assistance. No copy of that plan has survived, . . .[8]

The Plan

Figure 3 depicts the plan as revised by General William Hulls' relative, Alijah Hull, under Judge

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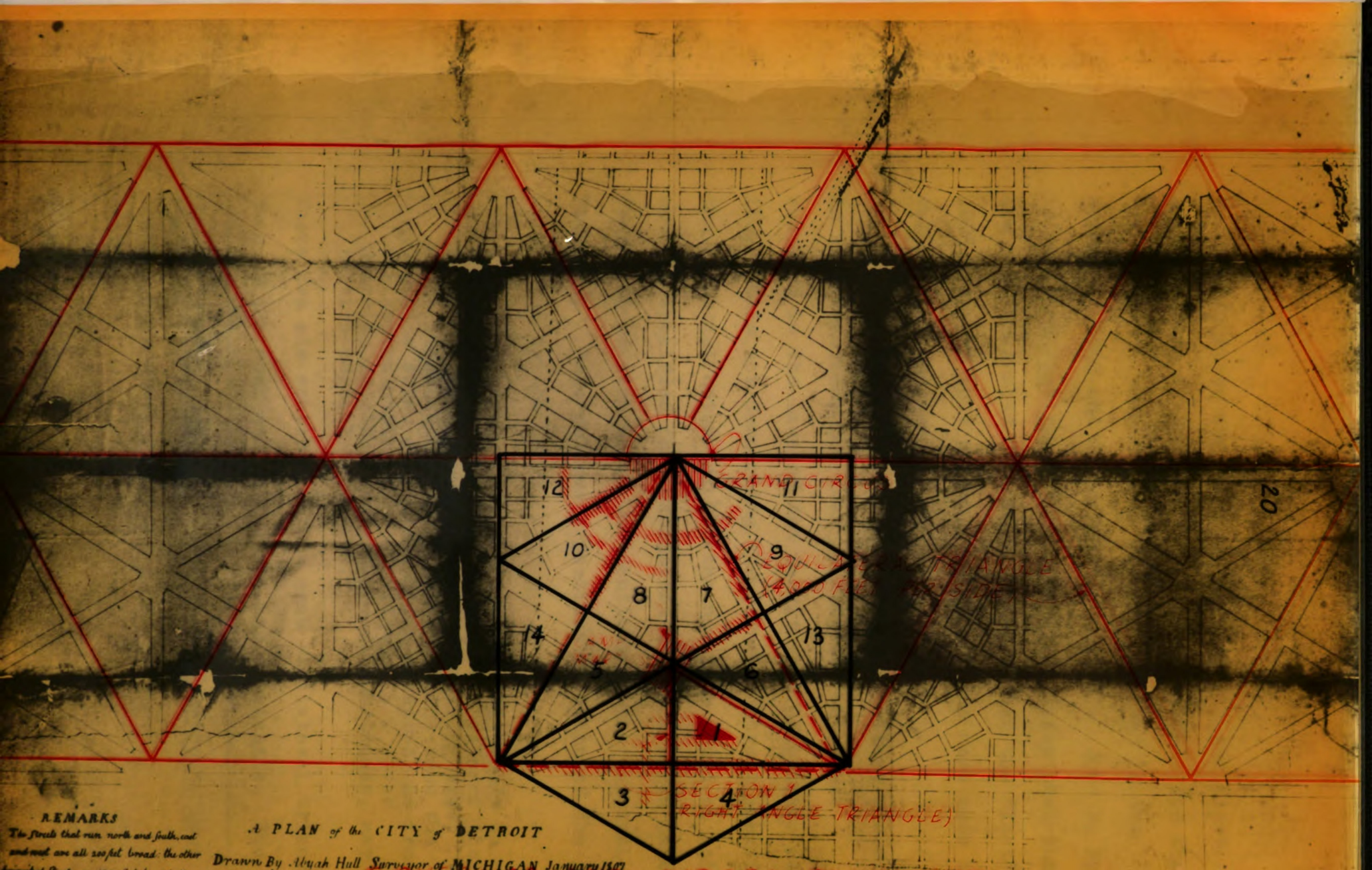
[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.



SOURCES:

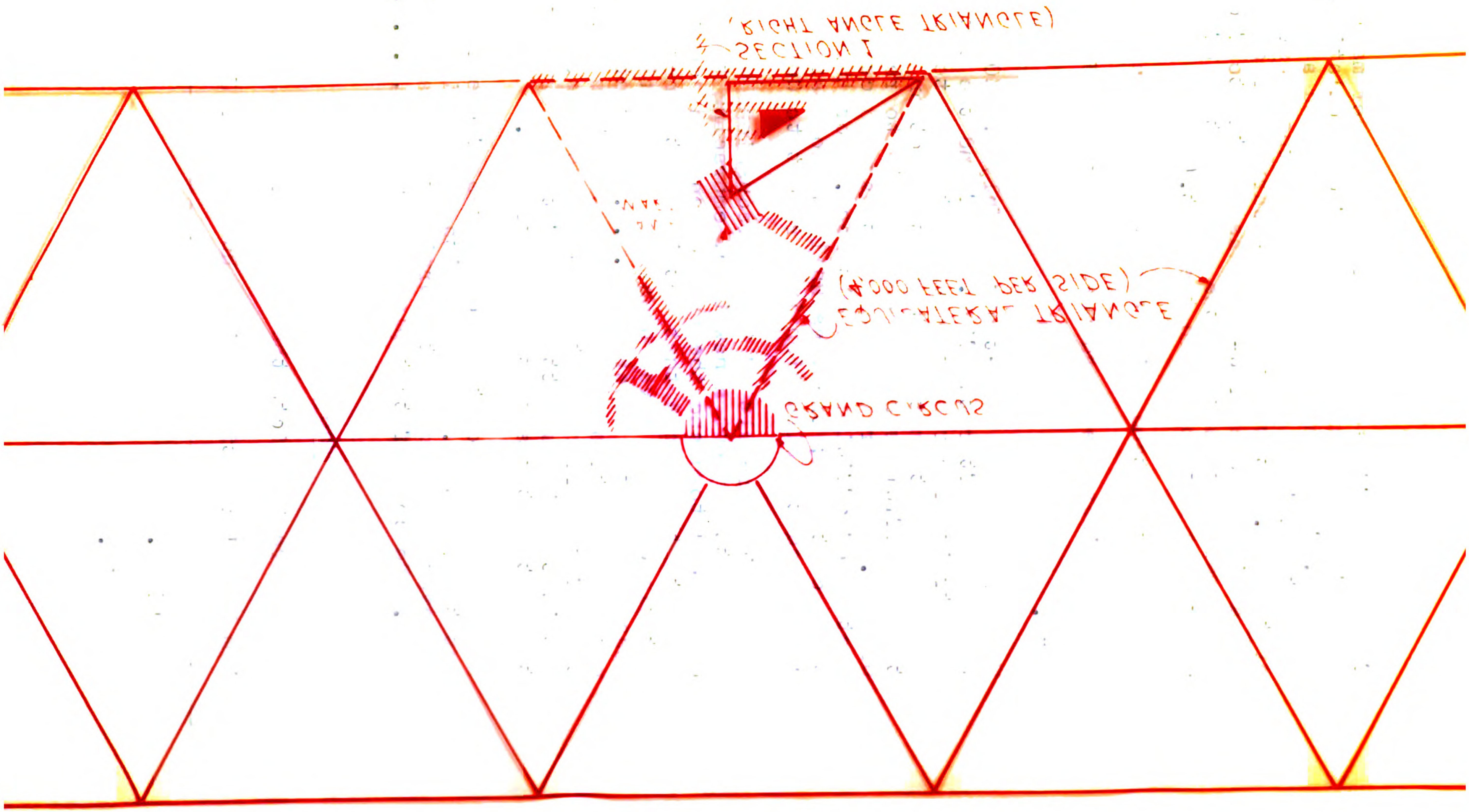
1831 PLAT OF THE CITY

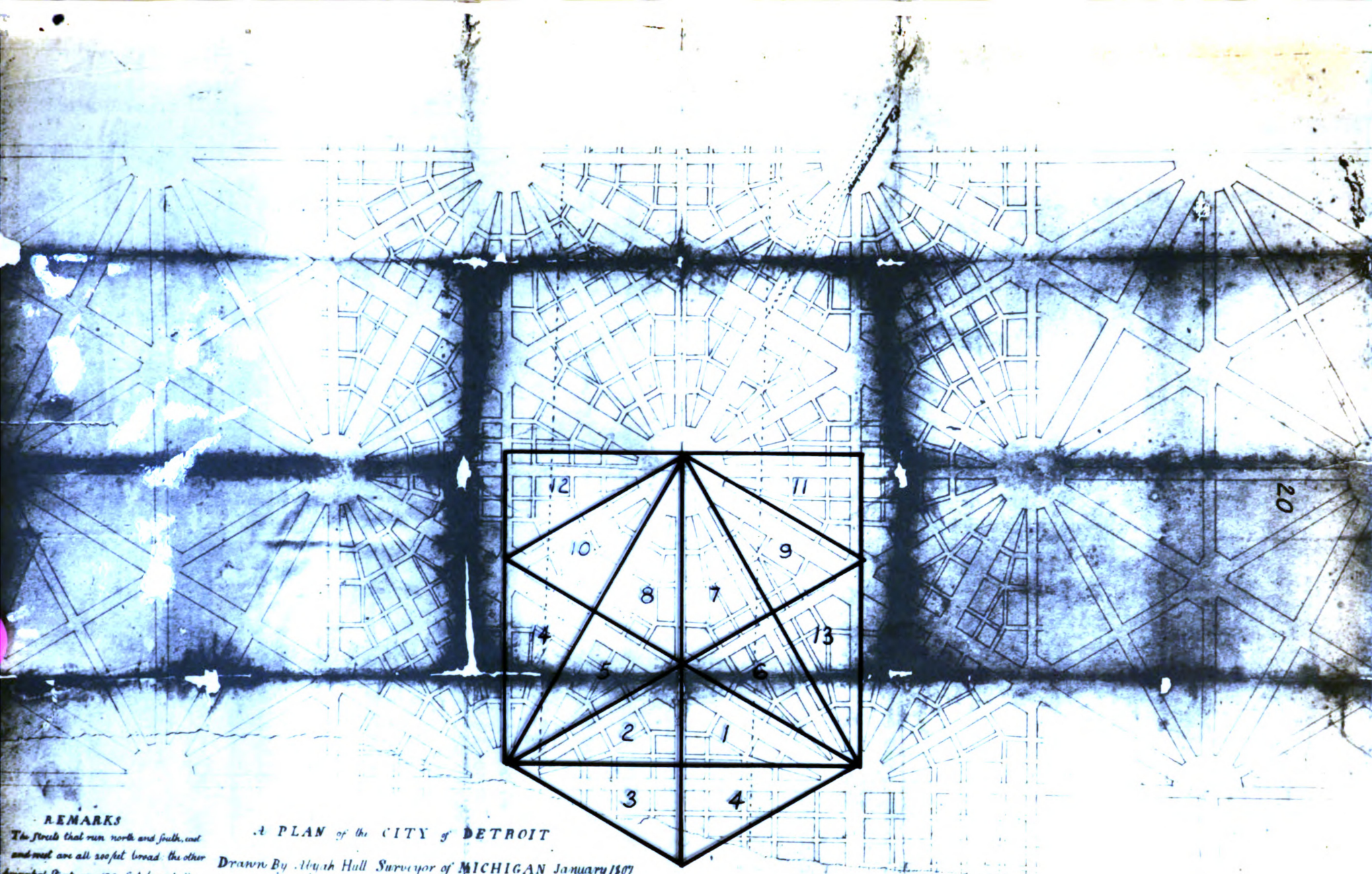
KEPS, JOHN W.

FIGURE 3

REPS, JOHN W.

GOVERNOR AND JUDGES PLAN, 1807





SOURCES:
1831 PLAT OF THE CITY

FIGURE 3

KEY: JOHN M.

1831 PLAT OF THE CITY

SOURCE:

CONFUSION AND INDECISION (SECTION NUMBERS), 1801

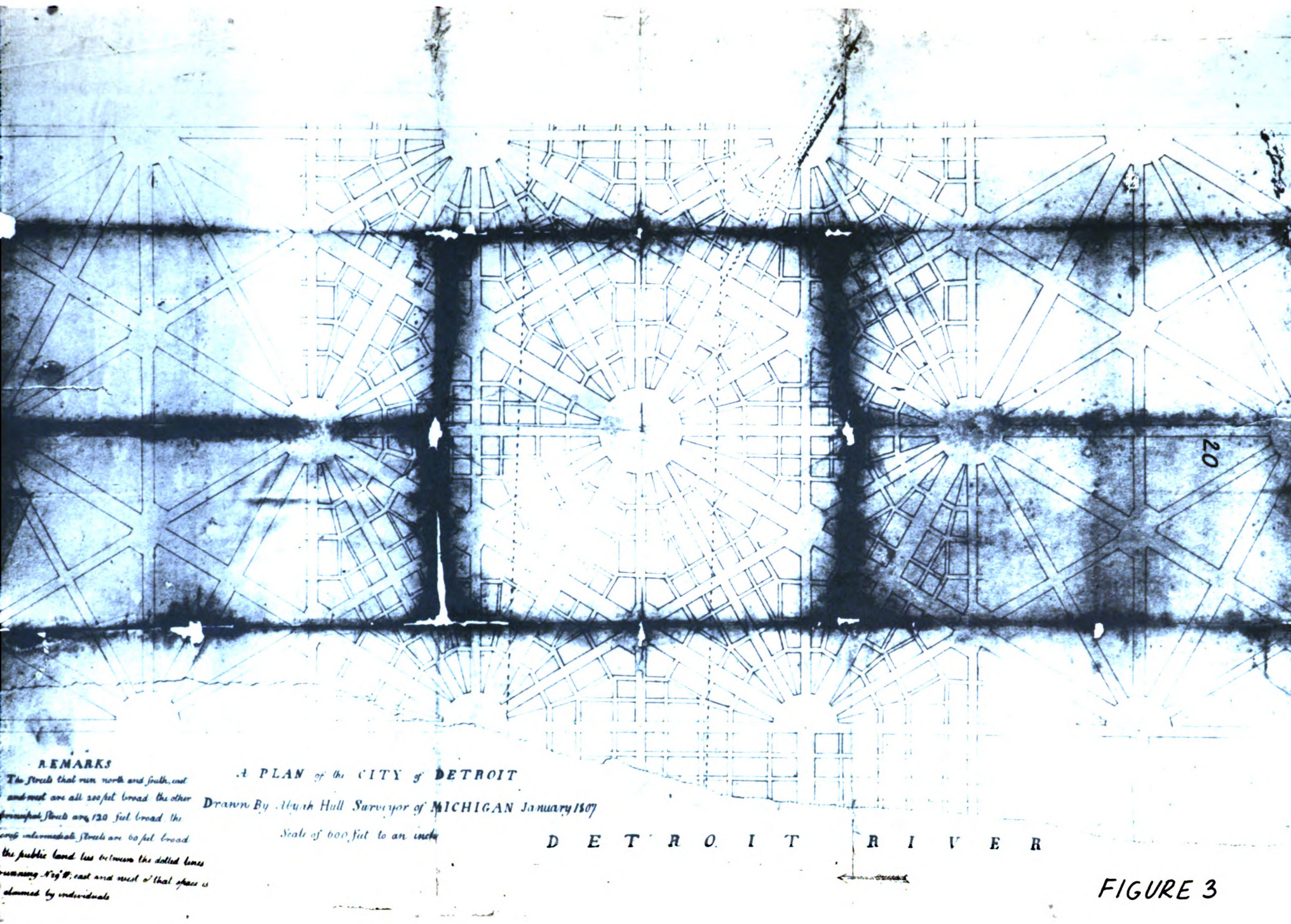

REMARKS
The Streets that run north and south, and east and west are all 200 feet broad the other principal Streets are 120 feet broad the cross intermediate Streets are 60 feet broad the public land lies between the dotted lines running N&S & E&W; east and west of that space is claimed by individuals
A PLAN of the CITY of DETROIT
Drawn By Abijah Hull Surveyor of MICHIGAN January 1807
Scale of 600 feet to an inch
DETROIT RIVER
20

FIGURE 3

Woodward's close supervision. Apparently the first plan as drawn by Smith was completed in 1805, and the "replacement" plan (Figure 3) was completed in the summer of 1806 and dated January of 1807. John W. Reps in his book, Making of Urban America, states that the new plan accounted for more land area than the "lost" 1805 plan and that probably modifications were made to the original design.

The legislative board of the territory passed, An Act Concerning the Town of Detroit, which was recorded in the Laws of the Territory of Michigan, dated 1807. This Act Concerning the Town of Detroit specified the essential nature of how the new town would be laid out and specified that extentions to the plan as needed from time to time would be identical to the original "section." Here follows a pertinent portion of the law as adopted by the board:

> . . . the bases of the town of Detroit shall be an equilateral triangle, having each side of the length of four thousand feet, and having every angle bisected by a perpendicular line upon the opposite side, such parts being excepted, as from the approximation of . . . (the) . . . river Detroit, or other unavoidable circumstances, may require partial deviation.[9]

There are six sections within each equilateral triangle. Each of the sections is a right-angle triangle. The

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[9]An Act Concerning the Town of Detroit, Laws of the Territory of Michigan, 1807.

area of each section is 26.531 acres, and the equilateral triangles are 159.186 acres in size. The total area represented on Figure 3 is about ". . . 3,000 acres, (or) almost one-third of the district over which the board had been given jurisdiction."[10] A graphic interpretation of the above cited law is provided on the red overlay of Figure 3. The discussion above relates the geometric framework upon which the new town plan was based.

When one is in the heart of downtown Detroit proper, you do not see the actual lines as described above. What can be discerned in part are the resultant street and lot lines. Discussion of the proposed and certain resulting streets follows here. Three sizes of street were provided by the plan. Principal avenues were laid out north-south and east-west with a width of 200 feet. Two of these principal avenues which are recognizable to this day are Washington Boulevard and Madison Avenue. The former runs north-south and the latter runs east-west. Washington Boulevard today is 195 feet wide and Madison Avenue adhers to the original 200 feet width. Other main streets were platted 120 feet wide, while minor streets were platted at a liberal width of 60 feet. Several examples of main streets laid out in accordance with the plan and still existing at

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[10]Reps, 266.

the planned widths include: Bagley (Cass to Park), Jefferson (Randolph to Chrysler Freeway), Monroe (Woodward to Randolph) and Woodward (Grand Circus Park to Campus Martius). Examples of existing minor streets (60 feet width) laid out in accordance with the plan include: Adams, Congress, Cross, Grand River, Gratiot, Larned, Library, Park Place, Shelby, State, and Witherell.

A representative sample of the above mentioned streets are indicated on the red overlay of Figure 3 with a medium shading dot pattern. Numerous other streets follow the alignment as dictated by the Governor and Judges Plan even though the rights-of-way widths are not consistently adhered to, where as the above mentioned examples do. Specific streets in the vicinity of the river front were laid out in a grid system to facilitate waterfront activities such as warehouses, industry and docks. Broad streets connected this grid system area of streets with the triangular street system.

As the previously discussed triangular system of street layout would suggest, certain intersections of streets were larger than others. This condition was a conscious design element of the plan. Two units of public open space were incorporated at regular intervals in the plan. These units were "circular" and rectangular. The "circular" unit of open space was

larger in area than the rectangular type. Likewise the circular type was referred to as "circus" and the rectangular space was called a "campus."

The location of these special units of open space was determined as follows. Where twelve avenues intersected, a circus was provided. The sharp points which would normally result from such an intersection were avoided by cutting the blocks back 160 feet, which also provided for lots of a more normal shape. The smaller rectangular open spaces (campuses) were to be provided wherever six avenues intersected. These campuses were all laid out with the longest dimension lying in a north-south alignment. One other facet concerning the circuses and campuses is pertinent to this study, their size. Each circus was eleven acres in area with a radius of 400 feet. The rectangular campuses were to be 590 feet long by 370 feet wide and contain 5.01 acres.

All of the above mentioned particulars can be discerned essentially by examining maps, yet germane to the topic is still another source of public open space. Here we refer to the triangular central portion of each triangular section of land. These were left open. The reason is clear after reading an act the Governor and Judges passed a year after the original plan was approved

by President Thomas Jefferson. The act reads in part as follows:

> . . . the internal space of ground, in the middle of every section, shall be reserved for public wells and pumps, for markets, for public schools, for houses for the reception of engines or other articles for the extinction of fires, and the preservation of the property of the inhabitants, for houses for the meetings of religious, moral, literary, or political societies, or other useful associations, and generally for such purposes of utility or ornament, as the city council of Detroit may, at any time, by law, provide; or as, otherwise, the inclination and taste of the proprietors of the lots in such section, or that of the major part of them, may direct; and in the same manner shall be paved, gravelled, planted with trees, or otherwise improved and ornamented.[11]

These 6.01 acre triangular spaces were indeed intended to be the internal focal point of each 26.531 acre section of development in the city. This would appear to be a generous allocation of space for the community's common interests.

At this point a review of the effect of the Governor and Judges Plan is essential. A clue as to how effective the plan would be is alluded to by the fact that each time Judge Woodward travelled away from the City of Detroit, it seems resistance to implementing the plan materialized. Even though as Reps states in his book concerning the nature of the plan, "a single

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[11] An Additional Act Concerning the Town of Detroit, Laws of the Territory of Michigan, 1807 cited by, John W. Reps, The Making of Urban America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 270.

integrated pattern was used, a pattern as suitable to the level topography as any other abstract system of land subdivision, including the gridiron,"[12] the development did not occur in accordance with the plan except for two whole sections and parts of nine others. Perhaps the settlers were of such a disposition or mind not to be generally very concerned with any abstract system of land subdivision. Rather, they probably were more concerned with the quantity of land which they could obtain, for purposes of sustenance and other day to day requirements.

At any rate, those parts which were platted and occupied in accordance with the plan amounted to 121 acres of development within the present day 542 acre Central Business District. The total amount of public open space within the district which adheres to the Governor and Judges Plan is 65 acres, or 12 percent of the total Central Business District. In detail, the public open space platted and occupied in accordance with the plan is as follows:

36.30 acres, streets,

10.51 acres, campus and martius,

18.03 acres, central space within sections,

64.84 total acres.

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[12] Ibid., p. 271.

French Farms Force Growth Northward

The populace of the Detroit area from its beginning was a mixture. French, British, Americans and Indians had come to settle permanently in the area. This mixture caused confusion in understanding who owned what property at a given time. The several forms of government and jurisdiction which had prevailed were not consistent with each other. In line with this, the methods of conveying title or possession of lands to individuals also varied considerably. Records of conveyance are erratic in completeness, name changes are common, and transfers of "title" numerous. All of the aforementioned suggests that to compile a complete record of land uses for this period of time in Detroit's history is not possible. On the other hand it is possible to reconstruct the over-all form of the development.

The French and American systems of property conveyance had the most influence on the ultimate configuration of development. The French development preceded American development and will be examined first. The key to the configuration of all the French development is the Detroit River. The French came via the Great Lakes and the Detroit River. The waterways

were their form of transportation and access to the land areas. The waterways were navigable year round. The settlers used waterborne vessels for the majority of the year and when the rivers were frozen they could travel on top of the ice. The same cannot be said for overland routes at that time. The condition of the paths and trails varied with the seasons and resultant weather. A trail which was high and dry in the summer might be blocked by fallen trees or deep drifts of snow in the winter. Where a trail traversed a low land area it was apt to be wet or even inundated. In light of the prevailing set of circumstances it was easier to accept the waterway routes than to expend energies constructing roads.

Since the rivers, Detroit, Rouge and Ecorse were connected to each other, access to any property fronting on them was mutually accessible. The original objective of the French settlement was to engage in trade with the Indians and control the upper portions of the Great Lakes waterways. The primary trade involved was of pelts of fur from native animals. These were brought to the settlement area by the Indians, where they were loaded on vessels for shipment back to the east coast. Locating along the rivers facilitated these operations. In addition to the trade economy of the settlement, food to eat was a necessity. The combination of these two

activities appear sufficient reason for the general manner in which land was allocated to the settlers. Parcels were staked out so that each had access to the rivers. The configuration of these parcels was that of long narrow rectangles. The parcels were in fact farms. "Each farm had a narrow frontage 400 to 900 feet wide on the river, and extended inland as much as three miles."[13] Figure 4 shows in part how extensive an area these French farms covered. An indication of how many of these tracts of land existed by 1810 in the Detroit area is provided on a map entitled: Plan of Private Claims in Michigan Territory, as surveyed by Aaron Greeley, D. Surveyor. Some 245 private claims are recorded on that map, of which 156 are noted as being in the Detroit Settlement, and the balance are situated along the adjacent rivers of Rouge and Ecorse. Greeley's 1810 record of private claims covers a land area of approximately twice that shown on Figure 4. Within the immediate geographic area we know as the Central Business District, five (farms) (private claims) occupied 984.58 acres of land. By comparing Figure 4 and Figure 5 it can be seen, how the only land not occupied by private claims was immediately north of the center of the

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[13] Trafficways for Three Million People, op. cit., p. 6.

