

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

AND

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donald B. Austin", written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Donald B. Austin, Faculty Advisor

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ABSTRACT

The Community Development Block Grant Program was established by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, and it was put in effect January 1, 1975. Since then, it has become the major instrument for American urban community development. Block grants are made to a community, and the 'community' has the right to use the funding on those projects which will benefit their area. Because of the relatively new status of the Community Development Block Grant Program, or CDBG, community programs are not yet thoroughly established. Administration needs must be fulfilled before the program can be used to its total potential. The CDBG promises to be an effective program with many advantages over past programs. It is hoped that this program will aid in the improvement of the quality of life in America's urban communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my faculty advisor, Donald B. Austin, Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture, to the City of Bryan Planning Department, and especially to the citizens of the Neal Community of North Bryan. Without the cooperation of these individuals, this project would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The Community Development Block Grant Program was created by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. This program consolidated ten categorical development programs into one flexible and far-reaching program. It caused a shift in the responsibility for redevelopment, rehabilitation, and conservation to the community level.

OBJECTIVE

Because of its relatively new status, few conclusions have been drawn about the Community Development Block Grant Program, or CDBG. The objective of this research project was to research the CDBG and the role of the landscape architect in the CDBG and to participate accordingly.

METHOD AND TIME ALLOCATION

As a test area I chose the old Neal School Community of North Bryan. This is a minority and low income section with an average income of less than 5,000 annually, according to a 1970 census. The City of Bryan Planning Department has been concentrating much attention and energy on this area. Fall 1976 - I studied the objectives and guidelines of the CDBG and the role of the landscape architect in the program. Spring 1977 - I studied the background of the community and present and future projects which the Bryan Planning Department is considering. Under the guidelines of the CDBG and with the conclusions drawn from the first semester's research, I selected a project within the community for development.

RESEARCH TOOLS

1. The Texas A&M University Library.
2. Landscape architects and other professionals involved with community development.
3. The citizens of the Neal School Community.

PART I

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

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THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing rural to urban migration since World War II and especially since the 1960's. American cities were not and are still not prepared to meet this growing urban population. As a result many urban communities and cities have been poorly planned and haphazardly developed. Every citizen should become aware of and be concerned with the growing problem of community development in America's urban areas. Congress has passed various programs to amend this problem, but it still remains a major one. The most recent action was taken in 1974 with the establishment of the Community Development Block Grant Program.¹ The purpose of this paper is to explain the Community Development Block Grant Program. I will discuss the establishment, effect, eligible activities, funding, application for funding, use, and an evaluation of the program.

ESTABLISHMENT

The Community Development Block Grant Program was created by The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.² Below is an excerpt from the act:

"The Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, having considered the same, reports favorably a committee bill (s.3066) to consolidate, simplify and improve laws relative to housing and housing assistance, to provide Federal assistance to local governments in support of community development activities, and for other purposes, and recommends that the bill do pass."³

On February 27, 1974, The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs ordered the printing of The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The act is the result of three years' work by the Senate committee. It covers both housing and community development programs. It consolidates community development programs involving urban renewal and overhauls legislation involving Federal Housing Authority, FHA, mortgage insurance programs and low rent public housing programs. The program required a 'new authority' of \$4,402 million for Fiscal Year 1975 and \$4,646.5 million for Fiscal Year 1976, making a total of \$9,048.5 million for two years.⁴ The Community Development Block Grant Program, or CDBG, became law in August, 1974, and is presently influencing the development of many urban communities throughout the United States.⁵

EFFECT

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 has had two major effects on community development practices. It has consolidated existing categorical development programs, has caused a shift in responsibility for community development, and has had other effects.

CONSOLIDATION

The act consolidated ten existing categorical development programs into one flexible and far-reaching program. These ten programs were:

Public Facilities Loan Program

Open Space Program

Planning Advance Program

Water and Sewer Grants

Neighborhood Facilities

Advanced Land Acquisition

Urban Renewal

Code Enforcement

Neighborhood Development Program

Model Cities

Rather than fund each separate, categorical program, Congress funds those activities and more under one block grant.⁶

RESPONSIBILITY

Under the Community Development Block Grant Program the

responsibility for community development has been taken out of the hands of Federal politicians and bureaucrats. Re-development, rehabilitation, and conservation of urban communities is now the responsibility of community individuals. Local planners, local elected officials, and the individuals who live and work within the community now have a voice in the community's development.⁷

OTHER EFFECTS

Other effects are as follows:

Funding is direct to local governments for general purposes.

National purposes for community development emphasize benefits to low and moderate income persons and the prevention or elimination of slums and blight.

A greater degree of discretion and responsibility is given to the local elected officials in the allocation of Federal assistance funds according to local priorities.

The program specifies simplified planning, application, and review requirements.

The program is to be a mechanism for linking housing and community development activities.

It specifies a formula approach for allocation of funds on the basis of need but subject, also, to other influences.⁸

The effects of the CDBG have meant a considerable change in community development procedures.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible activities include a wide range of choices.

They involve acquisition of property, public works, code enforcement, building rehabilitation, elderly and handicapped projects, rental housing payment assistance, selling or retaining of real property, public services, and other projects.⁹

ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY

Acquisition of property which is blighted, deteriorated, or poorly developed that may be rehabilitated or preserved as a historical site, for purposes of urban beautification, for open spaces, for preservation of natural resources or scenic areas, for recreation, for public works or facilities, or for any other improvement which will benefit the public purpose is an eligible activity.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code enforcement allows funds to be used to assure that construction of buildings, facilities, and other projects is up to standard government regulations.

BUILDING REHABILITATION

Clearance, demolition, removal, and rehabilitation of buildings is, also, an eligible CDBG activity. Financing of rehabilitation for privately owned property is possible if the condition is detrimental to other activities.

ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED PROJECTS

Eligible activities include special projects to remove material and architectural barriers that may restrict elderly and handicapped persons.

RENTAL HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE

Housing owners may receive payments if they lose rental

income while temporarily holding units to be used for relocation. If local authorities consider relocation of an individual or individuals necessary for community improvement, CDBG funds will support the relocation.¹⁰

SELLING OR RETAINING OF REAL PROPERTY

Community planners may dispose of or retain acquired real property as necessary to meet community development goals.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services may receive CDBG funding if not otherwise available within a particular area of concentrated activities. This may include meeting recreation needs of the community.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities include relocation, planning, and administration costs. The CDBG allows matching of CDBG funds with funds from other Federal programs for specific activities.¹¹ Other Federal funding sources include Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, 312 Housing Funds, Title 20, Texas Department of Public Welfare, Texas Department of Community Affairs, private money from lending institutions, and funds from private companies, such as the Lone Star Gas Company.¹²

Training, employment, and work opportunities within the program are to be given to lower income residents and business concerns located in areas of program activities as much as possible.¹³

FUNDING

Congress appropriated \$ 8.4 billion for the first three

years of the Community Development Block Grant Program. This includes Fiscal Years 75, 76 and 77. Program funding became available to the community on a two year basis beginning January 1, 1975.¹⁴ This section is broken into two parts: Funding Categories and Funding Practices.

FUNDING CATEGORIES

Communities may apply to one or more of three funding categories depending on their situation. The three categories are Entitlement Funds, Hold Harmless Funds, and Discretionary Funds.¹⁵

Entitlement Funds

All cities, metropolitan areas, and central cities of 25,000 people may apply for Entitlement Funds. Seventy-five percent of the block grant funds are to be awarded to these SMSA's, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas.¹⁶ Reasoning for this use of the majority of CDBG funds is that three-fourths of the United States' population is in metropolitan areas.

Hold Harmless Funds

Any community that received funds under four of the consolidated programs is assured funding under the Hold Harmless account. The four programs were Urban Renewal, Code Enforcement, Neighborhood Development, and Model Cities.¹⁷ Twenty percent of the Community Development Block Grant funds are allocated to meet Hold Harmless guarantees to non-metropolitan areas. This fund is to remain stable for the first three years. In the second three years this grant category will be phased down by

thirds until it disappears in Fiscal Year 1980.¹⁸

Discretionary Funds

Any city may apply to the balance left after Entitlement Funds and Hold Harmless Funds are subtracted from the total allotted by Congress. This account recognizes that there are many non-metropolitan areas in need of community planning and development.¹⁹

FUNDING PRACTICES

Funding in all cases is rewarded according to application to the Secretary of HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Regional Community Development Agencies, established by HUD for administration of the CDBG, evaluate applications and can modify or disapprove any part or all of an application. The amount of funding received cannot be varied more than eighty to one-hundred and twenty percent between contract periods.²⁰

A transition period was set before funding could be obtained and before the existing categorical programs were terminated.²¹ Additional funding for completion of activities started under the categorical programs was provided. Any funds left from Model Cities, Public Facilities Loan Program, Water and Sewer Grants, and the Neighborhood Facility Program can be awarded, by the Secretary, with Community Development Block Grant funding.²²

Fund priority is awarded to a community under the following formula:

POPULATION X 2-POVERTY X HOUSING OVERCROWING

This formula takes into consideration population and housing need, once, and poverty, twice. Each area receives the greater of either the formula or Hold Harmless account.²³

Those eligible to receive funds include units of local government, towns and cities, central metropolitan areas, and urban counties. The CDBG permits flexibility in local arrangements. Urban counties are counties within a metropolitan area which are authorized by state law to take the necessary steps toward community planning and development and housing assistance activities in unincorporated areas. The county must have population over 200,000 excluding that of any metropolitan area.²⁴

APPLICATION

Eligible applicants do not automatically receive funding under the Community Development Block Grant Program. Application must be made for the funding. With approval of the application, the community must acquire a release-of-funds.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

Application is made on an annual basis to the Community Development Agency. Four steps are necessary. These are a three year plan, a program for community development needs, a program to eliminate slums and blight, and a housing assistance plan.²⁵

Three Year Plan

The three year plan is a summary of the community needs and local and regional development objectives. National urban

growth tendencies should be taken into consideration and a plan should be developed to meet growing community needs.

Program for Community Development Needs

The second step of the application outlines a program of activities to meet the needs and objectives stated in the three year plan-summary. This should take environmental factors into account. It should also state community resources other than CDBG funds.

Program to Eliminate Slums and Blight

This part of the application is a discussion of projects to upgrade blighted, deteriorated, or slum areas within the community. It should state proposed improvements to community facilities and should support health and social services where necessary.

Housing Assistance Survey

An accurate survey of the community housing stock is the fourth requirement. This should assess the housing assistance needs of lower-income persons, and it should specify a realistic annual goal for improvement. It should include persons and number of units to be affected. The general location of low-income persons should be avoided if possible. Rehabilitation of housing and a greater choice in housing should be stressed.²⁶

RELEASE OF FUNDS

With acceptance of the application, a specified amount is approved for community use. These funds are not released for project use until assessment procedures are completed.

