CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STUDY
PULLMAN, WASHINGTON

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE STUDIES
by
FIFTH YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CLASS
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

direction and coordination
PROFESSOR DORMAN D. ANDERSON
PROFESSOR ROBERT M. FORD III

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PULLMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
The question is not whether Pullman will grow, but rather how it shall grow.

That a worldwide population explosion is happening; that Washington State is one of the fastest growing of the United States; and that Pullman is one of the fastest growing cities in this state, are incontestable facts.

The growth of Washington State University, responding to pressures of population combined with significantly increasing demands for higher education at undergraduate and graduate levels, will place extreme demands on commercial facilities in the Pullman area. The growth from 1964 to 1968 is a good indication of what the future holds. In this period enrollment of WSU increased from 9,000 to 12,000. Pullman's population grew from 15,000 to 20,000. This rapid growth demands and guarantees the base for expanded commercial facilities.

In response to the clear need for expanded commercial facilities, and with the knowledge that through creative design and planning it is possible to develop more meaningful, efficient, desirable, and economically viable commercial facilities, the fifth year architecture students of WSU have undertaken the project of generating four design alternatives to future commercial development.

The design studies, undertaken at the request of the Pullman Chamber of Commerce, indicate four different ways in which the present commercial center could be strengthened and expanded so as to meet the future needs of Pullman and the surrounding area.

The studies evolved from the premise that continued diffusion of the central business district would eventually result in a badly fragmented commercial network, diminishing the benefits of competition and of complementary commercial facilities available in more highly utilized commercial locations.
That commercial facilities developed in strips along highways are generally visually objectionable, are hazardous from a traffic safety point of view, and are not efficient is all too common knowledge to planners. While some commercial functions, such as neighborhood shopping facilities, food stores, and service stations may well be located outside the central business district, it is not desirable to locate major interrelated commercial and business functions in a dispersed fashion. Commercial shopping centers such as Lloyd Center in Portland, the Tacoma Mall, and Seattle's new South Center are unquestionably successful. The difference lies in the fact that where the strip developments cater to a person in a car, the major shopping centers have acknowledged the need for ample parking but have additionally recognized the desirability of catering to the pedestrian. With a large number and diversity of shops within easy walking distance, it is possible for the shopper to easily accomplish a variety of shopping requirements, to benefit from better selection, to buy on "impulse," and to utilize his time and effort more efficiently.

One has only to look at the success of major shopping malls with enclosed pedestrian circulation to understand the desirability for such projects. There is the Tacoma Mall which has captured the major shopping of the City of Tacoma. There is also the new South Center of Seattle, which has a similar design to the Tacoma Mall. While these successful shopping malls are taking the shopping traffic away from the city, Pullman has the chance, if it acts now in a very creative way, to develop its own shopping mall within the existing business district valley, thereby taking advantage of all existing stores and helping to reinforce their business—while the shopping center is growing from within the heart of the city.

The present trend of developing sales, service, and professional space in strips radiating out from the center of Pullman along the major highways may well continue. If it does, it will result in the problem that, for the amount of money invested, Pullman will not have the commercial lure that it would if the
money were invested in one closely integrated shopping center. The attraction of a pedestrian shopping center is the ease of carrying out all shopping and errands at one convenient stop without having to get back into the car several times and driving between stores. Shoppers will drive a considerable distance to get to a convenient shopping center. If a well planned shopping center were developed in the Pullman area it could draw from an area around the city including Moscow, Colfax, the small farming communities, and even Lewiston to some extent; as well as keeping Pullman shoppers in Pullman.

If nothing is done internally and several out-of-town businesses create a shopping center along the major highways out of town, there will be a very definite drain from Pullman's central business district. This drain will not only be detrimental to Pullman's existing businesses, but the central business district would begin to deteriorate and become an area of marginal use. This would be very detrimental to the whole community of Pullman with its core actually becoming a slum. The tax loss to the support of city services would pose additional burdens on Pullman residents.

In the development of Pullman's central business district, there are several major problems to be considered and solved. While there are differences in the manner in which these problems were solved by the four architectural design teams, each of the four solutions attempts to solve the same overall problem of developing a larger, more complete, well balanced central business district.

The first of these major problems is that of handling Pullman's traffic: through-traffic, out-of-town traffic coming through the central business district, and cross-town traffic from the residential areas to the University along with the traffic from the residential areas into the central business district. The major differences between the four solutions lie in this realm of traffic planning.
Proposals have been made by the State Highway Department that relate to development of either a major by-pass state highway around Pullman or a major limited access state highway through Pullman on the existing Union Pacific right-of-way. The design teams explored the desirability of these possibilities as well as the possibility of a one-way street system in the central business district and an overhead road system. Advantages and disadvantages of the various schemes were carefully evaluated.

