



BOISE

DOWNTOWN
URBAN DESIGN
PLAN

VOLUME 1

Framework Master Plan & Design Guidelines

ZIMMER·GUNSUL·FRASCA PARTNERSHIP
DON MILES ASSOCIATES · PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES, INC.

BOISE DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Prepared for

BOISE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Volume 1

Framework Master Plan and Design Guidelines

Adopted by Boise Redevelopment Agency

April 1, 1986

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This downtown urban design plan focuses on an eight-block area in Boise's downtown renewal area. The study area is bounded by Capitol Blvd., Bannock Street, Ninth Street and Front Street. For 20 years this area had been reserved for development of a regional shopping center. Five master developers in succession have been under contract to the Boise Redevelopment Agency [BRA] during that period, but none was successful. In May 1985 the last of them resigned. The City removed its prohibition on development of regional shopping facilities elsewhere, and the BRA took a fresh look at the historical resources and development potential within the eight-block area. Proposals were invited from developers for all or part of the area.

In June 1985, BRA invited the American Institute of Architects' Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team [R/UDAT] to conduct a special study of Boise's downtown. R/UDAT convened in Boise in October. A vigorous four-day session produced a downtown concept plan which focused new developments and activities on the 'Eighth Street Mall': an open street dominated by pedestrian traffic. R/UDAT's report on its study and recommendations was printed in full in the Idaho Statesman, and gained wide support throughout the community.

The BRA invited developers to amend and resubmit their earlier proposals in the light of R/UDAT's recommendations. At about the same time, the BRA sought the assistance of urban design consultants to help them reconcile the R/UDAT recommendations with submitted development proposals. In particular, the BRA sought advice on the design and integration of public spaces and parking in the eight-block study area. A chronology of consultant tasks and activities is given in Appendix 1.

1.2 Purpose of the Downtown Urban Design Plan

The ultimate purpose of this plan is to ensure that the eight-block study area is redeveloped in a manner consistent with its position at the center for downtown retail and commercial activity in the state capitol. To this end, the plan responds to three urban design objectives:

- o Develop a logical urban structure for the area which is consistent with the form and function of downtown Boise as a whole.
- o Develop guidelines for the design of both public and private developments to ensure quality, consistency and compatibility of design with historic structures and between new developments.
- o Develop a strategy for the implementation, operation and maintenance of streets and other public open spaces in the area.

In this document, framework master plans address the interplay of building mass and open space; circulation, parking and access; pedestrian movement and landscaping. Design guidelines address streets and other public open spaces, new and historic buildings. Implementation, operation and maintenance of public spaces are addressed in the context of 12 public capital improvement projects. These are designed to create a special, quality urban environment consistent with detailed design objectives developed in earlier sections of this urban design plan for downtown Boise.

2.0 FRAMEWORK MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the framework master plan is to provide an overall design context for public and private improvements in the area. Not only should it ensure that adjacent developments function harmoniously together, it should also ensure that the study area develops in a way which is compatible with other parts of downtown Boise.