An assessment is a publicized report to inform the community citizens of the projects proposed by community planners. Assessments are required for almost all spending, other than administration. The assessment procedure gives local individuals an opportunity to voice their opinions.

A description of the proposed projects is published in the local newspaper. If no adverse comments are received within fifteen days, another written notice is printed. This states the intent of the local planners to request a release-of-funds from the Community Development Agency. After another fifteen days with no local individual's objections, the community planners send a letter of request to the Community Development Agency. The agency waits another fifteen days and then sends a letter notifying the planners that the funds are released. This makes a total of forty-five days to complete the assessment process. Citizens objections could increase this period. For the sake of efficiency, assessments for most projects are written in one report. Those projects which are suspected to create controversy are written separately so as not to hold up the other projects.²⁷

USE

Community Development Block Grant funds are being used throughout the United States for improvements to urban communities. This section will discuss a use study by the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development of the Committee on Banking, Currency, and Housing

and use of CDBG funds by the City of Bryan, Texas.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

An Office of Evaluation of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, gathered data from on site visits to ten cities, management reports, compilation of material from one-hundred and forty applications, and fifty-seven surveys. Trends were noticed on national and local levels.²⁸

National Level

Six points were found consistent on the national level:

- (1) Communities are using CDBG funds in support of the primary objectives of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Seventy-one percent of the 1975 funding was to be used in areas where family income was less than median income for metropolitan areas; Sixty-six percent was used in blighted areas.
- (2) Participation in CDBG programs increased as compared to categorical grants. Eighty-two reported participation from the office of the mayor; Eighty-eight percent reported participation from the city council; Seventy-seven percent reported an increase in citizen participation.
- (3) A majority reported priority needs were met through the CDBG. Seventy-nine percent of highest priority needs were met in part, and eleven percent were met in full.
- (4) The subcommittee found that local strategies were parallel to objectives established by the act. Localities are stressing the elimination of conditions detrimental

to health, safety, and welfare and the elimination of slums and blight. Restoration and preservation are reported to have low priorities.

(5) Cities are making an effort to conserve and expand the housing stock. Communities planned to invest sixteen percent of their CDBG funds into housing programs with an emphasis on rehabilitation.

(6) Eighty-five percent of the metropolitan cities reported a reduction in red tape, and ninety-five percent reported a reduction in Federal intervention.²⁹

Local Level

The subcommittee reached five conclusions on use at the local level:³⁰

(1) Entitlement cities emphasize the national goal to eliminate slums and blight over other objectives. The following is an average community's use according to the subcommittee survey.

31%-elimination of slums and blight

20%-better use of land resources

17%-improve and expand community services

10%-elimination of detrimental conditions

2%-restoration and preservation of historical property

1%-reduction of isolation of low- to moderate-income groups

(2) Priority is given to low- and moderate-income areas for the elimination of blight and urgent community development needs. Seventy-one percent was to be spent in areas

where income was less than median for nearby metropolitan areas, and sixty-six percent was to be spent in blighted areas. These statistics are the same both nationally and locally.

(3) CDBG activities differ from neighborhood to neighborhood according to the income level and physical conditions of an area. Median income neighborhoods emphasized service-related and physical development activities as well as housing. Fifty-two percent of the funds were to be used for open space, neighborhood facilities, and other public works in areas above median income. Blighted areas received funds for physically-related activities such as rehabilitation, code enforcement, and public works. Non-blighted areas gave equal emphasis to all eligible activities. Model Cities ('new town' developments) gave major emphasis to public works.

(4) Twenty to twenty-five percent of the cities studied made a significant change in their use priority of CDBG funds in 1975 as compared to use of categorical funds in 1968-72.

(5) Specific activity use plans were as follows:

*25 %planned to spend 67%of CDBG funds on projects similar to those in categorical programs.

*Remaining funds were to be spent on low-income areas outside the city boundaries.

*Rehabilitation, social services, and neighborhood improvement activities received special emphasis.³¹

CITY OF BRYAN

The city of Bryan, Texas is actively involved in the Community Development Block Grant Program. Bryan planners have designated three low income areas. Use of CDBG funds are concentrated in these three areas. The following are three year plan-summaries from applications submitted by Bryan for Fiscal Years 1975 and 1976.³²

BRYAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

THREE YEAR PLAN - SUMMARY

Project**	Community Development Funds			Other Matching Funds
	1st Year	2nd & 3rd Years	Total	
Total	\$206,000	\$1,278,000	\$1,484,000	
<u>East Area (Castle Heights)</u>	\$109,600	\$ 219,000	\$ 328,600	
1. Water System Improvements	\$ 57,600		\$ 57,600	
2. Streets	\$ 32,000	\$ 207,000	\$ 239,000	
3. Park & Development (land purchased & developed 1st year; further developed 2nd & 3rd years)	\$ 20,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 24,000	BOR 50% match
4. Demolish dangerous buildings and general clean-up		\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000	
<u>West Area (Palasota-Cottonwood)</u>	\$ 22,000	\$ 192,000	\$ 214,000	
1. Drainage (Cottonwood Creek, Commerce to by-pass)		\$ 170,000	\$ 170,000	
2. Sidewalks (Palasota Rd.) Sidewalks (Beck St.)	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	
<u>Central Area (Neal School)</u>	\$ 20,000	\$ 265,000	\$ 285,000	
1. Obtain title or long-term lease of Neal School campus: clean-up, lighting, landscap- ing for Community Center	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000	BOR 50% match
2. Rehab structures at Community Center, Parking and Land Development		\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000	BOR 50% match
3. Acquire & develop land for Williams Park expansion		\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	BOR 50% match
4. Streets & Sidewalks Randolph and 21st Street		\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	
<u>At Large Area (All target areas)</u>	\$ 7,000	\$ 307,200	\$ 314,200	
1. Streets		\$ 108,500	\$ 108,500	
2. Utilities (water, sewer and street lights)		\$ 38,700	\$ 38,700	

Project**	Community Development Funds			Other Matching Funds
	1st Year	2nd & 3rd Years	Total	
Total	\$206,000	\$1,278,000	\$1,484,000	
At Large Area (All target areas) (continued)				
3. Housing Rehab (Interest subsidy on loans)	\$ 7,000*	\$ 145,000	\$ 152,000	Loans from local sources
4. Demolish vacant dangerous buildings (continue City program first year)		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	City Funds
<u>Social Services</u>	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 60,000</u>	<u>\$ 75,000</u>	
Selective matching for Day Care and Neighborhood Center Programs	\$ 4,000			Some in-kind match
Administrative costs associated with the coordination of C.D. Program with local community service programs and with the distribution of information about available assistance to persons in the community	\$ 11,000	To be determined in first year's planning activity		Matching variable up to 75%
<u>Administration</u>	<u>\$ 19,000</u>	<u>\$ 107,000</u>	<u>\$ 126,000</u>	Plus City Budget
(a) Administrative costs for Planning and Program Management; includes C.D. staff and consultant costs for first year*** and application for second year. (salaries, benefits, office expenses, travel & per diem space, etc.)				
<u>Contingency Fund</u>	<u>\$ 13,400</u>	<u>\$ 127,800</u>	<u>\$ 149,200</u>	

Figure 1. A plan-summary is required when applying to the Community Development Agency for funds. This is the 1975 plan.

Note:

After legal problems resolved, a pilot program to establish interest-subsidy will be undertaken for rehab.

Cost estimates include any Professional Design Fees.

Estimated to be 9 months only.

(a) Subsequent planning efforts will include appropriate consideration of an organized effort to meet the needs of Downtown Bryan, especially through available Federal funds.

Bryan Community Development Program

Three Year Plan - Summary

Project*	Community Development Funds			Other Matching Funds
	Current Year	2nd & 3rd Years	Total	
Total	\$458,000	\$1,558,000	\$2,016,000	
<u>East Area (Castle Heights)</u>	<u>\$102,000</u>	<u>\$ 237,000</u>	<u>\$ 339,000</u>	BOR 50% Match
Gas System Improvements	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000	
Streets	\$ 82,000	\$ 225,000	\$ 307,000	
Park Development		\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	
Demolish Dangerous Buildings and General Clean-Up		\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000	
<u>West Area (Palasota-Cottonwood)</u>	<u>\$ 89,000</u>	<u>\$ 150,000</u>	<u>\$ 239,000</u>	
Drainage (Cottonwood Creek, Commerce to By-pass)	\$ 67,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 217,000	
Sidewalks (Beck Street)	\$ 22,000		\$ 22,000	
<u>Central Area (Neal School)</u>	<u>\$103,000</u>	<u>\$ 310,000</u>	<u>\$ 413,000</u>	
Selective matching for Day Care & Neighborhood Center Programs	\$ 8,000			Some in-kind match and State monies
Administrative costs associated with the coordination of CD Program with local community service programs and with the distribution of information about available assistance to persons in the community.	\$ 15,000	To be determined in current year's planning activity		Up to 75% Matching Variable
Acquire and develop land for Williams Park expansion	\$ 7,500	\$ 57,500	\$ 65,000	BOR 50% Match
Streets and sidewalks Randolph and 21st Streets	\$ 39,000	\$ 81,000	\$ 120,000	
Neal School Rehabilitation Center and parking and development including ball field	\$ 33,500	\$ 115,500	\$ 149,000	

Project	Community Development Funds			Other Matching Funds
	Current Year	2nd & 3rd Years	Total	
Total	\$458,000	\$1,558,000	\$2,016,000	
<u>Large (All Target Areas)</u>	<u>\$118,000</u>	<u>\$ 467,000</u>	<u>\$ 585,000</u>	
Streets	\$ 72,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 272,000	
Utilities (water, sewer, & street lights)	\$ 16,000	\$ 44,000	\$ 60,000	
Housing Rehabilitation Interest Subsidy Loan Program	\$ 30,000	\$ 203,000	\$ 233,000	Loans from local sources
Demolish vacant, dangerous buildings		\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	
<u>Administration</u>	<u>\$ 40,000</u>	<u>\$ 130,000</u>	<u>\$ 170,000</u>	Plus City Budget
a) Administrative costs for planning and program management; application for subsequent year (salaries, benefits, office expenses, travel, & per diem, space)				
<u>Contingency</u>	<u>\$ 6,000</u>	<u>\$ 264,000</u>	<u>\$ 270,000</u>	

* Cost estimates include any professional design fees

Figure 2. A plan-summary is required when applying to the Community Development Agency for funds. This is the 1976 plan.