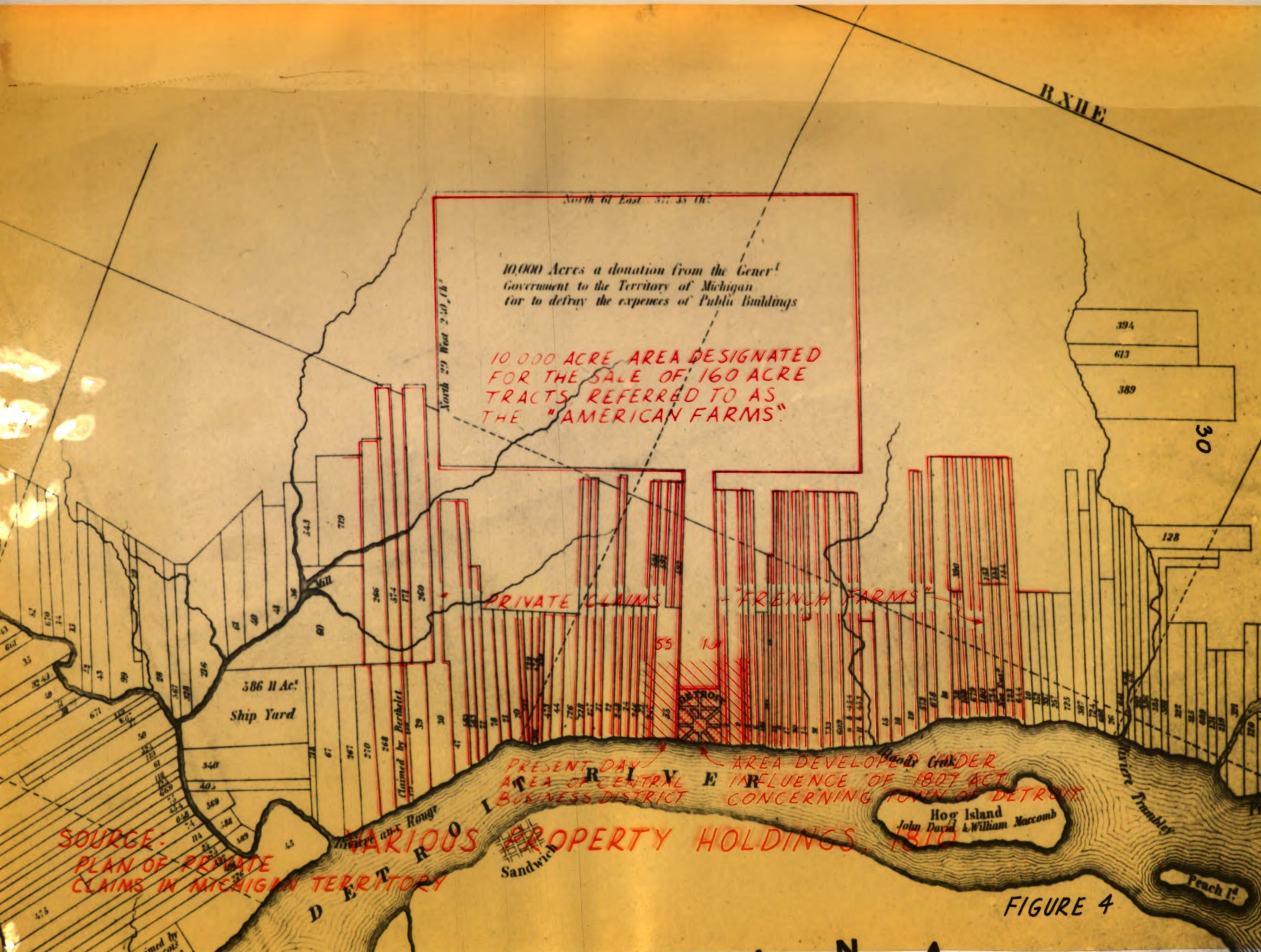
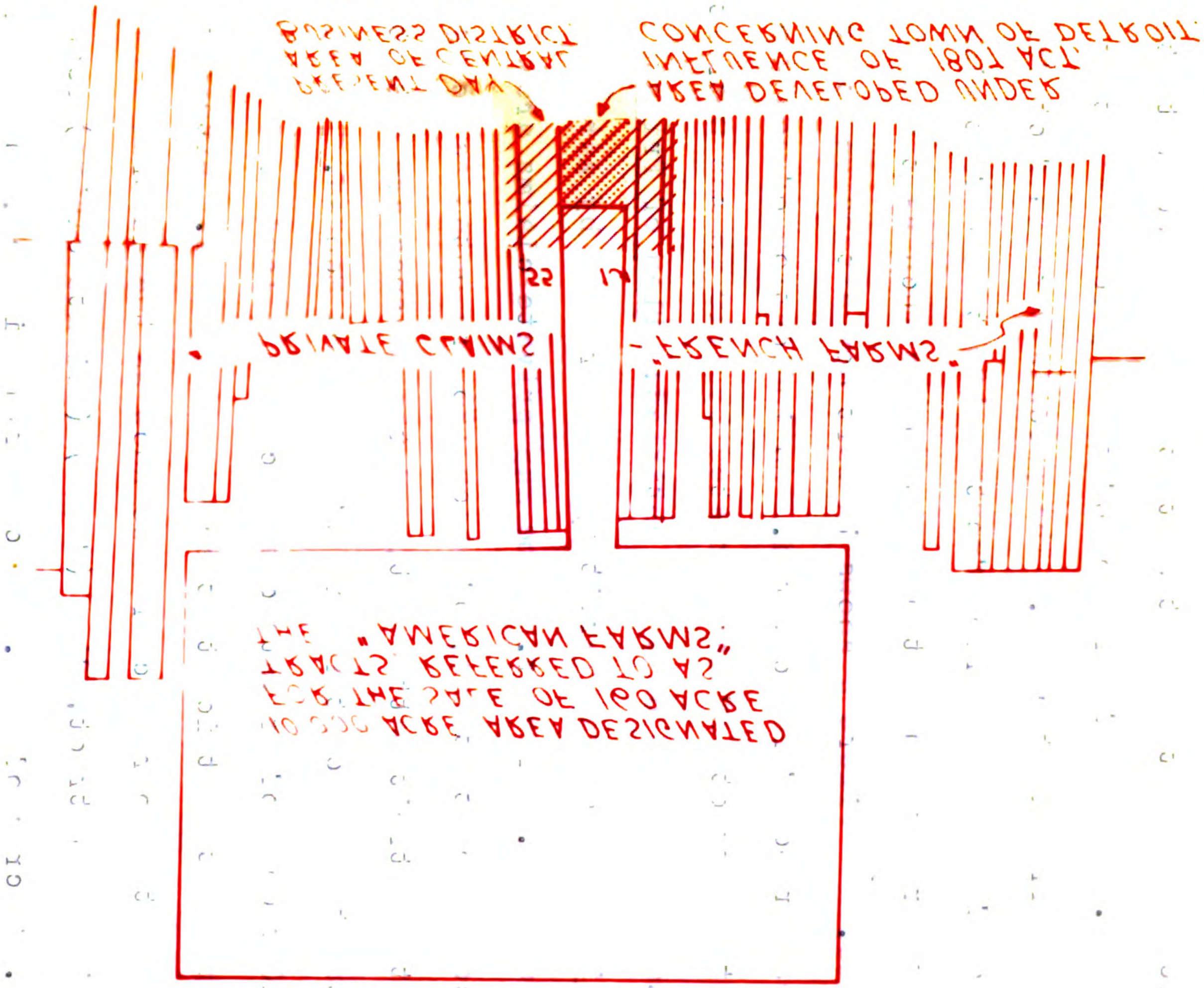

R XII E
North 61 East 377.35 Ch.
North 29 West 2.50 Ch.
10,000 Acres a donation from the Gener.l Government to the Territory of Michigan for to defray the expences of Public Buildings
10 000 ACRE AREA DESIGNATED FOR THE SALE OF 160 ACRE TRACTS REFERRED TO AS THE "AMERICAN FARMS".
PRIVATE CLAIMS
"FRENCH FARMS"
586 11 Ac.
Ship Yard
Claimed by Berthelet
Mill
DETROIT
PRESENT DAY AREA OF CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
AREA DEVELOPED UNDER INFLUENCE OF 1807 ACT CONCERNING TOWN OF DETROIT
DETROIT RIVER
Riviere Trambley
Hog Island
John David & William Maccomb
Peach I.d
Sandwich
Riviere aux Rouge
VARIOUS PROPERTY HOLDINGS, 1810
SOURCE: PLAN OF PRIVATE CLAIMS IN MICHIGAN TERRITORY

FIGURE 4

VARIOUS PROPERTY HOLDINGS, 1810



SOURCE: PLAN OF PRIVATE CLAIMS IN MICHIGAN TERRITORY

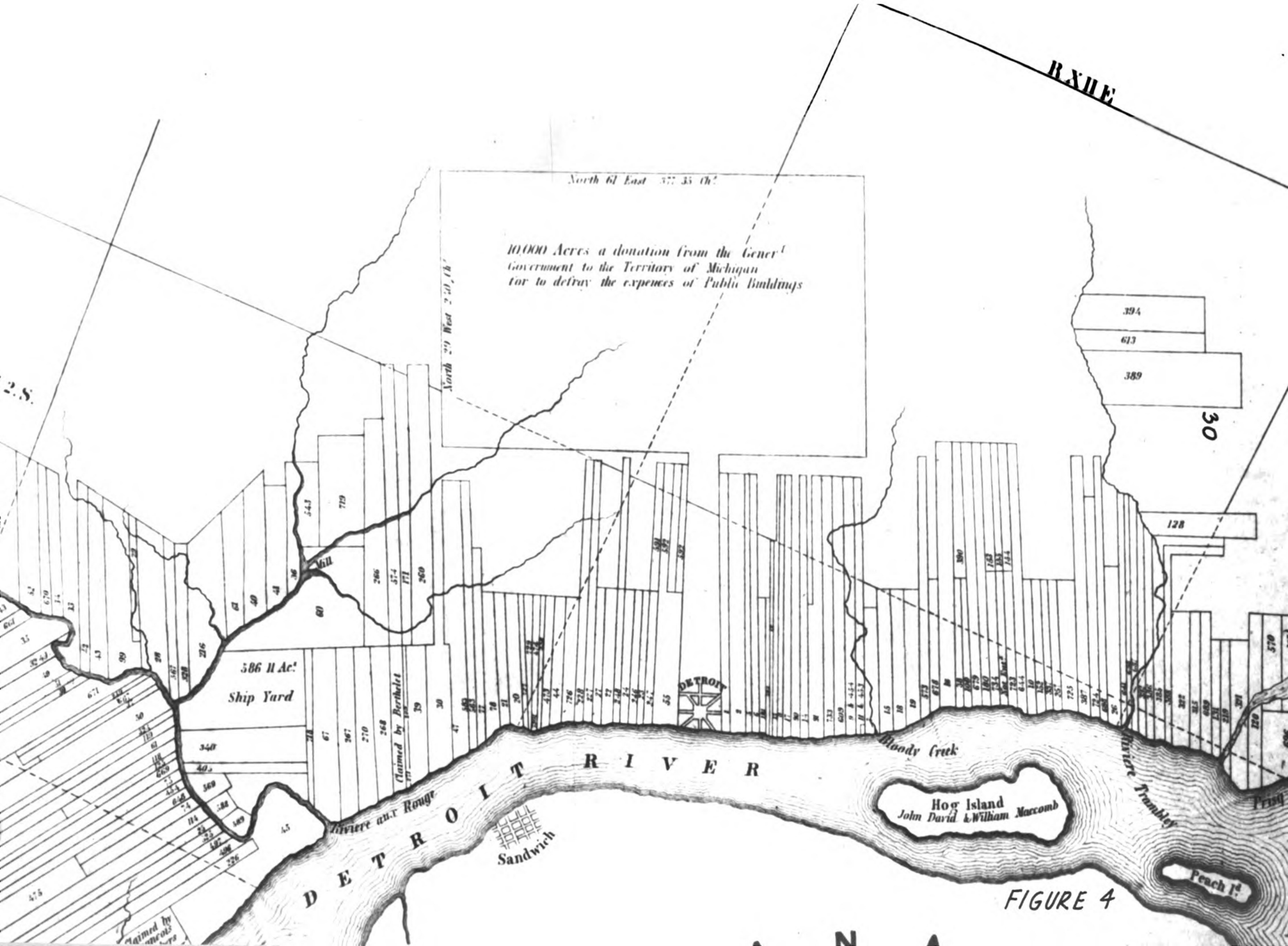
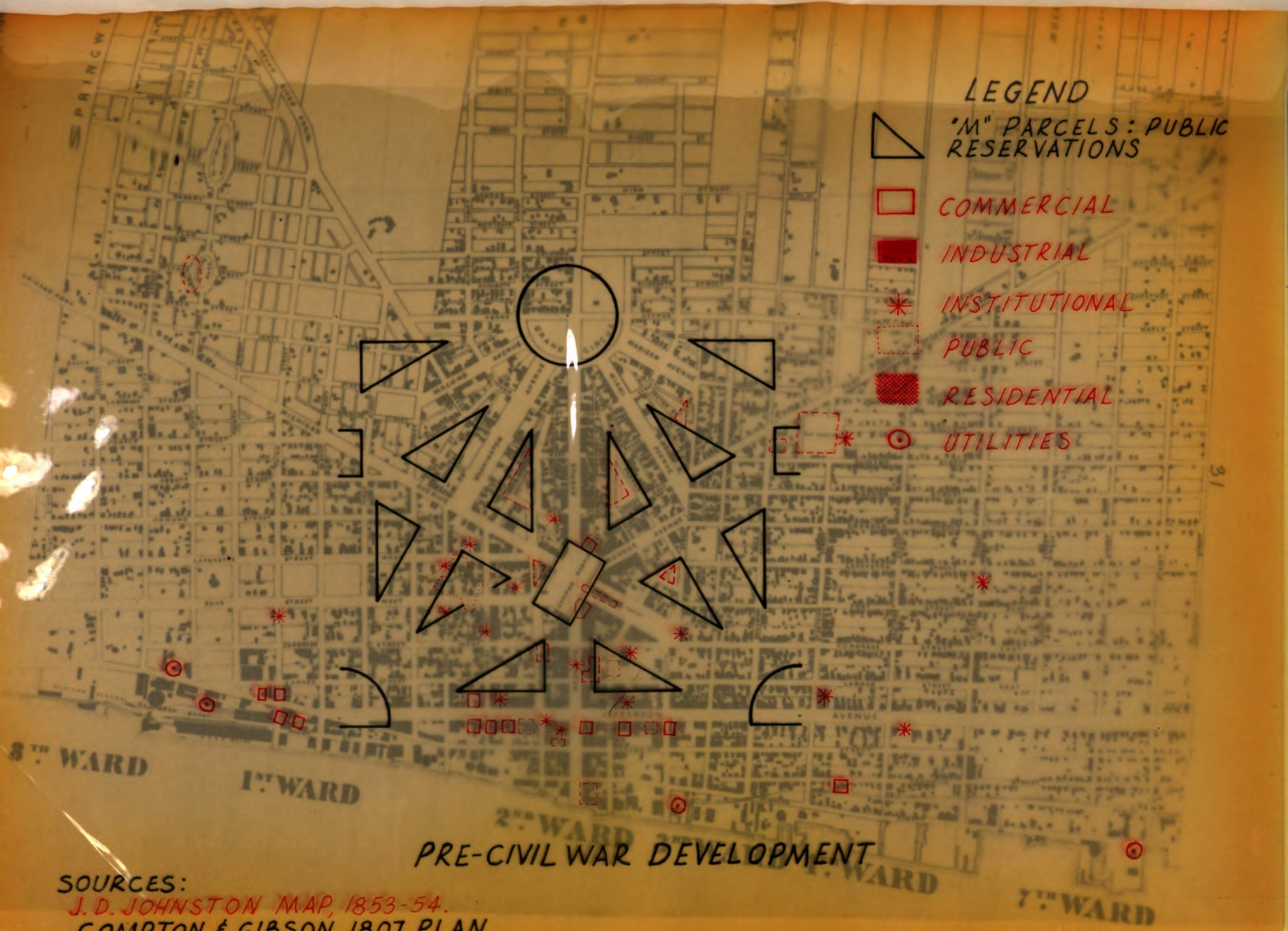

R XIIE
North 61 East 377 35 Ch.
10000 Acres a donation from the Gener.l Government to the Territory of Michigan for to defray the expences of Public Buildings
North 29 West 250 Ch.
394
613
389
30
128
Mill
586 11 Ac.s
Ship Yard
Claimed by Berthelet
DETROIT
Moody Creek
DETROIT RIVER
Riviere aux Rouge
Sandwich
Hog Island
John David & William Maccomb
Riviere Trambley
Peach I.d

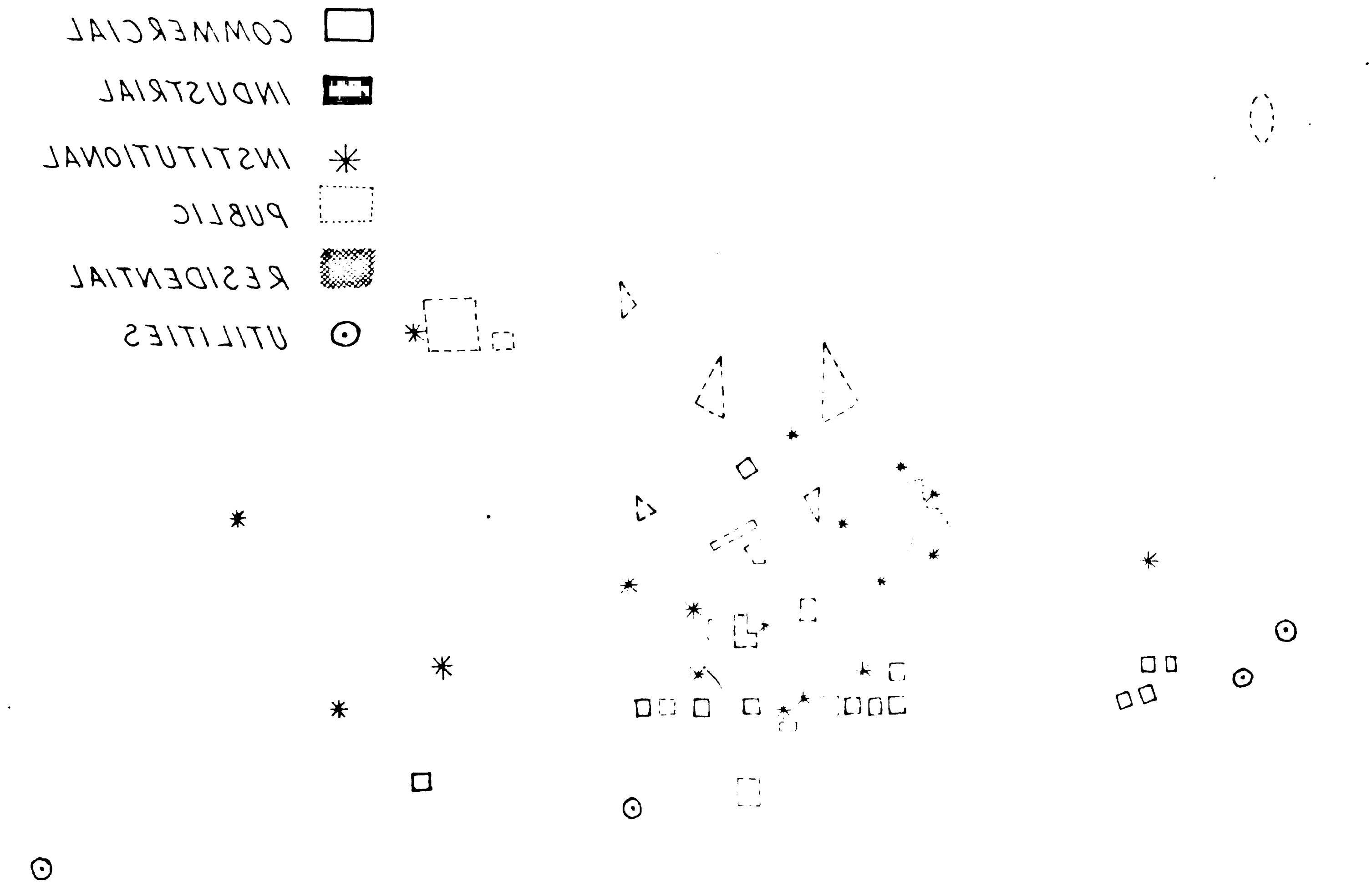
FIGURE 4



PRE-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT

SOURCES:
J. D. JOHNSTON MAP, 1853-54.
COMPTON & GIBSON 1807 PLAN

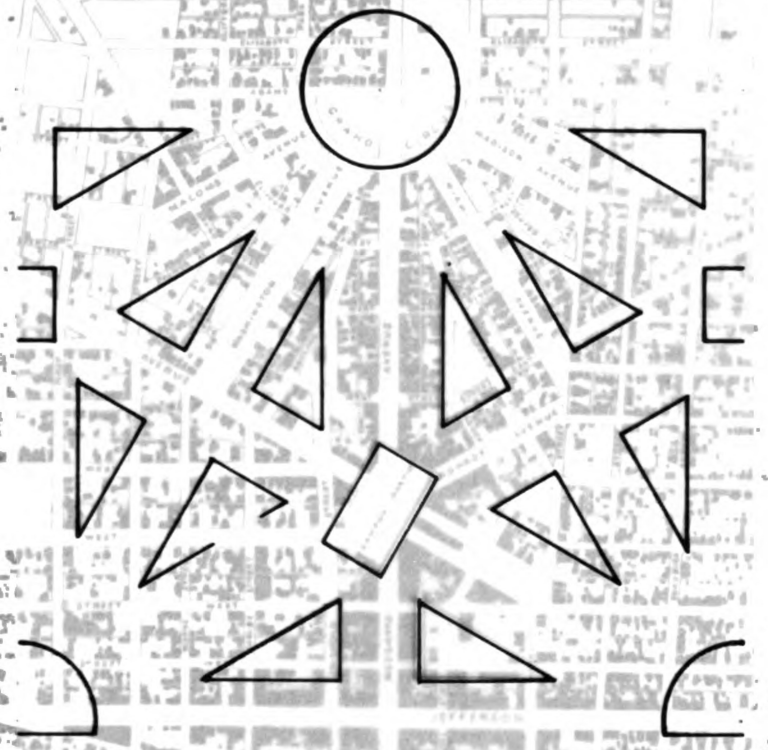
FIGURE 5



J. C. JOHNSTON MAP 1853-54.

LEGEND

"M" PARCELS: PUBLIC RESERVATIONS



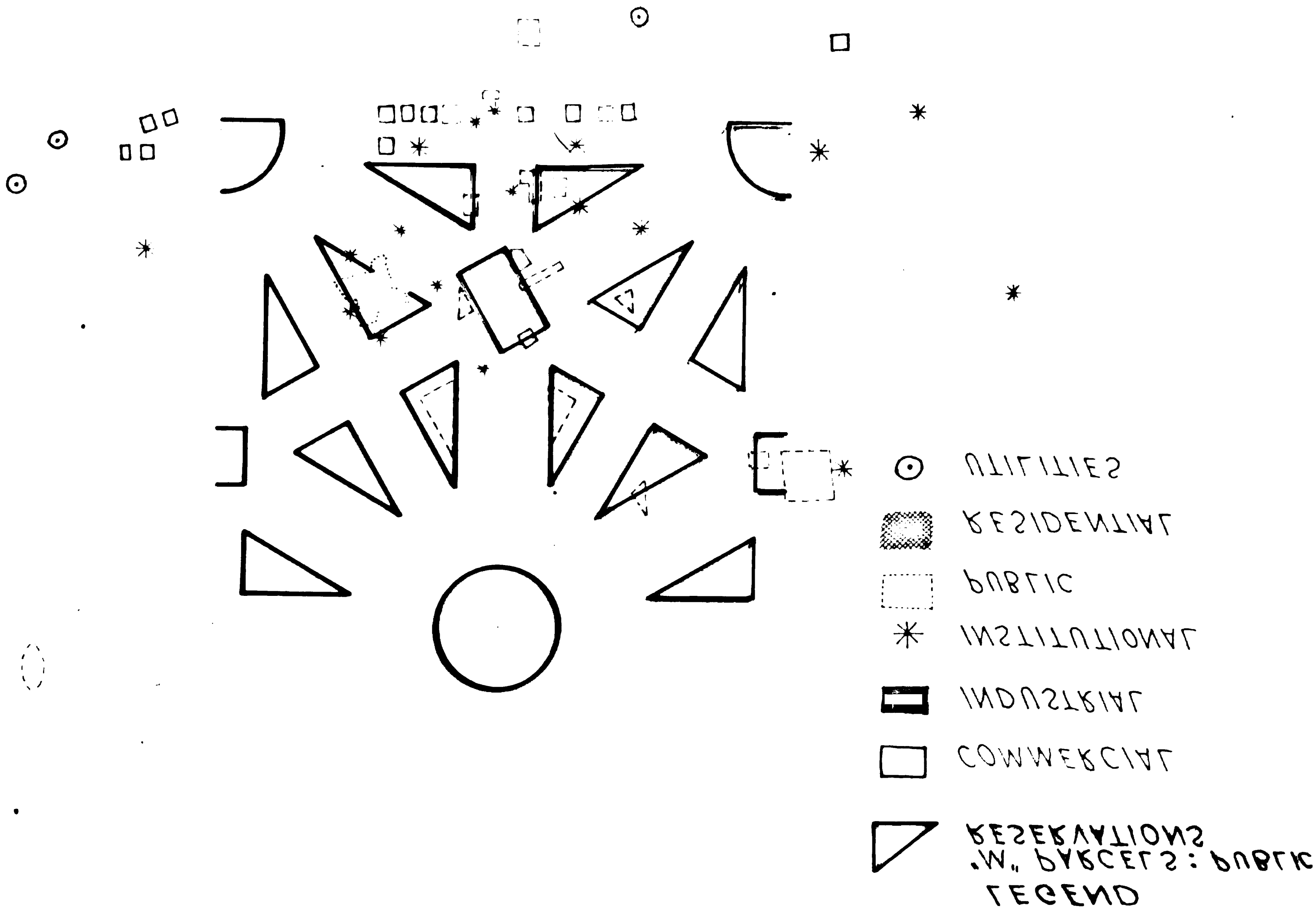
PRE-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT