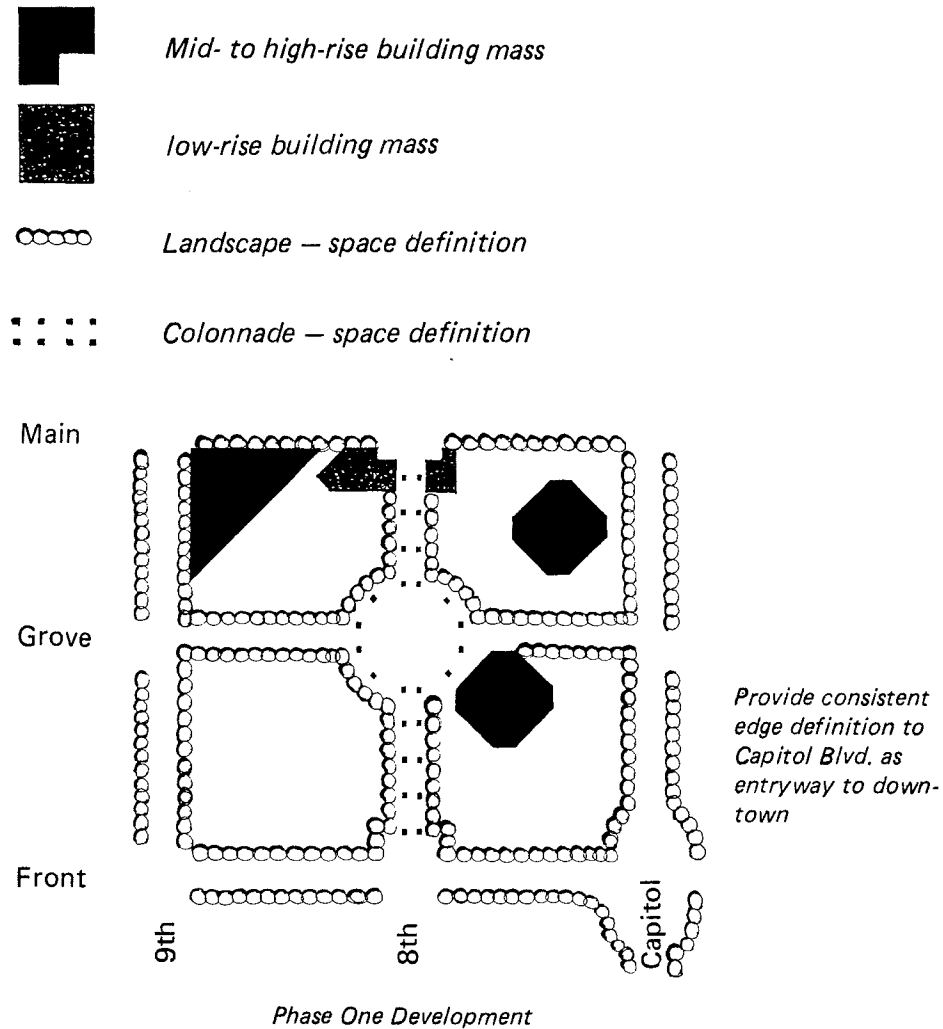
As the city continues to mature so the characteristics of its transportation system must be able to adapt to greater densities of development and increased levels of activity in the downtown. Opportunities for improved transit must therefore be recognized and preserved. Through-traffic must be routed more efficiently through the street system. Downtown streets and open spaces must be capable of accommodating larger numbers of people on foot.

Special assets of downtown Boise must be recognized and protected. These include access to the river, views of the mountains, the grand approach to the state capitol along Capitol Blvd., and numerous valued historic buildings.

The framework master plan is presented here as a series of plan diagrams and accompanying text which together encompass all the issues discussed above. Specific development projects within the area covered by the framework master plan need coordination at a more detailed level. That is the subject of the next section of the report entitled Design Guidelines.

