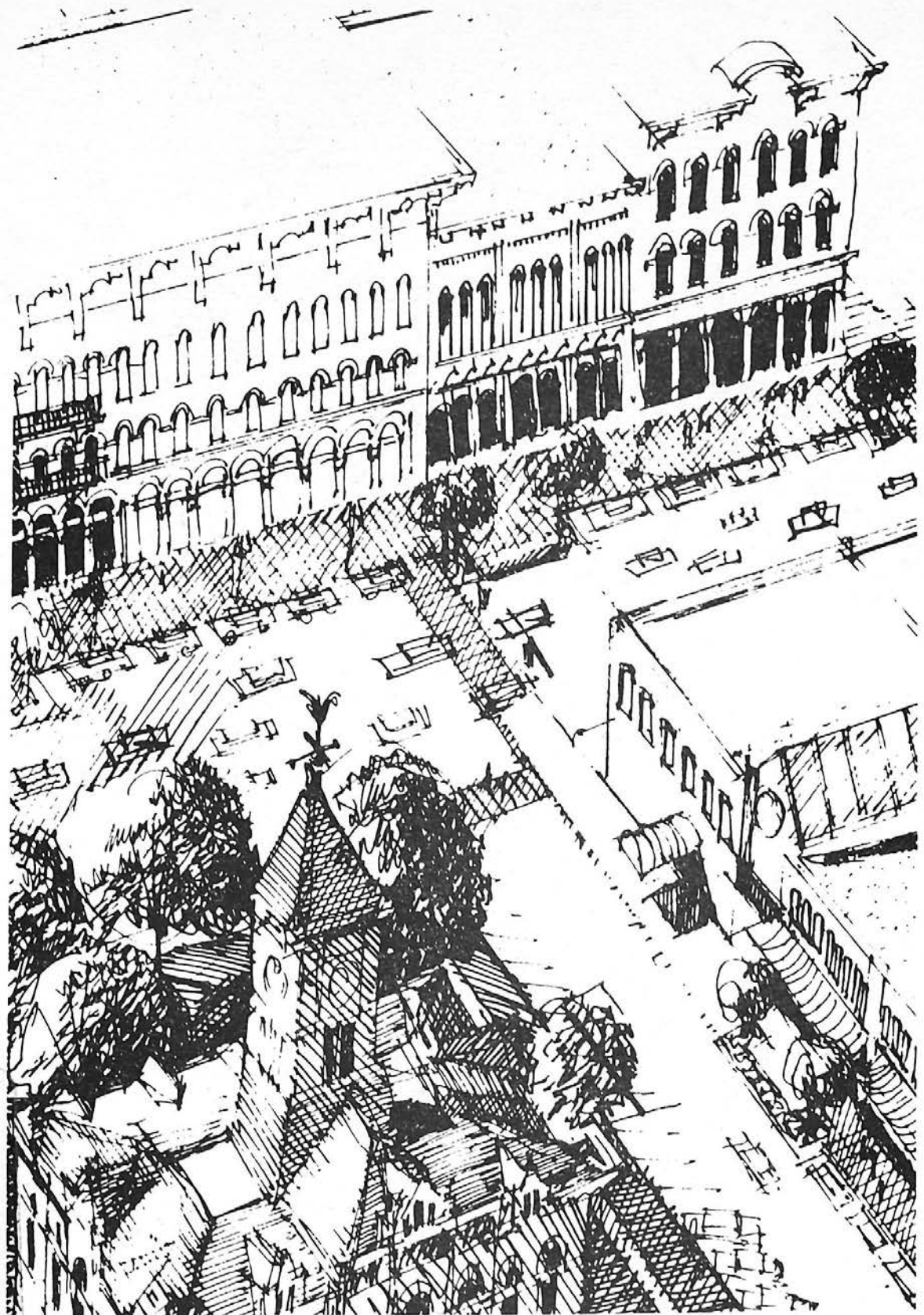


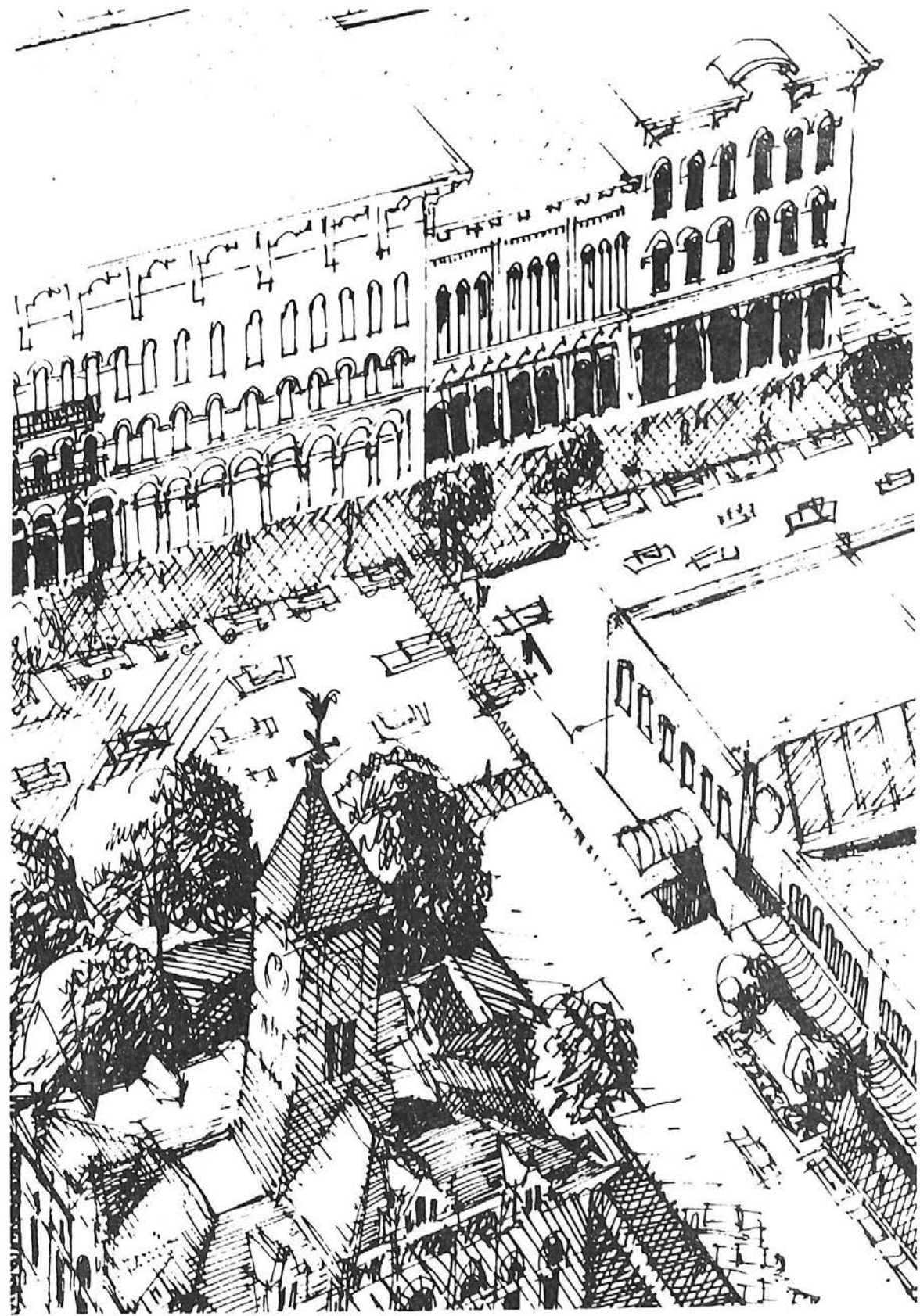
Change  
with  
Continuity

A Recommendation  
by the American  
Institute of Architects  
R/UDAT Team for  
Howell, Michigan

1984



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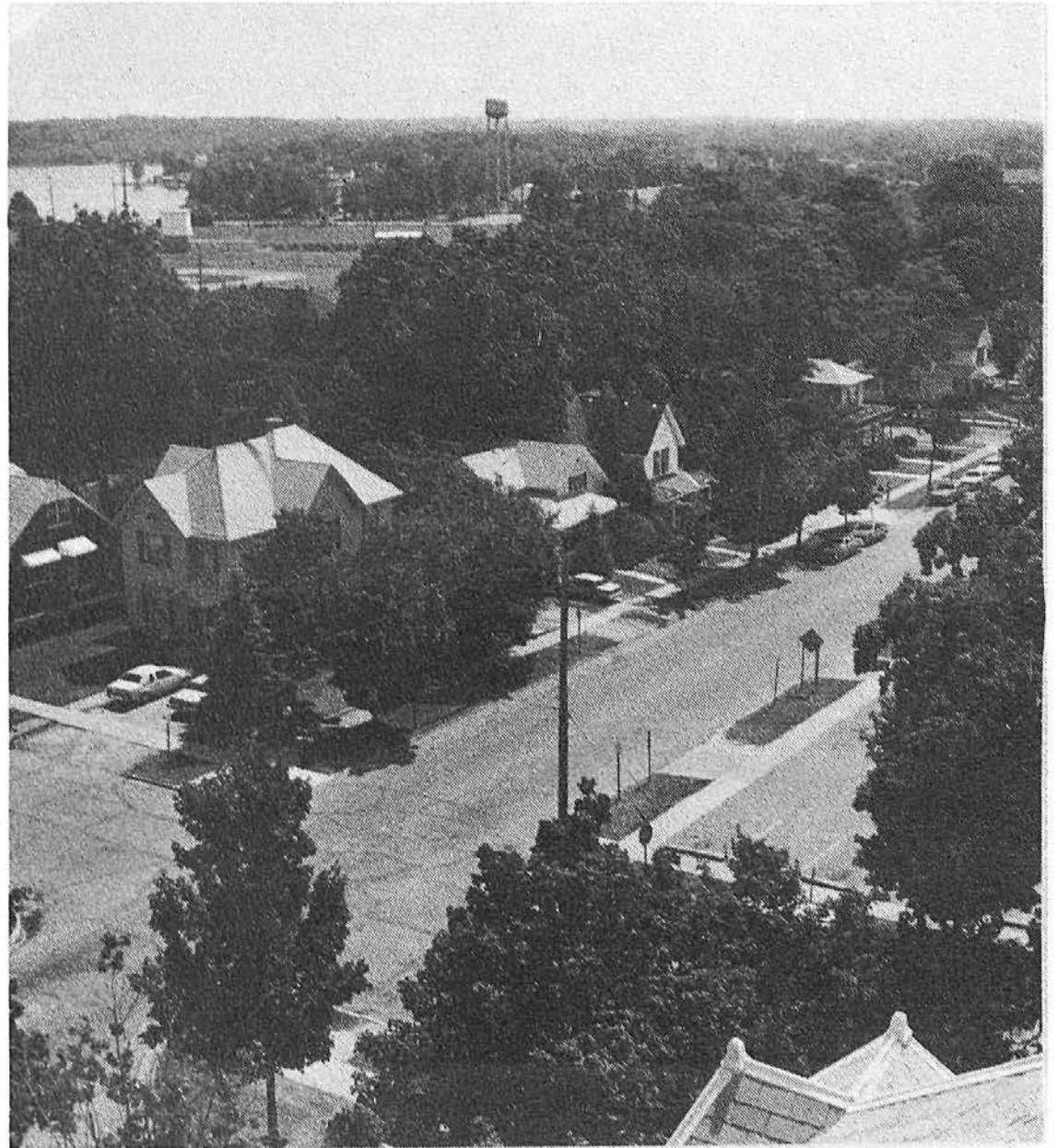
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Introduction:  
Why we  
are here

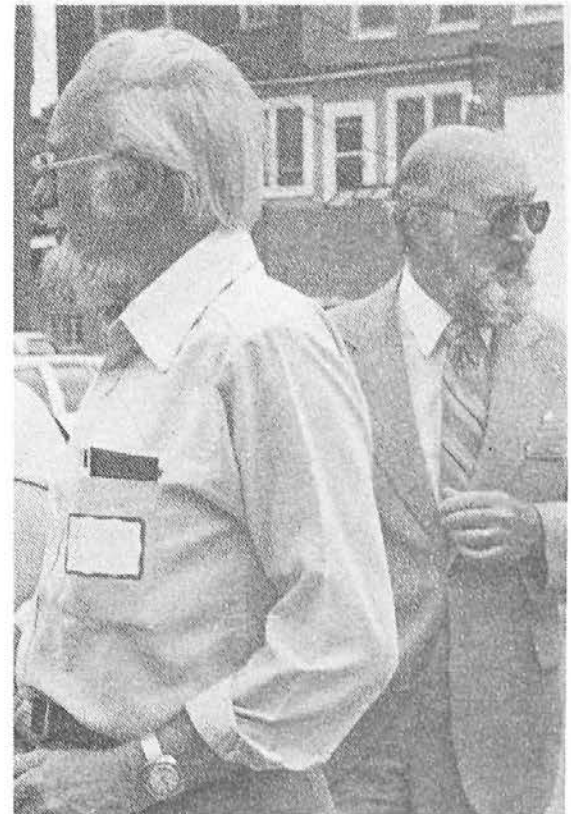


What began several years ago as concern for Howell's downtown and its ability to compete for regional shopping, culminates with this R/UDAT report. Concern in the interim generated a number of studies and proposed plans to revitalize the city. In each instance, the efforts went largely unnoticed by the general populace. Little of the plans were even implemented and the continued status quo of downtown serves as a symbol of the lack of concerted action within the city as a whole.

In recent years, a Business Development Committee was formed to determine solutions and a course of action for the Howell area. After contacting the state and outside professionals for help, the group found that it enjoyed a consensus of concern, but no common conception of how to describe the problem, its cause or potential solution.

They then looked for an impartial source, possessing expertise in urban analysis and the concept of a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) approach was first suggested.

What followed was the assurance, through support from various interest groups and financial contributions from businesses, individuals and the City of Howell, that Howell had the community involvement and interest to invite and sustain a R/UDAT problem solving team.





When we arrived, we found sound evidence of the strong support and interest which initiated our invitation. Over two days, we spoke to and heard from large numbers of citizens from various interest groups including: city, county and township government, industry, merchants, human services, the beautification and historic preservation committees, service clubs, neighborhood groups and other concerned citizens.

We spoke to people who have lived in Howell all their lives, people who arrived from elsewhere ten years ago and those who moved here two years ago. We spoke to those who were born here, moved away and chose to return. And we spoke to representatives of all age groups, including teenagers.



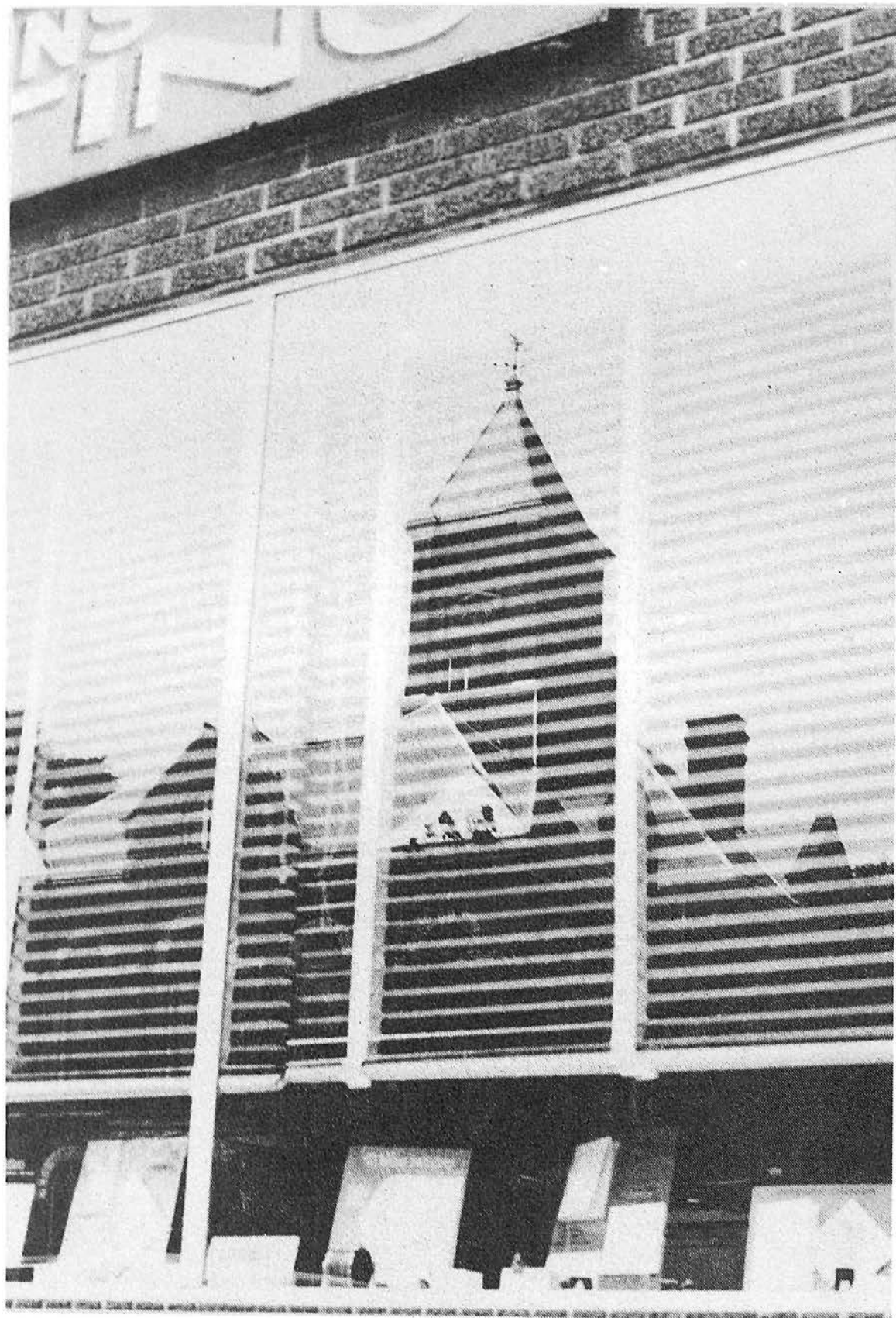
Everyone with whom we spoke was brimming with important (and not so important) information, history and opinions. We know some of your best gossip going back at least twenty-five years. No one tried to hide problems (we know about "polio" lake) or politics. We have been treated to sincere and energetic Howell hospitality of a sort only a small town can provide. We were encouraged to sample your activities and attended a successful Moonlight Madness.

It became clear to us upon our arrival that the expectations surrounding our visit were extremely high and the list of issues you wished us to address was long and detailed. Many of you wanted us to provide a complete master plan for your community and others of you wanted solutions to specific problems

with which you were concerned. We could do neither. Instead, the limits of time and the variety and complexity of the issues required that we draw into focus those issues with the greatest effect on your community and its future. In this way, we hope to direct you to areas in need of the greatest attention. In the process, we attempted to provide you with a fresh look at the problems and concerns that face you daily and we hope to leave you with an understanding of these issues which will better enable you to shape and direct your future.