SOURCES:

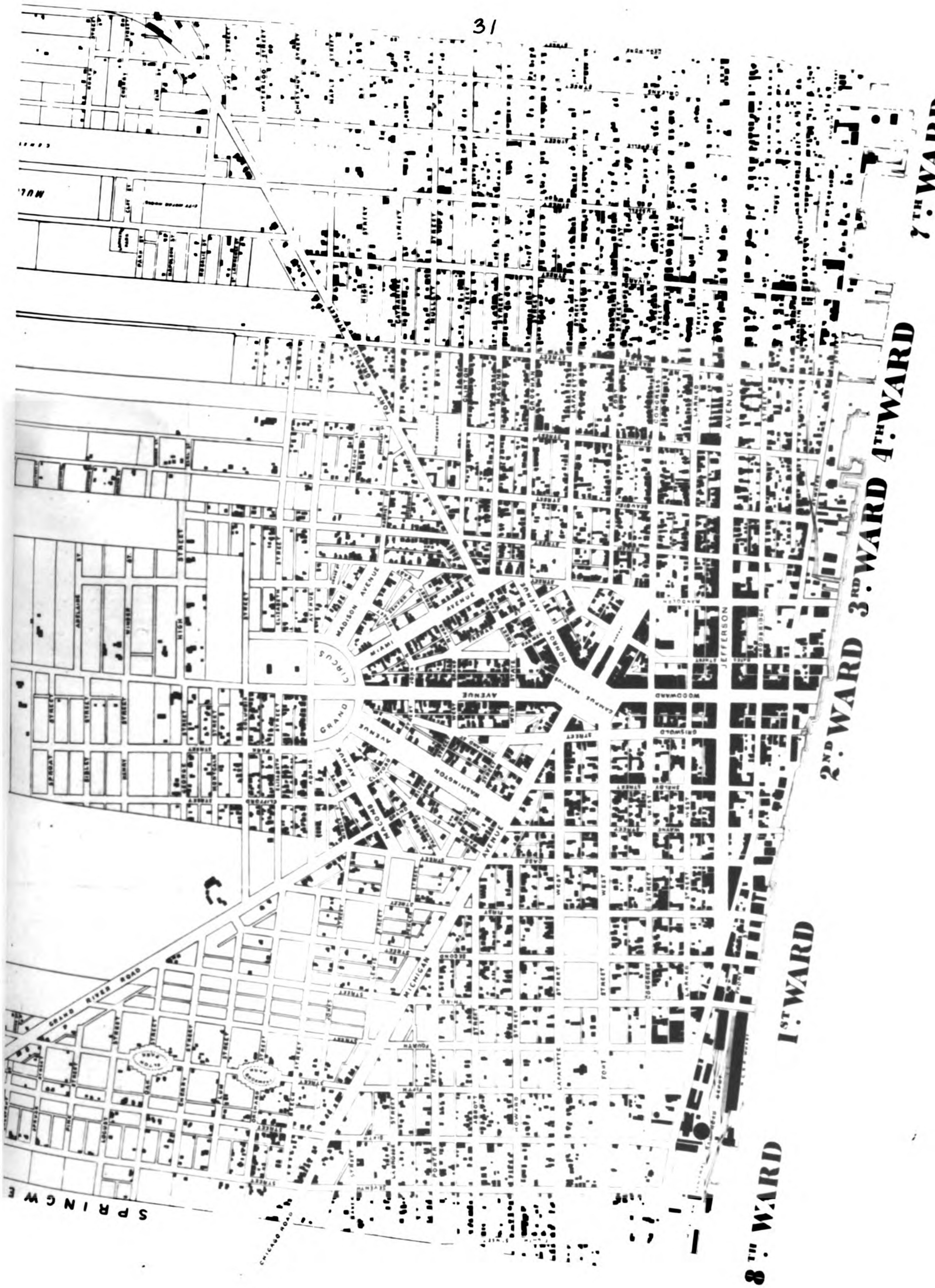
COMPTON & GIBSON 1807 PLAN

FIGURE 5

PRE-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT



SOURCES:
J.D. JOHNSTON MAP 1853-54
COMPTON & GIBSON 1801 PLAN


1ST WARD
2ND WARD
3RD WARD
4TH WARD
7TH WARD
8TH WARD

settlement, between claims numbered one and fifty-five. This "unclaimed" strip of land measured approximately one-half mile in width and extended northward two and three-quarters miles, where it bordered a 10,000 acre tract of land donated by the General Government to the Territory of Michigan. It was in this narrow one-half mile wide stretch of land that urban development within the confines of the corporate city limits would soon take place.

American Farms

As of 1815, the city limits of Detroit were expanded by charter to embrace an area of 1.36 square miles or 870.40 acres. By 1820 the population of Detroit according to the U.S. Census was 1,442 people. The settlement was accelerating its growth both in terms of number of citizens and area occupied. The private claims owners did not appear to be inclined to subdivide and sell parcels to the increasing population, at least not to the extent of the demand. Perhaps one deterent to that activity was that the land was useless unless a person could gain access to it. This meant building streets to the lots and the private claimants were known to build individual roads on their property leading back from the waterfront for their own personal use but seldom built roads parallel to the river which

would have provided inland intercommunications between the farms. Thus new settlers began seeking lots elsewhere.

Elsewhere proceeded to be a former tract of public ground. Originally the land had been put aside by the French for use as a common pasturing field. It was referred to then as the King's Common. This author has never seen it recorded on any maps or plans, although Clarence M. Burton documents it in his classic history reference, The City of Detroit, as ". . . lying between the Brush Farm on the east and the Cass Farm on the west, and extending back from the town line to a distance of nearly three miles from the river."[14] The above mentioned farms correspond to private claims one and fifty-five east and west of the Commons respectively. Burton states, the Common was determined to be property of the United States.

According to Clarence M. Burton's writings the Governor and Judges laid out the Commons north of Adams Avenue into what was known as "Park Lots" including the ground on both sides of Woodward Avenue and extending northward nearly to the present boulevard (Grand Boulevard). In March of 1809, forty-one of these lots were sold. The "people" opposed this sale and presented

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[14]Clarence M. Burton, The City of Detroit, Volume 1 (Chicago-Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1927), p. 321.

a petition for the return of the lots to the people for use as a public commons forever. This petition was not granted. Burton goes on to state further, that the Park Lots constituted a part of the 10,000 acre tract donated by Congress in 1806. This reference is in respect to the very large rectangular tract outlined in red on the overlay of Figure 4. As the note on base map of Figure 4 states, this land was donated by the General (Federal) Government to defray the expenses of public buildings which the territorial government might incur. The method of defraying public expenses was to sell to private persons, land from this tract. Further clarification of the disposition of these lands follows.

The disposition of this public land was initiated at a meeting of the Commissioners sitting as the Land Board on December 14, 1808. The three Commissioners present: Governor Hull, and Judges John Griffin and James Witherell so,

> ordered, that Mr. McCloskey be requested to survey the lands granted by congress to this Territory, for the purpose of building a jail and courthouse, and that he commence his survey northwest of the street, 30. "This was the survey of the parklots," which runs thro' the Grand Circus, parallel with the main street; that he shall there begin with lots of five acres, and increase the size of the lots as he proceeds, . . .[15]

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[15]Governor and Judges Journal, Proceedings of the Land Board of Detroit, ed. M. Agnes Burton, Comp. Clarence M. Burton (1915), p. 17.

As a result of the above survey, 1,360 acres were conveyed.

The balance of the 10,000 acre tract was not surveyed until 1816, when it was divided into twelve lots of eighty acres each, totalling 8,640 acres. Apparently conveyance of these lands was slow, since the record shows that not until April 2, 1835 were all of the Park Lots conveyed, as likewise the Ten Thousand Acre Tract, by the same date.

Use of Public Reservations Parcels

The intended uses and function of Public Reservation parcels was described earlier in this chapter under the description of the Governor and Judges Plan. In the same year (1807) that the Governor and Judges Plan is dated, a map was prepared by Compton and Gibson of Buffalo, New York. On this latter plan, Figure 5 the Public Reservation parcels are referred to in the legend by the letter M. Further, on the Plan proper the M designation is shown in twelve places. Not all of the Public Reservations were the same in size or relative location. These specially designated areas were slated to be laid out in three different categories. The largest ones were the circuses and the campuses, which have been previously described. The second category of public reservation is that centered within each numbered section of land. Each of these was laid

out in a triangular configuration. The third and last type of public reservation parcel as shown on the Compton and Gibson Plan is also inside of some of the numbered sections. These parcels were irregular polygons in shape and also the smallest parcels designated for public use by the plan. The location of these irregular parcels was close to one of the angled intersections within a numbered section other than a right-angle intersection. The red overlay of Figure 5 highlights the location and configuration of the twelve designated parcels. It is presumed that both Grand Circus and Campus Martius were considered as also being "M" areas, the Compton and Gibson Plan refers to them by their respective proper names.

Concerning ourselves with the specific land uses assigned to M parcels, only four out of the total of twelve were assigned. These are listed as follows by the section number they are in and the identifying letter as found in the legend.

Section	Letter	Use
1	F.	Catholic Church
5	E.	Fort Shelby
7	A.	Penitentiary
8	B.	Capitol

The above four assigned spaces were all of the triangular type public reservation parcels. Of these four the fort

was not actually assigned to the space in Section Five, since it was already in existence before the Plan was devised.

Land Transportation

As urban development traversed inward from the shoreline, water transportation became less convenient and less suited to all of the needs of the inhabitants. The inconvenience caused by lack of adequate roads was expressed prior to the nineteenth century in behalf of Detroit. "Just before the first general assembly for the Northwest Territory met in 1799, Peter McNiff, a local judge and influential citizen wrote to the Wayne County representative to ask for better roads. He pointed out that settlements extending sixty miles up and down the river from Lake Erie to Lake Huron could be reached by land only in September. Because of the swamps, these settlements had to be reached by boat in spring, or by sleigh on the ice in winter."[16]

However influential Peter McNiff and others may have been, substantial fiscal support was not forthcoming until two decades later. During the 1820's the United States government authorized several military highways to connect Detroit with such points as Port Huron,

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[16] Trafficways for three million people, op. cit., p. 1.

Saginaw and Chicago. In effect what the government did was to declare some of the old Indian trails as the routes for the military roads. At that time the trails were not passable on a year around basis, at least not as far as the white man's requirements are concerned. For overland travel the white man utilized two wheel carts pulled by ponies and the condition of the trails would not accommodate this mode of transport for a good part of each year.

Eventually the road builders did take advantage of the general alignment of the Indian trails for the primary reason that the trails followed high ground wherever possible. Five of the eight major trails lead into the area of Detroit's Central Business District. Within the Central Business District we will later see the alignment of the highways is "spoke shaped" in configuration as a result of the Governor and Judges Plan.

The following list includes the major trails, their eventual street name and United States Highway route number.

Old River Trail -	general alignment of Jefferson east and west
Great Trail -	general alignment of Fort St. west and Gratiot (U.S. 25) east
Saginaw Trail -	Woodward Avenue (U.S. 10)

Grand River Trail - Grand River Avenue (U.S. 16)

Sauk Trail - Michigan Avenue (U.S. 12)

The three other trails not leading directly to the Central Business District but in the region included the Ann Arbor, Potawatomi and a branch of the Great Trail. These trails generally followed inland streams including the Rouge, Huron and Raisin Rivers. Reference is called to Figure 1 which discloses the close relationship between the Indian trails and the new highways.

The condition of these "improved" roads was not always satisfactory. In an effort to correct this state of affairs the State of Michigan Plank Road Act of 1848 was passed. The effect of this act was to supplement federal funds for the improvement and maintenance of the highways. By the name of the act, one will recognize that the new improvements were to be constructed of wooden planking. The Michigan Plank Road Act was implemented by granting sixty year charters to applicants who would construct these roads. The financing of the roads was by private capital, and to repay the investors "tolls" or rates of fare for the privilege of using them were maintained at five to six mile intervals. As an example on the tollroad leading to Pontiac there were three tollgates, the first one being located at Adams Avenue, adjacent to the Grand Circus.

The era of plank roads lasted for only a decade, far short of the authorized sixty year charters. The chief reason for the early failure was because the tolls charged were not sufficient to provide adequate maintenance. The state of disrepair became so great the public came to loathe the very name toll road. The solution for making the roads passable was found to substitute gravel for planks. The gravel roads proved serviceable when provided with adequate drainage. This form of road continued until concrete highways were built to help accommodate the automobile. It was at that time that public funds were used and therewith the private toll roads passed into history.

While the highways were being improved a new form of transportation was appearing. Steam motive power gave the railroad its first real advantage. The first railroad in the Northwest was the Pontiac and Detroit line, incorporated in 1831. While the first railroad station in Detroit was located at the edge of downtown, by 1842 a new station was located in the heart of the city at Gratiot and Farmer Streets. This location is adjacent to the triangular parcel of land in Section 7 of the Governor and Judges Plan, designated a Public Reservation.

Other stations were built as new railroad lines were constructed into the downtown of the city. One of

the later stations was located on a site previously designated as a Public Reservation, that being the Campus Martius. The balance of new train stations thereafter sought sites south of the very center of the downtown toward the river. The other locations within the Central Business District are as follows: at Third and Woodbridge, at Michigan and Third, at Fort and Third, and at Brush and Atwater. In 1914, the newest and largest railroad station in Detroit was completed, being located to the west of the Central Business District at Michigan Avenue and Roosevelt Park.

In summary, five railroad stations locations were situated within the Central Business District prior to the twentieth century. In later years two of these stations remained, both being on the edges of the district and the station with the greatest volume of traffic relocated outside of the district.

Land Use Growth: Changes Through Turn of the Century

The preceding four sections of this chapter, together with Chapter I, provide the framework within which the land uses will be described. The transportation functions which we have mentioned are the result of an increase in the number of people in the area and their desires for improved means of travel and transport. The Erie Canal was completed in the early part of the

nineteenth century, making it easier for people to travel west. The population of Detroit and Wayne County combined, almost doubled between the years 1820 and 1830. From 1830 to 1850 the population of Detroit more than tripled reaching 21,000 persons by mid-century.

An increase in the amount of land area needed for the inhabitants is reflected in the growth of Detroit by its annexation records. In less than forty-five years, from 1806 to 1849 the city expanded almost eighteen times its size. Quantitatively from the time it submitted a plan to Congress in 1806 for approval, the city embraced an area of 0.33 square miles; by 1849 Detroit was 5.85 square miles in area. This growth was accomplished by the annexation process. The Detroit area of 1849 represents five annexation proceedings.[17]

In contrast to the outward growth of the community, attention here is focused on the internal situation. Now, we should recall that within each 4,000 foot equilateral triangle of the Governor and Judges Plan, seven specifically designated public reservations were proposed; plus the respective portion of a circus at the three angles of each triangle. Therefore if we account for a "whole" circus for each triangle

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[17]See Appendix "B" for more detailed information regarding land areas acquired for each annexation. The area embraced by the city as of 1849 included all of the land area within the Central Business District as currently known.

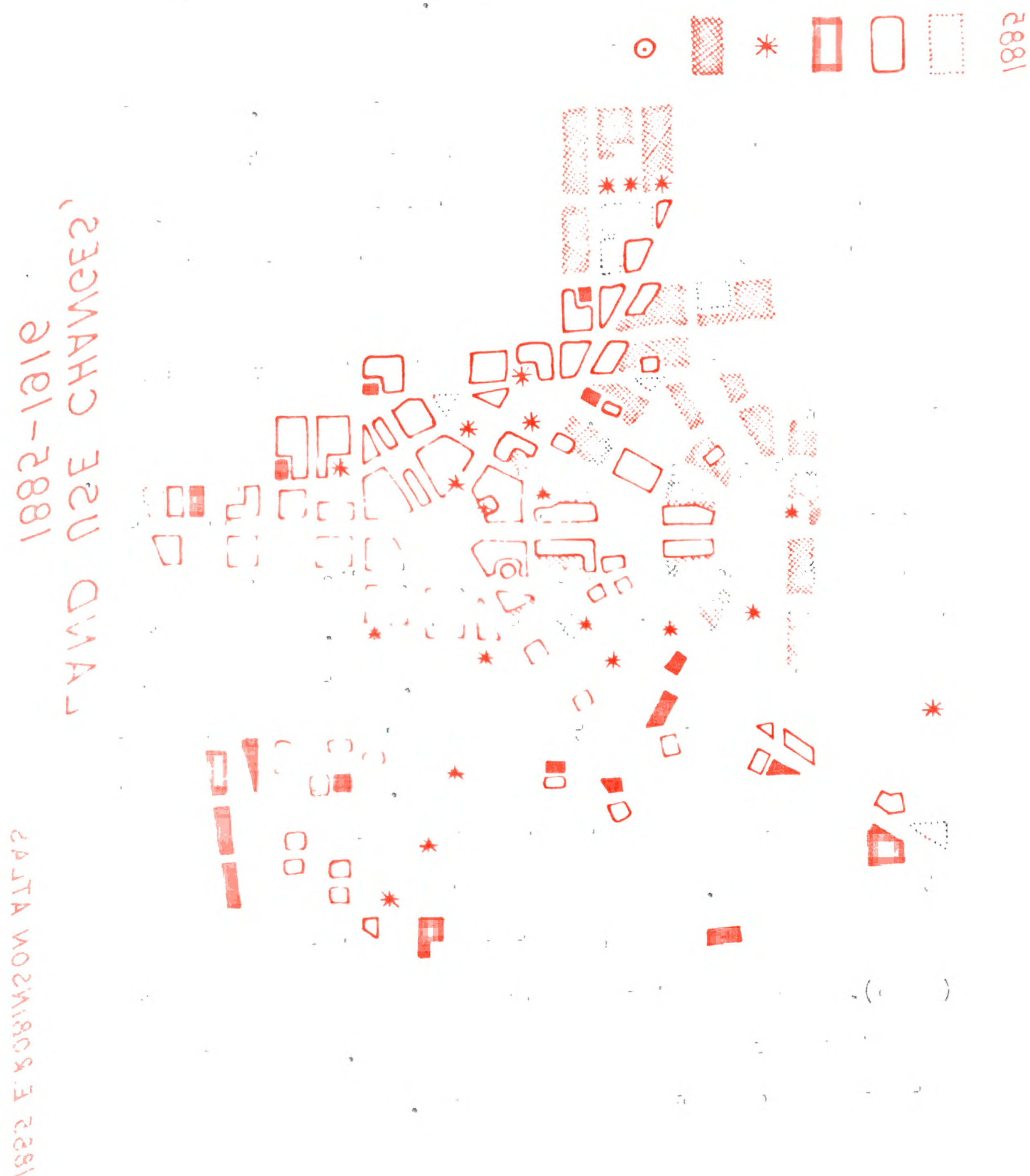
the theoretical total number of public reservations is eight. Yet, only four of these materialized in line with the original thought of the plan. Those four plus two other spaces are of note because of the ensuing development upon and around them. They are as follows: Campus Martius, Capitol Park, Grand Circus Park, Library Park, and Cadillac Square plus Clinton Park. An interpretation of the land uses associated with these six public open spaces is provided first, and then attention is afforded the general land use configuration for the area as a whole.

The period of time accounted for here is circa the nineteenth century. Additional changes of the land uses in later years are discussed in Chapters IV and V. For the purpose of identifying the several different land uses associated at the six specific spaces mentioned above a detailed listing follows. Each listing is identified by a name and number. Both name and number are repeated in the legend of Figure 6, with the numbers appearing on the map proper. The majority of the document sources of information utilized here are other than maps. Mapping as a form of recording land uses in Detroit commenced at the end of this period (1896). Because of this, occasional ambiguous locations are offered regarding a given land use. Where this situation occurs they are so noted.