The second major problem relates to development of additional parking facilities sufficient to accommodate anticipated future demands. Presently several commercial enterprises anticipate moving out onto one of three approach highways in order to gain additional parking. The successful development of the downtown area depends on significant development of considerable additional parking in close proximity to the commercial center. All four design solutions suggest immediate acquisition and development of parking facilities between Paradise and McKenzie Streets.

The third major problem to be solved by the design teams required development of pedestrian oriented shopping facilities which would encourage safer, more desirable and more economically successful commercial facilities. Major emphasis of all four design alternatives was geared to developing means by which the downtown Pullman area could, in fact, be developed so as to provide a commercial center of significant merit.
DESIGN ALTERNATIVE NUMBER ONE

Major east-west cross-town traffic is carried on a new two-level express route on the McKenzie Street right-of-way on Pioneer Hill. This system will carry through-town traffic, cross-town traffic, and provides excellent automobile access to the parking structures between Paradise and McKenzie Streets. The two-level auto traffic across the south end of the garages has two advantages: first, it does not require as wide a right-of-way as would a single-level traffic pattern and secondly, it allows traffic to enter and exit from the garages easily and safely going in either direction.

Traffic exits off from the two-level throughway onto Pine and Kamiaken Streets which carry traffic through the central business district and up onto College Hill. These two streets provide the main entrances into the garages and also tie onto one block drop-off and pick-up loops on both Main Street and Paradise Street for shopping traffic. Other than these short traffic loops the business district is closed to autos and is planned for pedestrian shopping traffic. The solution would definitely need to be worked out in greater detail, but in principle it is difficult to find a clearer, more elegant solution to Pullman's traffic problem.

It is important to note that in all four alternatives the same basic area was allocated for parking. The parking structures encircle the commercial district on the southwestern, southern, and southeastern edges. The close proximity of the parking to the shopping district is most important.

The three-level parking structures would be built in stages as needed. This plan proposes a second-level walkway system which forms a direct link between the upper levels of the garages and the second level shops. This tends to equalize the advantages of first and second level shops and when combined with several escalators helps to create an invigorating shopping density.
DESIGN TEAM NUMBER ONE

Robert Hull
Bassam Kahaleh
Khalid Riaz
William Strouse
Gerald Tallman
Stephen Wattenbarger

a commercial    b parking    c major thruway    d traffic loop
DESIGN ALTERNATIVE NUMBER TWO

This proposal would rely on a by-pass ring road. Through traffic is carried on Paradise Street, but Main Street would be utilized only for slow shopping traffic with a large amount of perpendicular parking on Main Street. Multi-level parking garages are proposed between Paradise and McKenzie Streets leaving room for the proposed city hall.

This scheme is particularly noteworthy for its attempt to improve the relationship between the central business district and the University. To encourage University students to walk into the central business district, shops would be developed along the south bank of the Palouse River reaching toward the University. There would be parking for these shops on their south side and a pedestrian promenade along the river bank which would be connected into Reaney Park by several pedestrian bridges. A continuous link of student oriented commercial activity would make the walk from the University into the commercial center more inviting.

This solution also demonstrates the possibilities for developing the existing alley spaces between Main Street and Paradise into pedestrian malls which relate to both the back of the existing stores on Main Street and to new structures along the north side of Paradise Street. This mall would stretch from directly behind the Tate Building eastward terminating in a new large commercial structure on the site of the existing civic center. In a similar manner the alley behind the Old National Bank Building could be used to develop a closer, more vital shopping connection between all of the shops in that block. These additional circulation malls combined with circulation through some stores and weather protection over Kamiaken and Pine Streets would spell the success of the large parking garages to the south as well as to the entire commercial area.
a commercial  b parking  c mall  d riverfront shopping

DESIGN TEAM NUMBER TWO

Marcus Bevens
David Hall
Gary Rehberg
Vance Titus
Thad Wardall
DESIGN ALTERNATIVE NUMBER THREE

Through traffic coming in on the Colfax Highway flows down West Main Street to a point where it connects into a new elevated road structure 45 feet above Main Street. This elevated structure follows directly above Main Street through town and connects into the Moscow Highway with a new viaduct link. While the four or five blocks of elevated structure is costly, this cost is minimized by its extreme shortness and utilization of existing air rights. By comparison a by-pass around the city must be anywhere from two to three miles in length and new right-of-way must be purchased. Cost estimates indicate that the elevated system could provide significant cost advantages.

If properly executed, the elevated structure also provides an enclosed mall to provide pleasant pedestrian shopping on Main Street throughout the year. The use of skylights allows enough sunlight into the mall to keep it well lit and cheerful while providing weather protection as can be seen in the photographs of Main Street on the back cover.

The photograph on the opposite page indicates that there is adequate area for considerable development of new commercial space along both sides of Paradise Street. Much of the commercial space along Main Street is maintained "as is" with additions where and when it becomes necessary. This scheme relies heavily on multi-level parking garages which are entered from several levels, simplifying the internal ramping of the garages. There is also some proposed parking along the river between Kamiaken and Grand which helps to balance the parking around the business district.