R/UDAT  
AS MIRROR

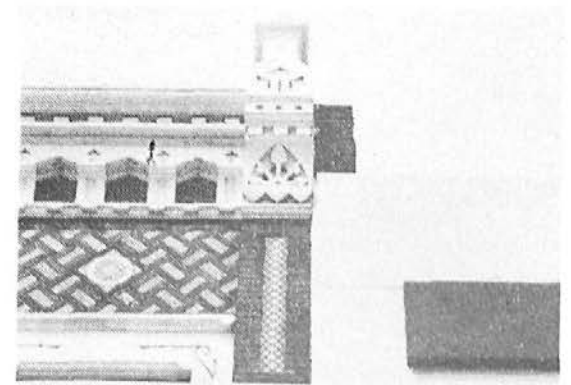
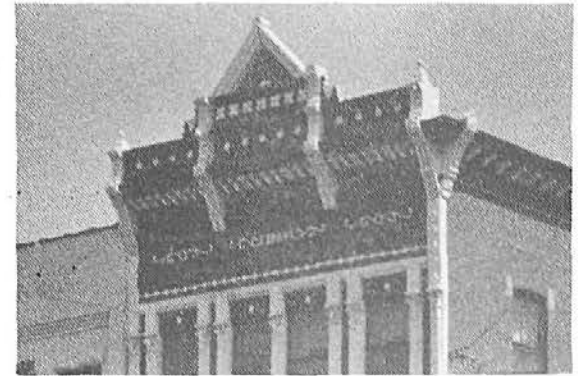
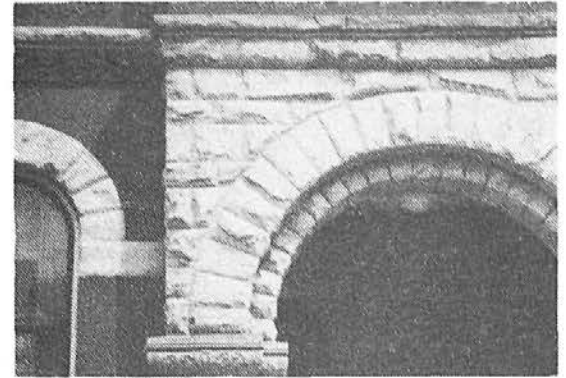




The R/UDAT in Howell, Michigan, was designed to reflect the values, concerns, and dreams of Howell citizens. In this regard, the R/UDAT team served as a mirror for the community. R/UDAT provides a unique way for the community to see itself. This image is sometimes hazy, sometimes fractured, sometimes out of focus. However, in most cases the image is remarkably clear. This report describes the image in the mirror.

R/UDAT is not a comprehensive planning process. It is, instead, an outline of strategies. It gives direction to community initiatives. Its success is completely determined by the community's interest and commitment. In formulating our recommendations, the team has been completely dependent upon input from citizens and we have all been most impressed by the participation of these citizens in the R/UDAT process.

In this report "you" means all the members of the Howell community. "We" means the 14 members of the Howell R/UDAT team.



# The Common Vision

YOU SHARE A COMMON VISION OF YOUR TOWN. ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE DIFFERENCES, YOUR COMMONALITIES ARE STRONGER THAN YOUR DIFFERENCES.

What is this common vision of what you want Howell to be? You want Howell to be the ideal American small town with a strong sense of place and a strong sense of community.

# Sense of place

In this common vision of Howell's sense of place, what are its ideal physical characteristics?

It is a place...

which has a central focus...downtown.

with a coherent image in its neighborhoods and public spaces...streets, sidewalks, front yards, court house lawn. These spaces make up the community living room.

where change comes rarely and when it comes it comes slowly.

with a clear edge, middle and center.

where many of its individual buildings are significant to the community.

where the best of both urban and rural come together.



# Sense of community

In this common vision of Howell's sense of community, what are its ideal social characteristics?

It is a community...

which is self contained and self sufficient.

with stability and security.

where the opportunity exists for people to know one another.

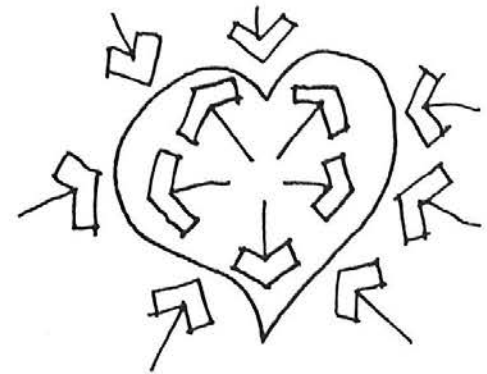
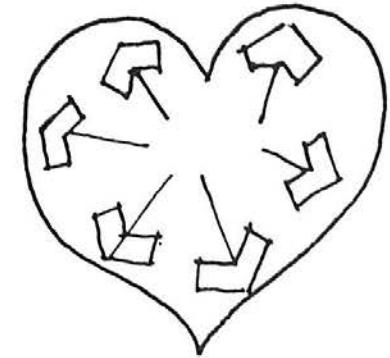
where tradition is more important than change.

which is a good place to raise kids.

of family values which treats each of its citizens as part of a large extended family.

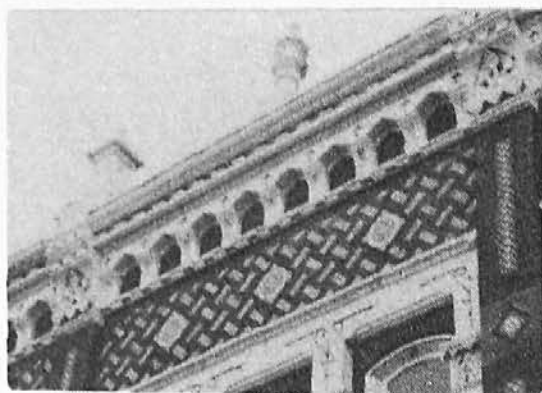
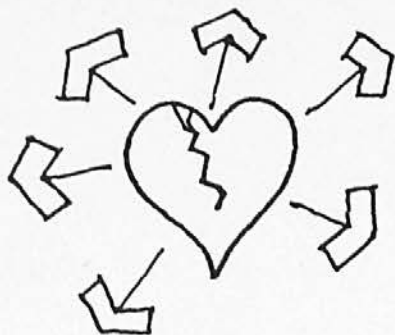
THERE ARE MANY THREATS TO HOWELL'S COMMON VISION OF THE IDEAL AMERICAN SMALL TOWN AND ITS SENSE OF PLACE AND COMMUNITY.

Some of these threats are part of the normal evolution of a community and will resolve themselves naturally; others are so serious that they demand your immediate action. These threats demand your action.



Threats  
to the  
COMMON VISION

## Real threats to the sense of place



## Real threats to the sense of community

Your downtown is not focused. It is being pulled apart. Each merchant, event, county employee and office that moves from downtown pulls energy from this central focus. (The movement of the county court facilities from the court house area is a serious and immediate threat to the strength of the downtown.)

You are not exercising control over the quality of your neighborhoods and public spaces. You are not certain who currently has this control.

You are not exercising control of the rate of physical change in your environment.

The clear definition of your town's edges, middle and center is growing fuzzier and, if left on its own, will blur into sameness.

You are not exercising control over the character and quality of your new buildings and you have been slow to recognize the value of your historic architecture.

You are no longer a self sufficient, self contained community. You are part of a greater area.

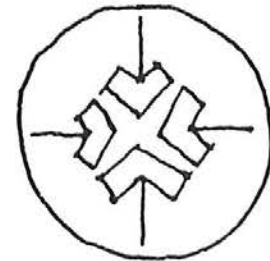
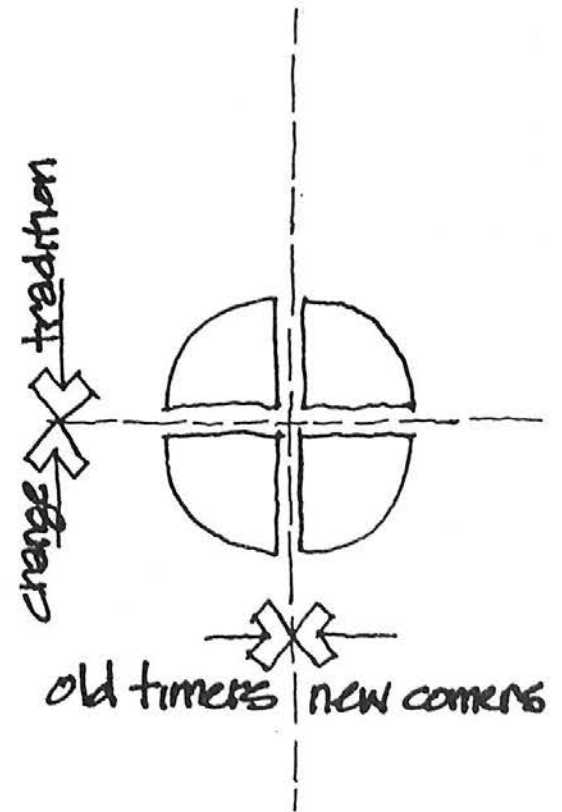
You are no longer a stable community but are being dramatically affected by Michigan's economy and its resulting movement of families.

You are allowing the natural categories of old timers and newcomers to stand in the way of real neighborliness.

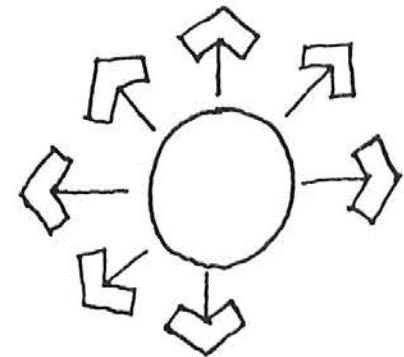
As the rate of change increases, your community will need more traditions and activities built around these traditions.

Many of your children feel alienated from the sense of community.

The concept of your community as the extended family is no longer a reality. You are rapidly evolving into a town where individual values are always more important than community values.



The image in the Howell R/UDAT mirror is one where there is more commonality than you realize. What follows is your reflection in five specific areas. Each represents an opportunity. Each is accompanied by specific messages that can help shape your sense of place and sense of community.



# Downtown



You spoke to us throughout the team's visit about the central business district. In many ways, you all share a common vision about this part of your town; you place a high value on it and treasure its characteristics.

## The COMMON VISION

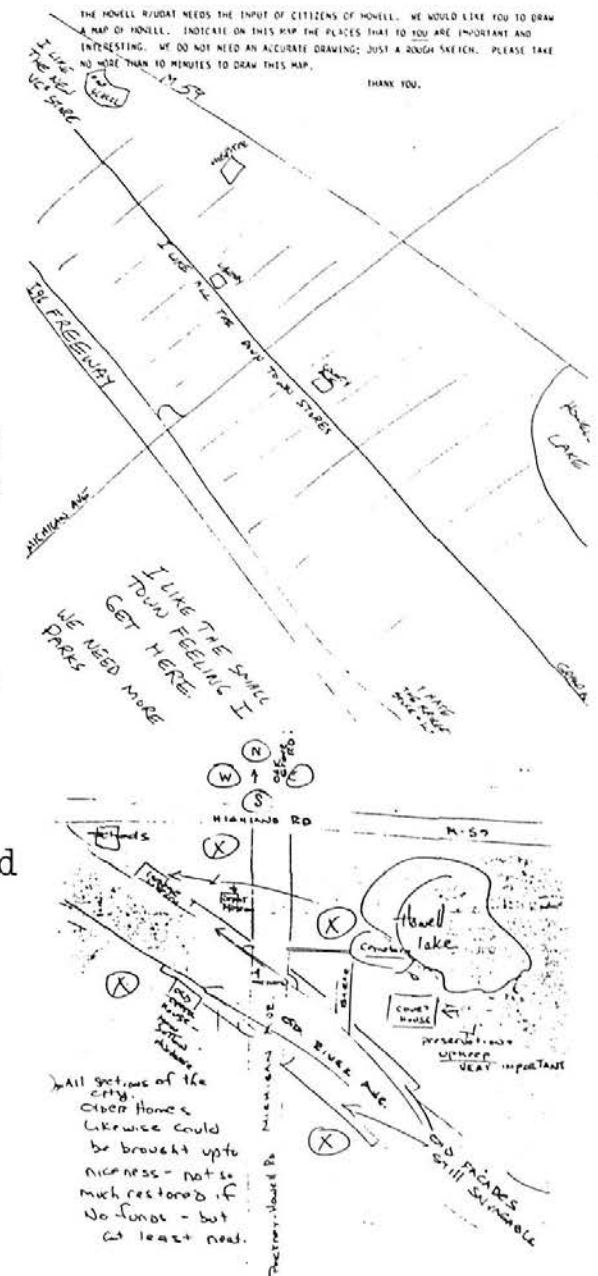
### OUR CENTRAL PLACE

You called it our central place, the heart of what many think of when they use the term, "The Howell Area." It is a place to come to, a destination. It is Howell.

### MAIN STREET AMERICA

Howell's downtown is what one thinks of when seeing an old fashioned Currier and Ives print. It is the intersection and the crossroads where things come together.

For years, the big streets have lead to this place. There is a special public aspect to this crossing point, one that is remembered and recalled with relative ease. When asked to draw a map of what Howell is, everyone draws in Grand River Avenue, and most show Michigan Avenue crossing it.



## A MARK OF OUR SMALLNESS

You referred to the commercial core area as an essential mark of your smallness, of what is meant when someone says "small town." The scale of the downtown is very important too. It is human in scale, shops are close to one another and there is variety and individuality. The doors and shop windows seem to be the right size too, made for people as pedestrians, not for automobiles.



You talked about the place in ways that indicate it's easy to get to know the retail area, to figure out how it works, and thus comprehend it.

The main shopping area expresses your scale, your smallness and also your uniqueness. You have something special here, it is fragile but it has great potential.

## OUR RECORD OF HISTORY

The downtown district is where your history is made evident. The history of the place is the history of the Howell area. It is the roots, the continuity and expression of continuation.

The buildings along the main street and the courthouse mark a place in our time; they represent stability in a powerful way. Although many things have changed, and are changing all around, the business district stays put, holding on to a place in time.







It is a place of memories, and of what helps to make memories. There is a nice comfortable feeling, a feeling of the familiar, almost a nostalgic expression within this place.

#### A SOCIAL NODE

In many ways, the downtown is thought of as a social place, a place where community services are found and where people come together to mix, to be seen and to see one another. The downtown is the place of city government, and county government, of services like the library and protection.

In a loose and abstract way, the idea of town is a place where the individual joins together with others, relinquishing his/her individuality in part to fill the equally important objective for socialization. The downtown is a symbolic expression of this transactional facet of life.

#### MEASURES OF SUCCESS

You often refer to the downtown as a visible measure of viability, success, and overall quality. If things are going well downtown in economic, physical, and social ways, then things are going well in the town. You measure quality by taking the pulse of a town's downtown.





What does the  
downtown have  
going for it?



We believe that Howell's downtown has a great many positive attributes and resources today that should form the basis of what it can become tomorrow. Many, many people in Howell also identified these qualities.