LAND USE CHANGES, 1885-1916

SOURCES:
1885 E ROBINSON ATLAS
1916 BAIST ATLAS

FIGURE 6

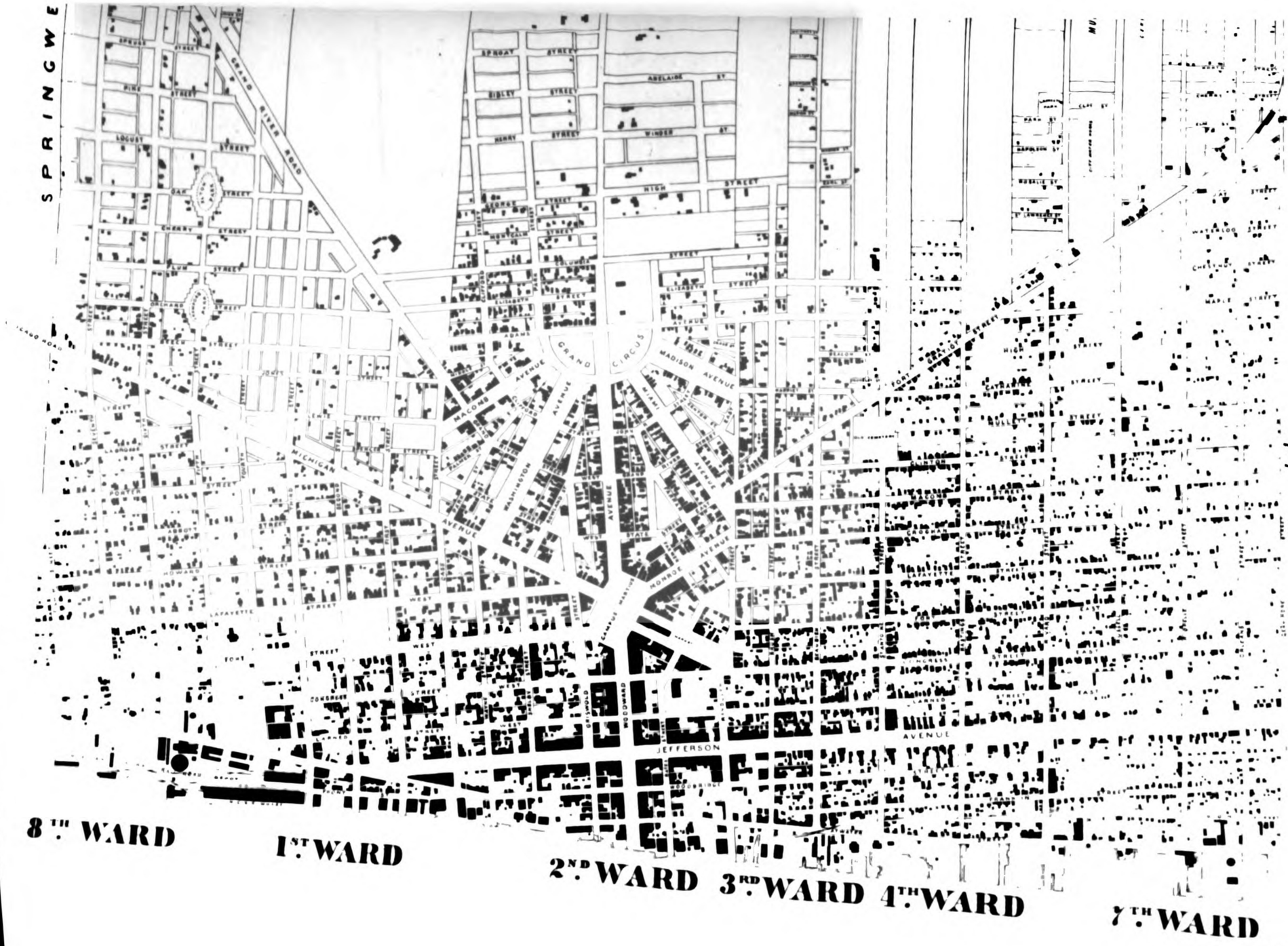

1882-1916
LAND USE CHANGES
1882
1882 E. ROBINSON ATLAS

SOURCES:

· 1916 BAIST ATLAS

FIGURE 6

LAND USE CHANGES, 1885-1915
1885
1915
LEGEND
PUBLIC
COMMERCIAL
INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTIONAL
RESIDENTIAL
UTILITIES
OPEN SPACES
SELECTED PUBLIC
CLINTON PARK
CADILLAC SQUARE
GRAND CIRCUS PARK
CAMPUS MARTIUS
CAMPUS MARTIUS PARK
GRAND CIRCUS PARK
FISHER FOUNTAIN
CADILLAC SQUARE
CLINTON PARK
SOURCES: 1885 BAIST ATLAS
1915 SANBORN ATLAS


SPRINGWE
GRAND RIVER ROAD
GRAND CIRCUS
MADISON AVENUE
JEFFERSON
AVENUE
8TH WARD
1ST WARD
2ND WARD
3RD WARD
4TH WARD
7TH WARD

44

FIGURE 6

1. Campus Martius:

This campus is located in the heart of the downtown, midway between Grand Circus Park and the river on Woodward Avenue. It is the only rectangular public open space in the central business district other than streets. The campus is second only to the Grand Circus in size. The orientation of the campus is true north-south.

The campus space itself has been the site of at least six known land use functions. The first of these utilized the fact that it was an open space. For more than a century (118 years) it was the site of the military parade ground. This function of the space can be attributed to the close proximity of the fort, bordering the campus on the southwest corner. Termination of this use of the campus is related to the federal government's sale of the fort in 1827. In that year the fort was razed, and the earth used to fill the campus and Xavier Creek.[18] Shortly thereafter, the land was platted and put on the market for sale in 1830. No records of structures or new land uses occur until 1836. In that year two stations proceeded to share the site. One of these stations was a railroad station and the

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[18]Congress Street partially follows the alignment of Xavier Creek, it was that portion of Xavier Creek which was filled.

other a fire station. The railroad station, first Michigan Central Depot was situated in the northwest portion of the Campus, corner of Michigan and Griswold streets, until 1848 when it relocated to a new depot at Michigan and Third. The fire station may have been located on this site until the city hall was completed in 1871.[19] Only four years after the fire and train stations commenced operations on the site a female academy petitioned the State of Michigan for a portion of the campus. This institution opened for operation in 1843.

Seven years later the surrounding residents petitioned the city to improve the campus site as a park. This was not done. In 1856 the City of Detroit took ownership of the campus, until then owned by the State of Michigan. Three years later the city commenced clearing the land for the purpose of erecting a city hall. Apparently this was a fairly lengthy process, since the city hall (joint city and county offices) was not completed and occupied until 1871, twelve years later. In the meantime mention was made that during the 1860's the campus was in a state of disrepair. With the exception of the military parade ground function the campus's use as the site of the city hall was the

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[19]Razing of the fire station undetermined.

longest, ninety years. The shortest recorded use of the site is that of a circus ground. In the summers of 1853 and 1854 the campus land was leased to a circus for the purpose of conducting a circus show.

In summary, Campus Martius has been put to six uses classified as follows:

a) Open space only, twice

b) Transportation terminal, once,

c) Institution, once, and

d) Site of public structure, twice.

The changes which occurred in the course of the first half of the nineteenth century on the Campus Martius express a period of growth in the community and of indirect ownership concern by the state. When the city took ownership of the property it did so with an apparent objective in mind, to build a city hall on the site. Shortly after the turn of the century, the city was in the process of preparing the site for construction of the city hall. The city hall was completed and occupied by 1871, rounding out the century. This public open space evolved from a relatively changing scene to that of one prominent public use: the seat of local government.

A preponderance of commercial land uses surrounded the Campus Martius in the nineteenth century. These commercial uses included such establishments as a shoe

store, theater, jewelry shop, clothing store, hotel, grocery store, furniture, an office building and a drug store. Two other land uses of note fronted on the space. The first of these was an armory, situated here from 1853 until 1898, when a new armory was completed at Brush and Larned Streets. The other land use is the former Detroit Opera House. This establishment is considered an institutional land use, while the armory was a public land use. These two cases of a land use other than commercial are the only ones of record. Space for locating commercial functions facing the Campus Martius with the City Hall situated on the western portion of it appeared to be in demand. In 1895 the first steel frame commercial building was erected on the northwest side of the Campus Martius. The structure was being erected to house the tallest department store in America; before the structure was completed the entrepreneur went bankrupt and the building was subsequently utilized as an office building.

2. Capitol Park

This public reservation parcel was also one of those originally designated for a public purpose. The first use that Capitol Park was put to was as a site for the capitol building for the Territory of Michigan. The capitol building was occupied from 1828 through 1847, as

a territorial government seat. In 1848 the use of the structure was converted to that of a school, when the State of Michigan Capitol was redesignated as Lansing, Michigan.

In 1865 library facilities were provided within the same structure as the school. This function was housed here for twelve years until a separate library building was completed elsewhere. The old capitol building continued to serve as a school until 1893 when fire destroyed the building. The tract of land remained vacant of structures for the balance of the century. For many years now the southern end of Capitol Park has been the location of a monument in honor of Stevens Thomson Mason, first governor of the State.

Land uses surrounding the public open space were divided about equally between residence and commerce for the major portion of the century. While in the earlier years a location close to the state capitol had economic advantages, when the school board took possession of the structure for educational purposes the economic relationship was not as strong.

Evidence of one institutional land use occupying frontage is available. In the 1880's a Young Mens Christian Association facility was built at Grand River and Griswold. Just prior to the turn of the century (1899) the Chamber of Commerce offices were located at

the northeast corner of State and Griswold Streets, which gives evidence that with a change in the function of the central space (school destroyed by fire in 1898) the commercial functions increased.

3. Grand Circus Park

Of the numerous circuses shown on the Governor and Judges Plan, this is the only one which was transmitted from paper to actual development. The circuses were to be laid out as a full circular tract of land, each embracing a total of eleven acres. Yet, not even Grand Circus Park fulfilled the new town plan layout: only the southern half of the Circus was developed covering an area of five and one-half acres. The northern edge of Grand Circus Park is Adams Avenue while the circular sides are composed of Park and Witherell Streets. Woodward Avenue bisects the half circular space in a north-south manner.

Another feature of the Governor and Judges Plan was that for this specific Circus a land use was designated. The Capitol Building was to have been constructed on this site. As has been previously learned, this location never came to pass. The Capitol building was constructed on a triangular center parcel in Section 8, known today as Capitol Park. No major structures have ever been constructed on or in Grand

Circus Park. Several minor features have been located on the land including a fountain, public toilet facilities and monuments of a historic nature. By 1885 a series of walkways were in existence traversing both halves of the circus. These walks were laid out in a manner which lead to a focal point feature in the middle of each half.

The basic physical characteristics of this public open space have remained constant. The size and shape have not altered since first laid out, and consequently the linear perimeter affecting surrounding land uses has not changed. From these conditions it can be stated that Grand Circus Park has been stable.

The land uses around the Grand Circus in the nineteenth century were predominately residential. Among the numerous houses fronting on the Circus was the residence of Governor John J. Bagley at the corner of Park Street and Washington Boulevard. This residence was built in 1869. By comparison the Bagley residence was the largest of the residential structures fronting on the Circus.[20] The Robinson Atlas appears to offer the most complete mapped documentation for this period of Detroit's history. The one land use exception to

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[20]E. Robinson, Atlas of the City of Detroit and Suburbs (New York: E. Robinson, 1885), plate 1.

residences around the circus is classified in this thesis as institutional. Specifically the institutional use found here in the later part of the century is two churches. The location of the two churches was approximately diagonal from each other on opposite sides of the open space. While one church was located at the north-east corner of Woodward and Adams Avenues, the other church was situated at the south-west corner of Macomb Avenue (now Bagley Avenue) and Park Street. The remainder of the properties fronting on the circus were occupied by modest size structures for purposes of residence. Most of the structures appear to be free standing and of two-stories in height.

The relationship of surrounding land uses to the Grand Circus public open space in the nineteenth century is partially conditioned upon its location. The major economic activities such as industry and commerce at this time were still predominately orientated toward the river. That is to say, land uses other than residential and some institutional had not tended to move northward away from the earliest settlement area near the river and Jefferson Avenue. From a more immediate standpoint the development of the public open space with walkways and statuary was a pleasant and conducive complimentary treatment for surrounding residential uses. Thus the population of approximately two dozen residences enjoyed

the spacious setting of fronting on the park. In the following chapter it will be observed that with land use changes around the Grand Circus, many additional people would benefit from this public open space.

4. Library Park

Like the previous three cited public open spaces, the Library Park tract of land is a result of the Governor and Judges Plan. While Capitol Park is situated west of Woodward Avenue, Library Park is one block east of Woodward Avenue. It too was designated as a public reservation tract and is located in Section 7 of the new town plan. The predetermined land use of this triangular parcel of land is indicated on the 1807 map prepared by Compton and Gibson as a penitentiary. Sufficient documentation has not been discovered by the author to confirm when and if the penitentiary building was erected, used and razed for a later use.

In contrast to the lack of documentation concerning the above public use of this tract of land, another public agency did eventually occupy the site and the records are numerous. The Detroit Public Library commenced operations in a building on the site in 1877. Construction of the building was started in 1875, with dedication ceremonies conducted in 1877. Less than ten years later, work was begun on a two story addition to

the library. At this time the triangular parcel was known as Centre Park.

Use of the land for a public library has continued ever since the doors to the first building were opened. The siting of the building was such as to leave some landscape space all around the structure. Thus a sense of open space was maintained even though the site was occupied by a structure. The most effective remaining open space consisted of two parts. At the north end a triangular portion of open land affords the opposite sides of surrounding frontage to be visually evident to each other. At the south end a rectangular portion of land accentuates the width of the total triangular tract. The entrance to the library building is situated at this wide end. The wide end of the space is bounded by three streets while at the narrow portion of the triangle two streets converge to form the acute angle of the tract.

With this physical configuration in mind the surrounding land uses can now be observed. Two distinct patterns were in evidence after the public library use was in operation. The two patterns of use are located one at the southern half of the surrounding frontage, and the other being the northern portion. The northern half presents a consistent pattern of residential properties fronting on the public open space. The

southern half was an entirely different situation. A combination of commercial, institutional, industrial and residential uses were intermixed around this south perimeter.

To the three central questions posed by the thesis we can now offer answers regarding the immediate Library Park area. The shape and size of this public open space has remained unchanged. We know only of public uses being located on the public land. Surrounding land uses were distributed in two patterns. The northern perimeter frontage consisted of residential uses; quite likely the houses were in existence prior to the library. The southern perimeter frontage attracted a mixture of land uses. This mixed land use pattern was more intensive in space utilization than the northern residential half. Access to the library was from the south. Perhaps this location encouraged more foot traffic to the south than to the north. If this is the case the presence of the commercial land uses would be enhanced by the greater number of potential customers in the immediate vicinity. Another condition which may have had a bearing on the arrangement of the land uses around the public open space, is that the more intensive commercial uses in the central business district were, at this time, located south of the Library Park area.

5. Cadillac Square

Unlike the four previously cited spaces, Cadillac Square was not designated a public reservation parcel. Cadillac Square has always been a public street right-of-way. The alignment and width of the street are a result of the Governor and Judges Plan. Cadillac Square was originally known as Michigan Grand Avenue laid out in a true east-west alignment. The width as prescribed by the Governor and Judges Plan was two hundred feet, a principal avenue intended to lead to the several circuses.

Michigan Grand Avenue never did fulfill the intentions of the plan; west of Woodward Avenue the width of the street was substantially reduced, and east of Woodward Avenue the street extended for only two blocks, terminating at Randolph Street. This later condition was a result of the westerly line of the Brush Farm. Figure 5 shows the location of this line and its alignment with Randolph Street.

Every city has a market place of one kind or another. Detroit is no exception. In the first century of its growth as a city, Cadillac Square served as the market center of the community. The central portion of the street was utilized for large sheds in which market operations took place. The market function was important enough to the city fathers, that they constructed a

market hall at the west end of Cadillac Square, facing onto Campus Martius. Within the publicly built market hall, space for governmental units was provided on the second and third floors. Here were located the Board of Health, Superior Court, and other governmental agencies. This public market building served as the principal location for government agencies of the city and county until 1872, when the first city hall was built on the opposite side (west) of Campus Martius.

The land uses on the perimeter of Cadillac Square appear to be closely related to the public markets. Other markets numbered three, a grocer, a livery stable and three hotels are noted on plate one of the Robinson Atlas. At the eastern end of the space a large steam laundry operated on property facing Randolph Street.

6. Clinton Park

Although the sixth public open space to be discussed was not a part of the original Governor and Judges Plan, the root purpose which brought it into being is even older. The basic reason for Clinton Park, the sixth selective public open space for discussion, has its root source even earlier than the Governor and Judges Plan. Ever since the French established the original Saint Annes Church a burial ground was

associated with the church site. When the Governor and Judges Plan was enacted the church property as well as numerous other properties were found to lie within the proposed street rights-of-way. The local Catholic church body was not to be displaced from its rightful property by the Governor and Judges Plan. Such a sacred site as the land for interment was not to be easily converted into a street. Congress Street as we know it today was to eventually traverse the burial grounds of Saint Annes Church.

In 1827, twenty years after the Governor and Judges Plan was set in motion, the city acted to provide a new cemetery site within the city. In that year, the city purchased two and one-half acres of land from the Antoine Beaubien farm. This tract of land was divided equally into two parts. The west half was designated for the protestant's use, with the east half earmarked for the Catholic's use.

The population of the Detroit community continued to increase steadily, and before long even the new cemetery space was fully occupied. Therefore, as soon as 1834 the city was in need of additional cemetery space. The Guoin Farm was purchased by the city in this year. A portion of the farm was laid out for cemetery purposes since the Clinton Park Cemetery was already

inadequate for further use. Thus in a brief seven years the first public cemetery was completely utilized and additional space for burial was sought elsewhere. With attention shifted to a new location the maintenance of the Clinton Park Cemetery became even more negligent. In an effort to avoid the continued circumstances of poor public cemetery practice a group of prominent private citizens purchased land east of the central business district for a private cemetery. The first of the private cemeteries was Elmwood Cemetery, starting with forty-one acres of land.

Thus with private enterprise entering this type of land use concern, pressure was relieved and, the city went on to other efforts.

> In 1854 after the Clinton Park Cemetery had ceased to be used for new interments, Saint Antoine Street was opened through it from south to north. This disturbed a large number of graves and as they were disinterned the remains were removed to other cemeteries.[21]

That was not the last change to the cemetery, but rather the first. Twelve years after the street opening a city common council resolution adopted in 1867, converted that part of the cemetery lying north of Clinton Street to a park, to be called Clinton Park.

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[21]Clarence M. Burton, M. Agnes Burton, editors, History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, Michigan (Chicago-Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930), Volume II, p. 971.

An objection to the council resolution was expressed by the local Catholic diocese relative to the eastern half of the property. The Catholic Church maintained that they would not relinquish the eastern portion of the cemetery for park purposes. In lieu of relinquishing the eastern portion for intended park purposes the Catholics stated they would establish a hospital on their portion. Thus after forty years use as a cemetery the northwest portion of the tract of land changed uses, although still in public ownership.

After the tract of land became a park, several public and institutional land uses situated on two sides of the public open space. The Catholic Church established Saint Mary's hospital to the immediate east of the park and a court building followed on the south edge of the park in 1889. These two institutions were followed by additional institutions and public uses in the next century of urban growth. Land use activity around the space in the close of the nineteenth century was intensified by expansion of the hospital facilities.

Summarizing, the three basic questions with reference to Clinton Park, the following remarks appear appropriate. The origin of the public open space was to supplement an earlier inadequate facility located very near the center of the growing community. The tract of land chosen for Clinton Park Cemetery appeared

far enough removed from the other community activities that it would not present a similar obstacle to urban development as the original Saint Anne's Church burial ground had. The tract of land was rectangular in shape having approximately a one:two width to length ratio. The length of the space was laid out in an east-west manner. The size of the tract was two and one-half acres. Due to neglectful public administration and maintenance of the cemetery grounds, and coupled with a street opening through the cemetery the space was physically divided into two units. Further subdivision of the land occurred when the northern portion of the west half was dedicated as a park. The park represented one-fourth of the original cemetery space. As a result the remaining public open space was drastically reduced in size and due to the new streets the resulting rectangular space's main axis ran in a north-south direction.

The land uses attracted to the space were one institutional and one public in function. The institutional use (hospital) and the public court building were sited to take advantage of the public open space for breathing room if not for aesthetic reasons.

Proposals for New Civic Public Spaces

All of the six selective public open spaces were a part of the total community in individual ways.

None of them was completely representative of the community in a symbolic manner. With the beginnings of the twentieth century, representatives of the city began searching for a means whereby the civitas of Detroit would be expressed. Two such efforts were initiated, one through the City Plan and Improvement Commission, and the second through a Committee of Citizens and Veterans. Each of these is worth our attention.

In 1909 the City Plan and Improvement Commission of Detroit was started. This first public planning body as we know them today functioned without a permanent staff. One of the consultants which they retained was Edward H. Bennett. Mr. Bennett's planning schemes for Detroit were prepared in the year 1915. The scope of the proposals prepared by him covered a variety of subject matter, as well as an extensive portion of the city. Some of the proposals offered by Mr. Bennett included: street improvements to mitigate traffic congestion, park and recreation features, a center for the Arts and Letters, and an "Ideal Treatment of the Campus Martius, Cadillac Square and the Foot of Woodward Avenue,"[22] a Civic Center.

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[22]Edward H. Bennett, Preliminary Plan of Detroit (Detroit: Detroit City Plan and Improvement Commission, 1915, Re-printed by City Plan Commission, April 1921), Plate VIII.

This last proposal is the only one which pertains to the Central Business District and the salient features are described as follows. In discussing the proposed Civic Center Complex envisioned by Bennett attention is directed to Figure 7, a reproduction of a drawing prepared in his offices. Apparently certain requirements were established in developing the plan either by the Improvement Committee or the architect himself since the proposal is relatively definite as to building functions.

The complex centers on the previously existing Campus Martius. Orientation of the space is altered from the original due north-south alignment to one coinciding with Woodward Avenue. The other change in the central public open space conceived by this design scheme is that, the corners of the blocks intersecting with Woodward Avenue be cut back at an angle, thereby creating an eight sided public open space. Like the previous four sided space, the new space also has edges of two dimensions. From the main central space two dominant paths of space project outward. To the river is Woodward Avenue and to the east is a new space bisecting the block between Monroe Street and Cadillac Square. These latter two streets flank the proposed composition. Both Monroe Street and Cadillac Square were indicated as boulevard streets on the plan, while

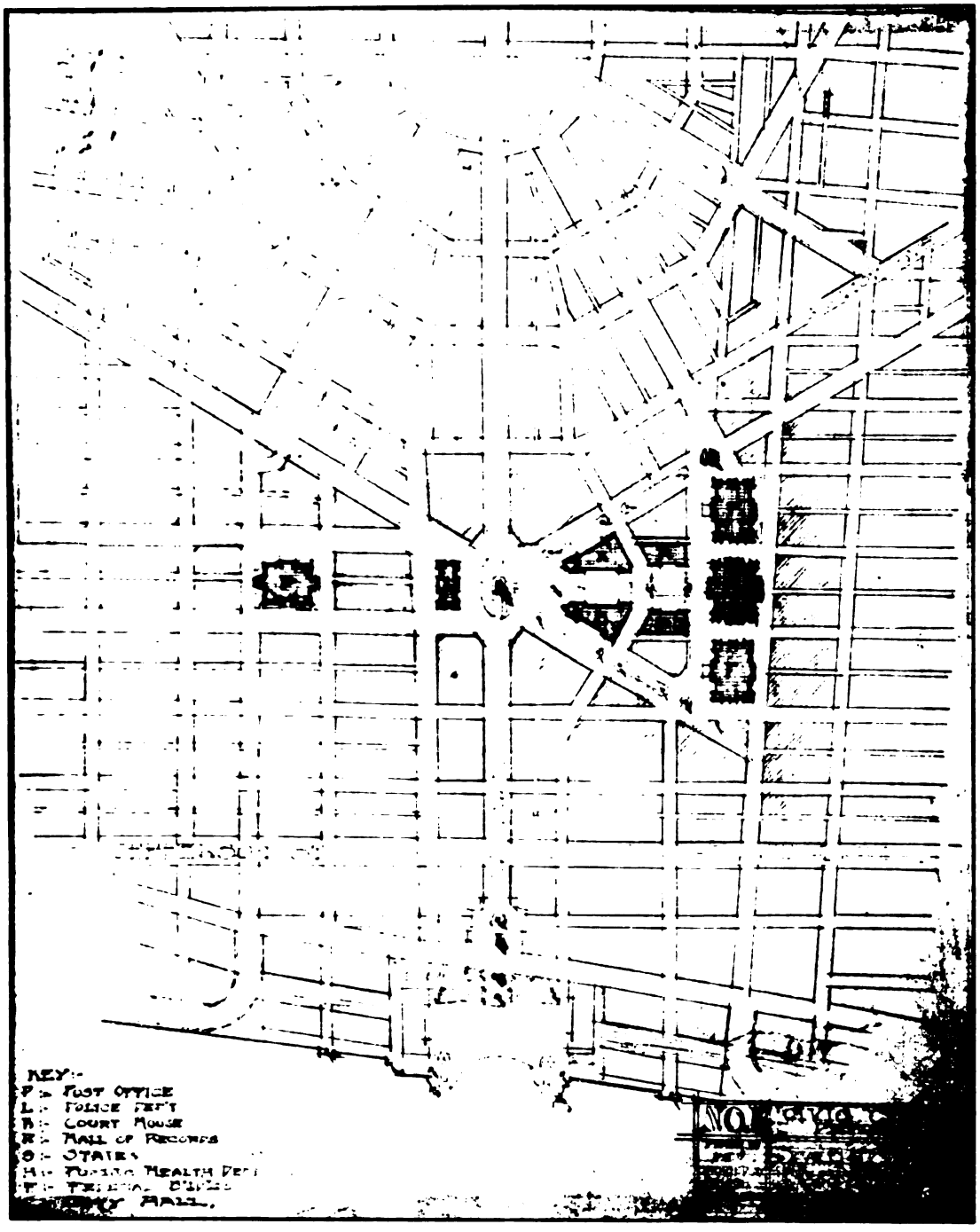

Plate VIII. Ideal Treatment for Campus Martius, Cadillac Square and the Foot of Woodward Avenue.

SOURCE: BENNETT

A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, BY EDWARD H. BENNETT, 1915

FIGURE 7

Woodward Avenue was shown as a wide street terminating at the river on an esplanade.

The main composition of the Civic Center complex is nine individual structures arranged in symetrical fashion around the Campus Martius and the new easterly projecting street. As shown on the drawing (Figure 7) each of the buildings was identified by intended use. Of these nine buildings three were in existence when the plan was drawn. These three were the city hall, post office and a federal building. This last building was actually the present county building at the eastern end of Cadillac Square. According to Bennett the City Hall would be converted to use for the police department and a new city hall would be at the eastern terminus of the new street. The remainder of the new buildings flank the new street plus a second federal building would lie immediately north of the new city hall.