Bryan's 1976 application has been approved, and the proposed projects will be started upon completion of the necessary assessments.

EVALUATION

Because of its relatively new status, few conclusions have been drawn about the Community Development Block Grant Program.³⁵ Mr. Bob Wimbish, Bryan Community Development Director, says that the program seems to be working. There is less paperwork and more freedom in determining community projects. However, rough spots are still being worked out in Washington, and regulations have been changing 'every two months.' Bryan is behind the proposed schedule, but Mr. Wimbish is pleased with the progress that has been made. The program, he says, is not very popular with bureaucrats in HUD because it does not give them much control over what the community does, and it thereby lessens their importance. Also, the program is not popular with Congressmen. Because project choice is on the community level, the program is not 'political.' Congressmen cannot take 'credit' for benefits to their constituents. For these reasons Mr. Wimbish wonders if the Community Development Block Grant Program can retain its existing flexibility.³⁶

FOOTNOTES

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- ⁸Clay Wellborn, "Old and New Communities," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 41 (July), 239.
- ⁹"Washington Scene," Parks & Recreation, ix (November 1974), 13.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 13.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 13.
- ¹²Bob Wimbish, Bryan, (June 21, 1976), 4:30 pm.
- ¹³"Washington Scene," Parks & Recreation, p. 13.

- ¹⁴Wellborn, "Old and New Communities," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 240.
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²⁹Ibid., p. 50.

³⁰Ibid., p. 54.

³¹Ibid., p. 54.

³²Wimbish, (June 21, 1976), 4:30 pm.

³³Application For Community Development Program, City of
Bryan, 1975, pp. 7-8.

³⁴Application for Community Development Program, City of
Bryan, 1975, pp. 20-21.

³⁵Witherspoon, "Community Development and Mixed-Use
Development," Urban Land, p. 6.

³⁶Wimbish, (June 21, 1976), 4:30 pm.

PART II

THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IN THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

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THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IN THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Community Development Block Grant Program requires the services of many types of professionals at various levels of involvement. The question to be answered here is where can the landscape architect participate. To answer this question one must understand what landscape architecture is, the various involvement levels of the CDBG, and the factors which affect the landscape architects participation.

DEFINITION

Newton defines landscape architecture as the art or science of arranging land together with the objects upon it for safe, efficient, healthful, pleasant human use. Michael Murphy, professor of landscape architecture at Texas A&M University, defines landscape architecture as simply design on the land. In general, all landscape architects hold with a common ideal that their purpose is to create a better relationship between man and his everyday environment.

INVOLVEMENT LEVELS

Levels of involvement required for the successful implementation of the Community Development Block Grant Program include administration, policy making, planning, implementation

of policy, and design. The landscape architect can and does become involved in several or all of these levels.

INVOLVEMENT

The level at which the landscape architect participates depends on the location of the project and the project itself.

The size of the town, the town's planning structure, and local politics are major factors influencing the landscape architect's role. In small towns he may be involved in all levels of the program. In Bryan, for example, the Community Development Director is a landscape architect. He is involved in administration, planning, and policy making with the city planner and city council. He is also involved in the implementation of policy and the design for specific projects. In larger towns the landscape architect may only be indirectly involved with the block grant program. In Houston, the Community Development Director is a businessman with a degree in Math and the assistant director is a lawyer. Their function is strictly administrative. Specialists are employed at each level. There are no landscape architects employed in the city's community development department. Landscape architects work with Community Development Block Grant funds in the design process through other city departments.

The role of the landscape architect also depends on the specific project. The program for development, the community/

user needs, the client (HUD) requirements, and special problems and/or potentials of the project site itself influence the role which the landscape architect takes.

The landscape architect must not necessarily conform to the present trends of involvement. However, the specific project and the project location are major influences on the role of the professional in community development.

RESOURCES

Austin, Texas. Office of the Mayor.

Bryan, Texas. City Planning Office.

Hubert Nelson, City Planner of Bryan.

Bob Wimbish, Community Development Director of Bryan.

Mike Owens, Planner II.

Houston, Texas. Office of the Mayor, Community Development

Division. Mary Anne Piacentini, Housing Planner.

Navasota, Texas. Office of the Mayor.

Community Development Director.

PART III

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AS A PARTICIPANT IN

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

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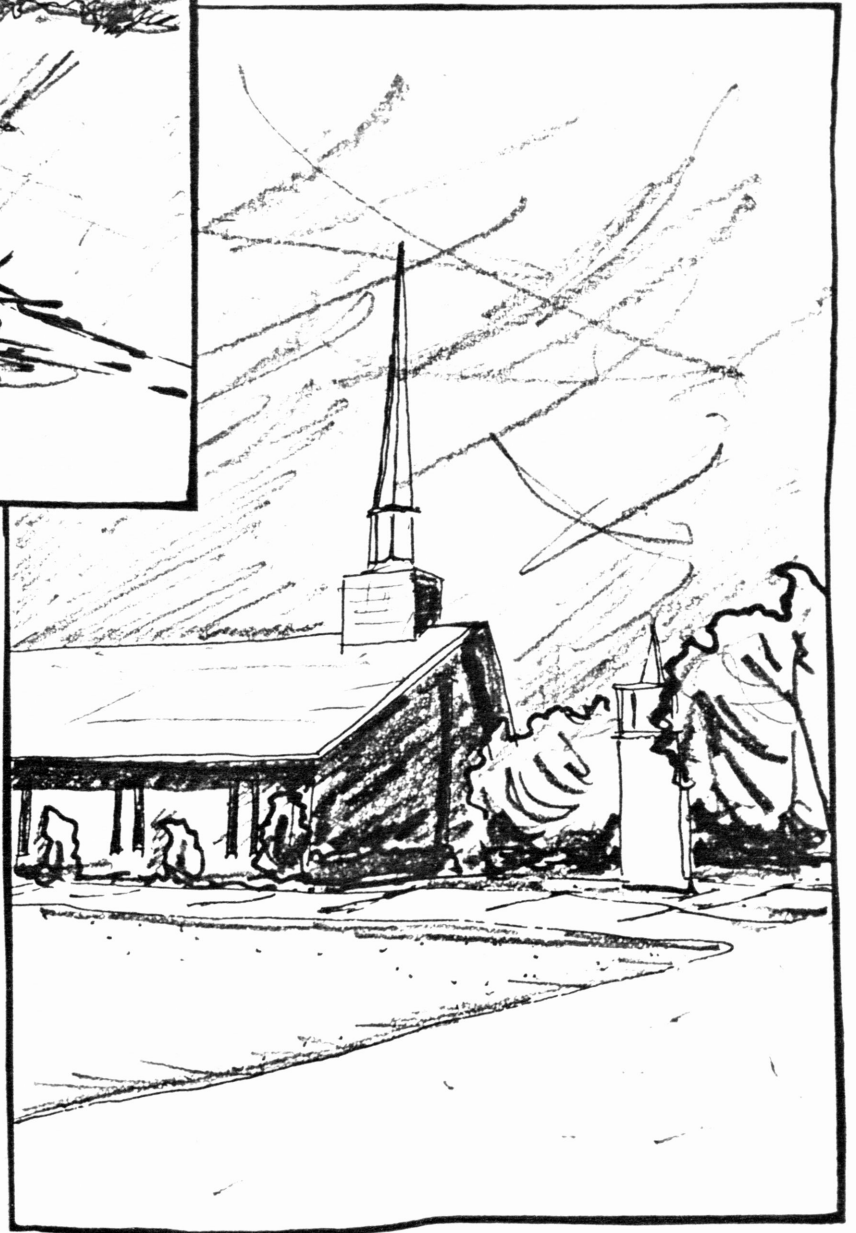
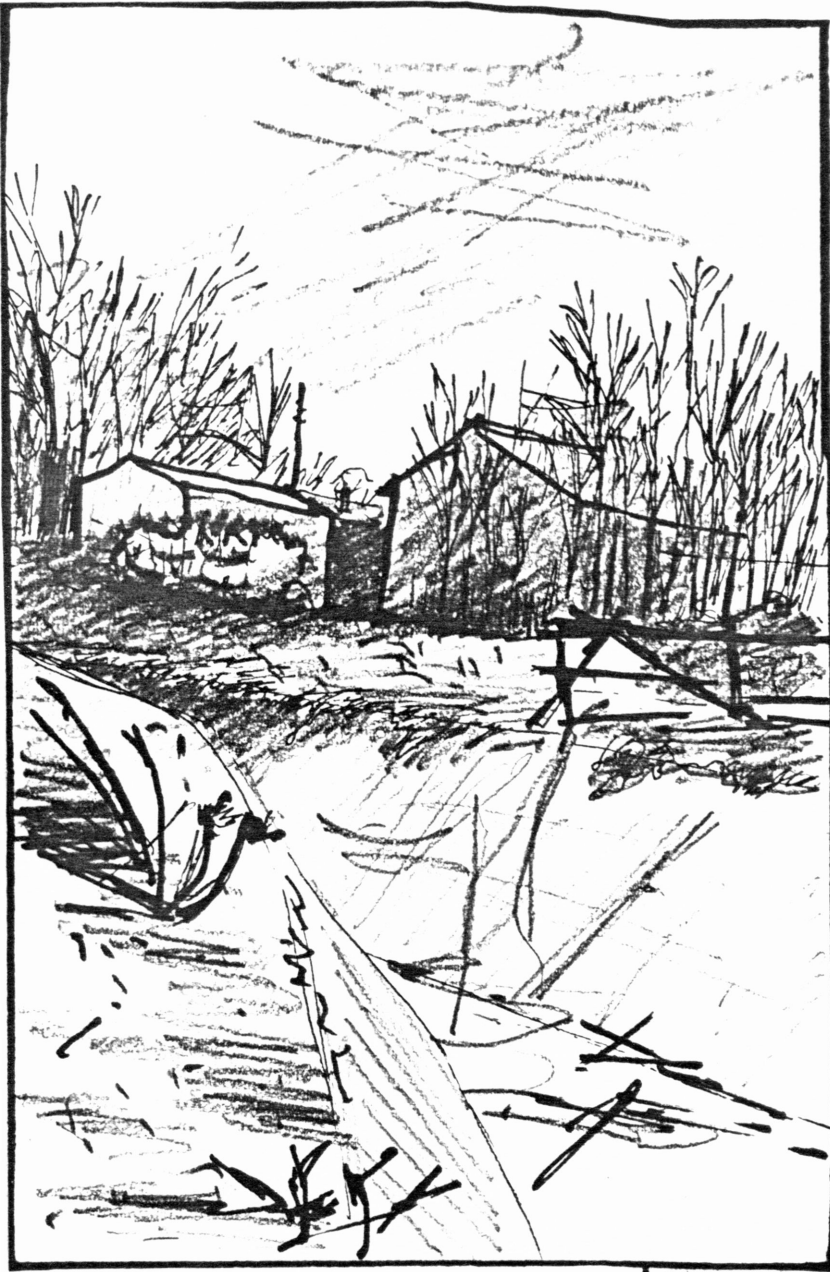
THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AS A PARTICIPANT IN
THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