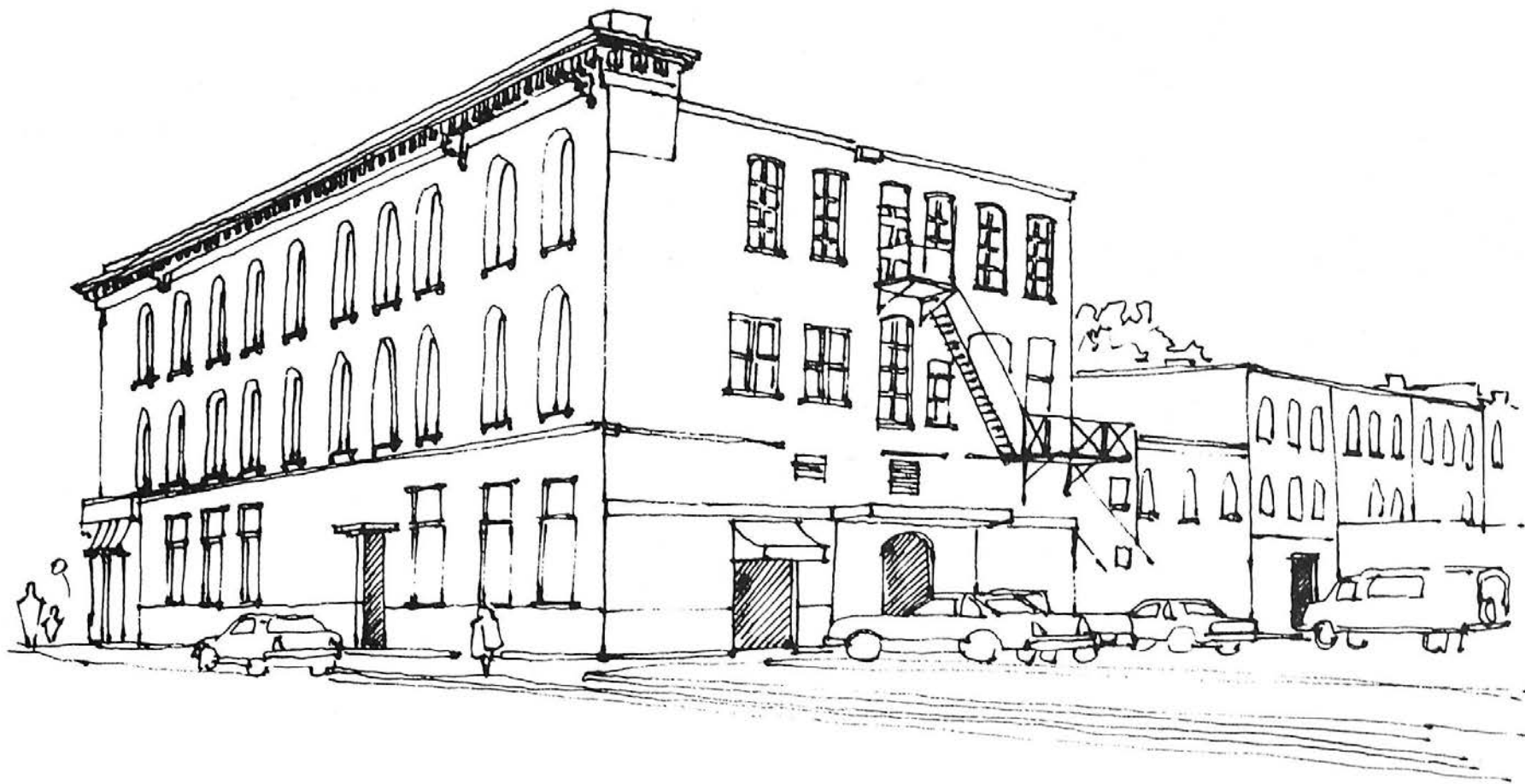
#### ARCHITECTURE

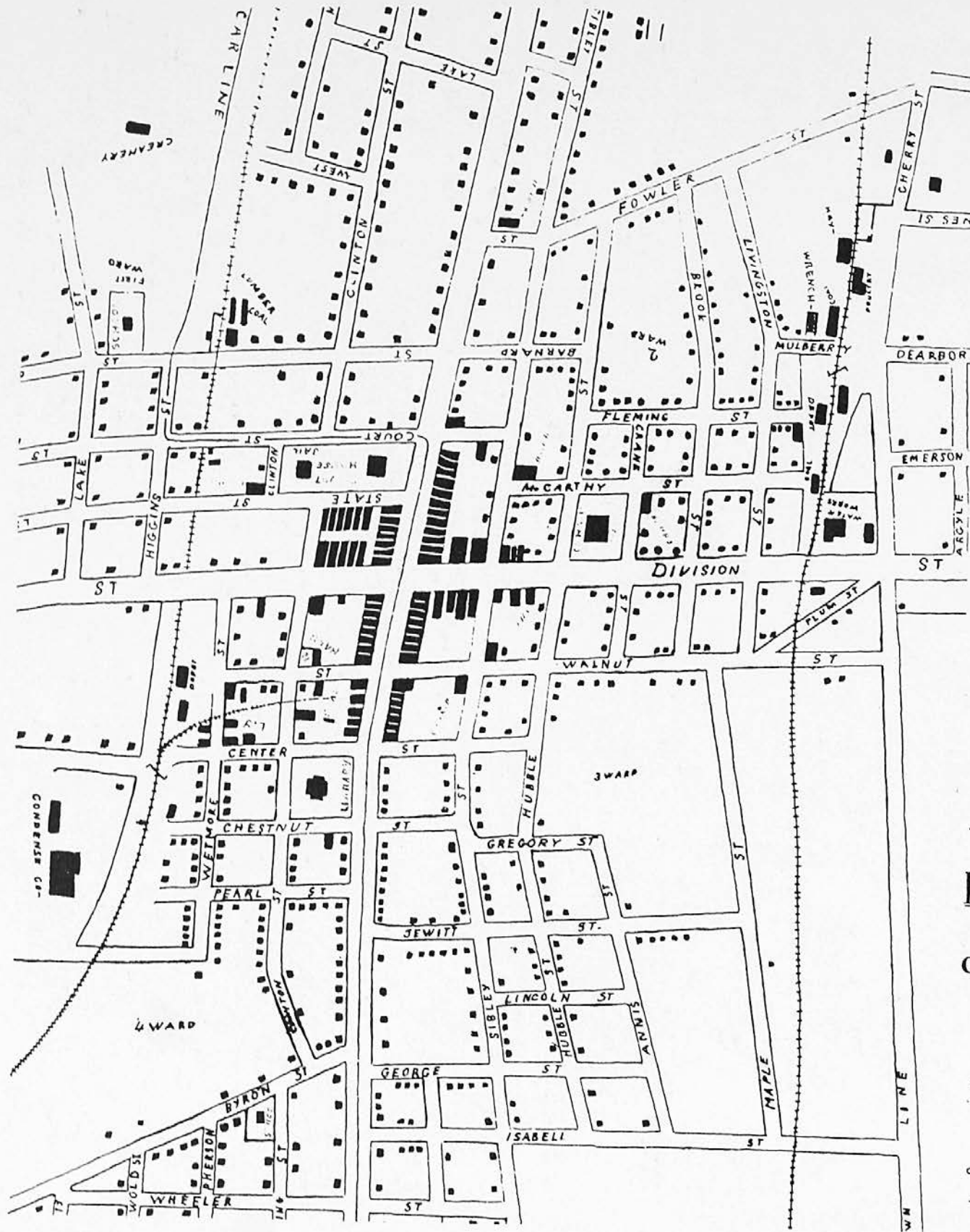
The architectural and historic quality of the two and three story commercial buildings in the core area are extraordinary. The architectural characteristics alone would easily rival many towns across the country who have promoted themselves as special historic treasures.

This collection of urban commercial architecture has tremendous aesthetic value. It is also an attraction in today's environment where too often development patterns have produced a sameness, a plastic tacky tack that has no aesthetic value and lacks the wonderful sense of continuity in time of Howell's downtown.

#### COMPACT CORE

The downtown has a tightly build-up character that is as special as the buildings themselves. This unusual level of development density, with buildings lining the major intersection is an urban asset contributing to the downtown's strong sense of character and unity.





MAP  
 - OF -  
 HOWELL,  
 THE  
 COUNTY SEAT

Scale  
 300 ft. = 1 inch

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 J. HAAS HOWELL, MICH  
 1910



1984



This closeness of buildings and activities contributes to an unusually fine pedestrian experience; well defined streetwalls provide the shopper with unusual variety.

The compactness is also expressed in the sense of connection that exists between the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.



### CONTINUITY

Perhaps the most significant thing going in the downtown is the fact that it is all still there. Howell has maintained a continuity through time in its downtown forms and functions. This staying power is a solid base upon which to grow without going to extraordinary means to import a character to establish the downtown as a retail center.



### WHOLENESS

There is a rich and obvious consistency in the downtown's overall character as it relates to the immediate residential surroundings. There are a number of qualities that contribute to a sense of wholeness in the area:

- Spatial Patterns:

The downtown is characterized by close packed buildings; the neighborhoods by individual buildings set in the middle of a lot surrounded



by open green space. This kind of distinction ought to remain because it makes evident the differences.

. Greenness:

The larger, mature trees and wealth of landscaping within the residential areas extends close into the downtown helping to visually link the two areas.

. Scale:

Building forms generally small in scale provide for visual and spatial variety.

#### NEW INVESTMENTS

The willingness to invest and work together to promote the retail core is indeed a valuable commodity to nurture and encourage.

#### DOWNTOWN TRADITIONAL EVENTS

Although few in number at present, the traditional events held in conjunction with the downtown show promise and more should be encouraged. They not only help promote shopping downtown; they also provide the vehicle to bring merchants together.





## AWARENESS OF PRESERVATION

The emerging awareness of the role and value of preservation activities within the city bode well in future efforts in the downtown.

## ENTRY AND EDGES

The downtown enjoys an unusually well defined sense of entry from the west, east and north.

It has the potential to develop these further and to make improvements in the sense of entry from the south along Michigan Ave. Furthermore, the edges around the downtown core are relatively well defined.

## DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS

Within the downtown area, there are opportunities for new kinds of development.

For example the opera house, structurally and aesthetically preserved in time, remains as one of the downtown's permanent future development opportunities.

- . Alleys (public and private rights of way) offer the potential for connecting, enclosing and extending the commercial shop frontages within the core area.
- . Underused sites immediately adjacent to the core of commercial buildings along Grand River Avenue and other downtown streets afford the potential for new infill projects. These would strengthen the physical fabric and increase the commercial activities.





- . Underused sites surrounding the county courthouse afford the opportunity to get some substantial new development in the core that could contain county functions and importantly, define the building wall around the courthouse square and provide a stronger sense of enclosure to this significant public space.
- . The history of residential uses, above the first floor retail and the potential to increase them is another positive attribute.

#### STRONG BASE

The downtown contains a strong base of nonretail activities including the city offices, post office, county court and some related functions and other businesses such as the Citizens Insurance Company. A downtown needs a range of activities like these; they provide a base and attract spinoff activities (professional offices, etc.) that also support retail.

#### RETAILING

The downtown area has the opportunity to support a vital and attractive retail sector. The area retains a psychological place of importance to residents that can be tapped. The architecture of the area is a draw. The neighborhoods around downtown retain a population and are relatively affluent. There are some office employees downtown or near downtown.

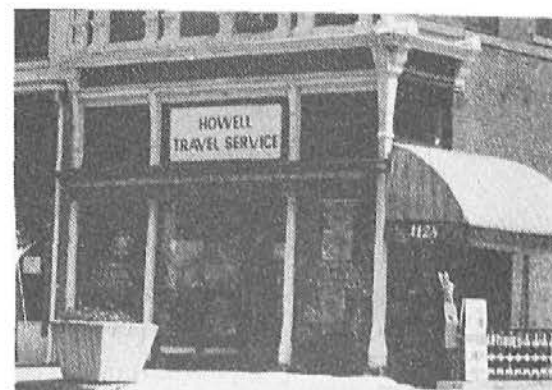
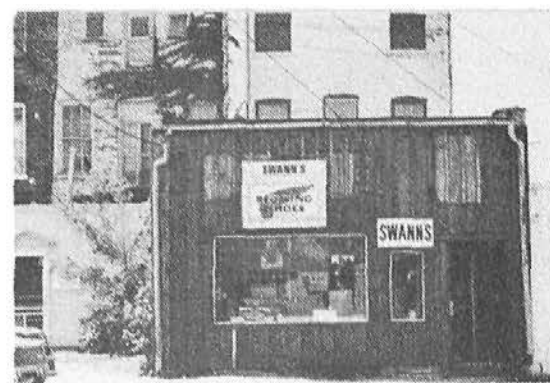
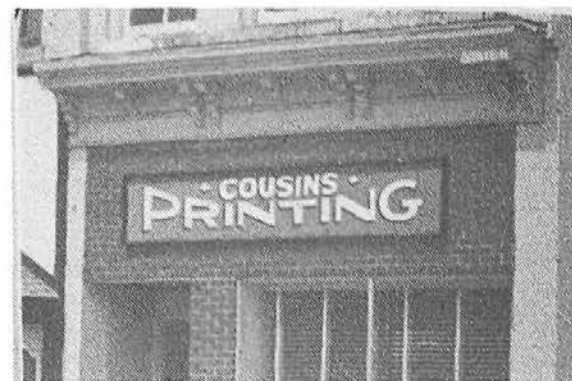
Demographic and life style changes have occurred that may present new opportunities. While working women and commuters emphasize convenience, they also value service. Two-worker households have substantially greater disposable incomes than suggested by per capita or household averages.

The turnover in Howell area population - newcomers rehabilitating houses and new area residents - also create opportunities for sale of goods related to remodeling and home furnishing. Some such firms deal directly with individuals and other market to and/or through contractors.

If significant population growth resumes, there will also emerge a strong market for specialty houseware, gift and decorating items, and specialty foods as has developed in Brighton (17 such shops compared to four in Howell, whereas the size of Howell's market appears to be nearly 50% the size of Brighton's). In addition, the basic architectural attraction of Howell is greater than in Brighton.

The potential in Howell's downtown is reflected by several successful and growing merchants selling such goods as :

- Hardware
- Specialty Furniture
- Shoes
- Sporting Goods
- Apparel





The successful merchants have one or more characteristics in common:

- Merchandise not available elsewhere in Howell area
- High service orientation
- Some Sunday and evening hours
- Advertising
- Attractive stores and displays

Several also augment their business through wholesale and/or group marketing. These merchants could probably locate their businesses elsewhere, but prefer downtown Howell because of the architectural chain and perhaps a greater feeling of this part of the fabric of the community.

These motivations can be used to attract other quality merchants to downtown Howell.

## Constraints

What are the constraints that must be addressed to take advantage of these opportunities?

### LIMITED CURRENT RETAILING

The CBD has ceased to be the sole or even primary retail area in Howell. For groceries and most general merchandise, there are several shopping areas east of the main portion of downtown. For major shopping, Howell residents are reported to shop primarily in Novi and Lansing.

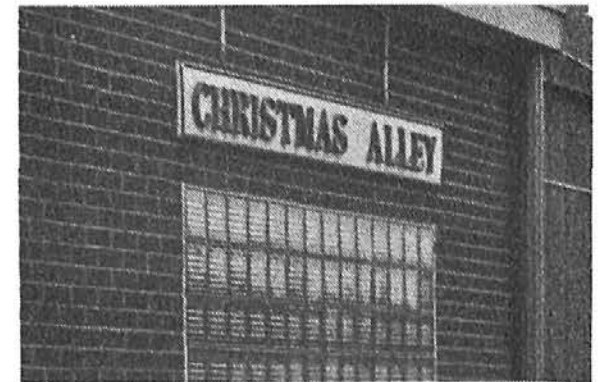
Downtown Howell has retained only limited retailing functions as summarized below:

| <u>TYPE OF STORE/GOODS SOLD</u> | <u>NUMBER</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Apparel                         | 6             |
| Shoe                            | 2             |
| Jewelry                         | 2             |
| Specialty-Gifts-Crafts          | 4             |
| Hair Care                       | 8             |
| Hardware-Paint                  | 2             |
| Restaurants, incl. takeout      | 6             |
| Bars                            | 2             |
| Bakeries                        | 2             |
| Variety (Dime Store)            | 1             |
| Office Products                 | 1             |
| Pharmacy                        | 1             |
| Auto Parts                      | 2             |
| Housewares, Specialty           | 1             |
| Party Stores                    | 2             |

Downtown no longer serves the full range of retail needs for food, clothing, housewares, etc. Instead, there is a potpourri of basics (e.g. hardware), apparel, food, and other shops.

This erosion has occurred over a number of years for many reasons:

- Freeways make travel to other areas to shop easy and relatively cheap.
- Two worker families shop at night and have limited time.



- Shopping malls offer convenient parking, uniform hours, up-to-date merchandise and comparison shopping opportunities.
- Discount stores offer a wide range of merchandise at lower prices; evening and Sunday hours.
- Some local merchant's merchandise is inappropriate for the current customer base.
- Some merchant's presentation and merchandising is unattractive.

The weak retailing situation has occurred despite a significant growth in the trade area during the last 15 years. From 1970 to 1980, the Howell trade area increased by 50% from about 22,000 to 33,000 people. We believe that it has remained relatively stable since.

The buildings and physical structure of downtown do not lend themselves well to be the sole shopping center. They are adaptable to specialty shopping, eating and many other uses. These limits will have to be addressed.

#### Retail Turnover

The newer merchants can be helped by other similarly aggressive merchants. There are many old merchants, however, who may not either adopt new retailing tools or retire. Since there are few vacancies, this can make managing a retail transition difficult.



### Excessive Competition

It is possible that a specialty shopping center will be located on commercially zoned/and off East Grand River Avenue.

This will result in more local competition within the most immediate sphere of the downtown market and could further draw business from the core and compete with its potential niche.

A possibility for excessive competition also exists in the proposal to sell excess sewer capacity to Brighton. If a sewer line exists, so does the likelihood of development. While permission is necessary to hook up to sewer service, permission can be hard to deny and future retail competition may result.

### Traffic

Unchecked traffic through town has the potential to erode the viability of the retail area, inhibiting new development. To work best, the retail downtown needs to maximize the connections among shops along the avenue and across it. Traffic patterns, speed, and the general anti-pedestrian conditions brought on by the noisy through traffic work against this.

### Potential Loss of Downtown Workers

Major economic functions must remain downtown to retain economic importance and support retailing. Should the courts, county offices or Citizens



Insurance leave or expand outside the downtown, opportunities are lost. Since there are other factors encouraging relocation outside the core, these users must be encouraged to remain downtown.

### Loss of Buildings

A real threat to the downtown lies in the potential for deterioration and destruction of the buildings. Gradually the core can easily lose some of the fine old structures, replaced if at all by structures that would not be in keeping with present forms and characteristics.



The worst scenario would be to produce a toothless grin in Howell's once proud victorian face with gaping holes created by buildings removed in response to safety, deteriorating conditions or misguided commercial considerations. Time is critical here. Continued inaction can result in such loss by default.



## What you can do about the downtown

### MAIN STREET PROJECT

Initiate a Main Street Project in the retail core. The Michigan Department of Commerce sponsors a statewide Main Street Program which offers assistance and expertise to towns who qualify. This program has four major objectives:

Organization - Seek the active participation of all parties who have a stake in the future of your downtown

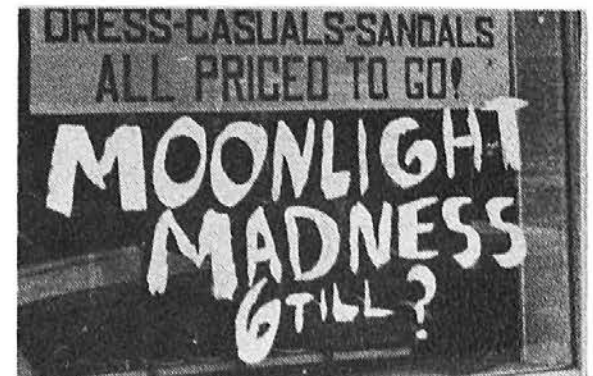
Promotion - Reinforce downtown as a meeting place through increased special events, festivals, performances, parades and promotions (increased activity increases sales).

Marketing - Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for downtown. Refine the merchandise mix and merchandizing to match the market. This will require professional assistance.

Design - Initiate a specific design plan for historic preservation, window displays, public improvement, signage, lighting, traffic flow and landscaping.

### MAIN STREET MANAGER

All of these recommendations will require that the retail core be managed as professionally as a shopping center. Individual retailers cannot afford the commitment of time and energy that this





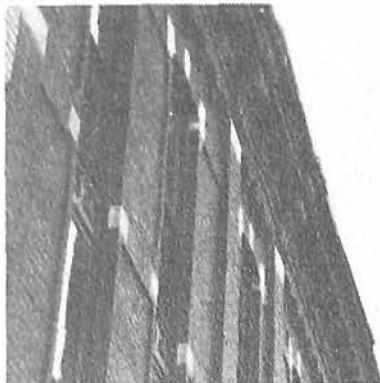
management requires. We recommend that you work toward hiring a main street manager for the downtown.

#### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Designate the downtown core as a historic district. The energy you expend in the process will be worth it. This is the first step toward taking visual and economic advantage of your rich architectural character.

#### THE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

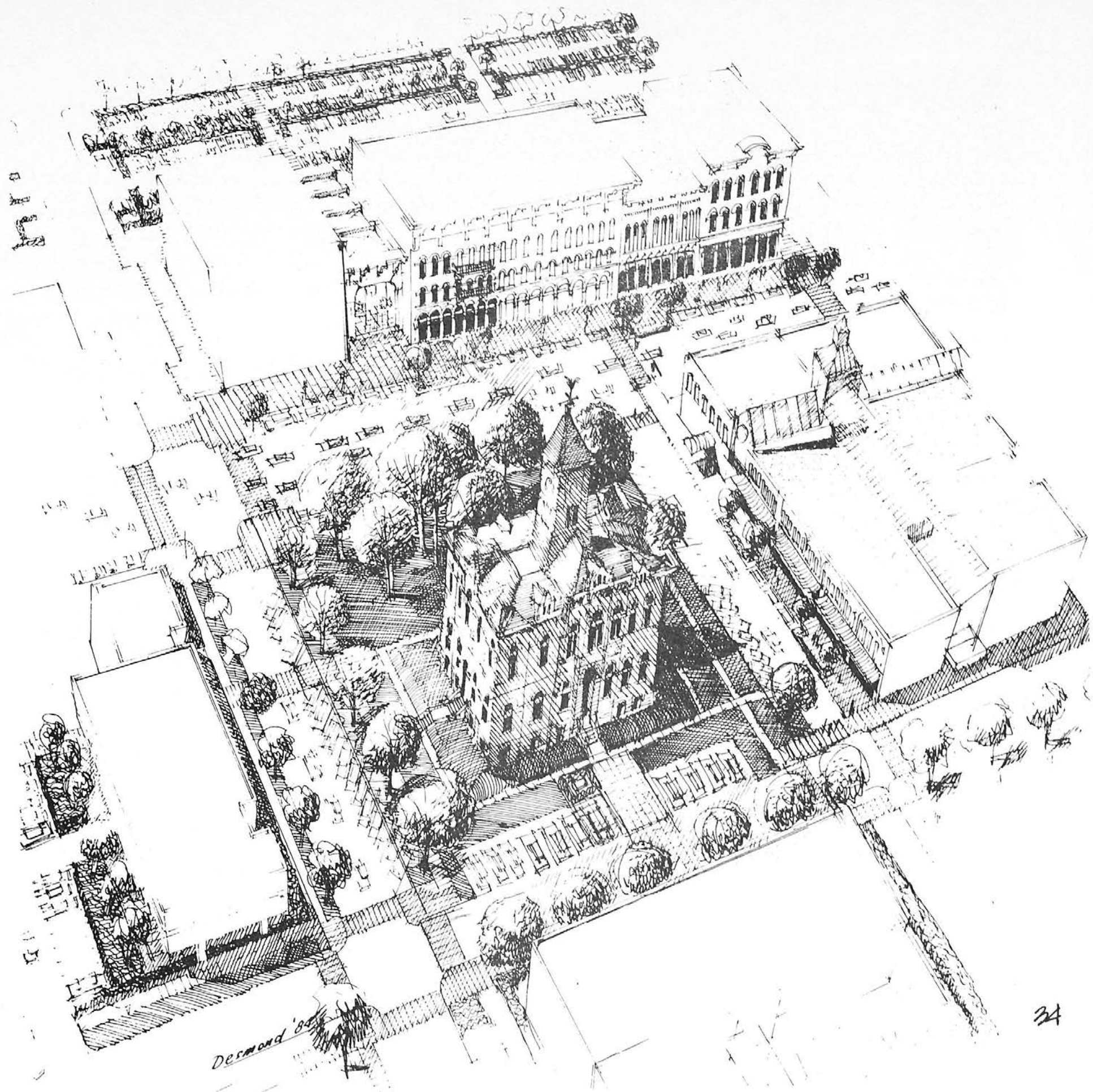
This historic district designation can lead directly to attracting new investments since private developers of historic district properties can take advantage of the Tax Incentive Act which allows for a significant income tax reduction for improvements to historic properties.