The Bennett design scheme labelled the "Ideal Treatment" is of the baroque order of planning. Such projects tend to be grandiose in scale. The one typical physical failing is a lack of regard for the surrounding townscape that envelopes it, and thus openly denies its esthetic pretensions. Baroque planning is derived from a period of princely powers. Baroque plans typically call for stringent control of the surrounding area, and heavy capital investments which are not necessarily conducive to a democratic society. One further comment

about baroque schemes, "half a loaf is actually worse than none: what remains undone or unaffected by the plan is itself a confession of its weakness."[23] Detroit was one of numerous American cities to receive baroque plans as late as the first part of the twentieth century, probably an extended outgrowth of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

The pendulum of planning has had a tendency to swing from one extreme to another. From the City Beautiful movement, of which Bennett's proposals may be classified, the trend shifted to that of the city efficient. Edward H. Bennett's proposal to the City Plan and Improvement Commission consequently never materialized.

Just prior to Mr. Bennett's studies being published by the Improvement Committee, world events were beginning to be upset. World War I started in 1914 and was to last into 1918. The United States became actively involved in the war as of 1917. Numerous citizens of Detroit were called to serve their country in the world conflict. Not all of them returned alive, and while others did return, all of the veterans were respected for their efforts.

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[23]Lewis Mumford, The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), p. 401.

In the year that the war ended (1918), the City of Detroit made a change in the structure of its planning program. The City Plan Commission was formed to replace the earlier City Plan and Improvement Commission. The new commission was afforded more permanent status, and directives as to which efforts to pursue were put forth. This change was a result of influences by the Detroit Citizens League and the Bureau of Governmental Research, the latter formed in 1916. A more responsive common council meeting daily, took heed of the citizens' desires.

As early as 1919 the common council was aware of the general sentiments of the Detroit citizenry relevant to providing some public act of commemoration to the city's war heroes. In 1921 the general electorate of the city approved a propositon on the ballot to,

> authorize General Public Improvement Bonds of Detroit for $5,500,000, to be issued and sold as determined by the Common Council, . . . the avails to be used to procure a site for and to erect a building for public assemblages and recreation, to serve as a city convention hall sufficient to seat ten thousand persons in its main auditorium, with rooms for societies of returned service men and women, the building owned by the city, to be a Memorial Hall in appreciation of those Detroiters who in war gave their lives and their service to their country. . . .[24]

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[24]Memorial Hall Report Recommendations as to Site, and other Records, 1925 (Detroit: Memorial Hall Committee of Citizens and Veterans), p. 3.

The following year Common Council appointed a committee to pursue the matter of a site for the proposed Memorial Hall. On August 22, 1922, the Memorial Hall Site Committee composed of twenty-five members began its work.

In the course of the next two years the Memorial Hall Site Committee along with two other citizens and veterans committees and a sub-committee on site, developed a set of resolutions which were agreed upon and presented to the Common Council. The Committees did draw upon the expert knowledge of two site engineers as well as numerous other individuals. The criteria upon which the site location resolutions were based is of planning significance. The Committee established that the following six general principles were indeed the criteria upon which to base their decision of a site location and size of the site.

> First: Central location--The very nature and use of Memorial Hall require a location central as to city activities.
>
> Second: Setting--The edifice must be given an imposing setting to make it physically impressive.
>
> Third: City Plan--It should tie in intimately with the city plan, to bring out the Memorial's importance as a public building, and, in turn, add its own dignity to the plan.
>
> Fourth: Mass transportation--It should be at a point easily accessible to the largest number of the general public, because this is to be the people's hall, and only their frequent and enthusiastic use of it will fulfill its purpose.

> Fifth: Motor transportation--A location should be chosen where automobiles can be accommodated on occasions when thousands of people wish to come to the hall within a given hour, and disperse simultaneously.
>
> Sixth: Hotels--It should be convenient to the majority of hotels, for otherwise it would fail as a convention hall, and without revenue from that source, might be too burdensome in upkeep.[25]

For some two years the committee consisting of city officials, architects, war veterans, and other citizens examined the possibilities of where to locate a Memorial Hall.

In the course of their efforts the committee utilized the resources of two consultants. The first of these we know of from earlier. He is Mr. Edward H. Bennett of the firm Bennett, Parsons, Frost & Thomas, site engineers with offices located in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Bennett was asked where he would locate a Memorial Hall. In line with his other recommendations concerning a center of Arts and Letters to be located out Woodward between Warren Avenue and Grand Boulevard, he then felt that such a structure would be appropriately located there. In that manner the Memorial Hall would be a part of an impressive grouping of buildings. Mr. Bennett further explained to the committee that he had not been encouraged by the common council to seek a downtown area

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[25] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

location. In fact the common council in its earlier proceedings had indicated no hope for the creation of a new civic center in the downtown area.

In 1923 the initial report as previously submitted by Mr. Bennett to the council was withdrawn. The spirit with which the new Site Selection Committee pursued its goal, presumably allowed them to reconsider the downtown area as a location for the proposed Memorial Hall. One of the members of the committee being an architect, approached the Michigan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for additional expertise resources. The architects organization, ". . . prompted by civic interest, volunteered through a member of the committee to sponsor the bringing to Detroit of Mr. Eliel Saarinen . . . 'world famous architect and city planner' to make this study."[26]

> The suggestion of the Michigan Chapter met with approval on all sides; and through pledges of funds to be privately raised, largely by the Michigan Chapter, and in part by the Memorial Hall Committee of Citizens and Veterans, this additional professional talent of a high order was brought to this problem under happy auspices.[27]

Mr. Saarinen was directed to consider all possible sites and more especially asked to give an opinion on the foot of Woodward Avenue location. According to the

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[26] Ibid., p. 4.

[27] Ibid.

Committees' report he did investigate independently several possibilities of location, and of his own choice concluded that the foot of Woodward Avenue location was his choice. Mr. Saarinen's findings were presented to the Michigan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, who then transmitted them with full approval to the Memorial Hall subcommittee of site selection.

One year later, 1924, the Memorial Hall Site Committee of Citizens and Veterans jointly submitted recommendations as to the site, to the Common Council of the City of Detroit. The committees' conclusions were based on the aptness of the river front--foot of Woodward Avenue site when measured by the six general principles for site location. The joint committee report, pointed out to the common council that three metropolitan betterments could be united into one harmoniously and also more economically if undertaken at the above site. The three betterments consisted of the Memorial Hall, waterfront reclamation, ". . . and the third is a Civic Center, or an immediate lay-out for one--a ground plan which gradually could accommodate a dignified group of appropriate public buildings erected as they may be needed--a Civic Center as distinct from an Art Center."[28]

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[28] Ibid., p. 7.

The committee determined that the artistic grouping of monumental buildings would provide not only aesthetic beauty but also commercial value. The committee went on to state that if the Memorial Hall is to be placed as recommended,

> . . . the committee believes Detroit would wish to see adopted at once a plan insuring a progressive enlargement of this transformation to embrace at least all that district from the river north to and including the south side of Jefferson Avenue, and all territory between Randolph Street on the east and Shelby Street on the west, in all twelve blocks of varying sizes, in which the city already owns the majority of one block on the river and parts of another bordering Jefferson.[29]

The above described area is about 1,500 feet wide and 800 feet deep amounting to 27.5 acres. This area involving twelve city blocks is indicated by a red outline on the overlay of Figure 8. The committee report further stated that of the twelve blocks, four should be acquired for the Memorial Hall and an esplanade, to be known as Victory Square. Two of the four blocks were to be for the Memorial Hall and the other two for the esplanade. Thus only half of the site would be covered with building allowing for a spacious setting. The report states that plans should facilitate later extension of the esplanade, on street widenings and additions as the future may determine.

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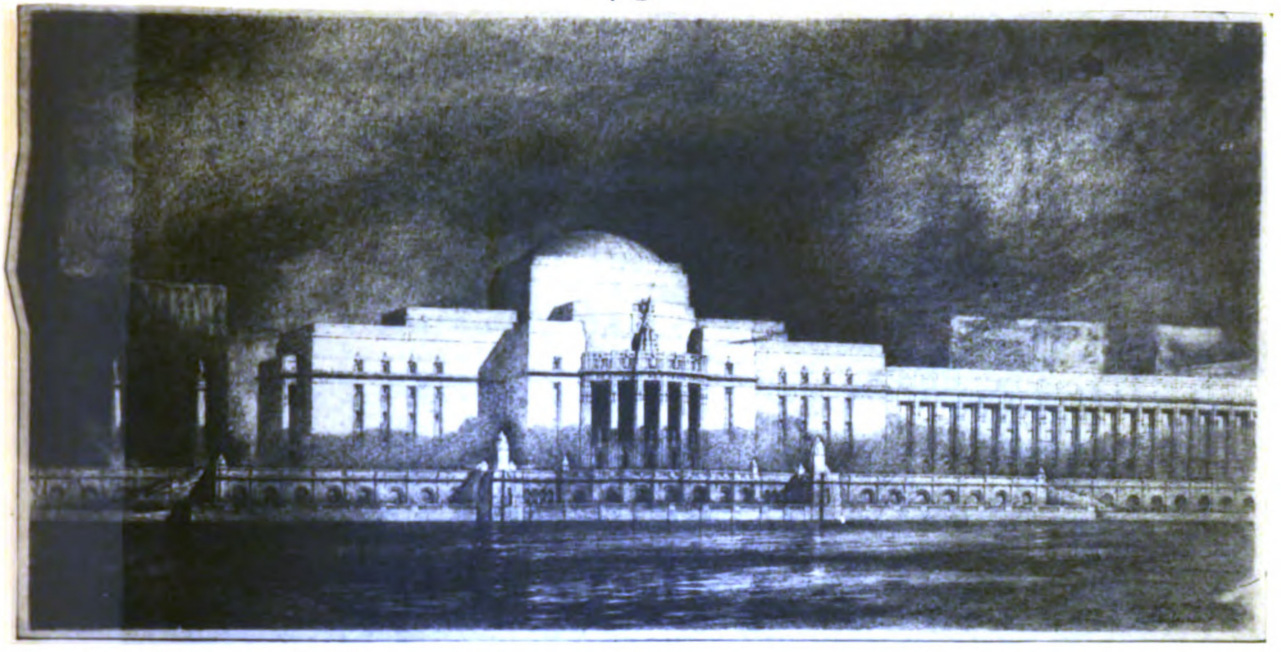
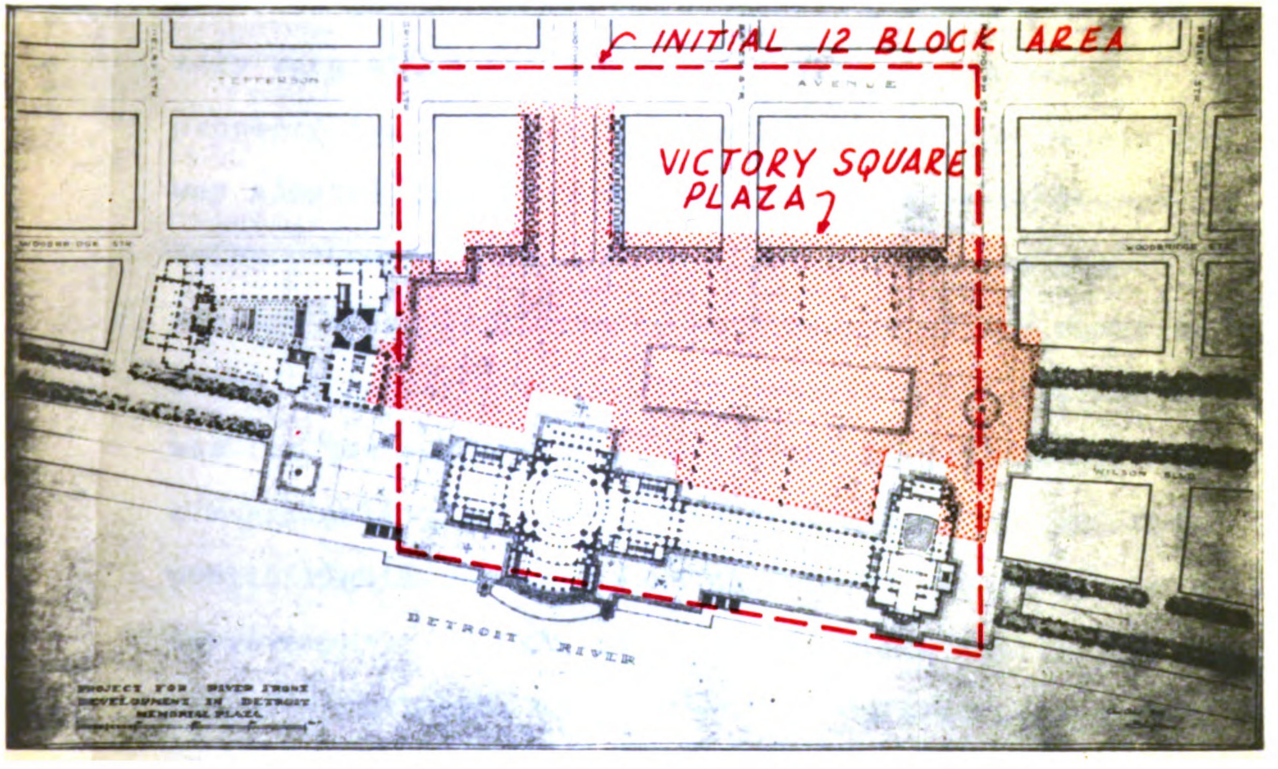
[29]Ibid., p. 8.





PROJECT FOR WATER FRONT DEVELOPMENT, DETROIT, MICH.

ELIEL SAARINEN, ARCHITECT

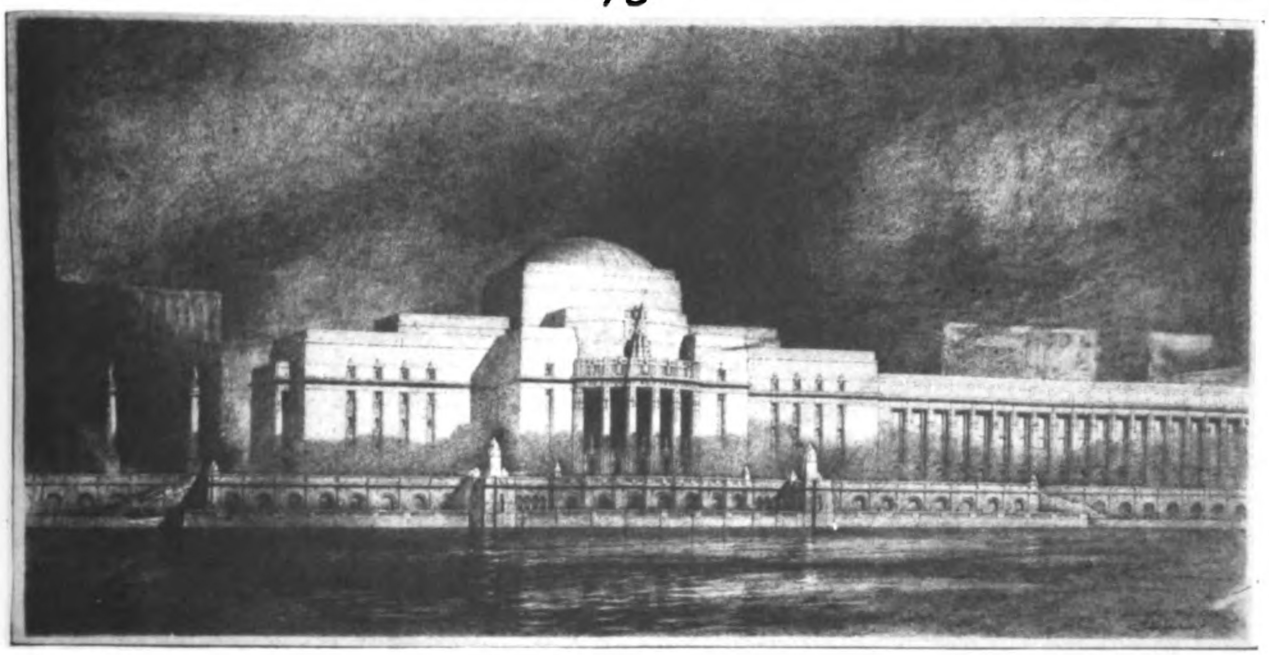
A SECOND PROPOSAL FOR A NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, BY ELIEL SAARINEN, 1924

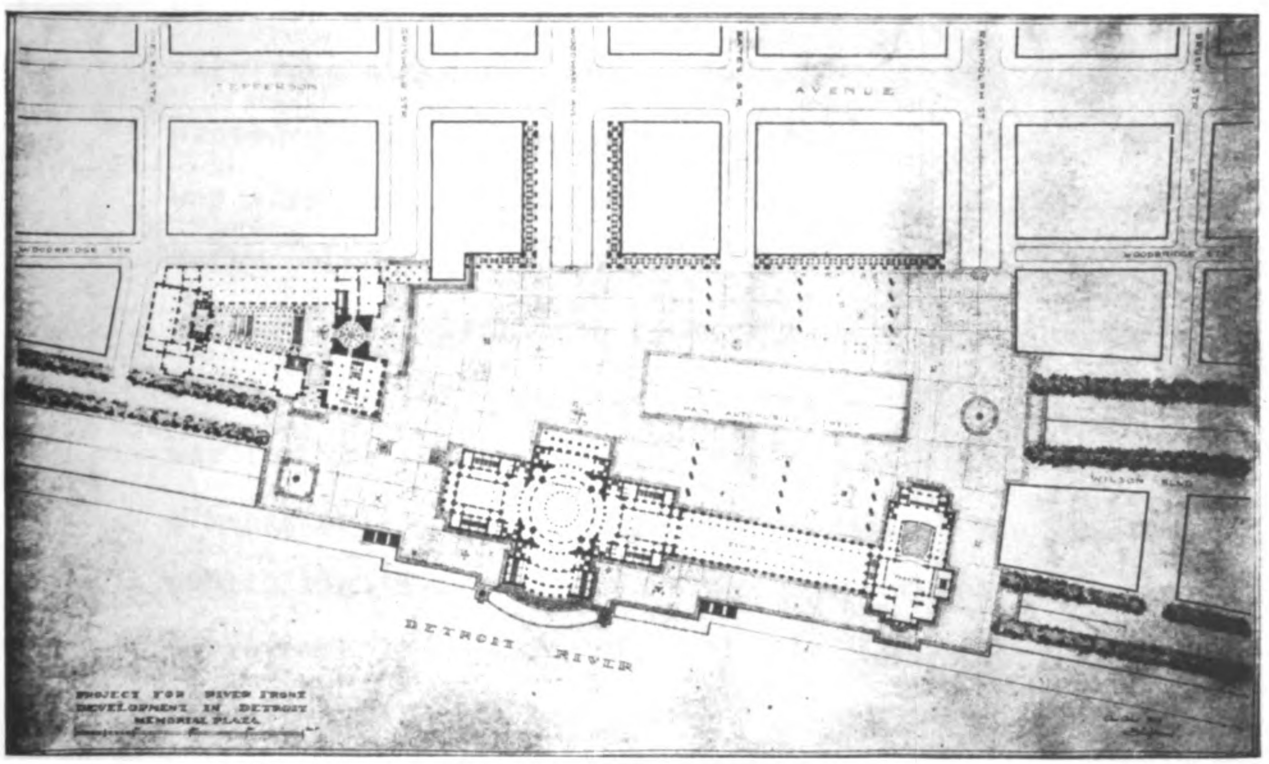
SOURCE:
THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

FIGURE 8

A SECOND PROPOSAL FOR A NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE,
BY LILIE SAARINEN 1954

SOURCE:
THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT





PROJECT FOR WATER FRONT DEVELOPMENT, DETROIT, MICH.

ELIEL SAARINEN, ARCHITECT

FIGURE 8

In any case the initial development would have a four and one-half acre esplanade of public open space. Figure 8 includes a facsimile of the rendering prepared by Eliel Saarinen to convey his concept of a total architectural composition. A photograph of the rendering was incorporated in the published report by the committees to the common council.

The committee report was received by council in June of 1924, and the same was adopted soon after on July 1, 1924. The council in the same resolution directed the Corporation Counsel to prepare the necessary resolution for the condemnation of the said property (the aforesaid twelve blocks). The resolution was adopted unanimously by the council, seven members being present. Another legal requirement was the passage of a resolution by both houses of the Michigan State Legislature. The state legislature's resolution was for the purpose of allowing the City of Detroit as a municipality to exercise eminent domain of land for public rights-of-way beyond the precise needs of the improvement. In 1925 the Michigan State Legislature proposed that said resolution be submitted to the people of the State at the next general election, as an amendment to Article XIII of the 1908 State Constitution. Said amendment would be known as Section 5. Herein

follows the text of said amendment as ratified at the November election in 1928,

> Municipality; eminent domain for boulevards, streets and alleys. Sec. 5. In exercising the powers of eminent domain and in taking the fee of land and property that is needed for the acquiring opening and widening of boulevards, streets and alleys, municipalities shall not be limited to the acquisition of the land to be covered by the proposed improvement, but may take such other land and property adjacent to the proposed improvement as may be appropriate to secure the greatest degree of public advantage from such improvement. After so much of the land and property has been appropriated for any such needed public purpose, the remainder may be sold or leased with or without such restrictions as may be appropriate to the improvement made. Bonds may be issued to supply the funds to pay in whole or in part for the property so appropriated, but such bonds shall be a lien only on the property so acquired and they shall not be included in any limitation of the bonded indebtedness of such municipality.[30]

Thus, within ten years of the war's end the necessary governmental machinery appeared to be prepared and ready to embark upon a common goal. Even the Board of Supervisors of Wayne County passed a resolution to consider the matter of a joint city and county building. Later we will see that just such a facility was eventually to be constructed as part of the Detroit Civic Center. Just as world and national events had started the movement to obtain a Memorial Hall, economic forces at these large scales were to effect the

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[30]Michigan Constitution (1908) Michigan Statutes Annotated (Callaghan & Co., 1964), Volume I, p. 302.

implementation of the proposal. In 1929, the year following the general election approving the amendment to the State Constitution to allow purchase of lands for a Civic Center, the stock market crashed. The economy of the nation reached rock bottom in 1932, and did not fully recover momentum until World War II. Public projects as well as private, non-essential to the war effort were curtailed until after the War. Materials, manpower and fiscal resources were all focused on winning the war. Detroit's Memorial Hall and civic center would have to wait until after the war to be realized.

CHAPTER IV

TWENTIETH CENTURY: PRE WORLD WAR II

General Factors of Change

Even though we have seen that the economy of the nation and Detroit was struggling in the third decade of the twentieth century, Detroit's population growth was not suppressed. In the twenty years from 1900 through 1920 the city's population more than tripled. Such an increase of people, there were 993,678 persons in the city as of 1920,[31] required more space just to house them at the prevailing density levels. Where these people would live was partially determined by a new mode of transportation. From 1910 to 1920 the electric street cars reached their peak of service, and influenced the size of the developing city. With this mode of public mass transit, housing was able to shift outward away from the earlier established pattern of development. For the more prosperous individuals automobiles were becoming available on a

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[31]U.S., Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. Number of Inhabitants, Michigan. Final Report PC(1)-24A, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961, p. 24-11. Note: See Appendix A for compilation of population figures.

mass production basis, which allowed even greater flexibility of travel.

In conjunction with the above factors, several other technological achievements were combined to create a new building type--the skyscraper. Although the several advances technologically were ushered in during the later years of the previous century, their impact was not as great as when the combination of them was brought together. Electric lighting, power stations, steel skeleton framework for buildings, and electric elevators, made it possible to construct much taller functional buildings than those before the turn of the century. Telephone service also facilitated communications from one office to another, whether or not the office was in the same building. Thus numerous offices could be arranged in any one building on a given parcel of land.

Outlying City Changes Affect the Central Business District

Related to the factors of change mentioned above, three significant events in the city's development will be found to affect the center of the city. Two of the three events concern transportation improvements. In 1915 the Grand Boulevard was still considered the boundary or outermost limits of the city. Only five years later Outer Drive was considered the limits of

city growth. In those five short years the city expanded five miles to the north, east and west. These two concentric or encircling roadway systems were connected to the Central Business District by the radiating thoroughfares such as Michigan, Grand River, Woodward and Gratiot Avenues. Prior to 1900 these radial thoroughfares were troughs of mud. By 1920 the radiating thoroughfares were paved; Woodward Avenue being the first highway in America to have a concrete pavement. These roads were a part of the 1925 Master Plan of Thoroughfares. Besides the above mentioned roads such other outlying routes as Southfield, Ford Road, James Couzens and Eight Mile Road, would all be part of a "superhighway" network serving the suburban trend of development.