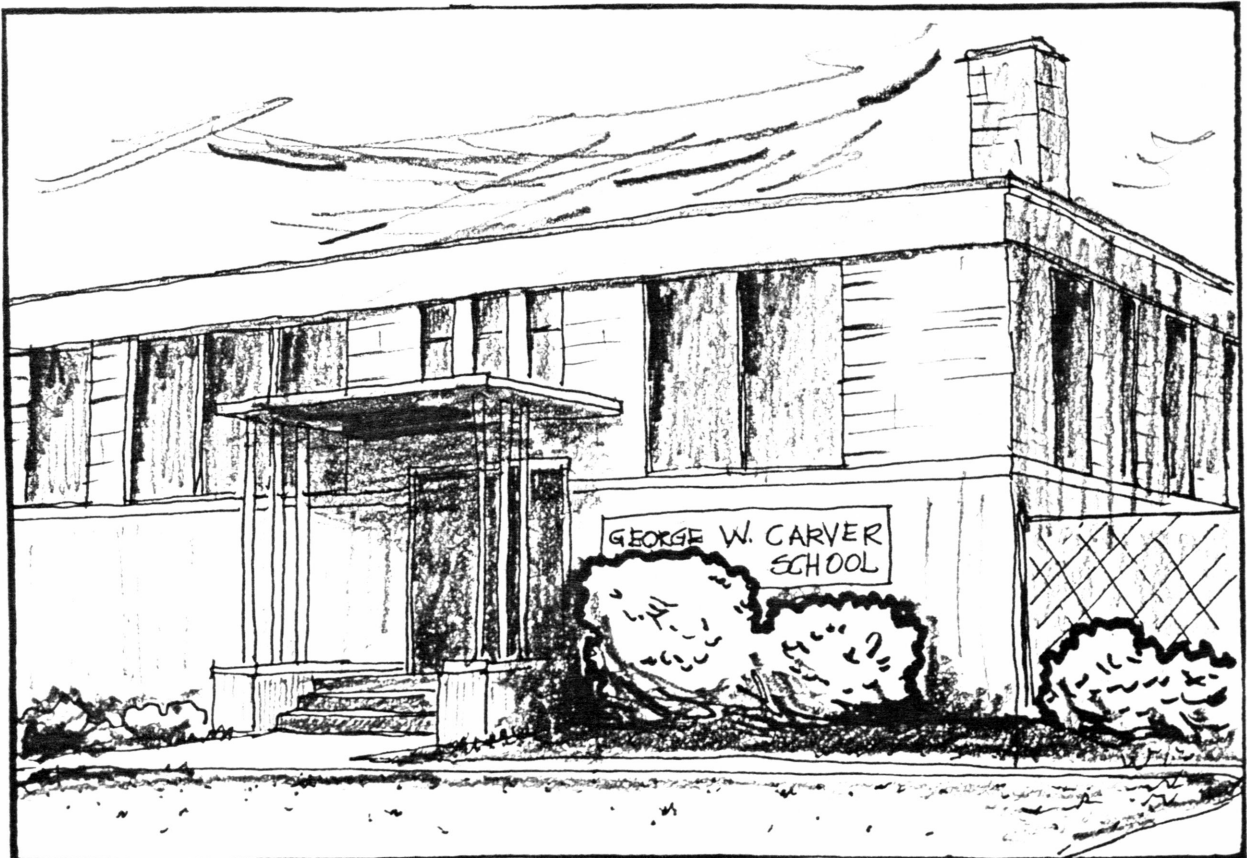
INTRODUCTION

The third step of my proposal was to select a specific project and participate as a landscape architect in the CDBG. As a test area I chose the old Neal School Community of North Bryan. This is a minority and low income section which meets the requirements for block grant funding. The project chosen was recommended by Bob Wimbish, Community Development Director of Bryan. The following report includes a project statement, site inventory, analysis of site potentials and problems, citizen involvement, concept statement, concept synthesis, and a development plan.

PROJECT STATEMENT

The Neal School Community is heavily pedestrian oriented. The location of the Carver and Kemp sixth grade schools, the development of the old Neal School into a community center and various other community activities suggest a need for a pedestrian accessway through the community from the Carver and Kemp Schools to the new Neal Community Center. I participated in the planning and design levels of the CDBG.





SITE INVENTORY

The purpose of the site inventory was to familiarize the designer with the existing conditions around and on the site to determine site restrictions which may influence the design.

The site is a fifteen by five block area in a low income, minority area in North Bryan. It is influenced to the north by the Carver and Kemp Schools; to the south by the Neal Community Center; to the west by a concrete drainage easement; and to the east by Nineteenth Street, the community's main street. The site is dissected in the north section by Highway 21.

Nineteenth Street is the community activity center because of the commercial development at the intersection of Nineteenth and Hwy 21 and the location of several of the community's churches along Nineteenth Street. Nineteenth Street is paved and is the only street in the community with sidewalks on both sides. About one-half of the streets are dirt. Residences are mostly of wood frame construction with a few brick homes. Federal housing is located next to the Carver School. There are many undeveloped lots. Streets and dirt paths are the major means of pedestrian access through the neighborhood.

The Boy's Club of Bryan is an important focal point for the youth of the community. The churches play an important role for both youth and adults. The location of commercial,

recreational, and religious centers within the community creates a self-supporting, closely linked community.

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND POTENTIALS

By analysis of the problems and potentials of the site, the landscape architect can better understand the restrictions which may influence the design.

PROBLEMS

Five major problems were determined upon examination of the site. These were as follows:

- (1) Channelized creek - Because of a flooding problem, the existing creek through North Bryan was channelized. The result was a 4 to 6 foot^{con}crete drainage ditch which is unsightly and dangerous.
- (2) Cemetary expansion - The expansion of an existing cemetary on Hwy 21 blocked a frequently used dirt path.
- (3) Highway 21 - Highway 21, or San Jacinto, dissects the north section of the community. This presents a danger to pedestrians. There is only one traffic light. It is at the intersection of Hwy 21 and Nineteenth and has no crosswalk.
- (4) Dirt Streets - At least half of the streets in the community are dirt. These are an inconvenience to the pedestrian as well as the automobile in severe weather.
- (5) Narrow Sidewalks - Narrow sidewalks along Nineteenth Street are narrow. The street is overpowering in scale and a hazard to the pedestrian.

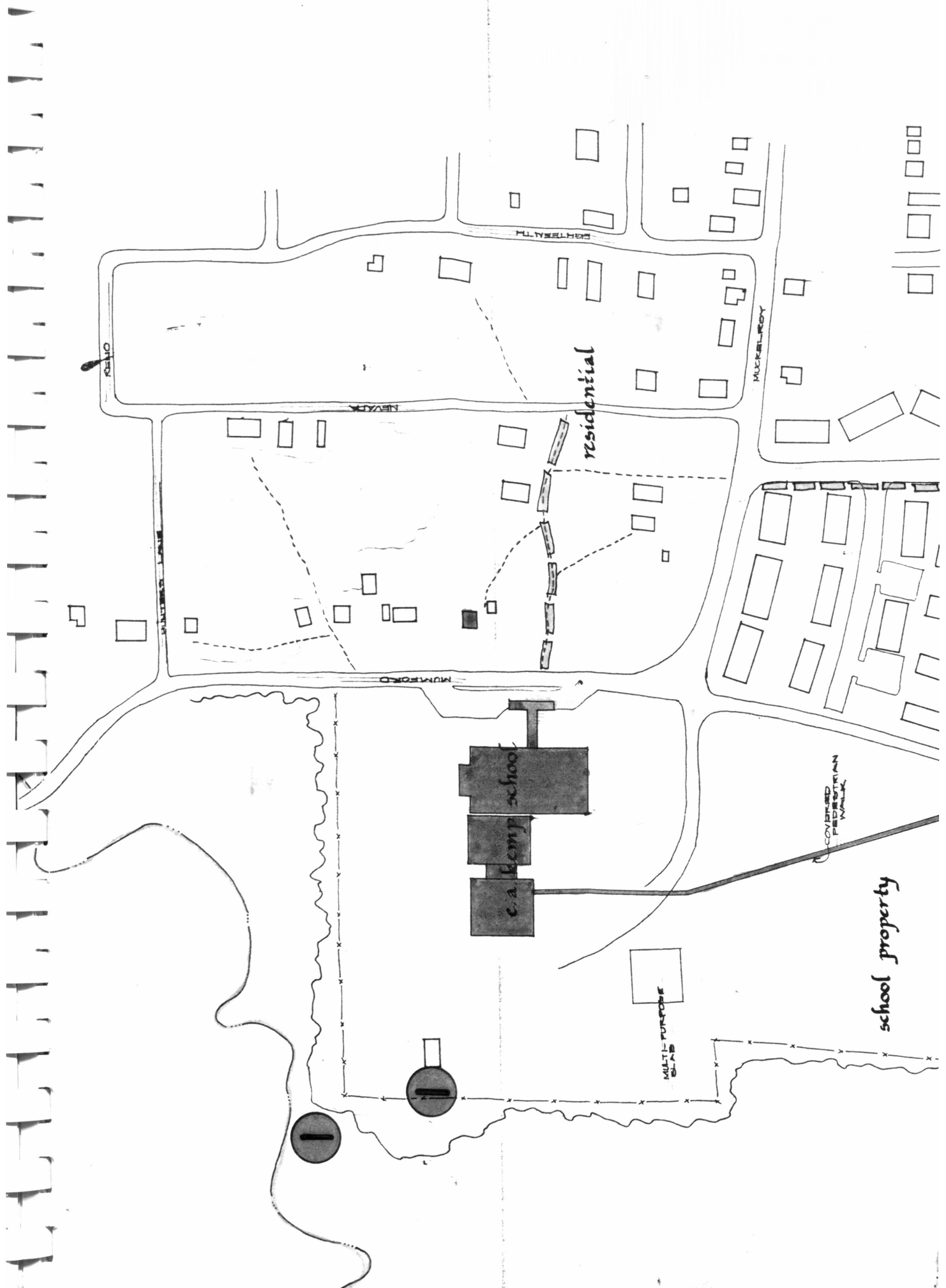
POTENTIALS

Six factors were recognized as having good development potential. These were as follows:

- (1) Nature Walk - The closeness of an unchannelized portion of the creek to the school and an existing greenhouse on the school property provide an excellent opportunity for an educational nature walk.
- (2) Existing Dirt Paths - Existing dirt paths throughout the community reflect an accepted community right-of-way.
- (3) Low Income Area - The low income area location gives the project a priority for community development funding.
- (4) Undeveloped Lots - Undeveloped lots throughout the community may provide a buffer to the path and make acquisition of land for city right-of-way easier.
- (5) Commercial Area - The existence of the commercial area tends to make the community self supporting.
- (6) Old Ball Field - The old ball field of the Neal Community Center and the proposed redevelopment of nearby William's Park provide great recreational potential.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

It is important that the inspiration of community betterment be carried by the community. If the community does not wish to improve their physical environment, there



MUCKLEBURY

residential

NEWARK

MORFORD

e.a. Kemp school

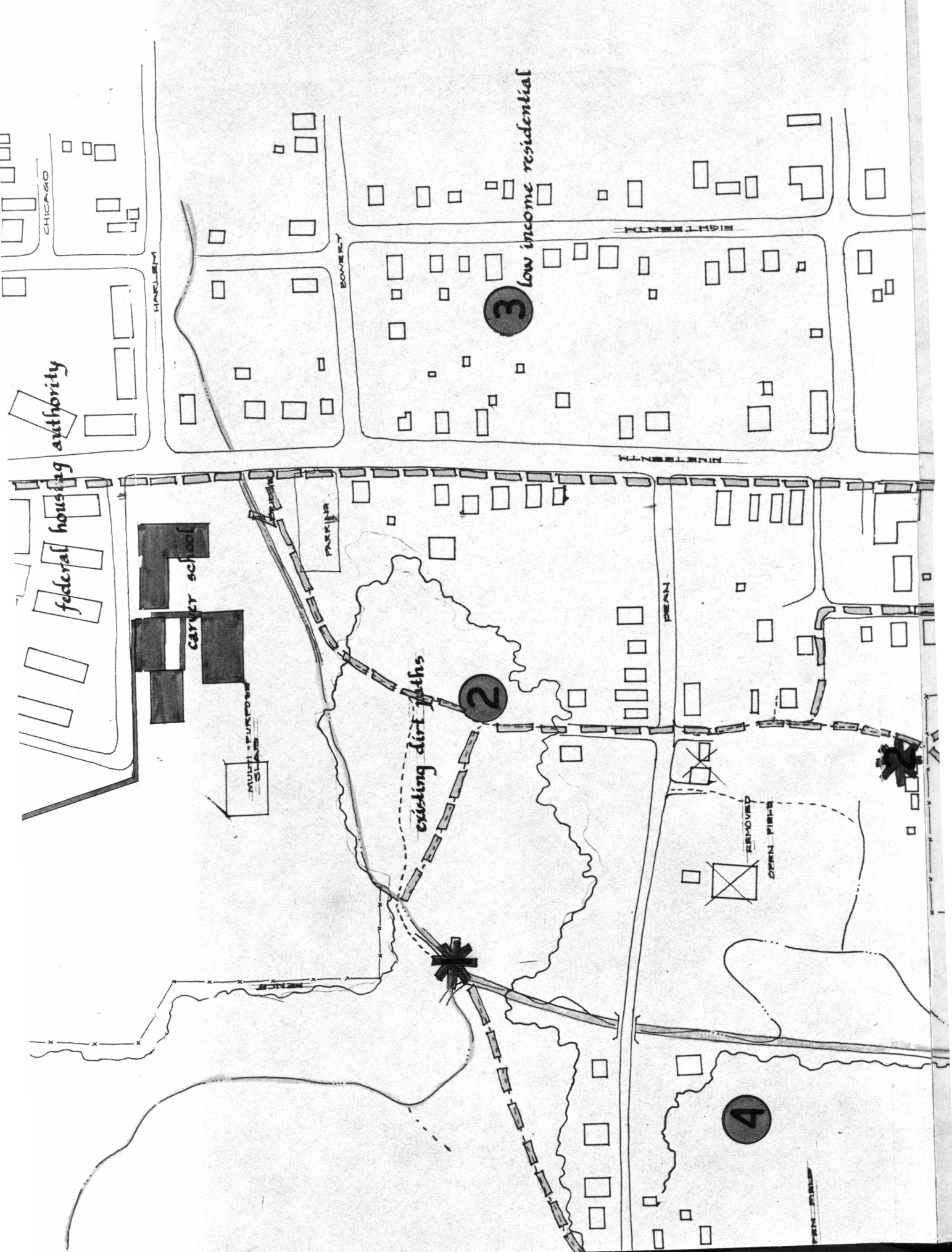
MULTI-PURPOSE SLAB

COVERED PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

school property

1

1



CHICAGO

federal housing authority

federal housing

CARVER school

MULTI-STORIED GARAGE

PARKING

low income residential

existing dirt paths

PEAN

NINETEENTH

EIGHTEENTH

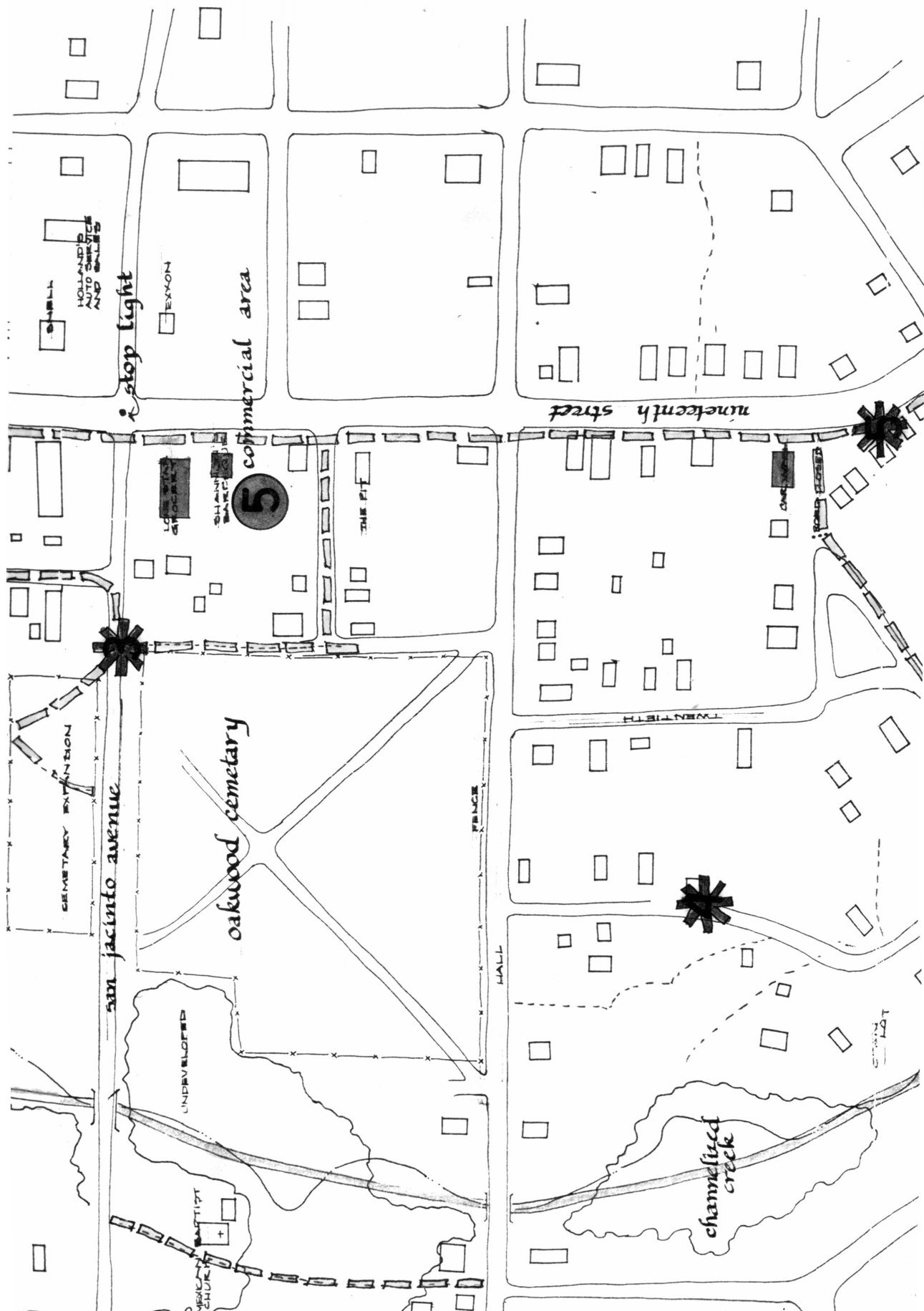
FENCE

REMOVED OPEN FIELDS

2

3

4



stop light

commercial area

nuneceh street

oakwood cemetary

san jacinto avenue

chammeled creek

CEMETARY EXTENSION

SHELL

HOLLANDS
AUTO SERVICE
AND REPAIRS

TEXON

5

LEONARD
STREET

SHANE
STREET

THE PIT

CANC

ROMA FLORES

TWENTYFTH

FENCE

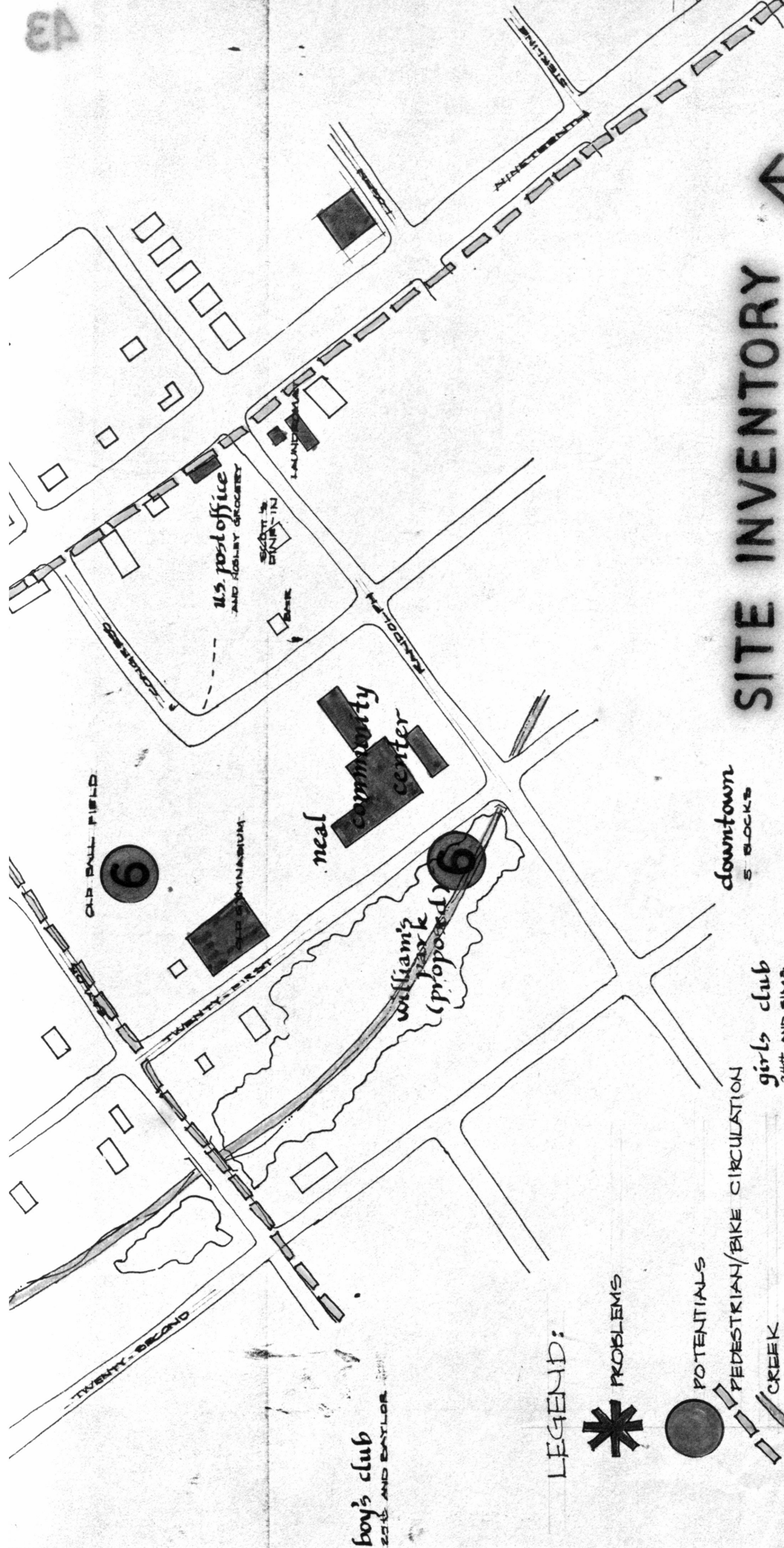
HALL

STAIN LOT

UNDEVELOPED

MEXICAN CHURCH

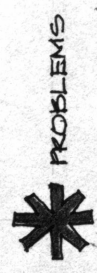
CANTINA



SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



LEGEND:

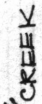


PROBLEMS



POTENTIALS

PEDESTRIAN/BIKE CIRCULATION



CREEK

IMPORTANT STRUCTURES



girls club
244 AND 246

downtown
5 BLOCKS

neal
community
center

us post office
AND HOLLY GROCERY

old ball field

GYMNASIUM

boy's club
2015 AND EATLOR

TWENTY SECOND

TWENTY FIRST

william's
park
(proposed)

COURTNEY

NINE STREET

CONSTANCE

LAUREL BLDG

SCOTT'S
DINING

BASE

6

6

is little that the landscape architect can do. If this project were funded and to be built, citizen involvement would be necessary for a successful product. This would require community meetings, questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Because of the time factor and the research status of this project, I did not seek to thoroughly involve the community. I did try to get a solid understanding of the community through observation and interviews.