The unique image of the downtown is derived from the historic character of the core. Character is the key for attracting your market niche - the range of local customers and tourists - which in turn will provide substantial economic benefit to the city.

#### FINANCIAL TOOL KIT

Before any significant progress can be made in the restoration of available buildings and attracting new investments, financial tools, such as those described below need to be identified and provided.





Loan Program - A facade improvement loan program (with some assurances that property taxes will not be unduly affected) could be provided to encourage property owners to restore their facades. This loan program will require the partnership of the merchants, city officials and local banks.

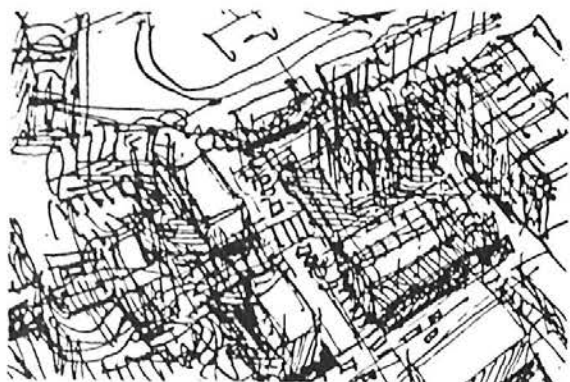
Special Service Area - A special service area with higher taxes to finance CBD improvements is another possibility. As early changes lead to improvements, this seemingly politically impossible task will become easier.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - TIF permits the growth in tax revenues over a base level to be used to pay for improvements to stimulate development in a designated area. Consider use of TIF either for a downtown district to support capital improvements and/or site assembly and infrastructure development for a specific project downtown.

Tax Abatements - Michigan permits a property tax abatement of up to 50% for up to 12 years. Tax abatement can be used to help lure a particular development. Its use to reduce the immediate tax impact of facade and other building improvements should be explored.

CDBG/Loan Fund - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) CDBG funds can also be used for downtown improvements if benefits from job creation for low and moderate income people can be shown. Among other things, these funds can be used to "buy down" interest rates on privately funded development loan programs funded by local lenders.





## A DOWNTOWN PROGRAM GUIDE

City as Developer - Build upon your tradition of the city as developer. The city can adopt a pro-active stance toward development downtown. We applaud, for example, your instance on keeping the post office and city offices within the core.

The city should consider using its some 42 acres behind the firehouse to help downtown. Sell the land to increase residential use in this area and use the proceeds to create a revolving fund for development leverage in downtown projects.

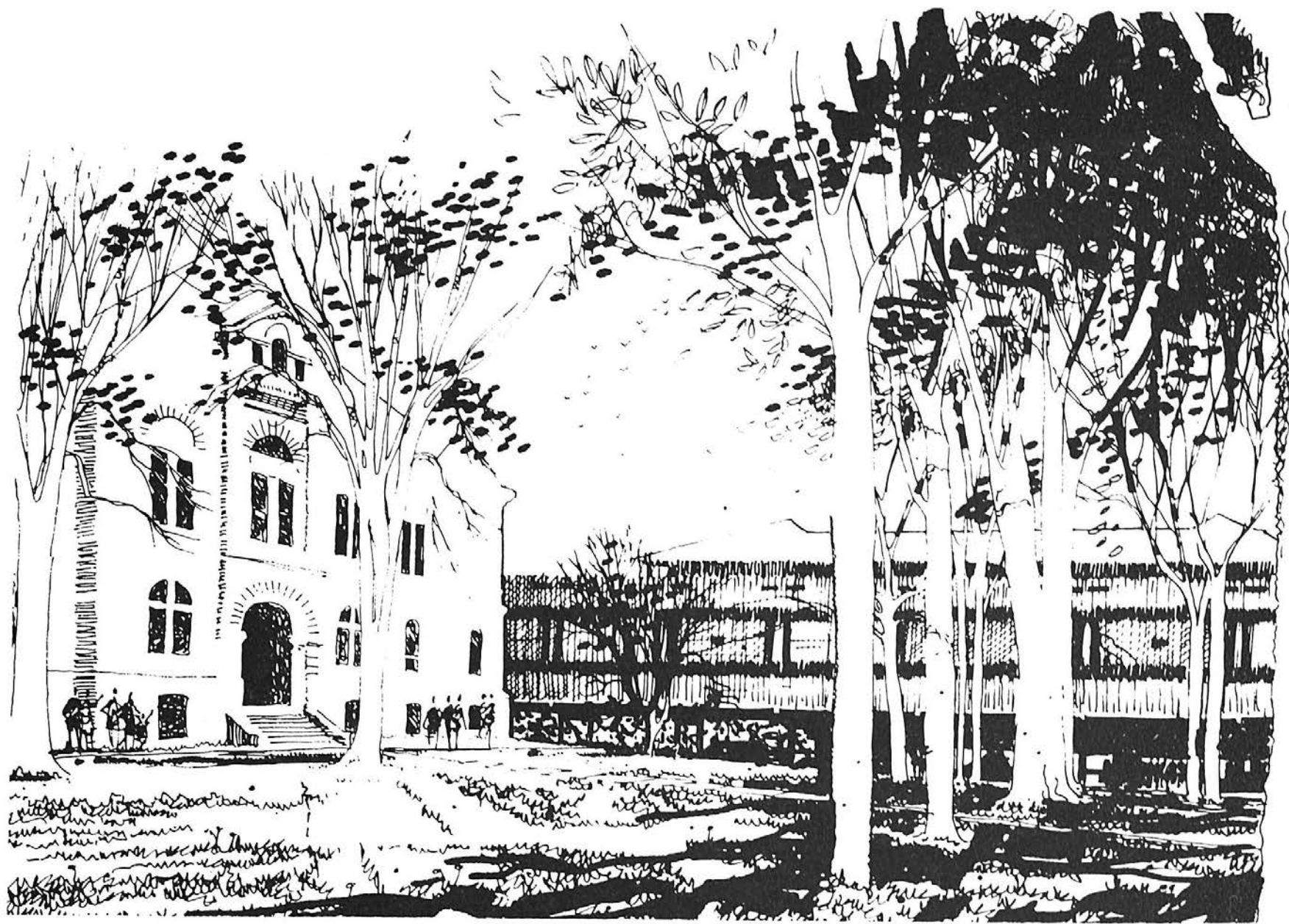
Preliminary plans have been discussed to use the old post office for city hall functions. The team applauds the concept in principle because it means keeping city functions downtown. We are, however, uncertain as to its ability to meet the city's projected space needs. We believe the city should strive to maintain a significant identity of public place and forms in the downtown.

Public Spaces - Make more out of the public spaces and facilities in the downtown.

The courthouse is a building that everyone is proud of; it is the surrogate symbol of the area. Its surroundings do not do justice to the prominence and potential of this public space.







Make the courthouse square a square. Enclose the space and define it clearly by getting substantial infill development, public in nature, to occur around the edges. The overall form, massing and architectural character of the enclosing buildings should, of course, be sympathetic to the downtown's special identity.

The public space surrounding the town's lovely library building is an untapped asset. Its present function is primarily a visual green setting. With limited improvements, it could take on a more parklike function, including perhaps some substantial pieces of outdoor art.



At some point, it may be desirable to link the library space with the courthouse space through selective alleyway improvements behind the Grand River Avenue commercial frontage. Grand River Avenue, appropriately landscaped, will also serve to unite the public, downtown spaces together.



Grand River Avenue - Opportunities have been noted, both by the team and members of the Howell community to make significant improvements in the pedestrian character of Grand River Avenue and the adjoining main streets of central downtown. Although it was beyond the scope of the team's work to prepare detailed plans and recommendations for these improvements, careful attention should be paid to the following considerations:

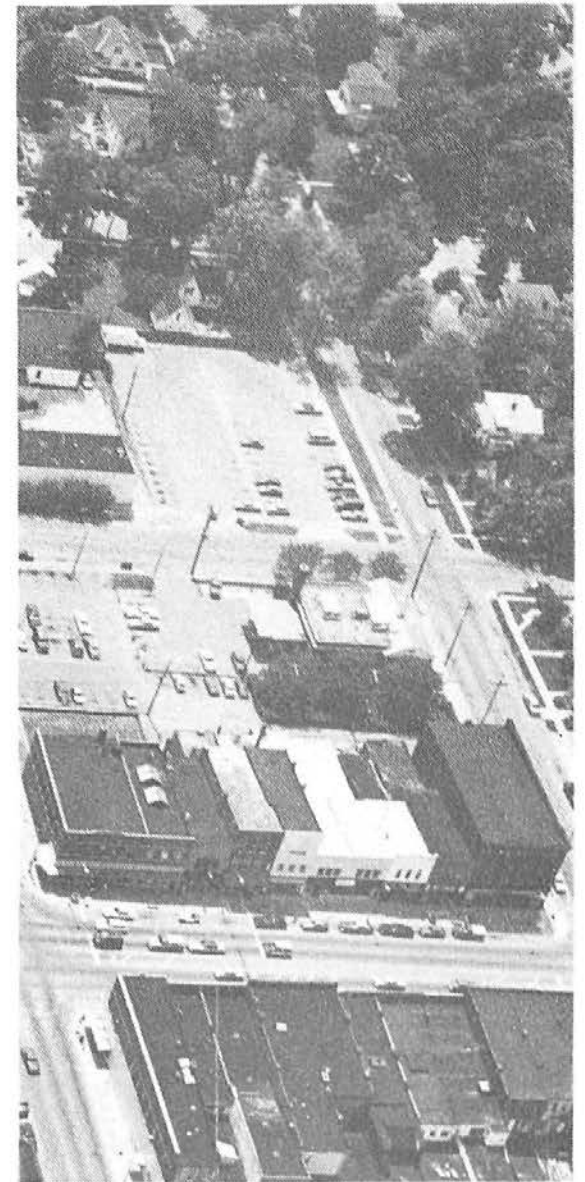
Traffic: How much traffic is too much traffic? When it prevents a community from effectively using one of its primary resources, the downtown. The volume, speed and sensual impacts of traffic (noise, vibration, threat to life and scale) are all too much for a viable, pedestrian environment downtown and steps must be taken to reduce them.

Traffic not destined for downtown locations ought to be discouraged from passing through. How? A combination of incentives, in the form of alternative routes to the north or south, and disincentives such as slower speeds, a sense of congestion and traffic controls.

Speed ought to be cut by posting a lower limit, pedestrian traffic lights, enforcing it, and by visual means communicating a sense of congestion and pedestrian environment (sidewalk widening, cross walks, landscaping, etc.).

Design: Design objectives for Grand River Avenue in the central coreblocks are to 1) increase the connections across the street and 2) create an environment that is pleasant to pedestrians.

It is our recommendation that design improvements to Grand River Avenue occur through a phased process. Progress from one stage to another will depend on success of previous phases and ability to proceed.





Phase 1: Slow down the traffic to 25 mph, plant trees in sidewalk area, make evident more pedestrian connections across the avenue intersections with traffic control lights, reduce the right turn on red actions at the key intersection, and through provision of pedestrian amenities, communicate to users that the pedestrian reigns on Grand River Avenue.

Phase 2: If and when need warrants, redesign the roadway to accommodate angle parking and reinforce the pedestrian connections across the avenue.

Parking - The team heard a lot about parking problems but, quite frankly, we feel you have no problem that requires large scale solutions.



Looking for locations to increase parking in existing public rights of way is a good approach. State Street, west of the courthouse is an ideal location for angle parking. Turn the street into one way and by extending the sidewalk landscaping and signage; encourage right turns only upon exiting.

As you evaluate the positive possibilities of this first angle action, identify another location when it makes sense and do the same. We feel you have sufficient street width throughout the downtown to accommodate more on street parking.



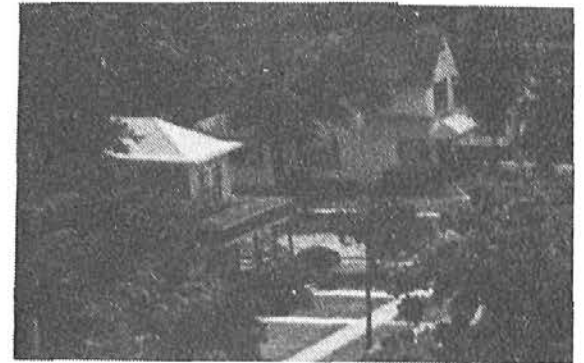
Recent merchants efforts to encourage employees to park away from the immediate Grand River Avenue

frontages is a positive move. But proposals by the city to charge steep fees may be out of line until efforts of the merchants have been tested.

The public parking lots are an asset in quantitative terms for the downtown but qualitatively they leave much to be desired. A much more rigorous and generous landscaping program ought to be carried out to not only screen these lots but with trees, link the lots in visual terms with the surroundings. In the future, it will be necessary to construct structured parking in order to save the town's character. Existing surface lots are prime candidates for this approach.

Urban Design Guidelines - An urban design plan should be developed for the downtown areas in conjunction with programs for improving the facades. The plan should set some guidance for growth and reinvestment in the core areas. Principles to be considered include:

- A) Location, use designation, and guidelines on overall design character for all vacant sites within the core areas. A general design principle that should be followed is "hold down the corners." By this we mean development should be sited so as to define and reinforce the corners of blocks. Put the parking inside, put the building out on the sidewalk line.
- B) Character and recommended treatments for the Grand River Avenue facades including color, proportion





at street level, window treatments, lighting, signing and materials.

- C) Edges and transition zones: in general, the objective should be to maintain consistency in the character of the block front.
- D) The entries to the CBD are relatively distinct and well defined by buildings. This characteristic reinforces the identify of the core and should be maintained.



## Next steps for downtown



Downtown revitalization is a process using many tools and the efforts of many people. Where can you start?

1. Support the downtown by concentrating as much employment and as many important economic and business functions there as possible. An immediate opportunity lies in placing the growth of county employment downtown and the development of an expanding county complex to house these employees. Most employees spend an average of \$5 per day downtown and can be encouraged to spend more. The presence of the court facilities also help attract law offices to the downtown.
2. Among the suggested financial tools, the low interest loan program for facade restoration perhaps holds the most promise. Once established, a model building for facade restoration could be selected. This program might be funded by an Industrial Revenue Bond issued to provide lower interest rates without seeking outside grant support, with the bond issue underwritten by local banks.
3. Initiate the comprehensive Main Street Management program described earlier. The initial funding could be sought from a consortium of the downtown merchants, chamber of commerce, special service area, city, county and local lending institutions.

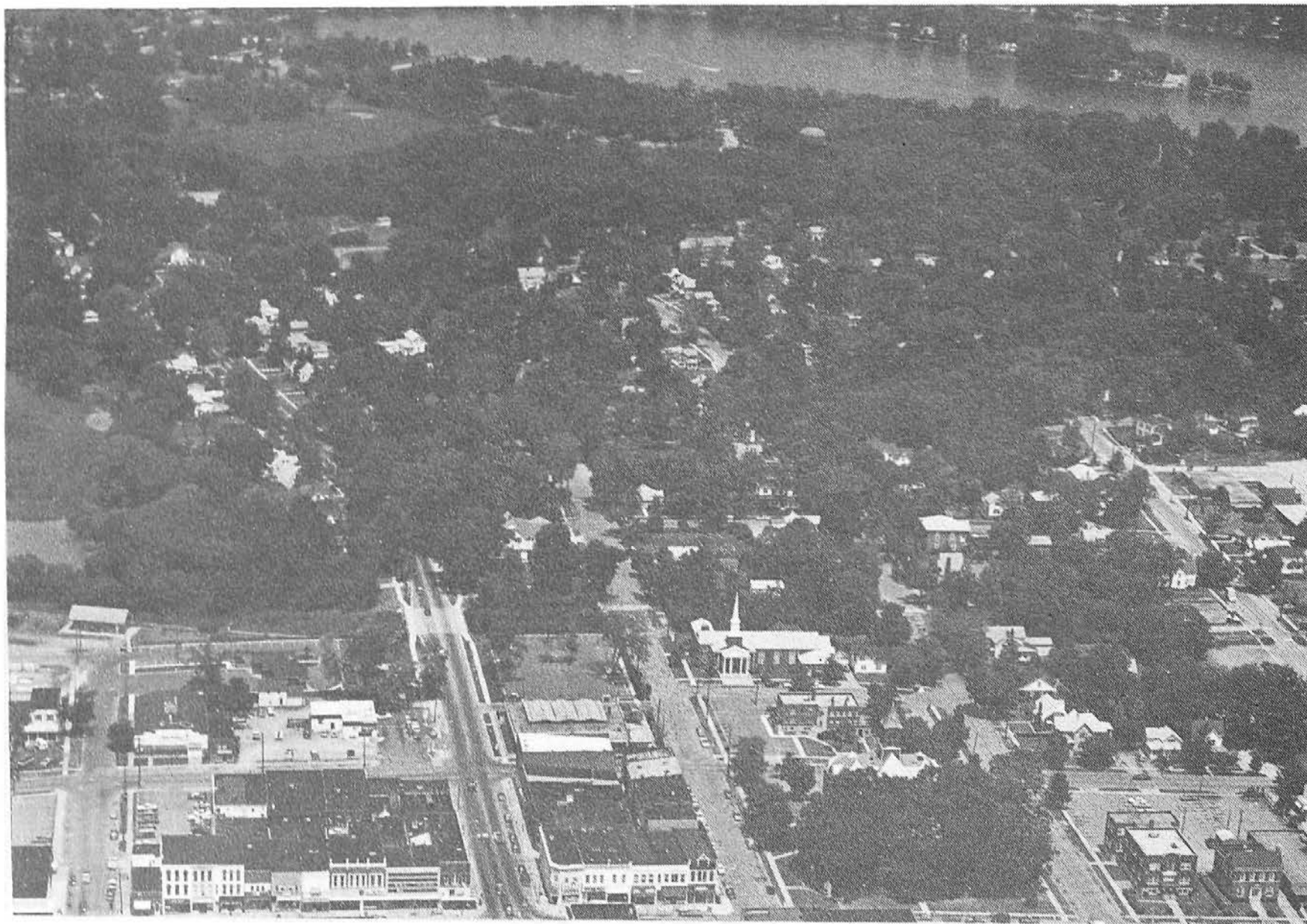




Desmond '84

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# Howell - Beyond Downtown



## The Common Vision

Beyond the downtown area - the symbolic and economic focus of Howell - lie those essential elements of your community which define a life style and visual expectation which we feel you may take for granted.