One other facet of Detroit's development would further the push to move new city growth outward. Detroit's new cultural facilities in the form of a Center of Arts and Letters was established one and a half miles north of the closest edge of downtown. Built in the 1920's the center's first two buildings were the new main public library and the Institute of Arts building.

The effects of the trends to move outward are also shown[32] in the annexation program of the city. The

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[32]See Appendix B.

city almost tripled in size during the first twenty years of the century. In 1905 the city embraced 28.75 square miles; by 1920 the city covered 75.62 square miles. Summarizing the several major forces of that time, we find that a growing population was being facilitated in its outward settlement pattern by improved transportation facilities, the latter including new types of vehicles and much improved roadways.

The Framework for Land-Space Utilization Changes: Result of Technology and Urban Growth

In light of the preceeding statements on the overall situation of the city, attention is here focused on the subject area of the thesis--the central business district. Land use and the changes thereof for this period of time can be recognized in three different ways. One, new development filling in the voids or vacant parcels of land; second, new development (structure) replacing a like use; and third, a new use replacing a dissimilar use. In the latter case either a new structure or the previous structure, dependent upon the individual case was possible.

The following physical characteristics assist to describe the central business district at the turn of the century. The entire land area exclusive of public rights-of-way, and parks was not built-up with

structures. The more built up areas were in the central portion of the district. Buildings ranged from two stories to six stories in height. The most prevalent construction materials for structures were timber and brick. Numerous buildings were sited, such as to have a front yard.

With the advent of new structural systems for constructing buildings and the associated vertical circulation systems to support them, the new buildings to be constructed in the central business district were soon to far exceed the previous height limitation of the earlier buildings. In addition to increasing substantially the height of the new buildings, the new structures were designed to utilize the entire parcel of land on which they were located. As a consequence, where previously individual structures tended to have yard space on one or more sides including the front, the new structures were built up to the property line.

The newly reorganized City Plan Commission of 1918, had been directed to prepare a zoning plan for the city. Several draft versions were prepared, but an ordinance was not adopted until 1940.[33] Development of the entire cultural business district took place before the zoning ordinance ever came into effect.

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[33]City of Detroit, Official Zoning Ordinance, effective December 25, 1940.

In all the preceeding chapters, discussion of land use and physical development has revealed that generally each parcel of development was considered as a separate entity. Various similar land use functions may have been observed in close proximity to each other, yet they were within separate free-standing structures with space around each of them. With the new construction possibilities and land use changes occurring, the density of development began to alter.

Once a fairly tall building was erected at a given place the adjacent properties with low buildings were susceptible to the possibility of being redeveloped with taller and larger structures. I assume that this condition is predicated upon economic principles. Property values in the central area began to rise.[34] The private property owners were placed in an almost compulsive situation of maximizing on the economic possibilities of greater return on their properties.

The significance of the above conditions is that previously the public open spaces in the central business district were bordered by relatively low buildings, many of them surrounded by their own private open space. Once the newer buildings began to

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[34]See Appendix C. Property Valuations in the Central Business District, City of Detroit.

predominate, the character of the public open space was altered. The basic character of the public open space I am referring to is that of space. Outdoor open space can assume a variety of different interpretations. One such interpretation is that the space is similar to an open ceilinged room. A room is a space enclosed by walls. In the case of a city, a space can be enclosed by buildings. The new twentieth century buildings did just that. The height, bulk and placement of the new buildings created "walls" around the several public open spaces.

It should be briefly mentioned here that the apparent sense of space enclosure[35] is affected by a variety of factors. Mention is made here of a fairly comprehensive list of these factors; while for the purposes of this thesis, I will only amplify on those which are directly related to the subject matter. A comprehensive list affecting the sense of enclosure in open space would include the following factors: architecture of the surrounding buildings; landscape features in and around the space, surface treatment of the space "floor" such as: street pavement and widewalks; absolute size and proportions of the space measured horizontally; area of the space. While the former

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[35]See Appendix D for Sense of Enclosure Diagram.

factors will influence the apparent sense of space--enclosed or unenclosed, the latter factors of size, proportion and area are the undergirding framework upon which the architecture and landscape elements are superimposed.

Thus it will be observed that in the case of Detroit's central business district, a spatial transformation of the character of public open space began to take place in the first three decades of twentieth century. This transformation was not a stated policy goal of the City of Detroit, but rather a manifestation of the collective developing city. As we will see the new technological "advances" would cause the city fathers to assess the changing conditions and alter the character of the public open space in the central business district.

Land Use Changes

General Pattern within the District: 1900-20

An inspection of buildings in 1900 finds that older buildings predominated in the southern half of the district, that being nearer the river; while newer buildings were to be found to the north, east and west. Also, a greater mixture of land uses is observed in the south-central portion of the district in comparison to the balance of the district. The following remarks

provide a generalized statement of the land uses in the district during the first part of the twentieth century, and are portrayed graphically on the black overlay of Figure 6. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the development pattern was that by this time all the land within the described central business district was in an urban context. Agrarian pursuits had been replaced by man's urban structures.

A sizeable number of properties were now developed for the purposes of commerce with significant concentrations evident elsewhere than just along Jefferson and Woodward Avenues. Fort Street West, Michigan Avenue, Broadway, Monroe and Washington Boulevard were all lined with commercial establishments.

Industrial firms as a land use component were located predominantly south of Larned Street. This distribution was essentially equal west and east of Woodward Avenue. Other scattered locations of industry were to be found out Grand River Avenue and east of Randolph Street both north and south of Gratiot Avenue.

Institutions at this time had a tendency to locate in pairs. That is to say, where one was situated another would also be close by, usually either within the same block or no more than a block away. In less than half a dozen situations, was one institutional land use located in isolation from all other institutions.

The distribution of institutions was fairly uniform throughout the Central Business District, the only areas not having any of this land use being the extreme northwest and northeast portions of the Central Business District. It is evident already, that by this time the commercial land uses were becoming a dominant force, since no institutions were located within the retail core of the Central Business District other than along Washington Boulevard and the Opera House at Campus Martius.

Two additional blocks within the district shifted to public ownership for the purpose of federal and county services. The former is that block bounded by Lafayette, Fort, Wayne and Shelby Streets, where a large post office and federal office building was erected. The latter case is the County Court House site bounded by Randolph, Brush, Fort and Congress Streets.

Changes Related to Selected Spaces

The previous remarks provide a brief description of the over-all situation in the district, here follows a closer examination of the conditions now surrounding the six selected public open spaces previously scrutinized. Review of them coincides with the previous order as follows: Campus Martius, Capitol Park, Grand Circus Park, Library Park, Cadillac Square and Clinton Park.

Each of the above mentioned places is identified by a number one through six in the legend on Figure 6 and the numbers are repeated on the map.

1. Campus Martius

All the land uses around the Campus Martius were commercial by the turn of the century. The major change which transpired was the size of the structures which enclosed the commercial functions. The first quarter of the twentieth century saw the erection of numerous high-rise office buildings along Griswold Street. Campus Martius is bounded on the west side by Griswold Street. Among the tall buildings on Griswold Street in the immediate vicinity of Campus Martius are the Penoscot, Dime Bank, and Standard Savings and Loan. The one institutional use still facing the north end of Campus Martius was the Opera House. Thus we see that the land use situation presents a picture of stability. With respect to the other two central questions to be answered, change rather than stability have occurred. When the "new" buildings were erected around the Campus Martius they were laid out on an axis consistent with the City Hall. But the City Hall violated the original true north-south axis of the Governor and Judges' Plan by some thirty degrees. As a result the shape of Campus Martius as a space was altered. The other change

as a result of the new high-rise buildings was an increased degree of land use specialization within the general commercial land use category. Financial institutions and closely related operations clustered around the Campus Martius.

2. Capitol Park

Like Campus Martius by the twentieth century the land use pattern surrounding Capitol Park was set. The entire perimeter was devoted to commercial functions. Griswold Street also touches Capitol Park. The new construction of high-rise buildings extended northerly along Griswold Street as far as Capitol Park. The David Stott building was constructed at the southeast corner of Griswold and State Streets. Like several other buildings along Griswold Street the David Stott building exceeds 400 feet in height.

One other newcomer to Capitol Park in the first forty years of this century is the arrival of mass transit. Capitol Park was converted from a relatively unused grassy area to a terminal point of the street car lines. As such probably many more people entered the downtown via this particular public open space.

The space of Capitol Park remained a triangular plot of ground, surrounded by numerous commercial establishments.

3. Grand Circus Park

The northern most of the selected public open spaces experienced considerable change in the first part of the century. Previously the Park had been surrounded by houses, two churches and the edges of commercial buildings fronting on Woodward Avenue. By 1916 according to the Baist Atlas the only remaining residential property fronting on Grand Circus Park was in the northeast corner. The predominate land use surrounding the park was now commercial. The church which had stood at the corner of Bagley and Park Streets was now replaced by a large hotel. The church at the northeast corner of Adams Street and Woodward Avenue remained, with one new institutional use in the block east of the church. This new institution was the new quarters for the Young Mens Christian Association at Witherell and Adams Streets.

While the semicircular shape of Grand Circus Park remained unchanged the land use composition has changed to predominately commercial uses mixed between retail and office functions.

4. Library Park

This complementary space to the Capitol Park also was the site of land use changes around its space in the first half of the twentieth century. From a

mixture of commercial and residential uses the pattern shifted exclusively to commercial land uses. Although no skyscrapers arose around this space the height of the new buildings increased substantially.

Like Campus Martius the Library Park space was the continued site of a public building. With the completion of the main library elsewhere this downtown branch specialized in serving the needs of business interests in the central business district. The triangular shape of the space remained constant.

5. Cadillac Square

The most pronounced change to occur in Cadillac Square was the removal of the markets from the center of the public right-of-way. The central area of the public right-of-way was replaced by a boulevard treatment.

At the east end of Cadillac Square a new County Court House was constructed replacing commercial and industrial land uses in that block. This location for the County Court House complemented the location of the City Hall at Woodward Avenue. Probably kindred private land uses located in the commercial buildings along both sides of Cadillac Square between these two governmental functions. New construction bordering Cadillac Square included two skyscrapers: Barlum Tower, and the

Cadillac Square Building. Both of these structures were situated on the north side of the street in the block closest to Woodward Avenue.

During the 1920's the spacious boulevard treatment of this street was converted to a street car terminal area similar to Capitol Park.

6. Clinton Park

Only one change is apparent in the surrounding land uses of this former cemetery. Where previously the jail and commercial facilities had bordered the west side of the Park now an industrial concern occupied the building next to the jail. The east side of the park continued to be bordered by the several medical institutions, the north by commercial, and the south side by presumably a mixture of commercial and residential uses.

The shape of the park in the twentieth century was slightly altered at the north end. Where previously it had been a regular rectangle, now the north end was triangular, reaching as far as Gratiot Avenue.

As far as attracting specific land uses around a particular public open space those medical institutions and governmental agencies which started here increased in size, attracting additions to themselves.

Chapter Summary

A composite of three major factors affected the composition of the Central Business District. First of all the population of Detroit increased measurably; next transportation facilities were markedly improved allowing the expanding populous to shift away from the Central Business District; and third new construction techniques allowed substantially taller buildings to be erected, replacing numerous low structues within the district. The overall results in the Central Business District were that while the public open spaces remained unchanged, the properties around them were covered with larger and taller buildings. Furthermore more of the properties in the Central Business District were being used for commercial purposes instead of industrial or residential uses.

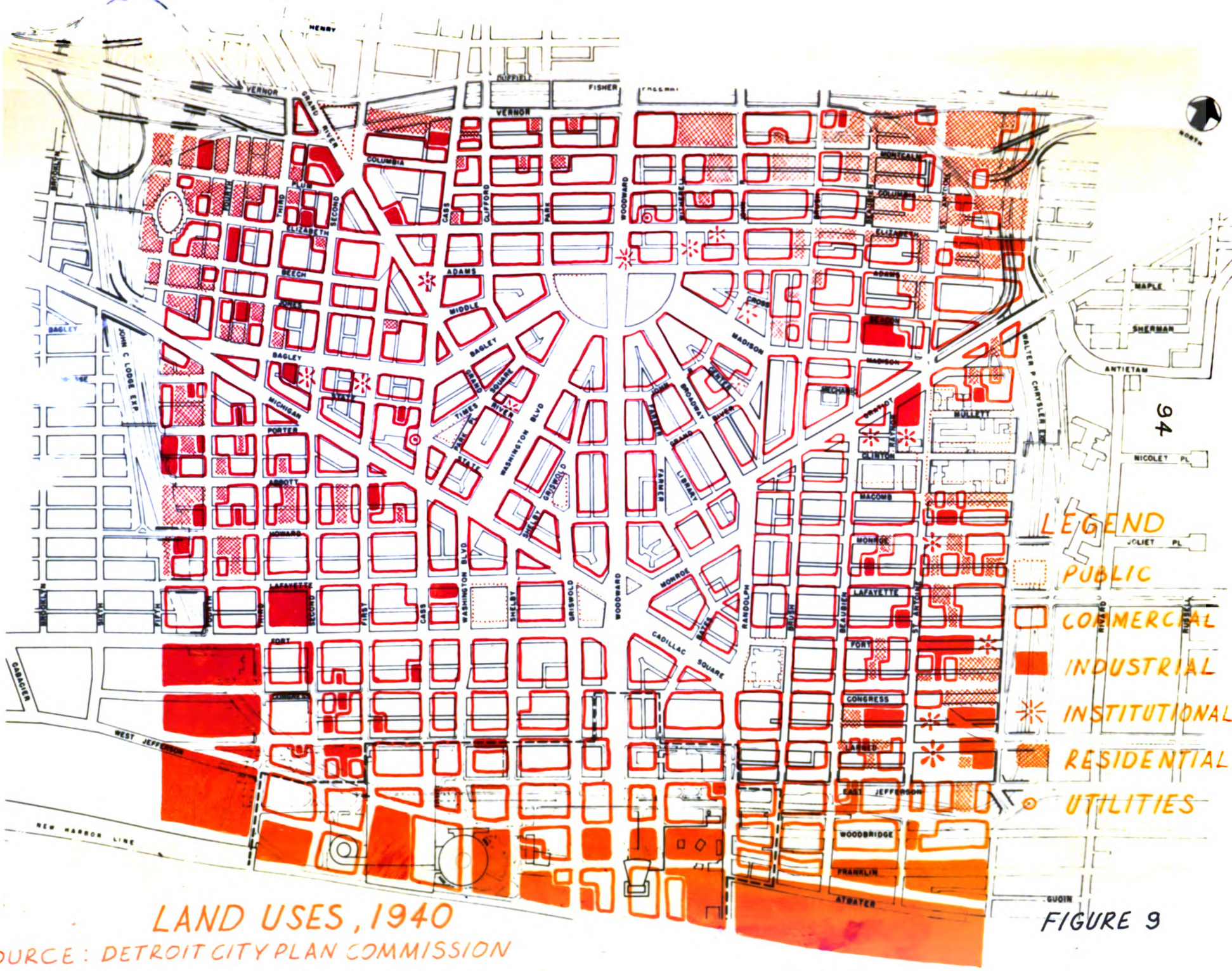
CHAPTER V

WORLD WAR II ERA TO THE PRESENT

A Lull

The decade preceeding World War Two was marked by an economy shaken by the depression. New development was virtually at a standstill. The economic boom years of the twenties waned. Downtown Detroit had experienced its greatest building period to date. The skyscrapers which were completed before the depression set in constitute the bulk of the new construction in the immediate past forty years.

Figure 9 portrays the land use situation just prior to the outbreak of the war. The most evident change in the over-all land use composition of the district from 1916 to 1940 is the general replacement of residential uses by commercial uses. Of the six selected public open spaces the only land use change was at the Campus Martius. Here the former Opera House on the north edge of the public open space was converted into commercial space for a discount department store. Public open space as an attractor of other land uses had leveled off. Virtually all the land surrounding the various public open spaces was built up and without



LAND USES, 1940

SOURCE: DETROIT CITY PLAN COMMISSION

FIGURE 9

LAND USES, 1940

SOURCE: DETROIT CITY PLAN COMMISSION


NORTH
WALTER P CHRYSLER EXP.
JOHN C LODGE EXP.
WOODWARD
GRAND RIVER
GRATIOT
MICHIGAN
WASHINGTON BLVD
CADILLAC SQUARE
EAST JEFFERSON
WEST JEFFERSON
NEW HARBOR LINE
RIVARD
RUSSELL
ANTIETAM
MAPLE
SHERMAN
NICOLET PL
JOLIET PL
GUOIN
ST ANTOINE
BEAUBIEN
BRUSH
RANDOLPH
MONROE
LAFAYETTE
FORT
CONGRESS
LARNED
WOODBRIDGE
FRANKLIN
ATWATER
MACOMB
CLINTON
RAYNOR
MULLETT
MADISON
BEACON
ADAMS
ELIZABETH
COLUMBIA
MONTCALM
JOHN R
WITHERELL
BROADWAY
LIBRARY
FARMER
CENTER
CROSS
MECHANIC
BATES
GRISWOLD
SHELBY
STATE
PARK PL
TIMES SQUARE
BAGLEY
MIDDLE
PARK
CLIFFORD
CASS
FIRST
SECOND
THIRD
FOURTH
FIFTH
SIXTH
PLUM
BEECH
JONES
PORTER
ABBOTT
HOWARD
LABROSSE
BROOKLYN
FISHER
VERNOR
DUFFIELD
HENRY
GABACIER
FIGURE 9

significant economic means new development did not replace the existing development. The only exception to the statement of all the land bounding the public open spaces being built-up was at Grand Circus Park. There the frontage of the block bounded by Witherell, Adams and Madison Streets was devoted to a surface parking lot.

In lieu of past planning efforts, "in 1940, with war impending, the national economy began shifting to war production and went into full gear upon our entering the war in late 1941."[36] "Greater emphasis was placed upon such matters as: planning for defense, war housing . . . , and post-war planning largely concerned with public works as a hedge against post-war unemployment."[37] Before the end of the war though, Detroit's Mayor Jefferies charged the City Plan Commission with the responsibility of developing a comprehensive plan for the entire city.

Planning for the Future

During the mid-forties a series of reports covering various individual subject matters of the plan were published. Included among these reports were two

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[36]Russell Van Nest Black, Planning and the Planning Profession: The Past Fifty Years 1917-1967 (Washington, D.C., American Institute of Planners), p. 11.

[37]Ibid.

which have had a direct bearing on the central business district. One is the Riverfront Development, and the other, A Civic Center Plan. These reports were written to obtain a response from the citizenry. Thereafter in 1947 a series of technical reports were prepared which the Plan Commission used in presenting the proposals to the City Common Council. By 1951 all of the elements of the plan had been reviewed by the numerous operating departments and agencies of the city and approved by the Common Council. In that year, the Official Master Plan for the City of Detroit was published, coinciding with Detroit's 250th birthday celebration.

The format of the Master plan did not single out the central business district for special emphasis, excepting that attention was given to two special areas in the city, the Cultural Center outside of the central business district and the Civic Center within the district. The latter was described as lying adjacent to the downtown along the riverfront.

As a part of the master plan a generalized land use plan map described in relative detail a manner in which the city should attempt to develop. This map included the general alignment of proposed expressways as well as the several categories of land uses. The land use categories included within the central business district were: major business district, government

center, major public recreation area, and light and heavy industrial areas. By far the largest land area within the district was committed to major business district uses. The second largest single area of land use is that designated for a governmental center. The area so designated corresponds to the boundaries of the proposed civic center. The relevant features of the Master Plan pertaining to the Central Business District area are shown on Figure 10.

Refining the Plan

Five years after the adoption of the Master Plan a second technical report pertaining the the Central Business District was completed by the Plan Commission staff. This report dated 1956 attempted to put forth the analytical features necessary to consider in preparing future project plans within the district. The report was organized in three major parts: Land use, Trafficways and Transit. An important analytical tool used in evaluating existing land uses and potential organization of the central business district was the decision to divide the district into "three more or less distinct parts."[38] The premise for establishing the three zones was based on existing land uses and

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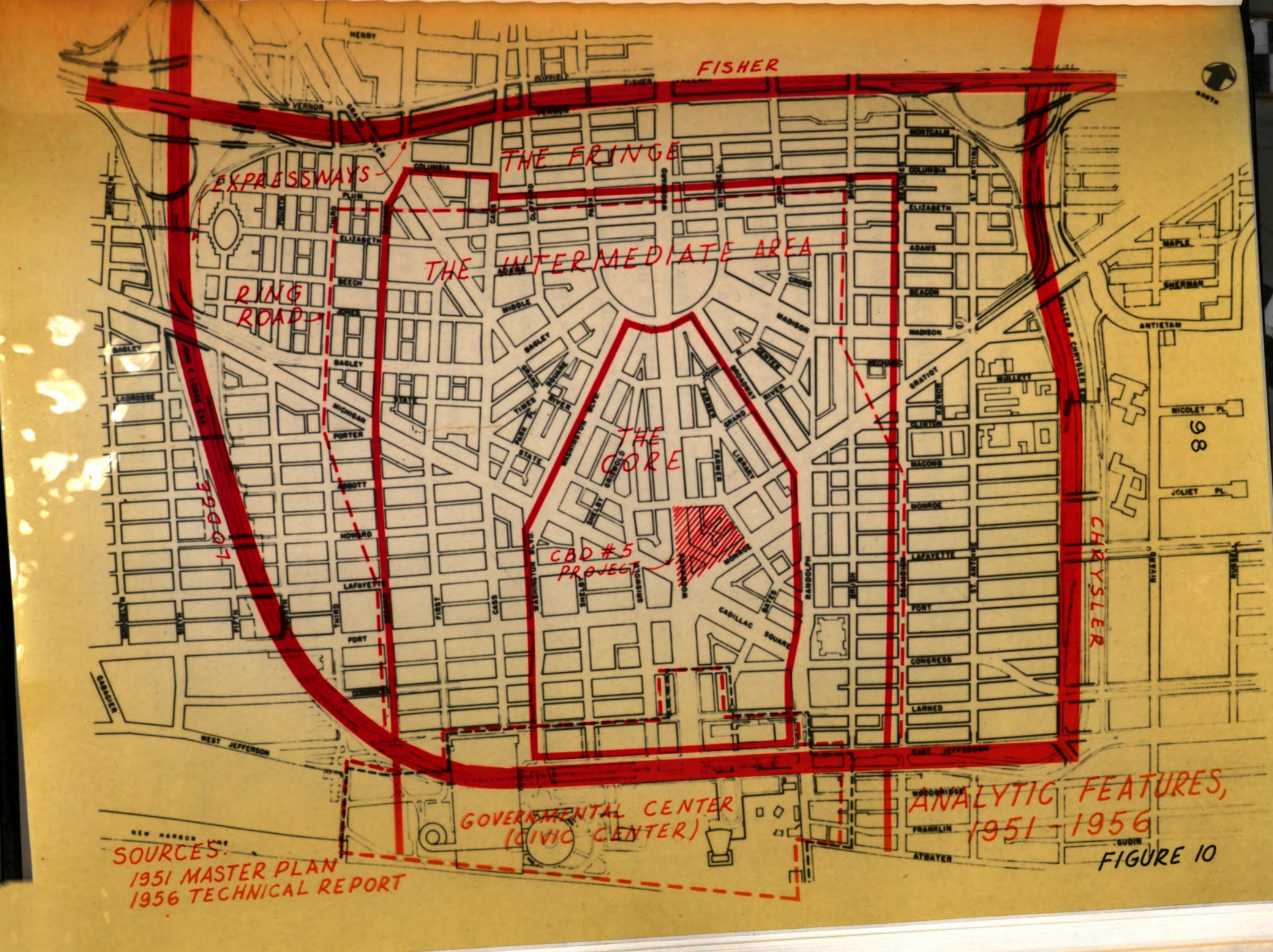
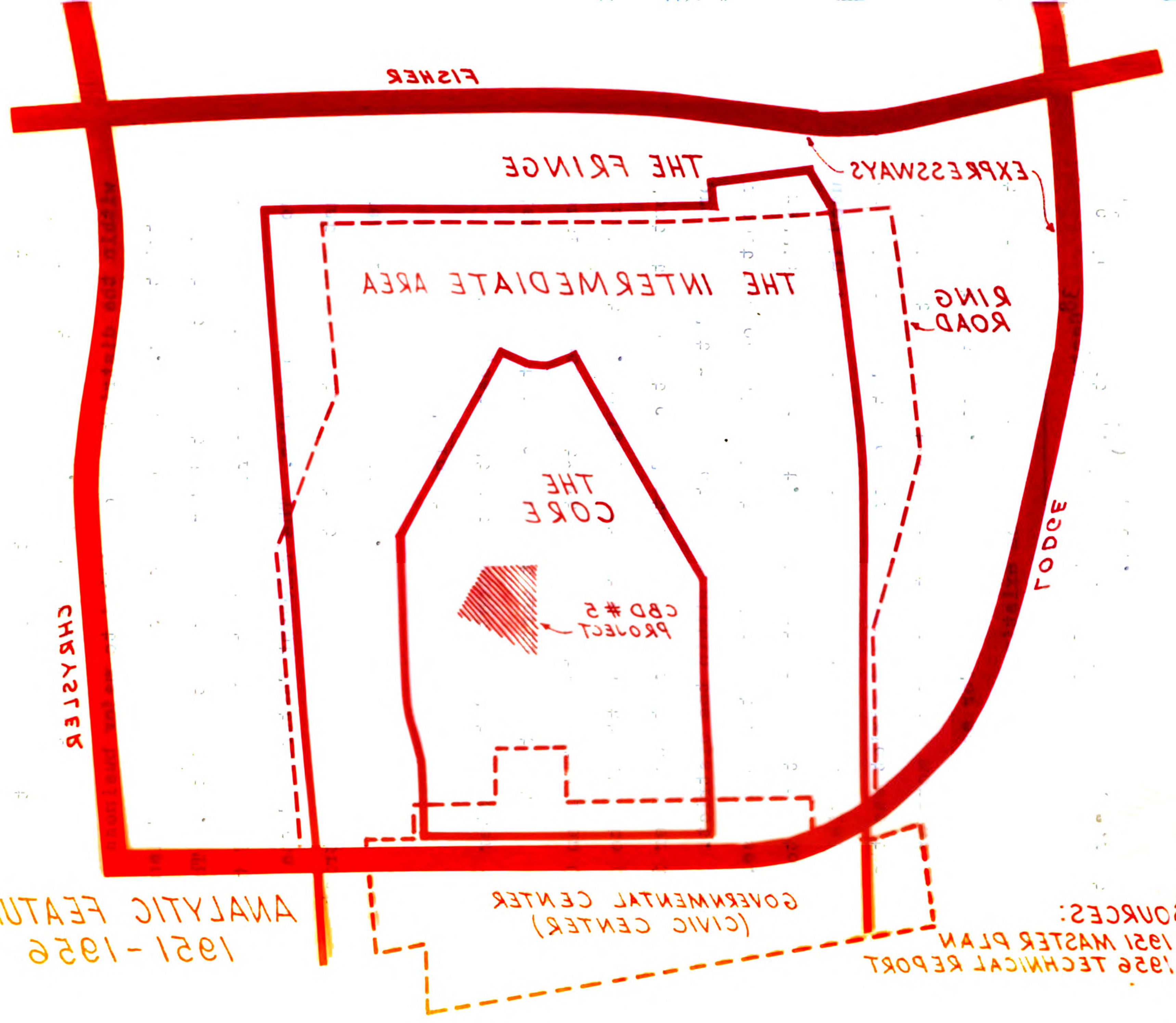
[38] Central Business District Study, Master Plan Technical Report #7, Second Series, June 1956 (Detroit City Plan Commission), p. I-7.