First, I found it necessary to justify that a pedestrian way, in fact, was needed and would be used. Next, it was necessary to determine the extent of development and the best location for the path. I carefully observed the activities of the community on different days of the week, and at different times of the day. I interviewed a number of individuals who work, live, or go to school in the community. They included the superintendent of the Carver and Kemp Schools, a teacher, a local Baptist minister, eight school children, and three community youth. The information gathered led to the conclusions shown on the concept map on page 49.

CONCEPT STATEMENT

The pedestrian accessway should be an all weather surface through the neighborhood to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. It should provide a pleasant experience and easy access for the citizens within the community and surrounding

neighborhoods. It should link to existing activity centers within the community.

CONCEPT SYNTHESIS

The next step was to synthesize the information into a firm design concept that would optimize the potentials of the site and minimize the problems recognized in the analysis phase. Three objectives were determined. These are as follows:

- (1) A Bike and Pedestrian Path from the two schools to the community center
- (2) Secondary Paths connecting the Hike and Bike Path to Nineteenth Street
- (3) Street Tree Plantings to green up and reduce the scale of Highway 21 and Nineteenth

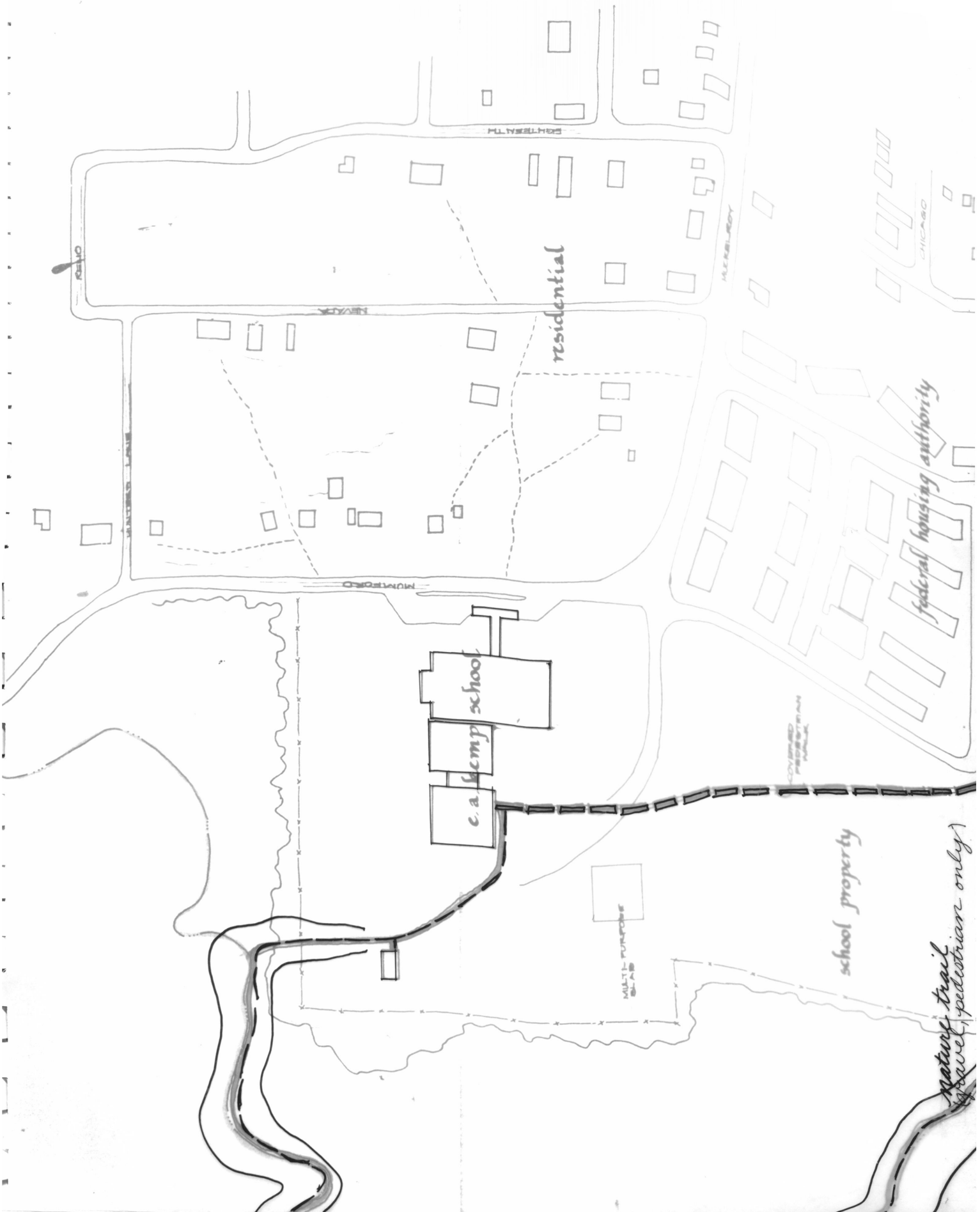
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan is a plan locating the proposed activities and limits of the design. The activities are as shown on the Development Plan Map and include the following:

- (1) A linear greenspace will serve as a buffer for the Hike and Bike Path which will extend from the Carver and Kemp Schools to the Neal Community Center. Activity nodes within the greenspace will optimize the user's experience. These activity nodes include (from north to south) the school area, an open space with dense vegetation, a cleared and leveled space, a passive space with benches and vegetation, and a recreation/park area at the community center. Activities in the recreation/park area are as designated on the Development Plan Map on the overlay, page 48.
- (2) The Hike and Bike Path should be constructed so as to go under Highway 21 at the bridge.
- (3) Crosswalks should be added at the intersection of Hwy 21 and Nineteenth Street to reduce the danger to the pedestrian.
- (4) Secondary Paths, (i.e., sidewalks), should connect the Hike and Bike Path with Nineteenth along Hwy 21 and Baylor. The sidewalk should extend along Baylor to the Boy's Club.
- (5) An educational Nature Trail should be constructed

along the unchannelized portion of the creek near the schools. This should tie in with the greenhouse which exists on the Kemp campus.