Next to the downtown, the most important aspect of definition and stability for you are your residential neighborhoods. Both older and newer neighborhoods are characterized by lovely single family homes with large, well maintained yards and numerous trees and plantings. Tree lined streets define specific neighborhoods and link neighborhoods one to another and to the downtown area. The proximity of residential areas to the downtown is a unique advantage to your small town existence. The housing stock includes many important historic examples. Individual homes as well as entire neighborhoods combine with downtown to create an important, aesthetic and historical statement.

Existing natural features and public use of land support residential Howell with important life style ingredients. The park, lake, school sites, recreation center and county complex provide important social and activity centers as well as land use features for the community. They also create a spacious visual effect as one travels



from the town center out to more rural areas. The excellent and generous setting of public facilities on large parcels is important to your sense of Howell as a small town in the midst of a scenic and rural region. To some extent, even your industrial park development, because it is well planted and has reasonable building to acreage ratios, support the same sense of identity.

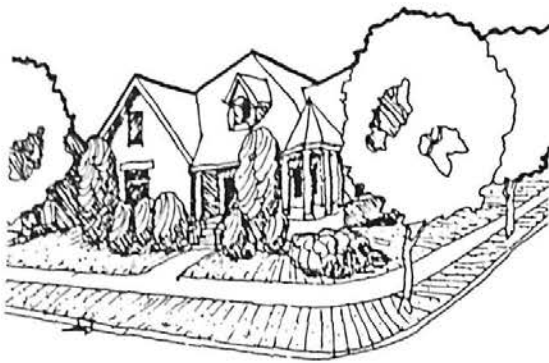


But...

Important natural and manmade amenities, so important to support the town center and your quality of life, are presently threatened by land use and environmental factors, such as:

- The intrusion into and erosion of character of established residential areas threatens their long term existence and integrity.
  - . Strip commercial on Grand River
  - . Relaxation of residential borders
  - . Rezoning in residential neighborhoods
  - . Home occupations
  - . Widening of roads
  - . Truck traffic through residential areas
- Thompson Lake, your most important natural feature, is threatened by pollution. Its use as a recreation site is diminished to the extent its use is allowed to erode.





- Significant pressure on parcels of undeveloped land, especially at the west edge of Howell, is a threat to the city's ability to control and define the visual and economic development within its borders and thus its established character. The character of West Grand River beyond the recreation center is perhaps the most sensitive area of Howell. The development of land in this area for public facilities, while compatible with future residential use, may also suggest uses other than residential. The zoning of recently annexed large parcels for commercial use signals the way for significant change in this area directly at odds with the competitive needs of the central business district. The recent adoption of the Protected Residential Zone is problematic to the eventual character of this area of Howell. While a protective measure, adopted to ensure the longevity of single family homes, the allowance of commercial uses in this vicinity strongly suggests an extension of commercial uses along Grand River Avenue toward a commercial center beyond the existing homes.
- Another sensitive area for the future is what we're calling the South Lake District (including the football field and the Sutton/Cautrel Industrial park). This large area of mostly industrial zoning may not, in the future, be as viable for industry as the large industrial parks in the southwest part of Howell.

The issues you have been facing which threaten to relax the strength of existing neighborhoods are not unique to Howell. However, the danger to your community from the loss of your neighborhoods would be more damaging than it might be to a larger city.

Zoning ordinances and administration are the keys to controlling both existing and anticipated development. At present, your local zoning experiences many problems:

- . An inflexible ordinance, not necessarily geared specifically to your needs and goals
- . Lax treatment of rezoning applications
- . Lack of enforcement
- . Unequal treatment
- . Instances of spot zoning

Zoning is often the single issue which can divide a town and rouse the populace. At the same time, it is the key regulatory control which allows you to define yourself in terms of your physical, visual and economic character. When zoning is not enforced or is changed too readily, the problems which result are both actual and attitudinal. In addition to the real problem of changing, for example, residential parcels to other uses, is the perception by the existing population that government is unconcerned with its welfare. Developers too need to know what the rules are so that they do not incorrectly perceive Howell as a place where anything goes or a place where they are not wanted.



# Ideas and suggestions



- Protect "edges" of residential areas by allowing no rezonings from residential.

Consider programs for rehabilitation and restoration of deteriorating housing stock.

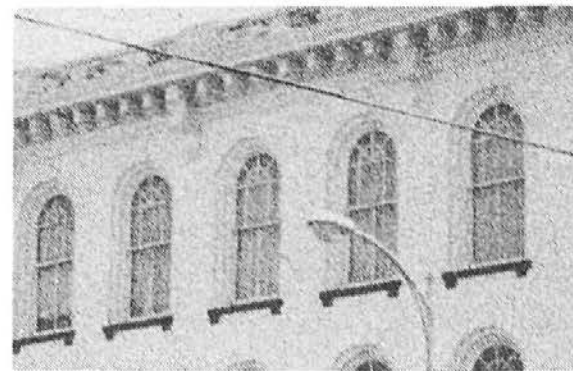
- Adopt historic districts for specifically mapped residential areas.
- Consider the future development of the Ann Arbor Railroad tracks as a linear pedestrian park.
- Adopt new legislation to deal with existing and future home occupations, allowing some professional uses in restricted residential areas but limiting the scope of such uses to that extent compatible with surrounding uses. Then enforce it.
- Extend sewer and water service to the residential subdivision north of Thompson Lake.
- Work with county and state agencies for clean up of the lake.
- Consider the following options for the industrial district south of the lake, individually, or in combination:





- . If it is possible to acquire all or part of the school's football field, create a park or recreation site on that portion acquired so as to provide a link between downtown and Thompson Lake.
  - . Either the school board or the City should consider the future use of the football field for intown residential dwellings.
  - . Consider the rezoning of present industrial sites to residential to enhance the residential character of the eastern portion of town and as an adjunct to the lake's natural amenity.
- To solve the economic dilemma posed by Citizens Insurance's present proposal to expand its operation outside Howell: If Citizens is unable to develop a site downtown, allow the expansion of Citizens to occur on its present site to meet their needs on the condition that no existing residential sites are utilized as part of the expansion.

We believe that the benefits of retaining all of Citizens operation within Howell outweigh the perceived detriment to allowing expansion within the city. In fact, we believe the expansion on site, if properly designed, would create no change to the character of the neighborhood as it exists today. Although admittedly a sensitive issue and a perceived catastrophe, we are confident that all potential problems can be cured by proper design, siting and landscaping. We recommend meetings in which Citizens, architects, designers and neighbors meet together to discuss and review possible architectural and siting solutions.





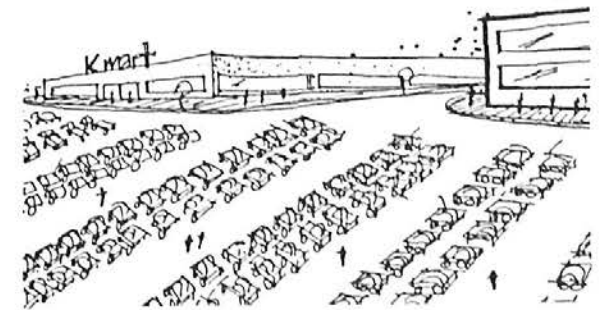
- The single large commercial parcel on West Grand River must be rezoned either to industrial to extend the present industrial park and thus compete with township lands or to residential, allowing multi-family use either as of right or as a special exception.
- Prohibit any commercial rezoning in in the West Grand River area, except perhaps small parcels of neighborhood commercial as the need develops in the future. We applaud the staunch effort taken by the city in denying a rezoning application in this area!
- Re-examine the residential-protected zone as it applies to West Grand River. If you want to allow occupational uses within existing residential structures here, that is fine. However, if you merely want to avoid pressure from commercial proposals here, then the solution is be tough on residential zoning.
- Adopt zoning regulations more compatible with the goals of your city:
  - . Provide more use districts to meet your needs such as for professional offices, home occupation, historic districts, and multi-family.
  - . Provide for more flexibility in uses within districts. For example, utilize the special exception mechanism which allows for some uses only upon review of individual applications and only upon acceptance of specified conditions.



- . Provide more and more specific standards for both site plan and subdivision approval.
- . Provide more specific standards and guidelines for the residential-protected district and consider extending (or moving?) such districts to other areas of town such as to the area immediately south of downtown, to the few remaining houses on East Grand River, and possibly to larger houses which can no longer exist as single family.



The implementation of any specific zoning suggestions here in a vacuum would be a mistake. Rather, what we strongly recommend is a full scale re-examination of the uses permitted in each area of Howell, what other variations on those uses are compatible in those areas, how harmful such variations would be and their potential as uses permitted as of right or as special exceptions within that area. Careful attention must be paid to the mapping of districts so that such districts enhance your goals for the future of Howell. Zoning is not merely a powerful tool, it is an expression by the city legislators of how uses in one area of town benefit the occupants of that area as well as the health, character and vision of the entire city.



In other words, Howell needs to re-examine its comprehensive plan and seriously consider amending its zoning and land development ordinances to better reflect the changing conditions and priorities that have occurred here.

# Economic Development



# The COMMON VISION

Historically, the Howell area has provided employment for its population. In 1980, nearly 50% of the residents still worked in Howell and 75% worked within Livingston County. Howell is an economic as well as residential community.

Over time, however, the percentage working outside of Howell has been increasing. This reflects the growth of new residents who selected Howell because it is a good place to live. It also reflects a growing awareness by Howell residents of the many opportunities in the broader region. And it, no doubt, also reflects the jobs lost during the recent recession.

In our meetings, some residents and officials placed top priority on economic and industrial development, while others were less certain. They were concerned that further industrial growth could damage the character of the community.

We believe that continued economic growth is important to maintaining the essential character of Howell as a small town rather than a bedroom suburb, that there are opportunities to recoup from the recent recession and that such growth can be accomplished without harm to the physical character of the community.

Over the past five years, the Howell area and Livingston County went through a major economic crisis, as did the state and region. Industrial employment in the Howell area dropped from about 2,000 workers in 1981 to approximately 1,500 in 1982-83. Adding the jobs lost when the state hospital closed, employment dropped by 1,000. By 1984, it appears that employment may have nearly recovered to pre-recession levels.



The loss of jobs, even if it turns out to be temporary, is reported to have resulted in some loss of population in Howell and the surrounding portions of the school district. In addition, there have been many families disrupted by loss of jobs and reduced standards of living. As recently as December 1983, the unemployment rate in Howell was reported to be 15%.

A strong local economy is essential to the health of Howell and the attainment of the objectives of all of the diverse Howell residents, whether locally employed or commuter, for at least two reasons:

City Finances. The city cannot provide the level of services demanded by the population solely with a residential tax base. Typically, residential use is service intensive and commercial and industrial users pick up the slack. The city has reported increased fiscal stress, and has a major investment in underutilized sewage treatment capacity.

School Facility Commitments. The school district has made major investments in new facilities, particularly the new high school. As a result of economic conditions, current projections are below capacity. A resurgence of population growth as well as direct revenue contributions from commercial and industrial users are both important to paying for these facilities.

To maintain the quality of life, key public services and to underwrite future improvements, continued economic development is essential. Further, high quality public services, both physical infrastructive and social services, provide the foundation for sound private sector investment. Cities that allow their public sector to deteriorate inevitably find their private sector following the same path a short time later.

The economy of Howell is linked to the future of the surrounding region. Historically, an agricultural center and county seat, Howell has also become a significant manufacturing center and insurance industry presence. In addition, and less recognized, the city has developed a medical center complex.

Howell opportunities lie in several areas:

- Retention and Expansion of Existing Firms - Commercial and Manufacturing.

Assets  
and  
opportunities

- Growth linked to "Just-in-Time" Inventory Control/Auto Industry Suppliers, Firms Attracted by state and county efforts.
- County Government Expansion
- Health Services as county Medical Center.
- "Natural" Tourism Related to Architecture and Small Town Character.

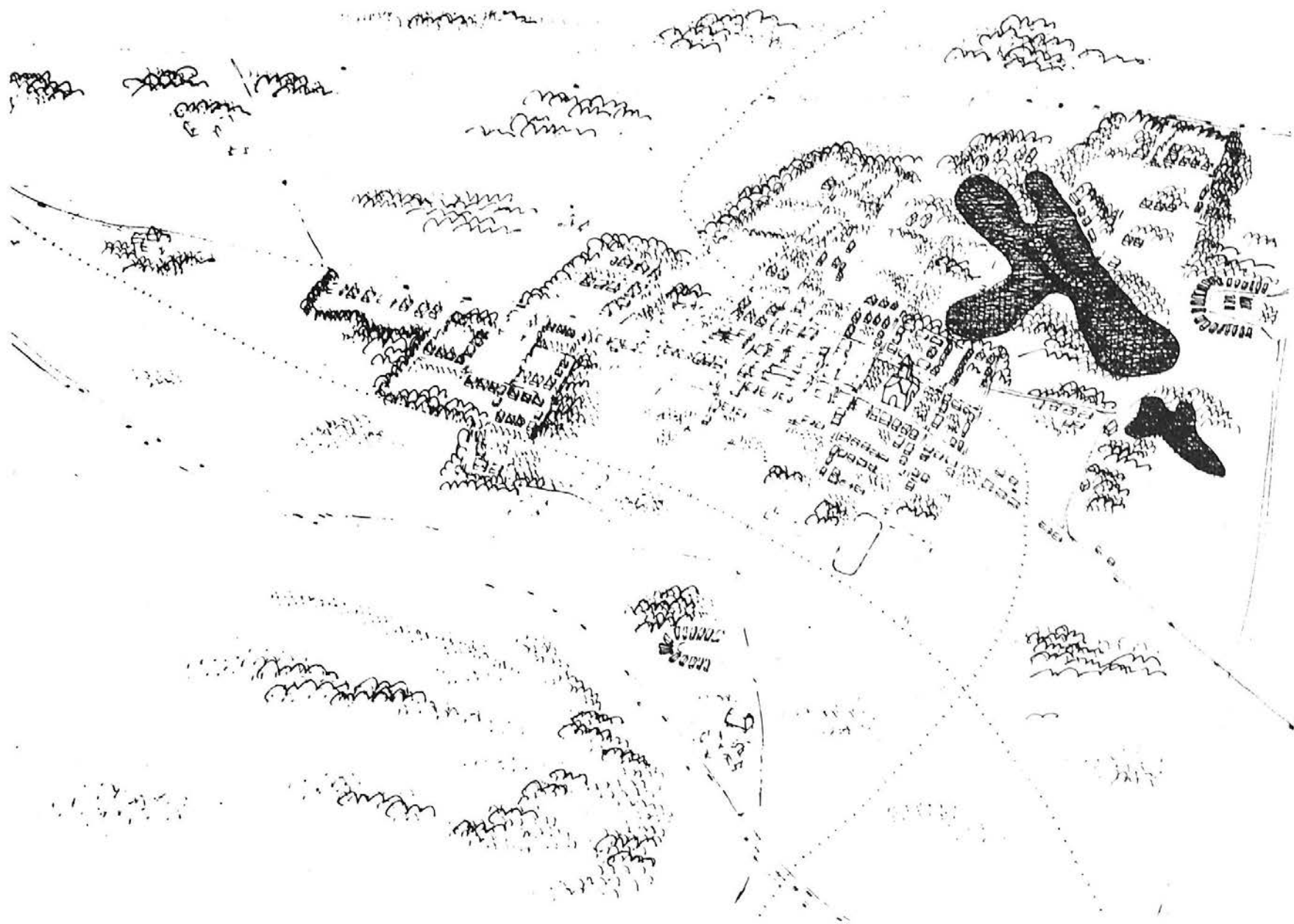
As population grows in the county (assuming the exurbanization process continues), several of these opportunities will develop relatively easily. The county is planning to expand now, for example. The medical center, while in a competitive situation, should continue to grow to serve a growing population. Other opportunities may be far harder to take advantage of.

## Constraints

We believe there are a number of constraints and problems that must be addressed if Howell is take best advantage of these opportunities and shape them to meet its vision of the future:

- There does not appear to be agreement on how to accommodate economic growth in a manner that is consistent with the character that people want to retain.





- New prospects and potentially expanding local firms may receive (or have in the past perceived) mixed messages about Howell's interest in their development, depending on their initial point of contact.
- The city of Howell cannot go it alone in attracting and even in retaining firms to the area and county due to its size and resources.

## Recommendations

We have several suggestions for you:

1. Establish Agreed City Industrial Development Area Policy and Standards of Development

While certain areas are zoned industrial, it is critical that the standards to be applied be accepted and set in advance. Key elements of an industrial area policy would include:

- Site selection and zoning
- Buffering and landscaping requirements
- Standards regarding noise, traffic, odor, etc.
- Policy on and commitment to extend services
- Private sector roles in development and marketing

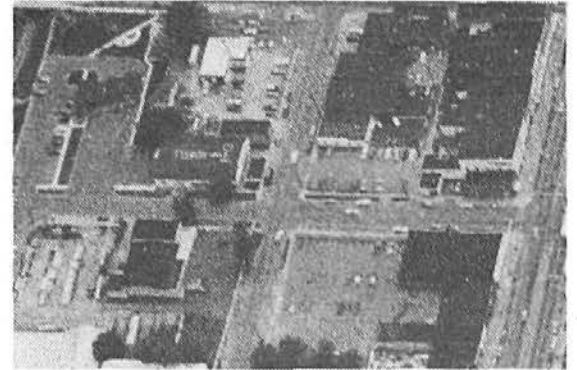


- Research incentive tools available and establish policy on their use. (Should be based on negotiations, but availability widely known.)
- Review all development regulations (building codes, etc.) for reasonableness and revise as appropriate.
- Train/orient point of contact officials (building, zoning, clerk, etc.) regarding city policies on development.

2. Establish Howell Area Economic Development Program

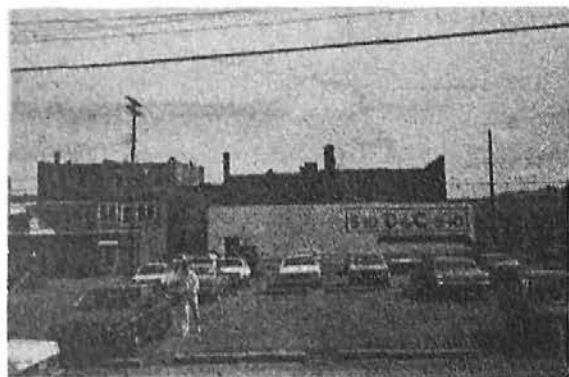
It is important that the City of Howell and the townships attempt to coordinate development since no one jurisdiction contains all desirable sites for firms locating or expanding. In the long run, controversy over service extensions serves to confuse developers and site selection personnel as to attitudes toward development. Such a program might include:

- Form an Economic Development Council consisting of public and private sectors leaders including: lenders, industrialists, Citizens Insurance, developers, city and township officials. Its charge would be implementation of an economic development program in cooperation with the county.