A second level walkway system links the upper levels of the garages and second level shops. This walkway system allows pedestrian circulation between all businesses without crossing automobile traffic and at the same time provides direct circulation between second level shops without climbing up and down stairs.
a commercial  b parking  c elevated roadway (covered mall)

DESIGN TEAM NUMBER THREE

Don Harris
Andrew Jacobson
Richard McBride
David Miller
Peter Rasmussen
James Ryan
Pierce Sinnott
DESIGN ALTERNATIVE NUMBER FOUR

The final stage of this scheme represents the greatest development of commercial space of any of the four proposals. The new commercial space can be built without interrupting existing commercial operations on ground level. The total development is based on the ability to build new retail space on two levels above the ground floor and a third level for professional offices, without disrupting existing ground level operations. After studying existing building patterns it was found that by building 50 ft. by 120 ft. long structural bays with columns only at the corners, a column pattern could be superimposed on the total downtown with only about four columns interfering with existing buildings.

Light-weight 10 ft. deep by 120 ft. long trusses would span over the existing stores from front to back. These 10 ft. deep trusses would form the walls of the professional office level, and the two lower levels of commercial space would be hung from these trusses. This can be built over the top of the ground level stores while they continue operation. At the level of this second and third floor commercial space would be two complete levels of pedestrian circulation which tie directly into the parking garage and are interconnected at strategic points with escalators.

The space on the ground under the structure could be later converted into auto oriented businesses (drive-in bank, drugstore pick up, etc.) and the remainder could become parking.

While these 50 ft. by 120 ft. units can be built in small increments as needed, and would provide all of the commercial space required in the foreseeable future, this scheme would necessitate a very coordinated effort of all businessmen and landholders to obtain the full benefits of having all levels tied together insuring that the whole scheme works as one shopping center. While the commercial benefits may be most significant it is important to note that the coordination problems may be the most difficult of the four proposals.
DESIGN TEAM NUMBER FOUR

Byron Blankenship
John Connell
Dale Glenn
Delbert Hobbs
Richard Prine

c a  commercial  b  parking  c  civic facilities on riverfront
Any significant development of Pullman's central business dis­
trict will be the result of the cooperative effort of a large
number of businessmen and elected city officials. Therefore
it is imperative that some vehicle be found which allows all
interested businessmen, landowners, and elected officials to
openly discuss what they each want to see done, to jointly
discuss the problems involved and to jointly initiate develop­
ment of appropriate solutions.

The initial consideration of any significant planning for
Pullman's central business district will involve automobile
traffic and parking. A successful commercial area must be
easily accessible by car. Shoppers, having once arrived, must
have adequate parking close to the shopping area. The extreme
success of shopping centers and malls have proven that this
parking need not be directly at the door of each shop, but the
organization of the total shopping area and its relation to the
parking must be carefully considered. In the planning of a
pedestrian oriented shopping center it is important to place
some form of "shopping generator" at the ends of the malls so
that shoppers are drawn through the length of the mall and
exposed to all offerings. The most usual "generators" are
department stores, but other "magnets" could fulfill this func­
tion.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

I. MAJOR NEW STATE HIGHWAY

Either an express traffic route elevated over Main Street or
one running along the south edge of the business district on or
near the McKenzie Street right-of-way. This state highway
should be carefully planned to allow access directly into park­ing facilities for the central business district.
II. MAJOR PARKING FACILITIES

A combined effort of businessmen and city officials to develop new major parking facilities which will serve the shopping center and be directly related to the new highway. The results of all four design studies indicated that the blocks between Paradise and McKenzie Streets are ideal for this parking, for reasons previously explained.

III. RIVER DEVELOPMENT

There should be consideration for extending the business district toward the University with a series of student oriented businesses along the Palouse River. The river should be developed to insure adequate flood control but also to provide expanded park and recreational facilities as it passes through the city.

IV. OVERALL PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The business community should come to an agreement upon an overall plan so that as construction work is accomplished over the years it will be well coordinated and each new building will reinforce the central shopping concept.

While planning for future development within the existing business district it is important to realize that it will not all take place at one time, but that planning must be clear and to the advantage of all concerned so that each additional construction can contribute to the overall plan. Parking systems and pedestrian shopping systems should be planned so that they will serve beyond the immediate future and allow for coordinated upgrading which will keep the shopping center viable for at least fifty to one hundred years.
Such planning is essential if the present and future investment in this area is to be protected. This planning is essential if the City of Pullman desires to keep its center an active, enjoyable place in which to be, and to prevent it from falling into marginal use and becoming a slum. It is from this standpoint that the citizens of Pullman should support the city administration and businessmen in their efforts to plan, coordinate, and implement improvements to the central business district.

The opportunity to undertake this development is unique to this period in time. The responsibility for creating a satisfying and meaningful environment is ours.