(6) Street Tree Plantings should be started at the intersection of Highway 21 and Nineteenth and extend north to the two schools, south to downtown Bryan, east to Highway 6, and west to the railroad. These street tree plantings should be somewhat informal--in keeping with the existing character of the community.



nature trail
gravel, pedestrian only

school property

federal housing authority

residential

e.a. camp school

MULTI-PURPOSE
SLAB

GOVERNMENT
PROPERTY

MUMFORD

HENCKS

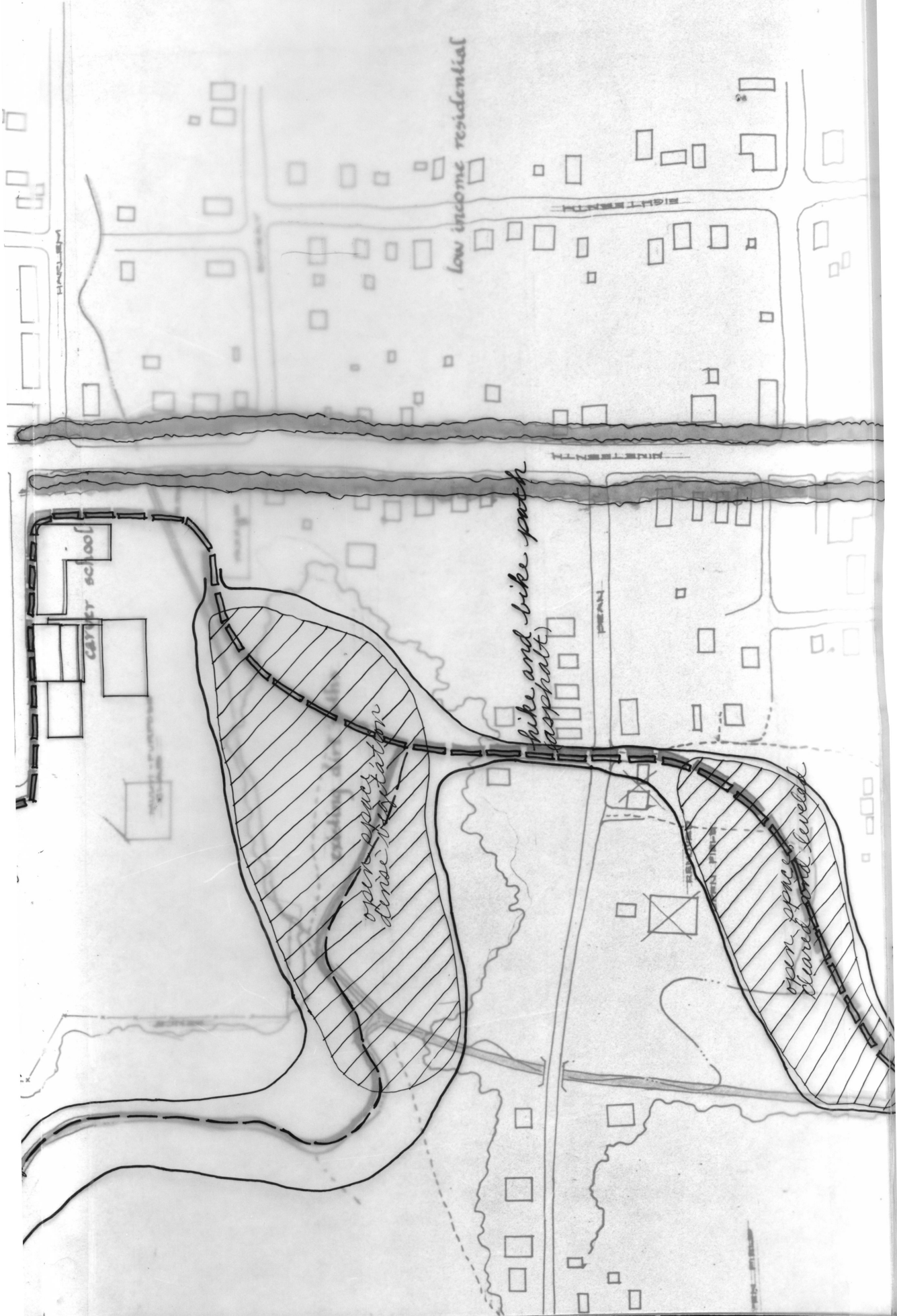
MILLWELLS

ALLENBURY

CHICAGO

CHICAGO

MUMFORD



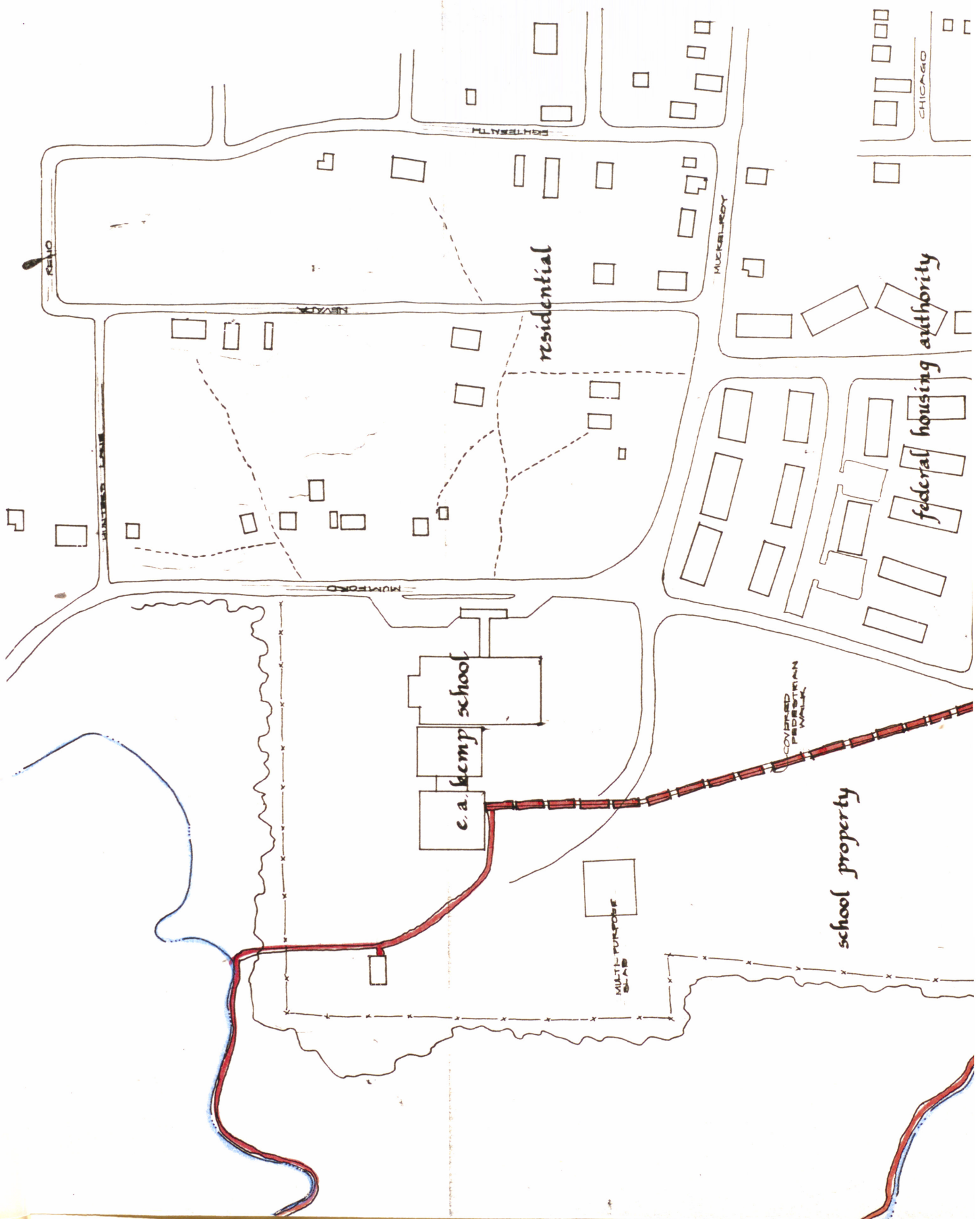
low income residential

CARTER SCHOOL

open space
dense vegetation

bike and bike path
(asphalt)