- Negotiate an agreement on development areas and service extensions. The current proposal for an Economic Development District is a constructive framework for discussion. Land use control regarding development on the fringe should also be a component of this agreement, however.

Financially, tax base sharing provides an alternative model to the EDD proposal.



3. Establish a Retention and Expansion Program for Commercial (Office) and Industrial Firms

Eighty percent (80%) of employment growth typically results from the expansion of existing firms. Their needs and concerns are of utmost importance in planning economic growth. If possible, this should be implemented on a Howell Area basis. If agreement cannot be reached on an area approach, the city should proceed separately. The following steps are required:

- Survey existing firms regarding plans, needs for land and facilities, complaints and problems at current location.
- Evaluate data to identify potential for expansion, and conflicts requiring resolution.
- Provide follow-up leadership to resolve conflicts/pursue expansion projects.
- As required and justified, work with firms to:
  - assemble sites
  - provide incentives

4. Work Closely with County Economic Development Organization on Attraction of Firms

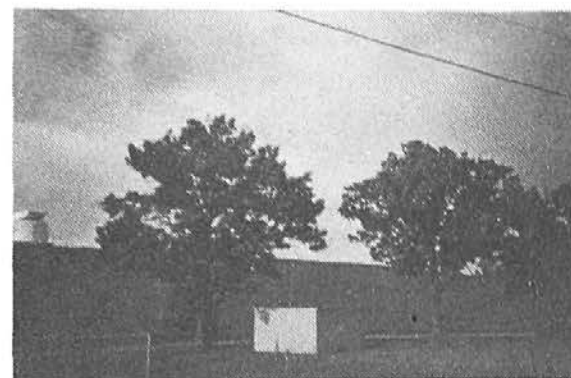
Since Howell cannot "go it alone," it should rely on the county to help bring firms to the area. Howell should be prepared to deal with these firms when brought to the area.

5. Expand McPherson Industrial Park Area

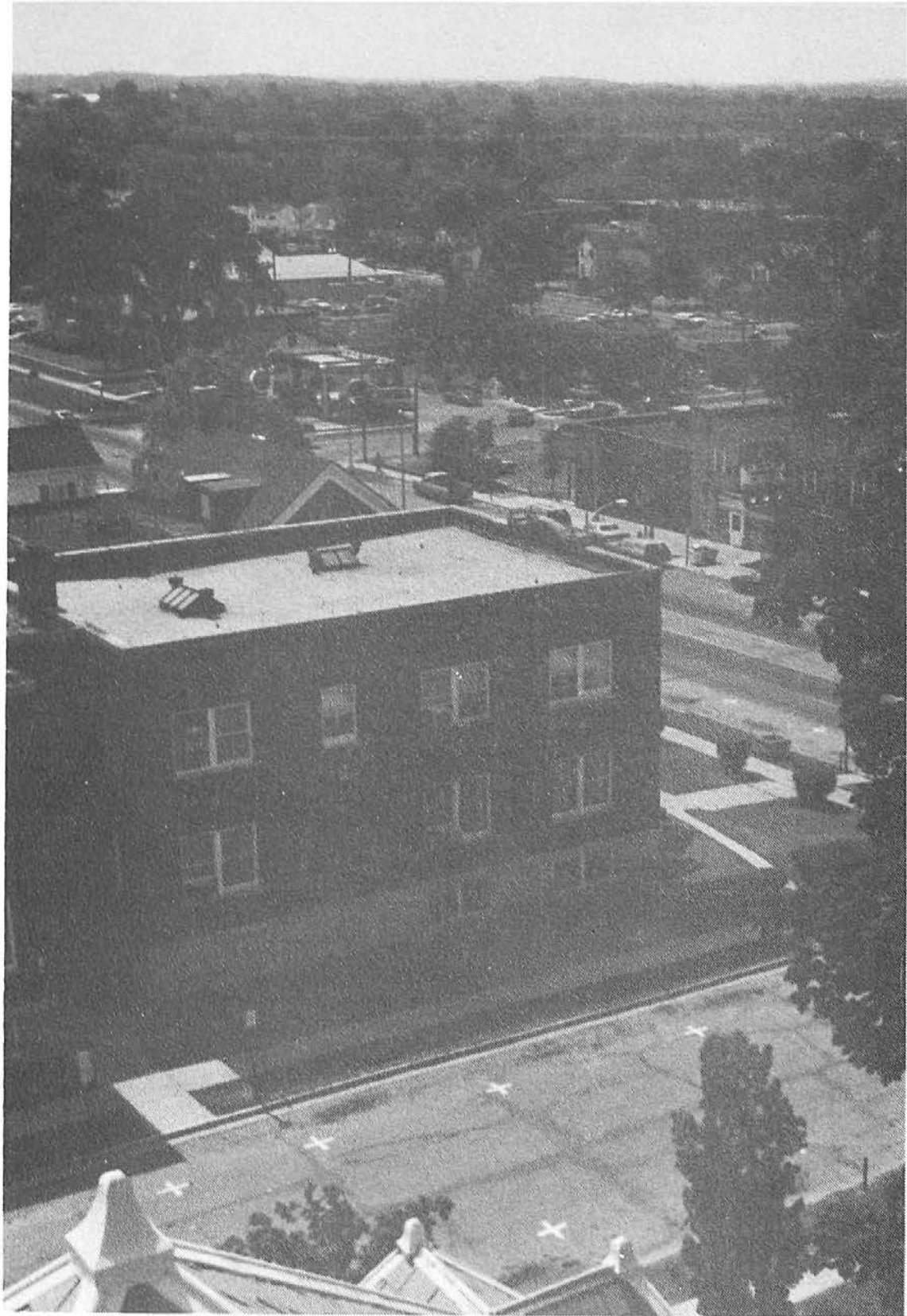
The industrially zoned area adjacent to McPherson is not yet improved as an industrial park. McPherson is nearly fully sold and it is therefore time to extend the developed industrial area. There was a previous developer who was reported to have gone bankrupt during the recession. The site is a good one, and industrial zoning may even be appropriate for a large adjacent area. This project would be a good prospect for use of Tax Increment Financing to underwrite the costs of infrastructure expansion.

The following actions are recommended:

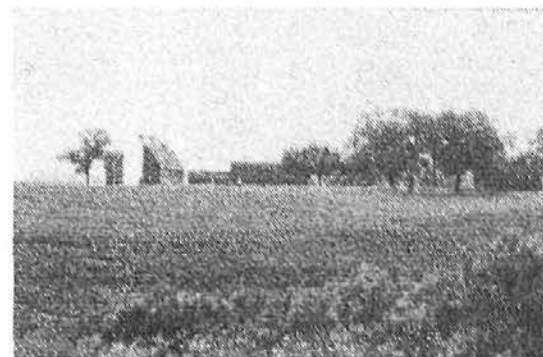
- Determine land owners' interest in obtaining an outside developer and, if positive, obtain lists of experienced industrial park developers.
- Prepare a promotional piece covering industrial land consumption, prices, development trends and city policy toward incentives.
- Follow-up with developers to promote the site and attempt to obtain a strong developer to execute the project.



# Surrounding Character



One of Howell's finest and most important assets is the countryside around it. The rural, agricultural character of these surroundings is an essential part of what we have been calling your community identity. Without it, Howell would be a very different place and after talking with you and hearing about some of the plans and potential changes in these surroundings, we are concerned that unless certain steps are taken, the character of this area will be lost. We feel that this will have a damaging and permanent effect on your community's identity and its economy.



Part of our concern stems from the fact that we heard very little from you about agriculture and its importance to Howell. Yet in our tour of the area, we saw plenty of evidence of what appeared to be very viable farming and agricultural activities.

In addition to farming, we saw a tremendous amount of open space with beautiful rolling hills and substantial wooded areas. This also has definite economic importance since people from the nearby urban areas are coming here in sizeable numbers just to enjoy the recreational opportunities the area has to offer.

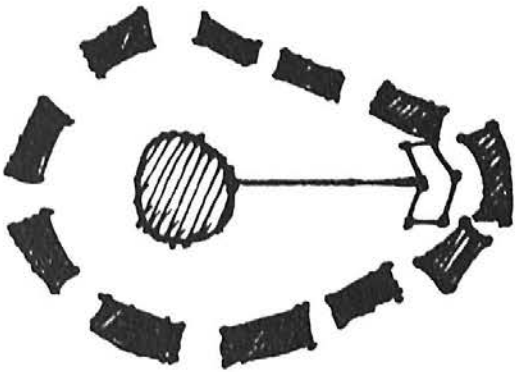
This rural character is, in our view, as important to Howell's sense of community as anything within the city itself. If it is allowed to develop

uncontrolled, Howell could very easily become just another town which has been gobbled up by spreading urbanization.

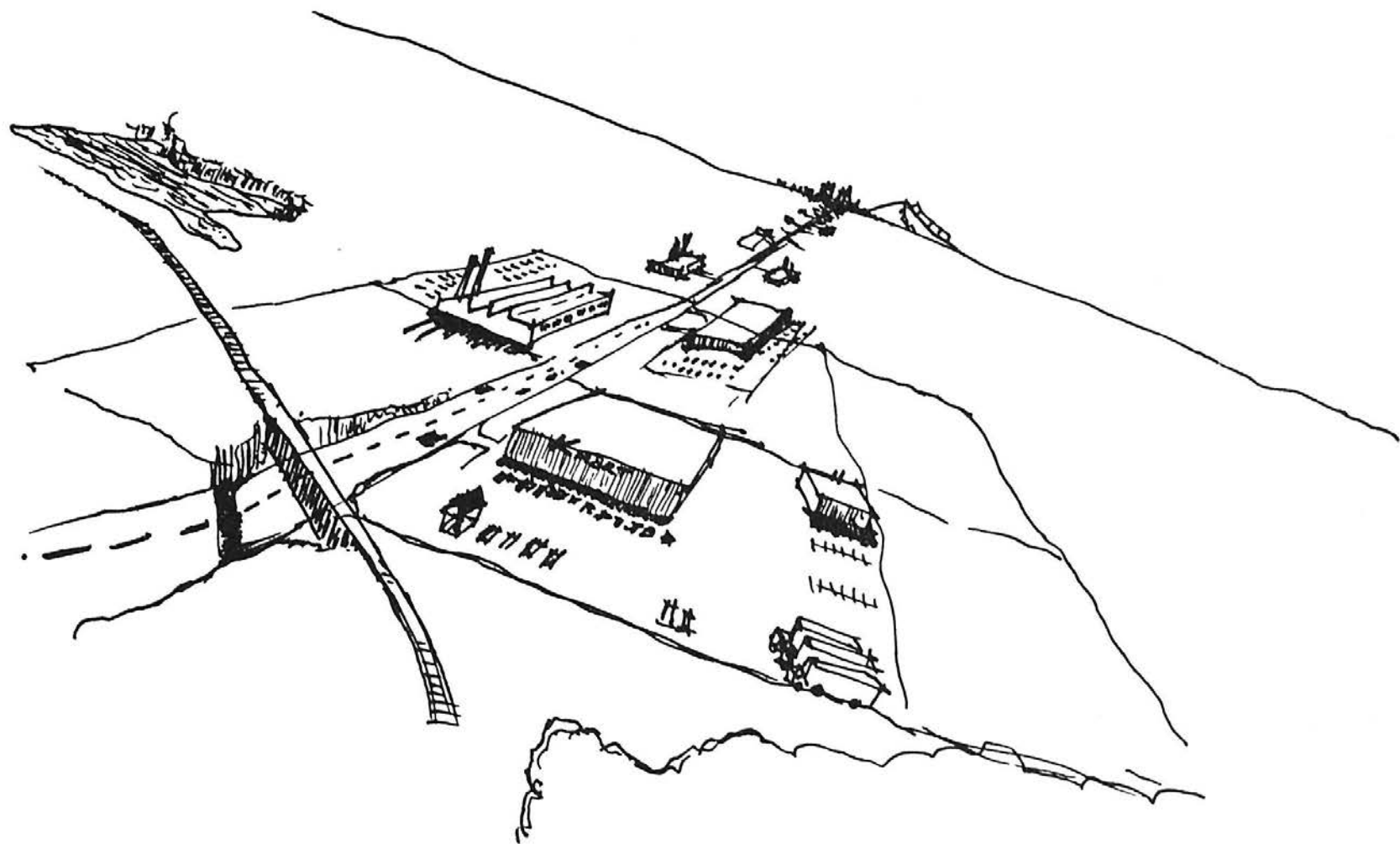
While this is certainly not something that will happen overnight, there are certain immediate threats which we feel require attention now. What are they?

- The surrounding townships have a great deal of interest in attracting industrial development within their boundaries. While current land use plans limit this development to areas close to Howell city, the attitude in general is something that should be viewed as a potential threat to the character of the surrounding area. The lack of coordinated land use planning between the city, the townships and even the county is cause for added concern.

- Howell's sewage treatment plant is operating far below its capacity which means that the user fees charged to its residents do not pay for the ongoing costs of operating the plant. As a result, the city officials are discussing the possibility of extending sewer service to the adjoining townships in order to avoid increasing your rates any further. While this would be of some financial benefit to those of you who are Howell city residents, unless land use controls accompany the sewer line extension, the result could be a very real threat to the rural character of the surrounding area and to the economic well being of downtown Howell.







What do we  
suggest be  
done about  
this?

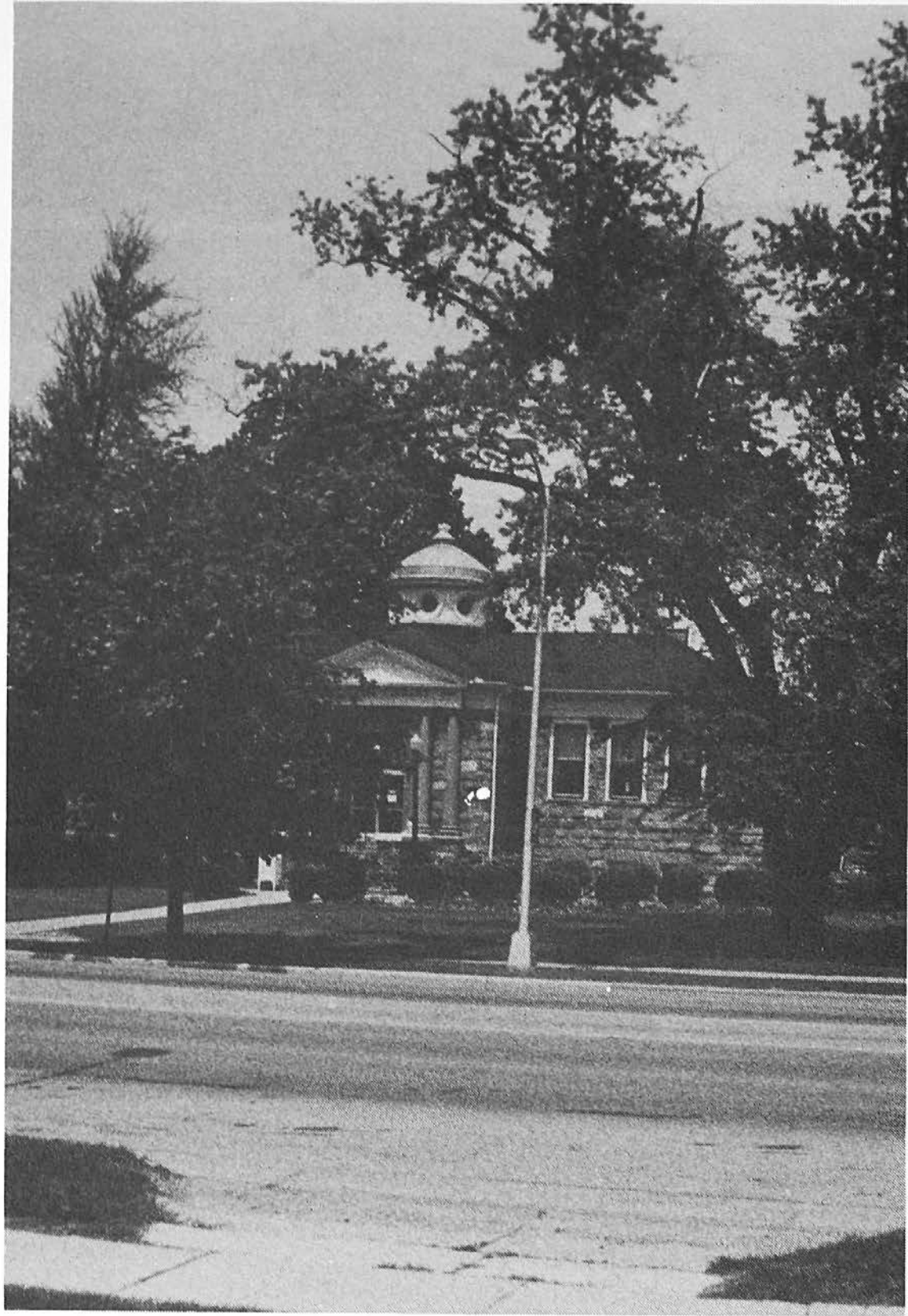


- The sewer capacity issue has opened a discussion between the city officials of Howell and Brighton concerning the possibility of extending the sewer to Brighton. Aside from the fact already mentioned that this would add to the competitive advantage which Brighton seems to have over Howell, it would also create a tremendous potential for development of the area between the two communities.
  
- In general, there is a need for the development of strategies and actions that will maintain and protect the rural character of this area.
  
- The city should continue and expand the dialogue they have wisely begun with surrounding township officials to discuss these issues and seek a common understanding of the importance this rural character is to both.
  
- Actions such as the possible extension of the sewer to Brighton which could provide added opportunities for development of the surrounding area should be avoided.
  
- The city should take advantage of their sewage treatment capacity to obtain some measure of control over the land uses in the areas where the sewer will be made available. We are not saying that sewer extension is a bad idea, only that it should be limited to the area close in to Howell city, and should not be extended for large-scale commercial development that could hurt downtown businesses, and that it be tied to joint land use planning for the affected areas in the township.

- The city should be encouraged to take the lead in developing coordinated land use plans between the townships and the city. This could be done on an informal basis and should have as its focus the protection of the rural areas which are of considerable value to both townships and the city.
- Finally, the Howell Chamber of Commerce should continue its demonstrated ability to provide leadership and should take the lead in developing a county-wide tourism/recreation marketing and promotion program aimed at the metropolitan areas outside of Livingston County.



# Social Fabric

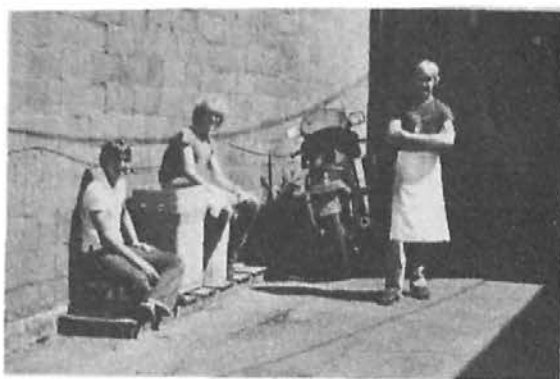


In the past, your area has been predominantly agricultural. During the late 1960's and the 1970's, this character has undergone dramatic change as thousands of families moved here from larger, urban areas.