FISHER
EXPRESSWAYS
THE FRINGE
THE INTERMEDIATE AREA
RING ROAD
THE CORE
CBD #5 PROJECT
CHRYSLER
I-96
GOVERNMENTAL CENTER (CIVIC CENTER)
ANALYTIC FEATURES, 1951 - 1956
SOURCES:
1951 MASTER PLAN
1956 TECHNICAL REPORT
FIGURE 10



ANALYTIC FEATURES,
1951-1956

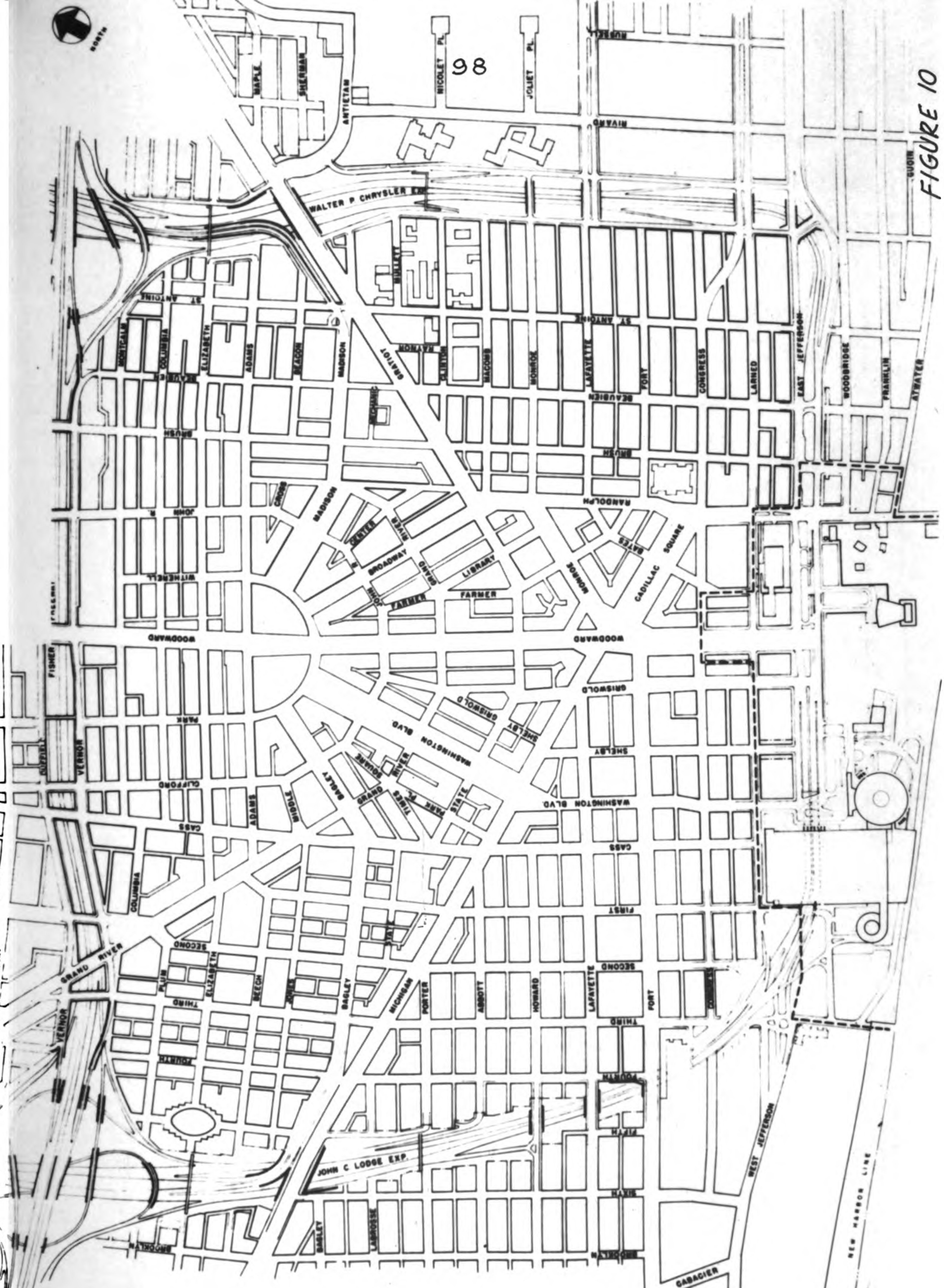

NORTH
WALTER P. CHRYSLER EXP.
JOHN C LODGE EXP.
WOODWARD
GRATIOT
MICHIGAN
GRAND RIVER
WASHINGTON BLVD.
CADILLAC SQUARE
EAST JEFFERSON
WEST JEFFERSON
RIVARD
ANTIETAM
NICOLET PL.
JOLIET PL.
MAPLE
SHERMAN
RUSSELL
ST. ANTOINE
BEAUBIEN
BRUSH
RANDOLPH
MONROE
LAFAYETTE
CONGRESS
LARNED
FORT
WOODBRIDGE
FRANKLIN
ATWATER
GUOIN
MADISON
ADAMS
ELIZABETH
COLUMBIA
MONTCALM
WITHERELL
JOHN R.
BROADWAY
FARMER
LIBRARY
BATES
GRISWOLD
SHELBY
STATE
CASS
FIRST
SECOND
THIRD
FOURTH
FIFTH
ABBOTT
HOWARD
PORTER
BAGLEY
LABROSSE
CLIFFORD
PARK
VERNON
FISHER
HENRY
TIMES SQUARE
GRAND RIVER
MIDDLE
PLUM
BEECH
JONES
MACOMB
CLINTON
CABACIER
NEW HARBOR LINE

FIGURE 10

existing intensities, both of which inferred that the distinct parts did exist. The three zones are identified as, The Core, The Intermediate Area, and The Fringe.

Briefly, the three zones exhibit the following particular characteristics. The Core is the central part of the district where tall buildings exist. The uses are intensive, and it is the destination of the majority of people going downtown for whatever purpose. The Intermediate Area lies immediately beyond the core. Many of the facilities in this area are parking and other uses serving the Core. It contains many non-shopping center type of commercial uses that do not have to be on high value land in the Core. Also, it is the medium intensity area although small portions of it are of light intensity. The third area, The Fringe, is the remainder of the Central Business District, its outer edges. It is an area where many uses are mixed more or less haphazardly. Usually, but not always, they are of light intensity. Many of the fringe uses have no particular reason for being within the Central Business District rather than just outside of it. The boundary lines of the above three zones are shown on the overlay of Figure 10.

The reason for mentioning the three zones is that the Future Land Use Plan of the district, is based upon the combination of the superblock concept applied

within the three zones. The superblock concept as described by the report is an arrangement of physical elements such as buildings and open space to take into account the needs of the pedestrian. The utilization of the superblock concept is more appropriate for application in the Core Area, than the Intermediate or Fringe Areas.

Recent Changes

The application of the superblock concept is being utilized in redeveloping a portion of the Core Area. An example of this application is afforded in the Land Use and Development Plan for Central Business District Project Number Five. This project lies in the heart of the commercial core, and is locally known as the Kern Block. The project boundaries are Woodward, Monroe, Farmer and Gratiot. Due north of the project is the J. L. Hudson Company department store, while immediately northeast of the project is the Library Park Square, and the southern tip of the project is adjacent to Campus Martius and the area now known as Kennedy Square. The Kennedy Square underground parking garage is on the site of the old city hall. Relevant to the thesis are the conditions set forth in the Development Plan. At present a relatively small triangular parcel within the project is devoted to

public open space. Under the conditions of the project the developer may relocate the public open space to any other part of the project so long as it is at least an equal amount in area. The objective of the plan is that, "the arrangement of buildings and open space on the site should serve to link functionally and visually the two public squares adjacent to the site."[39] A further qualifying remark of the report states, "the open space area designated on the 'Land Use and Development Plan,' may have buildings built upon it if an equal amount of open space accessible to the public is provided elsewhere on the parcel."[40]

The inference is that the public open space is important to the project and to the district in general. The objective is to relate the various parts of the district to each other via the open space connection. Emphasis in this case is placed on a pedestrian connecting path, this project being in the Core Area of the district.

Other elements of the Master Plan which have been refined since its approval include the completion of the encircling expressway network, the beginning of

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[39] Urban Design Study, Central Business District Project Number Five, Detroit, Michigan (Detroit City Plan Commission, January 28, 1964), p. 13, mimeographed.

[40] Ibid., p. 14.

an intercepting roadway system in the Fringe area and the construction of the Civic Center on the area designated in the Master Plan for a government center. The following remarks attempt to succinctly conclude the more recent changes within the district which have now come into being.

Ring Boulevard

Located approximately one-third of the way inside of the district from the expressway network a boulevard type road is being developed. The purpose of this roadway is two-fold. First, it intercepts the downtown bound expressway traffic and circulates it to appropriate destinations. Secondly, by creating this new roadway system numerous existing gridiron pattern streets can be eliminated. As planned the new route, "will consist of two thirty-six foot roadways divided by a twenty-four foot landscaped median strip. Margins of fifteen feet are proposed. It is believed that this ample boulevard will help produce excellent building sites as it passes through the area."[41] The proposed alignment of the Ring Boulevard is shown on Figure 10.

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[41]Carl W. Almblad, "Some Traffic Factors in the Central Area Development," Traffic Quarterly, XIII (July, 1959), 378-395.

The Civic Center

The idea of a civic center in Detroit is not new, we have seen in Chapters III and IV that earlier efforts were attempted. The development of the civic center complex represents the one major undertaking by the community which has resulted in a significantly new component of public open space being created, since the original Governor and Judges Plan was laid out.

To properly reintroduce the nature of the civic center and its purpose the following quotes are extracted from the 1951 official master plan.

> From earliest times cities that have reached cultural maturity have sought to arrange their governmental buildings in orderly, visually effective architectural groups. The idea of a Civic Center for Detroit has risen out of the recognition that this city also needs a group of public buildings symbolic of its social and policital democracy.[42]
>
> The first purpose of the Civic Center plan is to designate a convenient central location where the administrative offices of government--whether city, county, state or federal--can be brought together.[43]
>
> A second function of the Civic Center is to provide a place for larger civic affairs in which many people may be brought together. For this purpose, the plan has been designed with meeting halls of various sizes grouped around a central plaza

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[42] Detroit Master Plan (Detroit City Plan Commission, 1951), p. 92.

[43] Ibid.

> dedicated to public use as a fitting memorial to the veterans of the two World Wars.[44]
>
> In order to achieve harmony and a high degree of architectural excellence in the Civic Center, the City Plan Commission has sought the advice of Detroit's architects on the design of the center.[45]
>
> In January, 1947 the Detroit chapter of the American Institute of Architects appointed an architectural advisory committee to assist the City Plan Commission . . . in . . . review . . . of . . . plans for treatment of the Civic Center as a whole and of individual buildings within the center. In February, 1947 on recommendation of the architectural advisory committee, the City Plan Commission retained Saarinen and Associates as consultants to prepare a Civic Center design which includes the position and character of buildings and structures, treatment of the plaza and provisions for parking and circulation.[46]

The aforestated quotations represent the official "posture" of the city at the time of the Master Plan publication. Years of consideration, deliberation and waiting preceeded arrival at those conclusive remarks and the development plan presented in the Master Plan document. Summarizing the statements contained in the Master Plan one word which connotes the intent would be "harmony." In retrospect harmony was not the original objective of the Memorial Hall Committee in 1925, but rather "monumental" appears to be a fair word to signify the meaning of the proposal.

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

In 1946 the goal was slightly altered to emphasize "nobility."[47] Presumably the consultants hired shortly thereafter, realized that a great many factors and people were involved and would become more involved before the Civic Center was completed. In their 1949 report to the City Plan Commission under the chapter: "The Master Plan and its Purpose" the following statement is made: "We have established an overall character of design and plan that will remain fluid and flexible until the areas and buildings do come into clear focus."[48] Such a statement would seem to allow sufficient latitude so that the various persons and/or groups involved could incorporate their own respective adjectives into the scheme, be it, monumental, nobility, or harmony.

All adjectives aside for the time being; the process of actually developing the civic center began in 1945. In that year a series of court condemnation cases were started. Land for the Veterans Memorial was acquired first, construction of that building began in

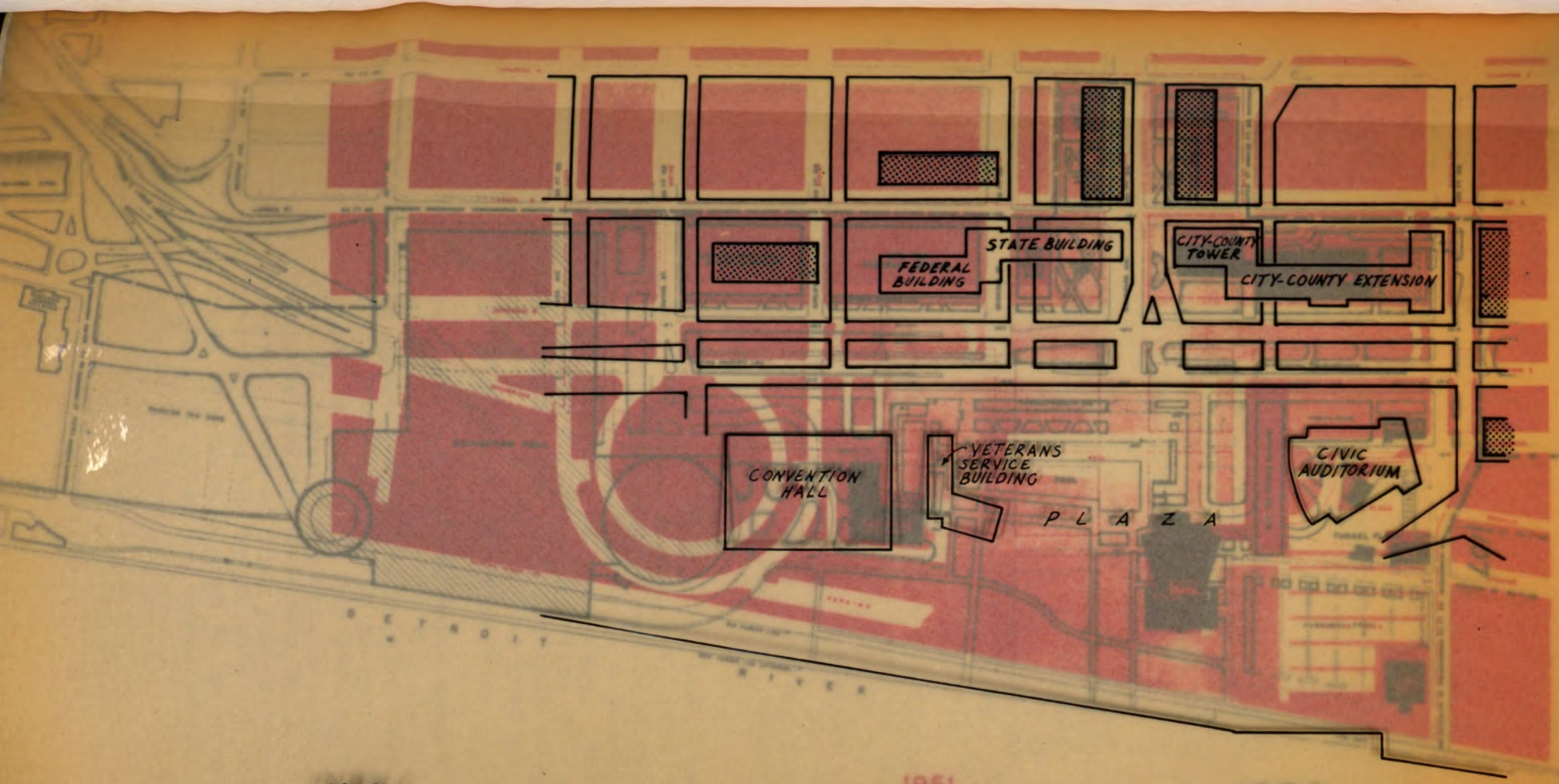
---

[47] The Civic Center Plan (City of Detroit, A Master Plan Report, No. 3 of a Series, issued by the City Plan Commission, October, 1946), p. 13.

[48] Saarinen, Saarinen and Associates, Architects, Final Report, The Detroit Civic Center Design, for the City Plan Commission, Detroit, Michigan, March 1, 1949, ditto, p. 6.

1948, and was completed in 1950. Successively a City-County Office Building, the Ford Auditorium and the Convention Hall and Exhibition Buildings were constructed, the latter being completed in 1960. The Master Plan version of the Civic Center did not envision a separate exhibition building. When the determination was made that such was advisable the overall size of the Civic Center site was increased from fifty-four acres to seventy-eight acres. More than five of these added acres were gained by extension of the harbor line. The central plaza of open space has remained approximately sixteen acres in size. Both the Master Plan version and the ultimate development within the extended area are shown on Figure 11.

The Master Plan description of the central space emphasized that the large landscaped plaza is essentially a square for pedestrians. The final design solution of the plaza is still pending. This situation exists because the final design solution for underground parking beneath the plaza is yet to be resolved. For the purposes of eventually deciding whether or not the plaza realizes its latent potential as a central design feature, only time and taste will tell. In order to better grasp an understanding of what the principal design consultants envisioned the plaza to be,



1946

CIVIC CENTER

SITE PLAN

SOURCE: THE CIVIC CENTER PLAN REPORT

LEGEND

PROPOSED PUBLIC BLDG.

PROPOSED OTHER BLDG.

1951

CIVIC CENTER

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SOURCE: OFFICIAL MASTER PLAN

1956

CIVIC CENTER

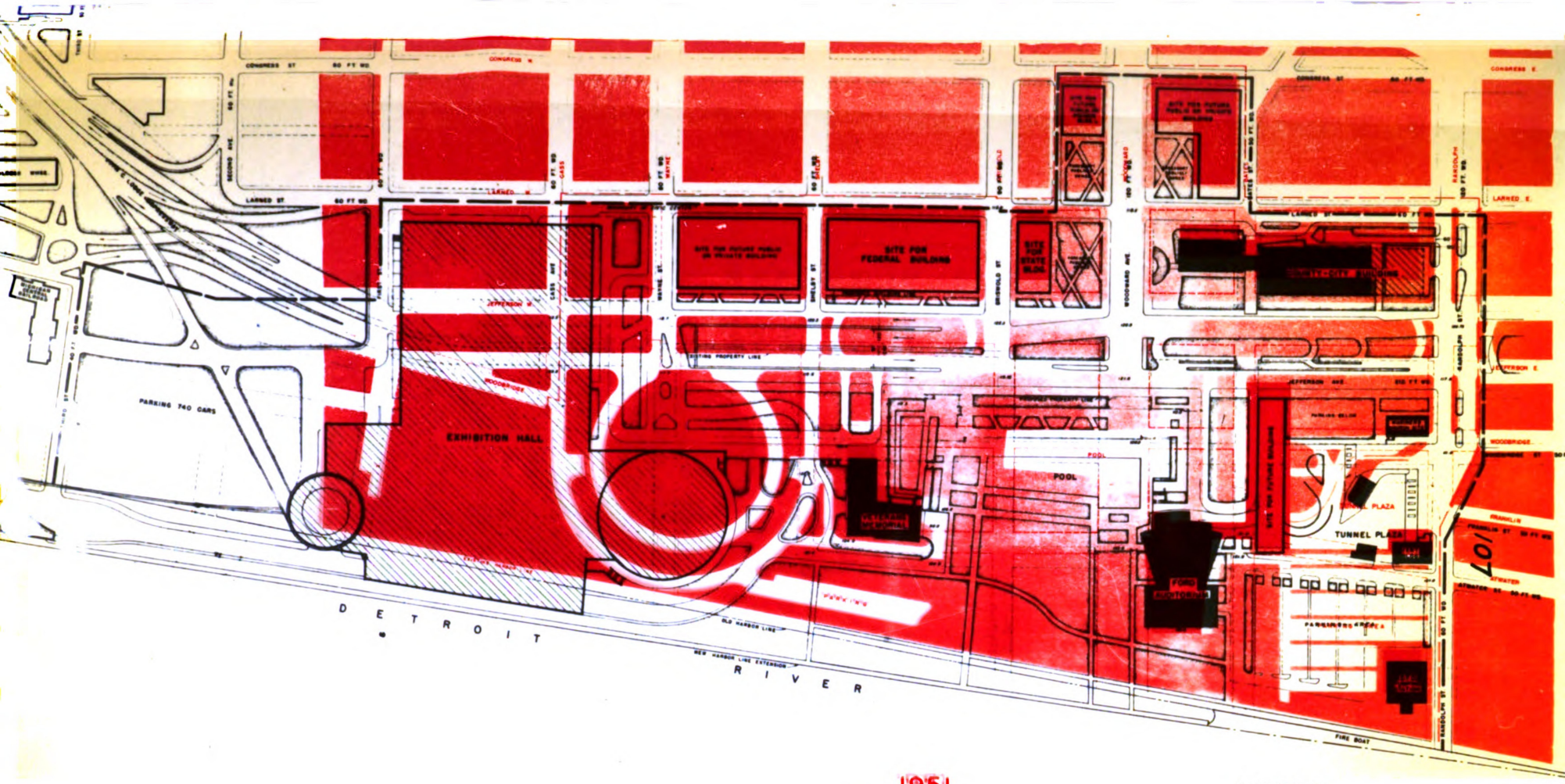
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

LEGEND

CITY OF DETROIT-MASTER PLAN

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

PROPOSED PUBLIC BRIDGE
PROPOSED OTHER BRIDGE
LEGEND
SOURCE: THE CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN REPORT
SITE PLAN
CIVIC CENTER
1978
AUDITORIUM
CIVIC
CITY-COUNTY EXTENSION
TOWER
CITY-COUNTY
BUILDING
FEDERAL
STATE BUILDING
HYATT
CONVENTION
BUILDING
SERVICE
VETERANS



1951

CIVIC CENTER

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SOURCE: OFFICIAL MASTER PLAN

1956

CIVIC CENTER

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

LEGEND

- EXISTING STRUCTURE
- PROPOSED STRUCTURE
- SITE FOR FUTURE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE BUILDING

CITY OF DETROIT – MASTER PLAN

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

PLAN NO. 9	SHEET 1 OF 1	ADOPTED BY COMMON COUNCIL MAY 17 1949
PLANNED BY	TRACED BY	APPROVED
DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY	RECOMMENDED

FIGURE 11

CIVIC CENTER

1941

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MAJOR TRAFFIC STREET PLAN

SOURCE: OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

LEGEND

PROPOSED PUBLIC BLDG.