open spaces
cleared and leveled



residential

federal housing authority

c.a. kemp school

school property

MULTI-PURPOSE SLAB

COVERED PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

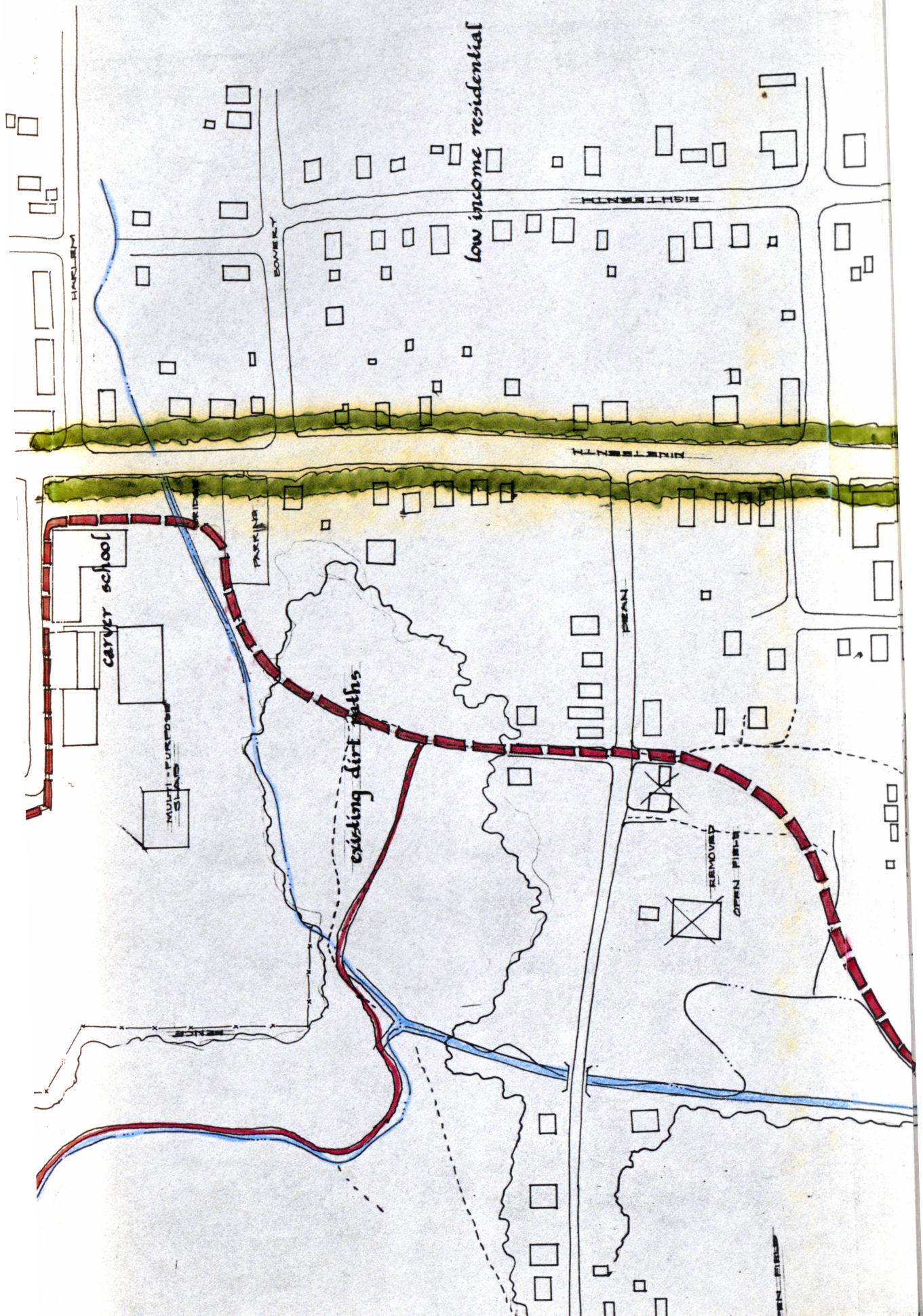
KENTUCKY

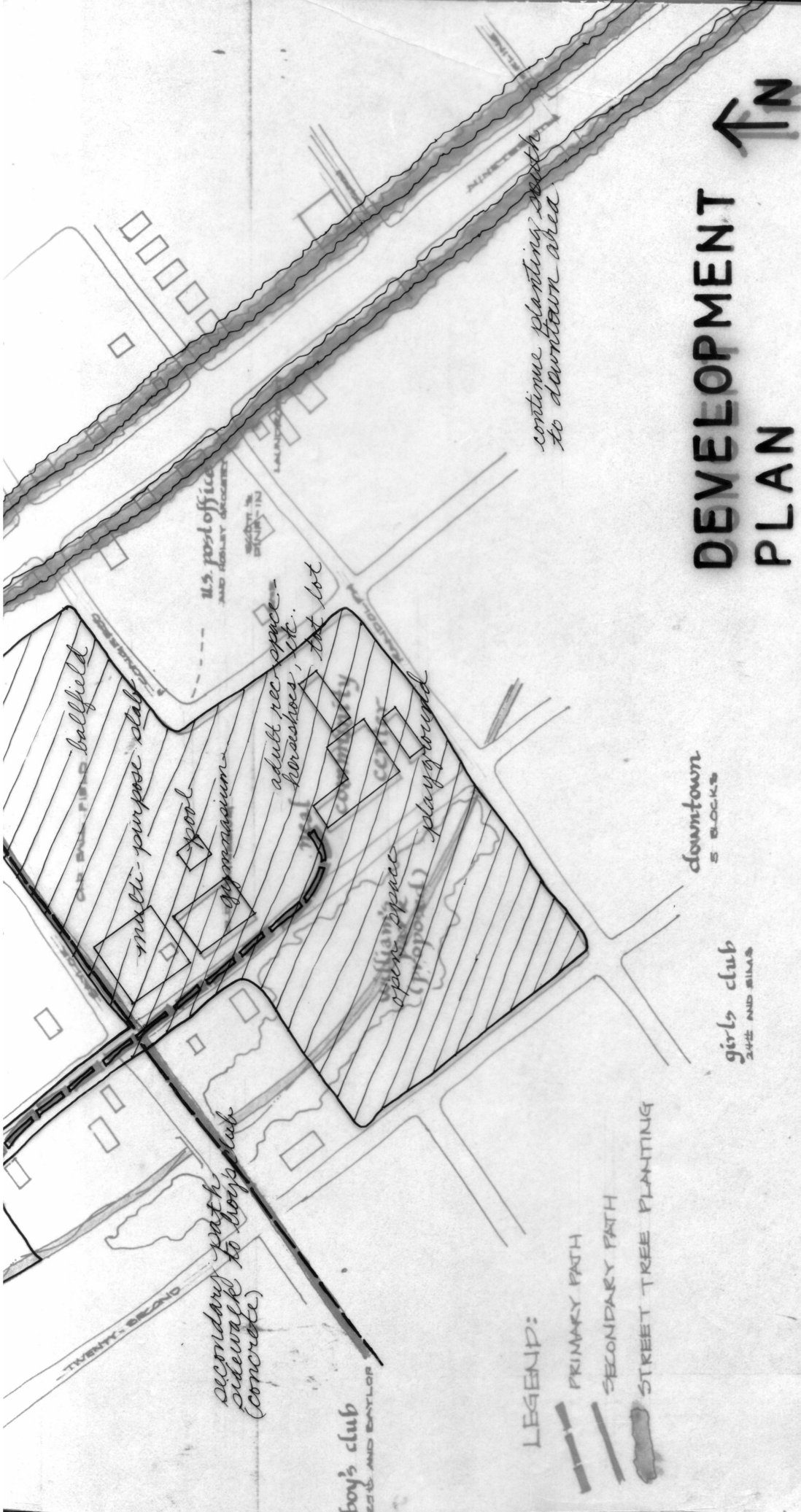
NEVADA

MUMFORD

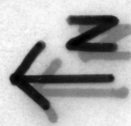
CHICAGO

CHICAGO





DEVELOPMENT PLAN



LEGEND:

- PRIMARY PATH
- SECONDARY PATH
- STREET TREE PLANTING

secondary path sidewalk to boys club (concrete)

*boy's club
23rd AND BAYLOR*

*downtown
5 BLOCKS*

*girls club
24th AND 21st*

continue planting south to downtown area

*U.S. post office
AND HOLLY GARDEN*

ballfield

multi-purpose slab

pool

gymnasium

*adult rec. space -
horseshoes, etc.*

*open space
(proposed)*

playground

20th Street

23rd and Baylor

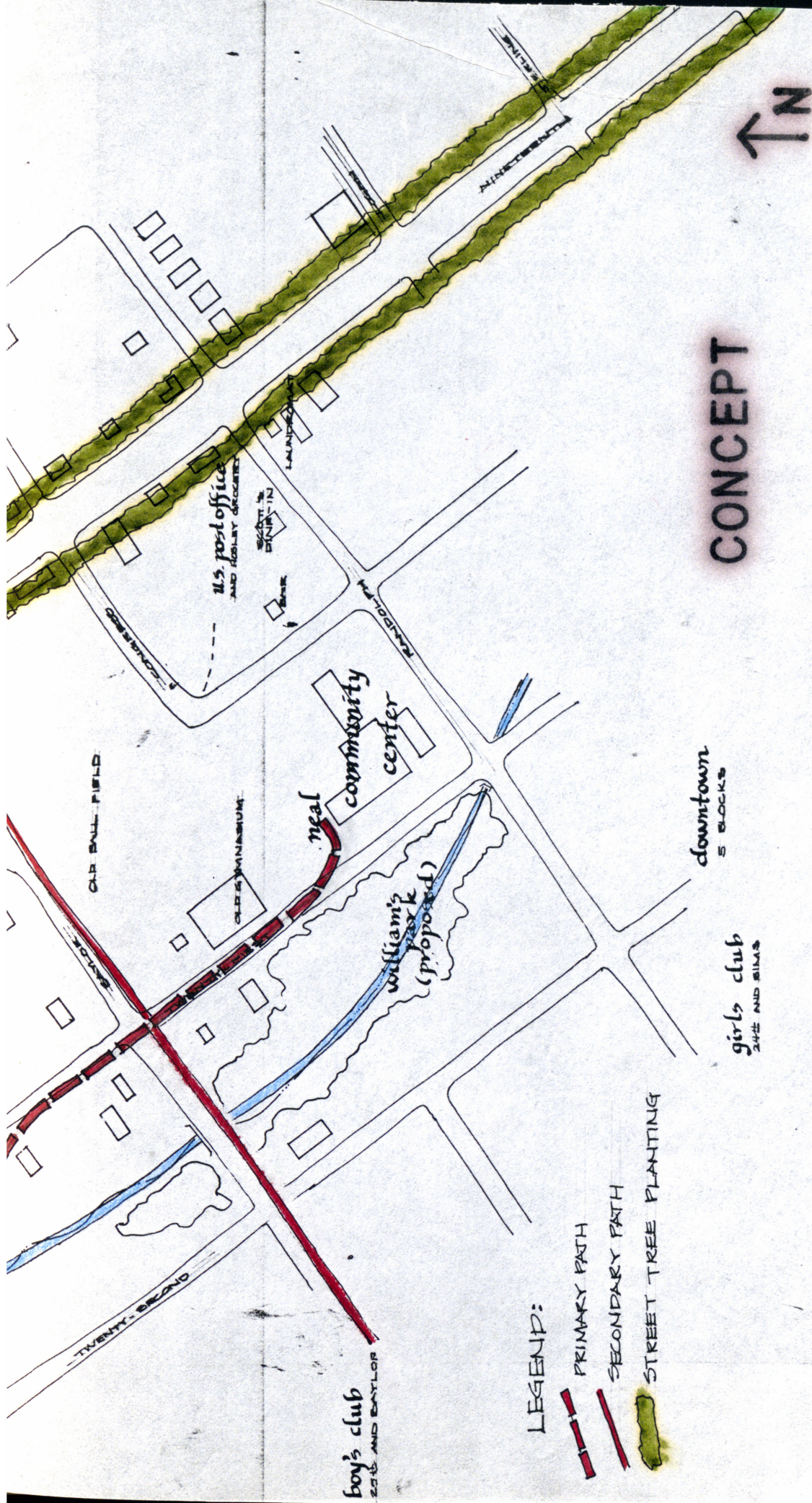
24th and 21st

downtown 5 blocks

LEGEND:

- PRIMARY PATH
- SECONDARY PATH
- STREET TREE PLANTING








CONCEPT



LEGEND:

-  PRIMARY PATH
-  SECONDARY PATH
-  STREET TREE PLANTING

boy's club
2012 AND DAYLOR

downtown
5 BLOCKS

girls club
242 AND 2143

US post office
AND RELAY OFFICES

community
center

william's
park
(proposed)

OLD BULL FIELD

OLD MINISTERS

TWENTY-SECOND

MAIN

MAIN STREET

LAUNDRY

SCOTT'S
SHIRT-IRON

BAR

CONVENT

CONCLUSION

Citizens of the United States must become aware of and be concerned with the growing problem of urban community development. We, as citizens, should be involved in this development.¹ As we become involved, three priorities should be understood:

(1) Basic needs such as staple foods and water, clothing, shelter, and facilities for personal hygiene must be satisfied first.

(2) The focus may then move from physical to cultural survival, and finally to individual fulfillment. This includes better storage and cooking facilities and individual comfort and privacy in homes.

(3) Finally, individual houses should be linked within a cohesive urban environment with community transportation, education, and health and social services.²

The Community Development Block Grant Program has the structure to accomplish these priorities. It is hoped that citizens will use the Community Development Block Grant Program to aid in the improvement of the quality of life in America's urban communities.

¹ Art Phillips, "Citizen Participation: Who Should Run Our Cities?" Community Planning Review, 25, (September 1975), p. 3.

² George Baker, "The World-Wide Housing Shortage - Can It Be Overcome?" Community Planning Review, 24 (October 1974), p. 5.

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