Although many of the comments made during the R/UDAT process by local citizens indicated that there is a rift in the community between many of the people, there is a surprising degree of similarity among the people living here, both new and old. In a general sense, the social, economic, racial, ethnic and religious characteristics of the people are very similar. No major barriers exist which separate the community. The overall value system and social make up of the citizens are very much the same. The traditional family structure with both parents living together with their children is the common situation here. The traditions associated with a strong family life such as employment, religion, home ownership, education and concern for the children are a strong part of Howell's and Livingston County's residents. New and old residents are somewhat bound together by their common beliefs and attitudes.

However, there are social problems which affect the ability of this area to provide its residents a more secure and satisfying social environment. Many people see themselves as being different and not being accepted in the community. There is a sense





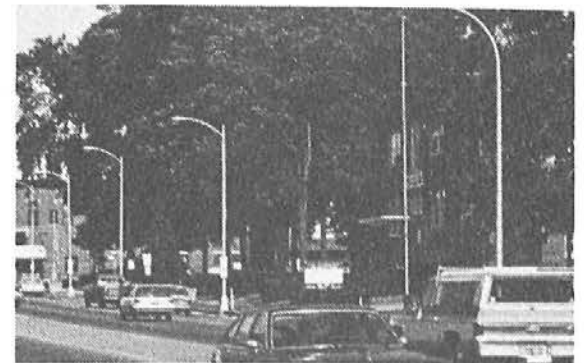
that the new people are not welcomed by the long time residents. As people have continued to relocate to this area, many of the social problems found more frequently in the larger, urban areas have become increasingly apparent in this rural area. According to many of the social service workers here, the instances of divorces, child abuse, spousal abuse, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse and mental illness have increased dramatically. The lack of affordable housing, particularly for the elderly, and the need for emergency shelter has been brought out. The need for better transportation for low income and elderly persons has become an important issue. Because this area has been suffering from major unemployment problems, many of the workers who have lost their jobs have had serious problems adjusting to this situation. The ability of many households to provide for themselves has been restricted significantly by the economic recession here.



Traditionally, small town, rural people have difficulty accepting the fact that families going through personal, economic or psychological problems oftentimes can't cope with these problems without outside help. The people of Howell will be confronted with the side effects of these personal and family crises more and more as the area continues to grow or unemployment continues high. You must realize that the availability of programs to deal with social problems in this rural area will not threaten the small town character here.

What has struck the R/UDAT team about the Howell area is the lack of a unified identity and sense of tradition and pride amongst its people about this area. There is a rift here and it need not be. Although the area has a strong historical tradition in terms of being the county seat and the symbolic focal point of Livingston County, that tradition and history is not yet a strongly felt part of its people here. There are no strong links to the agricultural community and traditions which might have developed there. The Melon Festival is an important effort to re-establish that sense of identity and pride, as is the court house restoration, but with so many new people moving into the area, special efforts must be made to strengthen local people's attitudes about the significance and good points of this area.

The R/UDAT group has agonized over how it best can help the people of Howell to address the social part of its problems. There are no easy solutions when trying to change people's attitudes about themselves or each other. But we feel it is important to emphasize the common bond relating all of you. You all have the same desire to see Howell be a friendly, warm, supportive and satisfying place to live. The social elements of that goal are already in place here. The obstacles frequently found in larger, more diverse areas are not here. The foundation is strong, but it needs a unified, harmonious structure.



# Housing

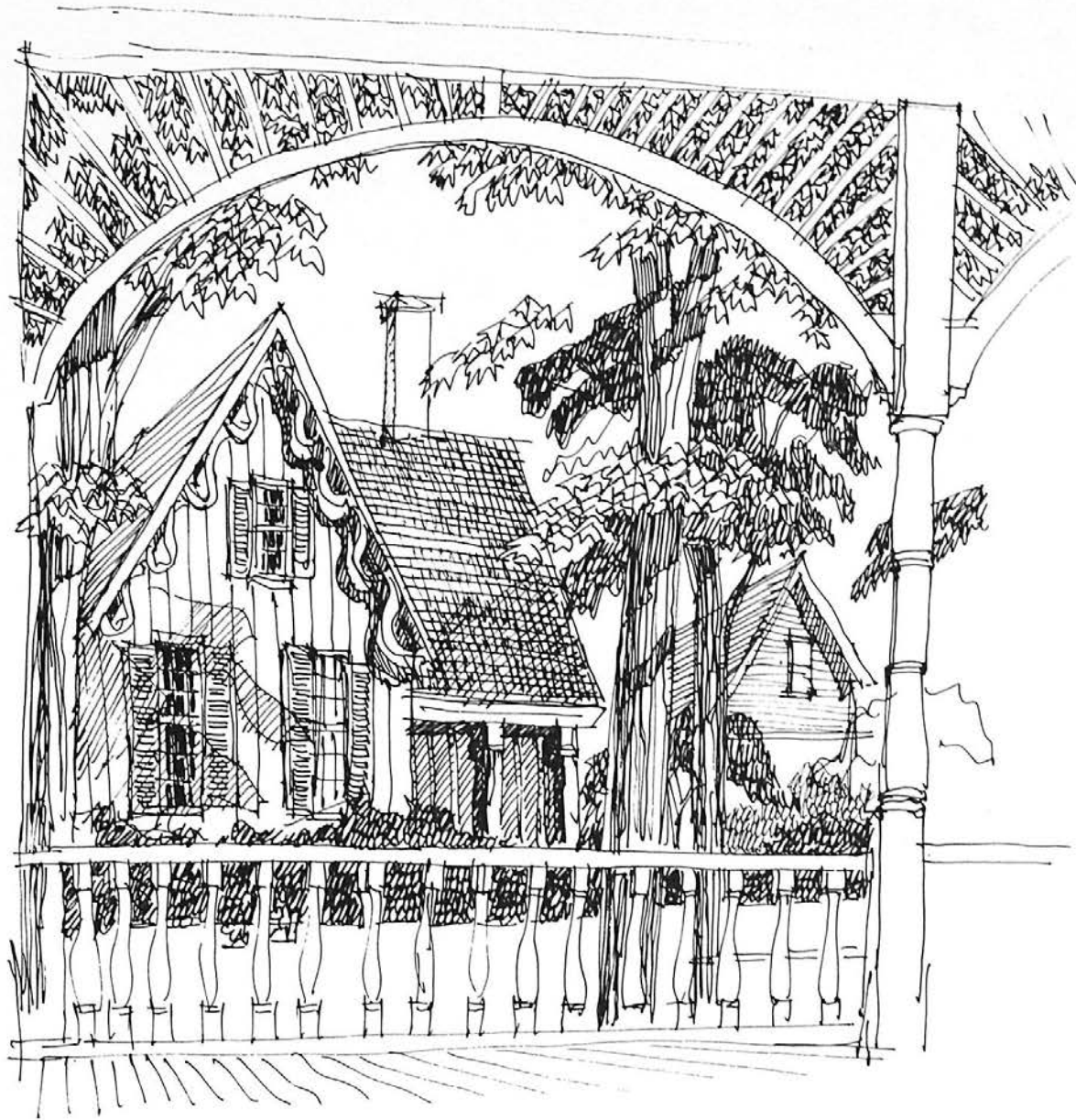
Because the issue of adequate social services was raised on several occasions and the inability of agencies and groups to adequately address these needs, we decided to provide some recommendations which should be of assistance to service providers regarding programs, funding sources, organization, and coordinated service delivery. We cannot fully address all of the social service areas, but several key problem areas have been raised.

## A. Funding Sources

Previous planning studies have described the increasing need for affordable housing in the Howell area, particularly for elderly and emergency shelter. Howell has also experienced problems with housing deterioration in several neighborhoods. There is no housing development organization or local housing rehabilitation program currently available to low income residents of Livingston County and Howell. Traditionally in rural areas low income persons will purchase or rent mobile homes, or will reside in seriously substandard buildings. Howell is no different. Two large mobile home parks exist in the Howell area and no doubt provide affordable housing to area low income persons. Apparently no public housing agency exists in the area as well. Howell has seen a large retirement village developed here, but no subsidized elderly housing is currently available.









Because of the tremendous cut back in Federal housing assistance programs since 1981, there are no longer the range of programs available for housing development. However, several programs still exist for which development groups and municipalities are eligible in the Howell area:

1. Farmers Home Administration (FHA)

- a. Section 502 and 504 programs

Contact the local, district or state office. Individual low income homeowners are eligible to apply. Funds are available for low interest loans or grants, depending on the applicant's income and age. Under Section 502 of the program, persons can buy and renovate existing houses or get mortgages to finance new construction. Developers can also apply to build and finance new houses. In 1983 the local FHA office turned back \$20,000 to the state office for the Section 504 program, which is available for housing rehabilitation, because no one in the area applied. FHA does little selling of its programs to the public, but it is available. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis.



b. Section 515 Program

Contact state office. This program provides construction and mortgage financing as low as 1% for constructing or rehabilitating multi-family housing units for both elderly and families. Private, public, for-profit and not-for-profit developers can apply. FHA generally wants developments to be located in areas with public water and sewer. Applications are usually accepted year-round.

2. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

a. Section 202 Program

Applications are accepted annually by the area office of HUD (Detroit), usually in the spring of each year. Only non-profit developers can apply. Only elderly or handicapped multi-family developments can be funded. Construction and mortgage financing is provided at 9 1/4% for 40 years. Section 8 certificates for rental subsidy assistance payments for tenants are also provided.





b. Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program

Administered by the Michigan Department of Commerce, Office of Community Development, applications are solicited each year from municipalities with a March 15th pre-application deadline. Eligible activities include housing rehabilitations, rental rehabilitation, code enforcement, weatherization and costs related to new housing constructions for low and moderate income persons. Maximum grant amount is \$250,000.

c. Rental Rehabilitation Program



Recently started by HUD, funds are allocated to the State of Michigan for funding of programs in small cities. Generally, the program will provide assistance to owners of substandard rental properties. Assistance can be given up to 50% of rehabilitation costs, not to exceed \$5,000 per dwelling unit. Funds should be available in the late summer of 1984. Contact the Michigan Department of Commerce.

d. Section 8 Rental Assistance Program for Existing Housing

Contact the Oakland/Livingston Human Service Agency. Low income persons can receive a certificate allowing them to pay 30% of their income in rent.

3. State of Michigan

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority provides tax-exempt financing through several programs. Currently, the Home Improvement Program/Neighborhood Improvement Program is available for financing rehabilitation programs. These funds can be combined with block grant funds to start programs. In the past, low interest mortgages for first time home buyers were made available. Low interest loans for multi-family developments may also be available.



4. Private Sources

More and more developments and larger rehabilitation projects for low income persons are partly financed from private sources. Developers will syndicate their project to other investors who will provide part of the money to get a project started.



In return these investors receive the tax benefits available for developing low income housing or rehabilitating older, historic buildings. Many historic buildings are being converted to housing units for low income persons with private investors and banks putting up much of the money.

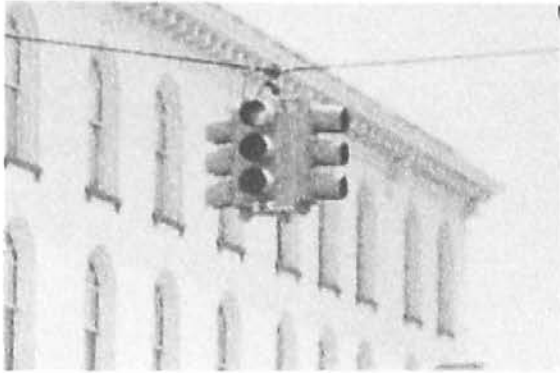
#### B. Organization

Howell or Livingston County needs a housing development organization. Usually a private non-profit organization is created to develop, run and manage housing units for low income persons. The organization can also work with other developers to encourage them to develop units on their own or become partners with the organizations. Formation of such an agency can be easily accomplished by a group of interested persons or an existing organization can create a housing development component. Sometimes churches will create a non-profit housing development corporation which is officially non-denominational, but is in part controlled by the church. The City of Howell could encourage the creation of a development group and work closely with that group to get FHA or CDBG funds.





For housing improvement and development programs to succeed in Howell, a full-time organizational commitment is required. If private financial participation through local banks can be brought in, chances are good for getting CDBG funding for rehabilitation. Because Howell has municipal water and sewer, and appropriate zoning, it has an excellent chance of getting FHA approval for a Section 515, multi-family housing loan. Numerous private developers or investors could easily be located to participate in this project. Since much of the deteriorated housing in Howell is located in the downtown and lower income neighborhoods, the city has a good basis for developing a rehabilitation program that could include its downtown. The keys are to emphasize the low income benefit, get bank participation and lay the frame work for an implementing organization.



## Transportation

### A. Funding Sources

The transportation service provided to low income persons has received complaints during some of R/UDAT's meetings. The possibilities for funding are varied. Operating funds can be provided from the following sources:

1. Aging Program (Older Americans Act).
2. Mental Health/Mental Retardation Programs.





3. Adult Social Services Block Grant (title XX of Social Security Act).
4. Community Services Block Grant.
5. Children and Youth Services Programs.
6. Drug and Alcohol Programs.

Vans can be acquired through Section 16(b)(2) Program of the Urban Mass Transit Administration.

#### B. Organizations

A coordinated transit service can be funded through the various social service programs funded by the federal government through the State of Michigan. In some communities non-profit groups have been formed to provide the service, while in others public transit systems operate them. A demand-response system with 24-hour lead time for making reservations is an adequate and reasonable system for an area this size.

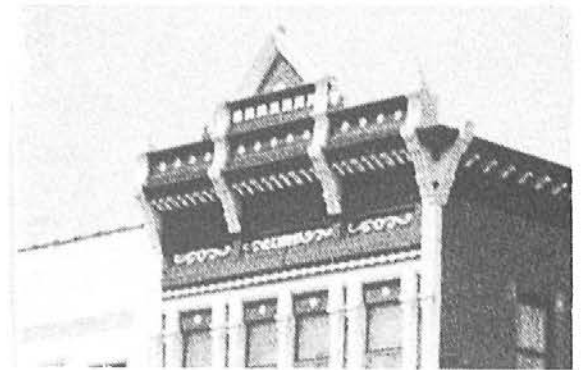




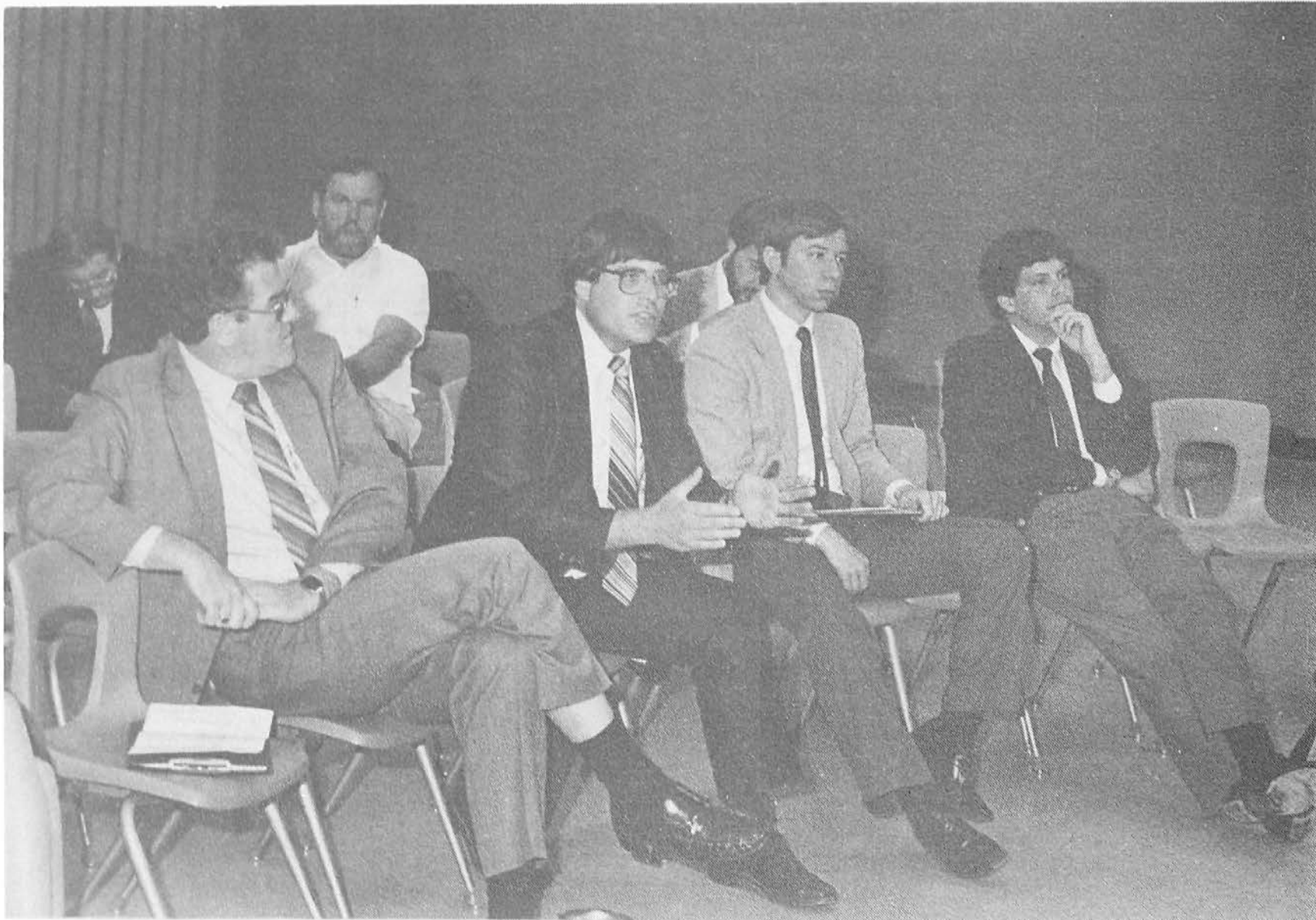
## General

Typically, most social service agencies have difficulty coordinating the services and providing clients with the broad range of information and referrals about other programs. There are efforts nationally to set up a more continuing planning and service delivery system for social service providers. Many people needing assistance are not aware of whom to contact, what to ask for and where to go. A centralized information and referral system can help alleviate this problem. The specifics of such a system would have to be worked out locally, but the fact that Howell is the county seat and has the largest concentration of services agencies, facilities and low income persons, would reinforce the need to locate such a service here.

If the major service providers could meet and develop an information and referral program, each of them could help support it financially. A "toll-free" telephone, staffed by people who have a general understanding of the various social programs and access in computers to some of the requirements of the various programs could be established.



Now what...



Now comes the hard part. When we leave for home, you, the Howell community, will be left with the job of evaluating, analyzing and, we hope, implementing some of the suggestions we have made. The challenge of sifting out the issues and problems from the input we received from you has not been simple; but it has been a much less difficult task than the one with which we leave you. And if we are certain about anything we have said it is this: none of this will happen unless and until you develop a process which allows you to critically analyze our recommendations and develop specific strategies and actions to implement those among them which you as a community decide further your shared goals. Our final message will be to suggest such a process, one which has as its basis a continuation of the community cooperation which preceded our visit and the community input and participation which occurred during these four days:

Where to start?