PROPOSED OTHER BLDG.

SOURCE: THE CIVIC CENTER PLAN REPORT

SITE PLAN

CIVIC CENTER

1948

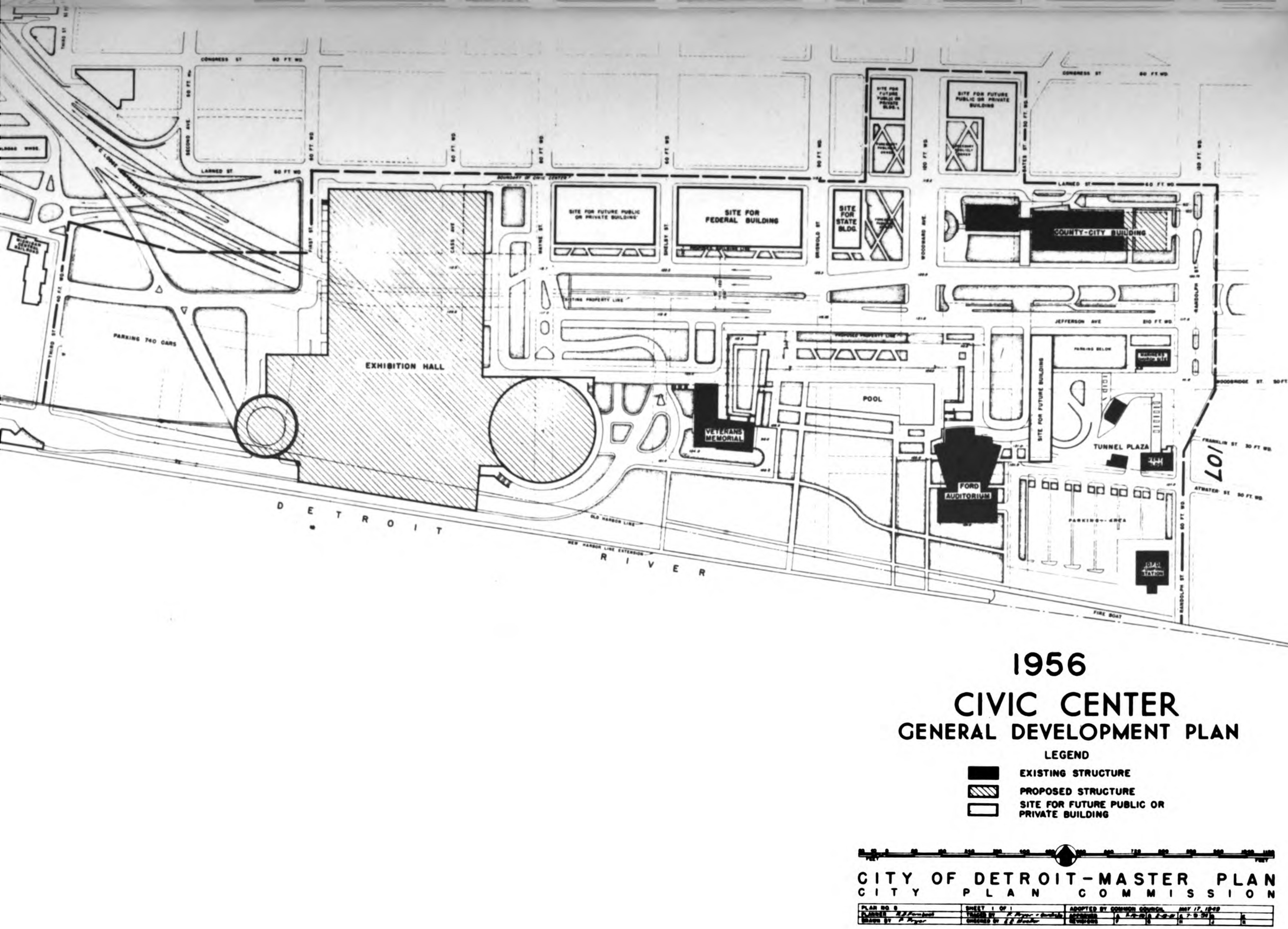

1956
CIVIC CENTER
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
LEGEND
EXISTING STRUCTURE
PROPOSED STRUCTURE
SITE FOR FUTURE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE BUILDING
CITY OF DETROIT–MASTER PLAN
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
EXHIBITION HALL
PARKING 740 CARS
SITE FOR FUTURE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE BUILDING
SITE FOR FEDERAL BUILDING
SITE FOR STATE BLDG.
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING
VETERANS MEMORIAL
POOL
FORD AUDITORIUM
SITE FOR FUTURE BUILDING
TUNNEL PLAZA
PARKING AREA
DETROIT RIVER
CONGRESS ST
LARNED ST
JEFFERSON AVE
WOODWARD AVE.
RANDOLPH ST
107

FIGURE 11

the following quotations are extracted in total from the consultants' 1949 Final Report.

XI. THE PLAZA

The garden square is conceived as a series of garden terraces that step down from Jefferson to the river. The principal entrance to this area is the broad stairway right in front of the City-County Building.

The first terrace is 6'-6" below the level of Jefferson. The retaining wall between this level and Jefferson gives the terrace a sense of enclosure on the north. On the east, it is bounded by the broad front of the Auditorium Building; and on the west, by the Veterans Building. On this terrace, walks, benches and plant materials are proposed.

A few steps (three foot-six inches) down takes us from this level to the level of the large pool. Except for the pool and the paved area in front of the Auditorium, this level is primarily grass. Compared to the level above, the paths and grass are very simple, thus focusing the attention on the pool and its display of waterworks and sculpture.

A broad meadow leads from here down to the water's edge. On the eastern side, next to the restaurant, some broad informal steps form an area where concerts may be played in a modest sized band shell, near the river's edge. Behind the shell are trees to screen the view of some boats that may be docked there. This screen of trees continues to the east to screen off as much as possible the buildings east of Randolph.

Let us return to the broad meadow from the pool to the river. Some of this is open, other parts are covered with trees. The trees should be of such nature as to give an open view of the river below the foliage. The area opposite Woodward is free of trees. The area between the extension of Woodward and the Veterans Building is more tree-covered, some of them even creeping up to the pool terrace. On the south side of the Convention Hall, there are trees placed so as to shade parking areas as well as grass and paved areas.

> Let us return to Jefferson Avenue and describe the planting there. In order to secure a boulevard esplanade appearance on Jefferson where it passes through the Civic Center, trees should be planted on both sides, as well as in the middle strip. This should be done all along Jefferson from Cass to Randolph except for the stretch just in front of the City-County Building opposite the wide stairway leading down to the gardens. By eliminating the planting here, the City-County Building is brought in closer (visually) to the civic square.
>
> On the west side of Woodward, a "tongue" of planting is brought in closer to the heart of the city. We would like to take this opportunity to urge large and well-cared-for trees for this whole project. There is nothing that would be more appreciated than some really green vegetation so near to the heart of Detroit.[49]

Figure 12 provides a graphic reproduction of the consultants' design scheme.

Perhaps the ultimate resolution of the central plaza cannot live up to the previous description for economic reasons. These economic reasons primarily involve the excessive cost of relocating existing underground sewer and water lines. The other obstacle which became economically unreasonable to shift was the entrance to the Detroit-Windsor International Tunnel. In the consultants' design solution the Ford Auditorium would have been partially located over the tunnel property. In the case of the City-County Office Building the location of underground utilities conditioned both the design and location of the building.

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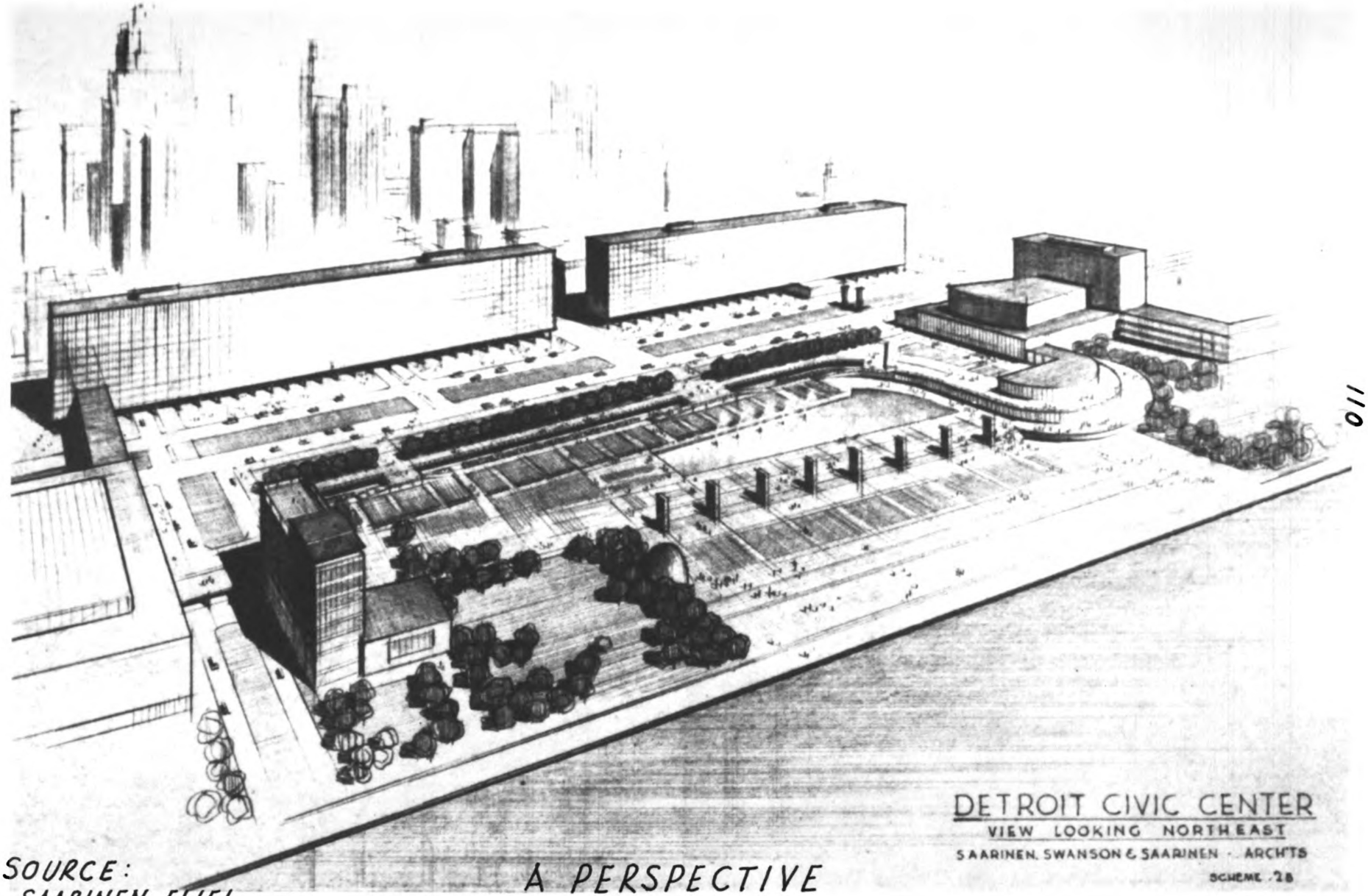
[49] Ibid., pp. 28-29.



A PERSPECTIVE

SOURCE:
SAARINEN, ELIEL
P. 126

FIGURE 12

As a result the buildings surrounding the central plaza are further removed from the edge of the space, thus in effect making the space appear larger in size.

In an effort to unite the vast civic center complex more closely with the major portion of the central business district Woodward Avenue has been widened. This widening extends from Jefferson Avenue to Campus Martius. This improvement is intended to carry the open and park-like character of the Civic Center northwardly into the central business district. This widening permitted the establishment of a landscaped center island and other tree planting areas along Woodward Avenue. This portion of Woodward Avenue is now 200 feet wide.

When the city embarked on the civic center endeavor one of the reasons in mind was to stimulate new private development in the district. Two major new structures have resulted in conjunction with the civic center and the Woodward Avenue widening. The Michigan Consolidated Gas Company has built a new corporate headquarters building at the corner of Woodward and Jefferson Avenue adjoining the civic center proper and the other major new building stimulated by the public improvements is the new main offices for the National Bank of Detroit at Woodward Avenue and Campus Martius.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The original settlement did not contain much public open space other than the public gardens and a parade ground. The indian trails did have an influence upon the location of future radial highways which converge in the central district. A fire in 1805 virtually eradicated the village which had prevailed for a century.

After the 1805 fire, and beginning anew with the Governor and Judges Plan, the city was endowed with more public open space. This public open space was in the form of streets of specified width, circuses, campuses and public reservation parcels. The latter was the most prevalent other than streets, with at least one set aside within each numbered triangular section of land.

The residents of the city soon objected to the disposition of property in accordance with the Governor and Judges geometrical plan. Shortly thereafter, the balance of the district was laid out in the conventional

gridiron pattern. Very little new public open space other than streets and alleys was added to the inventory of land uses. Clinton Park, selected as an example, was one of the exceptions. During these newer formative years, a diversified mixture of land uses prevailed throughout the area, including surrounding properties of the selected public open spaces.

All of the original public open spaces that were actually plotted on the ground in accordance with the Governor and Judges Plan have been retained, in public ownership. The original purpose of the majority of the dedicated public land was for public building sites. This intention materialized in three cases: a state capitol building later converted to school use on the Capitol Park site; a jail later replaced by a library on the Library Park site; and a combination market and city hall in the median strip of Cadillac Square. All of these historic public open spaces have changed land use functions at least once. Eventually all buildings except the library were removed from the public lands and the spaces converted into downtown parks. With minor exceptions such as mutual exchange of very small parcels, the

original public open spaces have retained their original size and shape.

From the 1920's on, the mixture of land uses around the selected public open spaces has been diminishing. In place of the mixed land use pattern, commercial uses prevail. Specialization of commercial uses surrounding particular public open spaces has taken place. Financial establishments predominate around the Campus Martius area, retail uses predominate around the Library Park, while entertainment facilities border Grand Circus Park.

In general the arrangement of land uses throughout the district has changed since the turn of the century. Observing the central business district as having three parts: the Core, the Intermediate Area, and the Fringe, the following development pattern exists. The Core contains the highest density uses including commercial activities, the Intermediate Area is of medium density and includes many uses which support the Core Area, while the Fringe is the lowest density of the three and many of the land uses located here could be elsewhere than in the district. The public open spaces are so located that they tend to establish the common boundaries between the three zones.

One significant new public open space has been developed since the Governor and Judges Plan. That space is the Civic Center with a seventeen acre central plaza. The Civic Center complex has stimulated a variety of new private development around it. This development includes a hotel, corporate offices of a utility company, a bus terminal and a new headquarters building for a bank. When the landscaping of the civic center plaza is completed, this open space should become more agreeable for pedestrians to use. The Civic Center is located in the Intermediate Area while the majority of the spaces are within the Core or form the edge of the Core.

The portion of the Central Business District which was laid out some 150 years ago in accordance with the Governor and Judges Plan provides Detroit with a unique characteristic. The triangular public lands once the site of public buildings, now afford open space upon which private development can prominently site tall buildings. Recent examples of new private buildings oriented to take advantage of dedicated public land are the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company at the northern edge of the Civic Center, and the First Federal Savings and Loan Association facing on

Kennedy Square. Another potential case is that of a new building on the Kern block (officially known as Central Business District Project Number Five) which would also face Kennedy Square.

Urban Planning Implications

In light of the foregoing observations covering the past 150 years, it is reasonable to conclude that:

1. Dedicated public open space does persist over a long period of time.

2. The use of dedicated public land may vary over time, but the changes in use are not made frequently.

3. There is a tendency for dedicated public land in this central area to be open, or have a low land coverage density factor.

4. Dedicated public land tends to be a developmental influence upon the surrounding land.

5. It is desirable to utilize public ownership for open land, to establish a long term definite community development pattern.

Would these conclusions fit other cities? Perhaps yes, although in order to confirm the possibility, an adequate inquiry would be necessary. These conclusions are most likely to apply to other cities of comparable size and kind.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

SELECTED POPULATION DATA IN THE
DETROIT METROPOLITAN AREA

Year	Detroit, City of	Wayne, County of
1701[1]	100	
1750[1]	650	
1774[1]	1,357[3]	
1783[1]	2,191[4]	
1810[1]	1,650[4]	
1820[2]	1,422	
1830	2,222	
1840	9,102	
1850	21,019	
1860	45,619	
1870	79,577	
1880	116,340	
1890	205,876	
1900	285,704	348,793
1910	465,766	531,591
1920	993,678	1,177,645
1930	1,568,662	1,888,946
1940	1,623,452	2,015,623
1950	1,849,568	2,435,235
1960	1,670,144[5]	2,666,297[6]
1965	1,630,000[5]	2,691,000[6]

[1]Source other than U.S. Census.

[2]All figures from 1820 on, are U.S. Census figures.

a. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, Volume 1, population 1920, Number and Distribution of Inhabitants, Table 53, p. 467;

b. U.S. Census of Population: 1950. Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 22, Michigan, Table 5, p. 22-14;

c. U.S. Census of Population: 1960. Number of Inhabitants, Michigan. Final Report PC (1)-24A, Table 5, p. 24-11;

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U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1921, 1952, 1961.

[3]Persons within stockade area: 222.

[4]Includes more than immediate settlement.

[5]As of July 1, 1965, Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission, Regional Reporter, No. 60, January 1967, p. 3.

[6]U.S. Census estimate as of, July 1, 1965, Population Estimates, Series P-25, No. 371, August 14, 1967.

Appendix B

AREA OF THE CITY OF DETROIT

Year	Area Annexed in Square Miles	Total Area in Square Miles
1806		0.33
1815	1.03	1.36
1827	1.20	2.56
1832	1.61	4.17
1836	1.09	5.26
1849	0.59	5.85*
1857	6.90	12.75
1875	2.25	15.00
1879	1.09	16.09
1885	6.10	22.19
1891	5.95	28.14
1894	0.21	28.35
1905	0.40	28.75
1906	6.90	35.65
1907	5.14	40.79
1912	0.97	41.76
1915	5.21	46.97
1916	23.687	70.657
1917	8.03	78.687
1918	0.937	79.624
1921	0.299	79.923
1922	4.725	84.648
1923	3.149	87.797
1924	16.867	92.664
1925	14.4693	119.1333
1926	19.8906	139.0239

*Entire Central Business District lies within this area.

Source: Annexation Map, City of Detroit, prepared by Detroit City Plan Commission.

Appendix C

Reaume and Dodds
Incorporated

001 WOODWARD AVENUE · DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226 TELEPHONE 965-4455

LEONARD P REAUME, Chairman
JOHN A. DODDS, President
GEORGE J. PIPE, Exec Vice President Treas
DONALD F. CARNEY, Vice President Secy.
WILLIAM R. LUEDDERS, Vice President
LOUIS I. FLATTERY, Vice President
E. C. SCHOLLENBERGER, Ass't Vice Pres
J. McGREGOR DODDS, Ass't Secretary-Treas

November 21, 1967

Mr. Richard D. Johnson
652 Cloverdale Road
Toledo, Ohio 43612

Dear Sir:

This is in reply to your letter to the Detroit Real Estate Board which was referred to me to answer. Your inquiry was as to the availability of aggregate values for central business district properties for ten year periods from 1900-1960.

There are no such figures available. Assessed values would not be dependable because up until 1920 there was no dependable relationship between assessments and market value. Since that time changes in assessed values have lagged many years behind any declines in value.

In your first paragraph you state that you would like to establish the "rise of property values in the central business district from 1900 on". Property values in this area fluctuated rather than having steadily risen with the growth of the city. This is true for even a longer period. To illustrate, in 1836 the northeast corner of Jefferson and Cass sold for $300 per front foot at the height of a boom. One hundred years later in 1941, the southwest corner of Jefferson and Griswold was appraised by the owner's appraiser in a condemnation case at $350 per front foot. In 1966 the northwest corner of Griswold and Larned, a block away, was sold at $53 per sq. ft.

On Woodward Avenue between Grand Circus Park and Michigan Avenue values were higher in 1912-1916 than they were in 1960-1965. The peak was reached in the 1920's when values got up to $16,000 to $20,000 per front foot. A low point was reached about 1964 when James Wineman bought a parcel on the east side of Woodward south of Grand Circus Park at $2200 per front foot. One cause of the decline in retail values has been the development of over seventy-five community and regional shopping centers on the perimeter of Detroit, all of which have been built in the thirteen years since Northland opened in 1954.

If you want to run down sales from 1900 to 1920, you will find them reported in the Detroit Sunday newspapers, which are available on microfilm at the Detroit Public Library.

Another source of sales information is the appraisal records of Silloway & Company in the Buhl Building which has a record of sales and appraisals since about 1910.

I am enclosing a discussion of current conditions in downtown Detroit which I recently prepared for a downtown appraisal report.

Very truly yours,

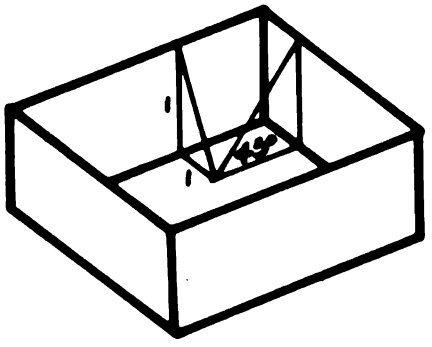
William R. Luedders
Member, American Institute
of Real Estate Appraisers

WRL:bm

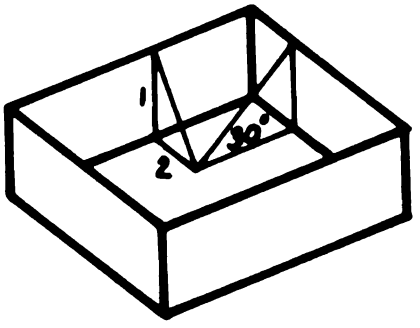
cc: Mr. Rolland E. Fisher
Detroit Real Estate Board
1980 Penobscot Building
Detroit, Michigan 48226

APPENDIX D

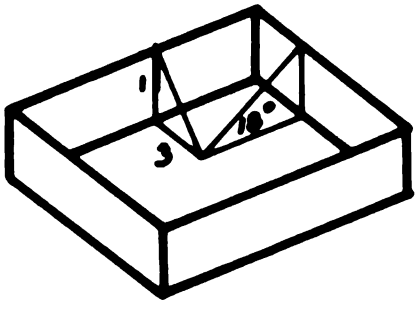
SENSE OF ENCLOSURE DIAGRAMS



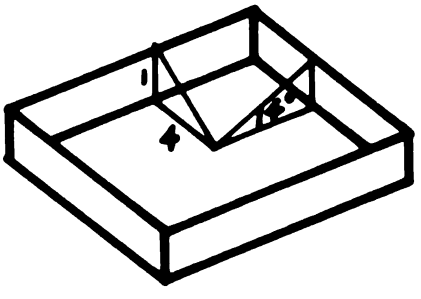
45°(1:1) FULL ENCLOSURE.



30°(1:2) THRESHOLD OF ENCLOSURE.



18°(1:3) MINIMUM ENCLOSURE.



14°(1:4) LOSS OF ENCLOSURE.

SOURCE:
SPREIREGEN, p.75.