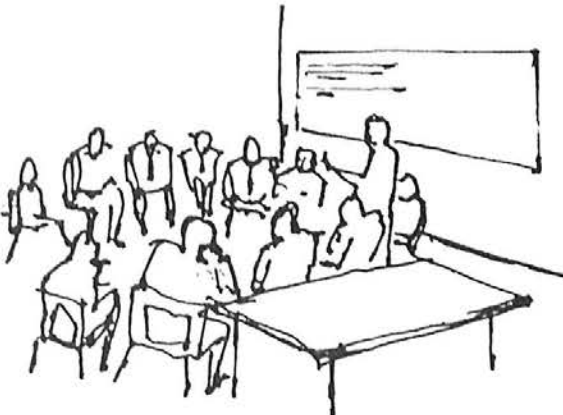
The R/UDAT visit began after the formation of a committee to look into some of the issues and concerns we came to address. This committee contained features we suggest be continued: it had the support and involvement of the city government and it represented a cross section of the community.

# Step 1

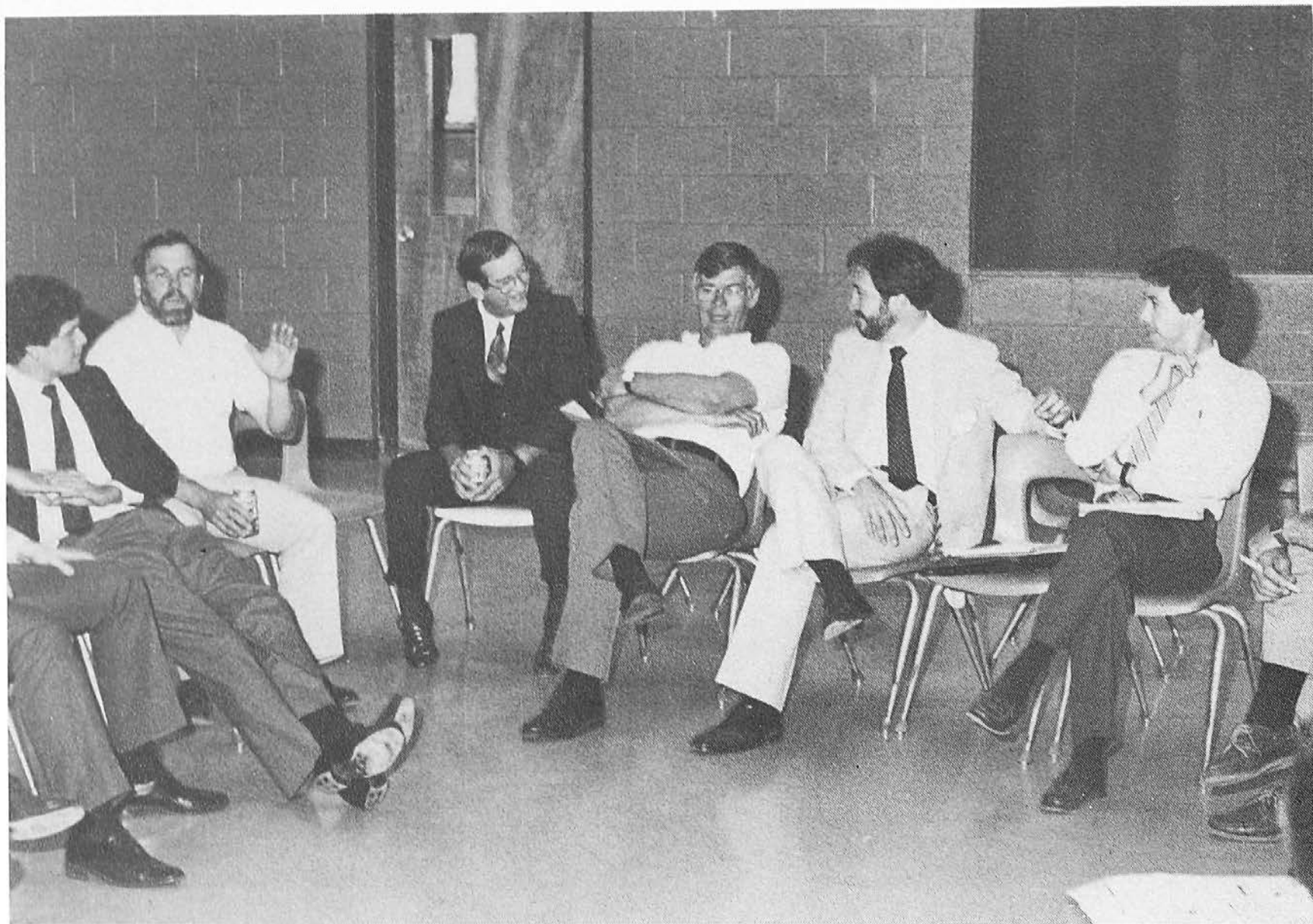
Continue the R/UDAT steering committee with its city support and strengthen it by expanding its membership to include additional community representation. We suggest that representatives of the following groups be included:

- Neighborhood associations
- Social service organizations
- Churches
- Economic Development (Community Development Organizations; e.g., Livingston County Economic Development Office, Inc.)
- Industry, including tourism/recreation
- Agriculture
- Townships
- Historic Committee
- Beautification Committee
- Residents at large
- Financial institutions
- Real estate
- County Commissioners

Don't be afraid that you're getting too many people. It may make the meetings seem difficult, but there's lots of work to be done and you will need all the resources you can muster.









Organize the steering committee into task force groups around the five issue areas we have identified.

- Central business district
- Beyond downtown
- Economic development
- Surrounding character
- Social fabric

Invite other interested individuals to join the task force groups to provide added input and energy.

Set a town meeting for Tuesday, October 16, 1984, and assign each task force the responsibility for analyzing and evaluating their topic and developing preliminary and action plans.

Have each task force present its conclusions and recommendations to the community at the town meeting in order to obtain community input prior to finalizing the recommendations.

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Step 5

## Step 6

The steering committee (enlarged) should continue to meet at least once every two months during the next year to compare notes and progress and share ideas. This will give each group the advantage of seeing how their areas of concern relate to the others and will provide a better coordinated approach overall.

## Step 7

Assign each task force to work toward implementation of the recommendations. Set a second town meeting for June 15, 1985. Have each task force report their progress on implementation at the June town meeting.

We make these recommendations fully realizing that this will involve a tremendous amount of effort if it is to be successful. Our impression of your community is that you care enough to make that effort and that you have the talent and energy necessary for it to be a success.

Δ few  
points final

- When soliciting additional members for the task force groups, make it an open solicitation and bring in as many interested people as want to be involved. The R/UDAT process, we feel, was a success because of the amount of community input and involvement and this needs to be continued during the follow-up effort as well.

- It is extremely important for the city council to be active participants in this process. Many of the recommendations will require council action to implement. The mayor and current council members should continue their involvement on the steering committee and remaining council members should join task force groups according to their areas of interest.
- Expect to meet resistance to some of your proposals and suggestions for change. It will be there. Don't cave in easily. Discuss, negotiate, compromise, but be clear on what is important to your shared objectives and be prepared to stand up for them.
- The process we have suggested and the implementation measures you will develop will at times require enormous amounts of time and energy to carry out. The people you choose to chair the steering committee and the task force groups must possess the leadership skills to carry you through. Further, many of the groups we have recommended have paid staff who can help carry the ball. Make use of their time and talent to maintain the momentum.
- You won't be able to accomplish what we have suggested all at once. It is important that these suggestions be carefully analyzed and that their implementation proceed carefully. Don't be in a hurry and don't be intimidated by the amount of work to be done. Set priorities and proceed accordingly.



- Our suggestion for a process is obviously an outline only. Fill it in with additions as you need them.
- We have not suggested a process beyond the first year. You may want to keep the steering committee, you may want to alter it, you may want to transfer certain areas of responsibilities to existing institutions. Do whatever seems to work. Our feeling is that after you have reached that point, you will be sufficiently far along that you won't need our advice.



So, continue the self-determination and momentum that brought R/UDAT to your fine town and begin to deal with the issues before you. The vision we have given you is your own and you are the ones who can make it a reality. Good Luck.





# Appendix

# The Team





## DENNIS RYAN/URBAN DESIGNER

Dennis Ryan, director of the Urban Design Program at the University of Washington in Seattle, is the leader of this R/UDAT project. This is his third R/UDAT assignment.

Ryan said he was impressed by Howell's historical value. "It has so much still here," Ryan said, adding, "Although some things have changed, the essential characteristics of its small townness are still evident."

And because of this, Ryan said members of the community are genuinely concerned about their community. But even with this high level of concern, the town does need some help in mapping out a survival plan.

"They need some direction, many towns do," Ryan said, adding that the community needs some assistance in developing a concept for downtown growth.

And Ryan believes the town will act on the recommendations and data collected in this R/UDAT report because community members are ready to commit themselves to a better community.

Ryan is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and is presently chair-elect of the American Planning Association's Urban Design and Preservation Division. He has assisted a number of local communities in dealing with issues of design, identity development.





JOHN DESMOND/ARCHITECT, URBAN DESIGNER

John Desmond is an architect with John Desmond and Associates in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is the 12th time he has served as a R/UDAT team member.

Desmond said he is most impressed by the strong sense of place and sense of community Howell residents share. "It's got a sense of community and a sense of place. And that's pretty rare now," Desmond said, adding that these qualities have disappeared in many smaller communities which are similar to Howell.

But while Howell does have strong qualities, Desmond said the city also has some problem areas which center around growth management.

According to Desmond, members of the Howell community can deal with this problem if they become effective growth managers. "It's mostly a matter of managing growth in a manner they all like," he said.

During this R/UDAT project, Desmond focused on the city's architecture. He has won four National American Institute of Architects design awards.

## TOM FOUST/PLANNER

Tom Foust is the executive director of York Area Development Corporation, York, Pennsylvania—a non-profit housing development and a management agency which provides low income housing. This is his first R/UDAT project.

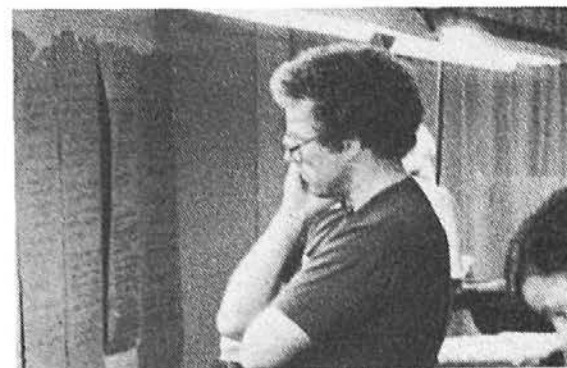
"I feel like a mission impossible team," he joked. During the project, Foust paid particular attention to identifying problems and exploring methods for implementing solutions to these problem areas. He was both impressed and concerned about Howell.

Foust was also encouraged by Howell's proximity to large metropolitan areas such as Detroit and Lansing and suggested that the city's closeness to these urban areas could have an impact on Howell's economy. "If the economy picks up in those areas, this community's going to start booming," he said.

However, Foust said he was concerned about what appeared to be the real residents' lack of understanding and knowledge about local government, land development and zoning.

Although Foust said he felt there was a strong rivalry between the city and townships that sometimes hinders abilities to cooperate on certain issues, he still feels that the area will be able to dissolve these differences. "I think that there's an opportunity to bring the various segments of the community together," he said.

Foust said he was honored to be a member of the R/UDAT team.





#### STEPHEN B. FRIEDMAN/ECONOMIST

Stephen B. Friedman is an urban economist with Laventhol and Horwath in Chicago. This is his first R/UDAT project.

Friedman said he welcomes the opportunity to work on an interdisciplinary team such as R/UDAT, and look at an entire community—rather than one specific issue.

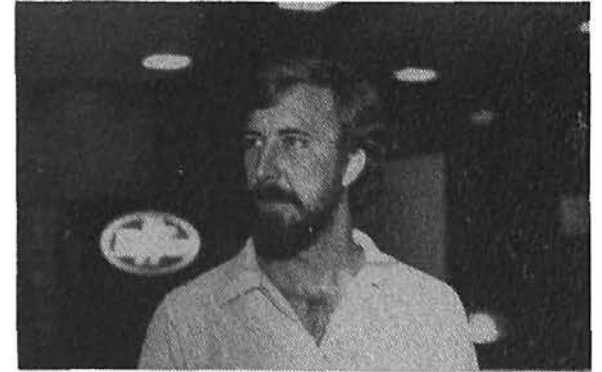
He said he is especially impressed by the city's architecture. "There is an economic potential in the downtown because the architecture creates the opportunity to revitalize retailing downtown," he said, adding that there is potential for merchants to do well in Howell.

According to Friedman, Howell has the potential to survive. "There is a great commonality of vision among both old and new Howell residents, perhaps more than they recognize. The town has a strong enough physical character that should be able to be retained, even as Howell becomes inevitably more likened to the metropolitan area," Friedman said.

Friedman has been responsible for market and financial analysis of single and multi-use real estate development projects that include residential, office, retail, industrial and recreational uses. He has also been involved in establishing both downtown and neighborhood revitalization strategies and in obtaining public and private financing to implement key revitaliation projects.

MICHAEL W. McDONALD/DOWNTOWN EXECUTIVE

Michael W. McDonald is the city manager of Healdsburg, California—a town, a little bigger than Howell, which underwent a R/UDAT project two years ago. Although he was involved in that project, this is the first time he has participated as a team member.



According to McDonald, R/UDAT offers an opportunity to learn about other small towns that are similar to his own town of 7,900 which is about 70 miles away from San Francisco.

Like other members of the R/UDAT team, McDonald was impressed with the architectural quality of many of the city's buildings as well as the townspeople's desire to improve the town and its surroundings.

"There's a real interest in doing something with this town," he said.

However, McDonald added that many members of the community don't hold a high opinion of Howell and place too much emphasis on negative aspects of the community rather than stress its positive points.

According to McDonald, this attitude must change before the community can achieve a positive central and direction of its future.

In addition to serving as city manager, McDonald serves on several intergovernmental agencies and received the International City Management Association's award for management innovation in 1979.



BARBARA ROSS/GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Barbara Ross is an attorney with Ross & Hardies, in Chicago. She specializes in zoning, land use and planning law. This is the second time she has served as a member on a R/UDAT team.

Ross views Howell's small size as a positive element which has the potential to act as a unifying force. "All the people who are here are here because they want to be in a small town..." she said.

However, she said an apathetic attitude is hindering the town's ability to maintain itself as a small town. "They're afraid of change. But if they don't change, they're not going to retain the small town qualities they came or stayed here for," she said.

Ross counsels cities on issues concerning zoning and land use and said that R/UDAT provides an opportunity for her to expand her exposure to these issues.

## BERT SWANSON/SOCIOLOGIST

Bert Swanson is a political scientist and a member of the Political Science and Urban Studies faculty at the University of Florida. He also serves as director of the university's Institute of Government. This is Swanson's first R/UDAT project.

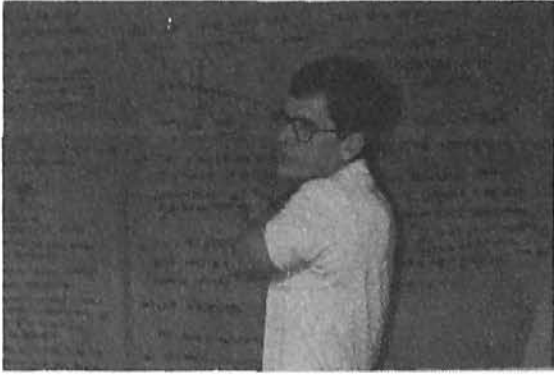


Swanson was impressed with the economic status of the city. "As hard as the recession has hit this community, they've been able to cope with it," he said.

Swanson said the members of the community seem to have a willingness to improve their community. "They seem to have a willingness ... there's more willingness here than I have seen in other small towns," he said.

But in spite of this willingness to work for improvements, Swanson said there is the persistent problem of effective implementation of a number of studies. To be effective, the citizens need to organize and make a commitment.

Swanson has served on a number of revitalization projects. He has written several books on leadership and community problems.



JAMES F. BARKER/ARCHITECT, URBAN DESIGNER

Like several other members of the Howell R/UDAT team, James F. Barker, associate architecture dean at Mississippi State University is captivated by Howell's buildings.

"Of all the towns I've worked in, this town would rank way at the top in quality of buildings," he said, adding that he found the courthouse "stunning."

Barker, who is director of Mississippi State University's Center for Small Town Research and Design, said he anticipated finding a town that had economic difficulties. "I expected more evidence of the economic decline Michigan has faced," he said. "My perception was that it would be worse than what I found."

But although Barker was fascinated by the town's architecture and surprised at Howell's economy, he also identified a major hurdle for community members to overcome. According to Barker, townspeople must realize that communication is a key to a town's survival. It is a requirement which must be permanent, "Community members have only come together when there's a major crisis," Barker said. "They can't put an idea to sleep. (An idea) doesn't come and go, it's constant."



Barker specializes in small town developments and said that because of R/UDAT's high success rate in these areas he "couldn't say no" to an invitation to participate as a team member.

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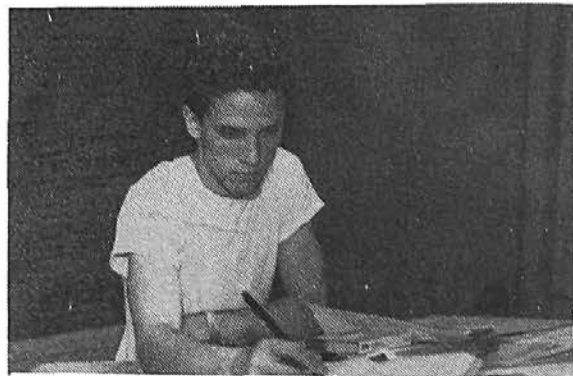
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Douglas Kremmer  
Jack LaBelle  
Amy Leist  
Shirley Leshuk  
Steve Leshuk  
Jim Lindgren  
Livingston County  
Judy Lopez  
Ken McDanough  
Donald McGarvey  
Jen McKeon  
Tom McKernan  
Edward MacDonald  
Delores Maidlow  
Barbara Martin  
Jane Martin  
The Malafouris's  
Florence Meadow  
Robert Michels  
Janet Miesle  
Elaine Moen  
Gerri Moen  
Knut Moen  
Sharon Muller

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| Sharon Nussle      | Fay Seitz         |
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| Mike Oyler         | Joyce Shaw        |
| Susan Owens        | Emma Shippy       |
| Linda Parlove      | Dick Slayton      |
| John Palmer        | McPherson Smith   |
| Peter Pascaris     | Tom Snider        |
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| Charles Phillips   | Alice Stritzinger |
| Blodwyn Pradew     | John Stritzinger  |
| Deb Pulley         | Darby Stuber      |
| Gayle Quick        | Roscoe Stuber     |
| Lisa Ramm          | Ken Thompson      |
| Catherine Rankel   | Bertha Toon       |
| Dave Reck          | Beverly Tucker    |
| Don Rhodes         | Radney Tucker     |
| Lawrence Ringe     | Joann Urbin       |
| Cran Rogers        | Ken VanBlaricum   |
| Paul Rogers        | Peter VanWinkle   |
| Sue Rogers         | Ken Weed          |
| Albert Rohrabacher | Ted Westman       |
| Janet Rohrabacher  | Betty Wright      |
| Tom Rose           | Roy Westran       |
| R. M. Rose         | David White       |
| Brian Rowlette     | Terry Wilson      |
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|                    | Jo Wysocki        |
|                    | Joe Zyskowski     |

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