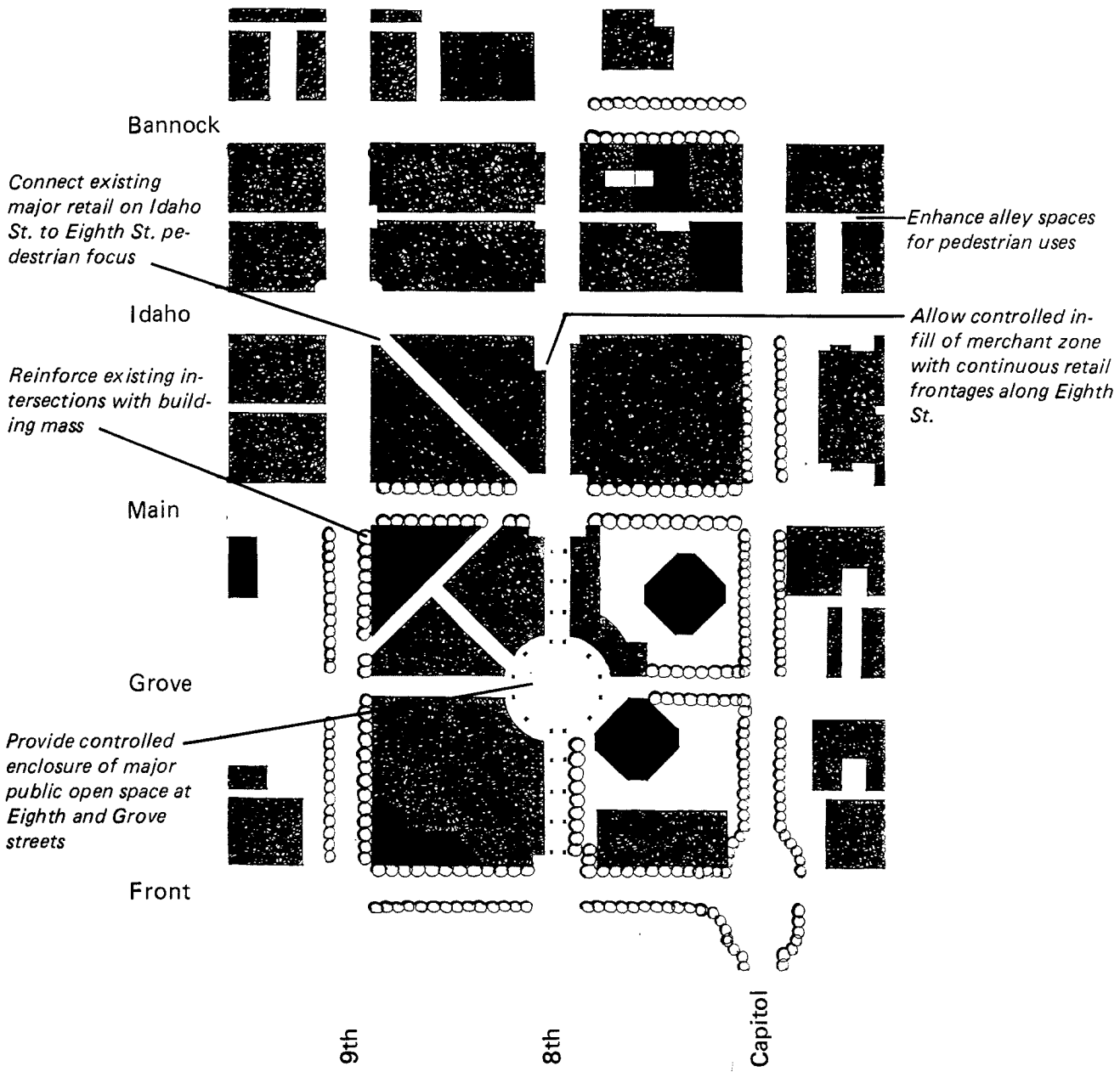
2.1 Building Mass and Open Space

This diagram illustrates the configuration and extent of open space between buildings at completion of development in the eight-block study area. Taller structures are shown black; low- and mid-rise structures are shown in a tone. Tree plantings will modify the containment of some open areas — as, for example, along Capitol Blvd., where the formal, axial



approach to the Capitol will be strengthened by avenue plantings wherever buildings do not define the street edge.

Within the eight-block study area, a hierarchy of open spaces can be recognized. Principal spaces along Eighth St. occur at the confluence of pedestrian traffic routes: streets, alleys,



and major building entrances. At Main and Idaho streets, pedestrians and vehicles will contribute to the general bustle of the retail center. Eighth Street will have no vehicular traffic (other than for service and emergency vehicles) between Main and Idaho, Idaho and Bannock streets.

South of Main St., Eighth St. will also become the exclusive domain of pedestrians, except for a small shuttle bus which will run between transit facilities on Main and Idaho to the north, and the Eighth Street Market, and other destinations to the south.

The major public open space will be located at the intersection of Eighth St. and the original alignment of Grove St. (restored for pedestrian access only). During early stages of development, the major public open space will be defined only by a colonnade of freestanding obelisks or columns. As development proceeds, building facades, trees and paving will reinforce the definition of the space. Ultimately it will mature into a primary focus of downtown activity. Alive with programmed events and performances, with strollers and vendors, it will become a favorite rendezvous spot for Boiseans and visitors alike.

An important feature of the framework master plan which is illustrated by this diagram is the maintenance and restoration of Boise's historic street pattern. This is important for several reasons, but especially because it ensures a proper fit with the surrounding urban fabric, and encourages access on foot to all parts of the area and its surroundings.

2.2 Circulation, Parking and Access

The interplay between general traffic, transit and pedestrians is shown in this diagram. Service traffic will, for the most part, be restricted to general traffic streets and alleys but will have limited access to Eighth St.

Eighth St. will be designated an auto-free zone between Front St. and Bannock St.; North of Main St. it will become the focus of downtown retail activity, serviced by transit on Main and Idaho streets. A pedestrian-compatible shuttle vehicle will run on Eighth St. south of Main, linking the retail core with the Eighth Street Market and other attractions to the south.

Transit will share Main and Idaho streets with general traffic as a one-way couplet. These two streets clearly have the potential to become transit malls with special street and sidewalk treatments, and other amenities for waiting passengers. It may be appropriate to construct the segments of these malls between Capitol Blvd. and Ninth St. as a first phase, coordinated with adjacent private developments.









Short-term parking is a necessary complement to transit in supporting Boise's downtown retail core. Two parking structures north of Main St. will satisfy this need. They will be accessible from Capitol Blvd. between Main and Idaho streets, and from Bannock St. between Eighth and Ninth streets, respectively. Together these two structures will provide approximately 900 short-term parking spaces.

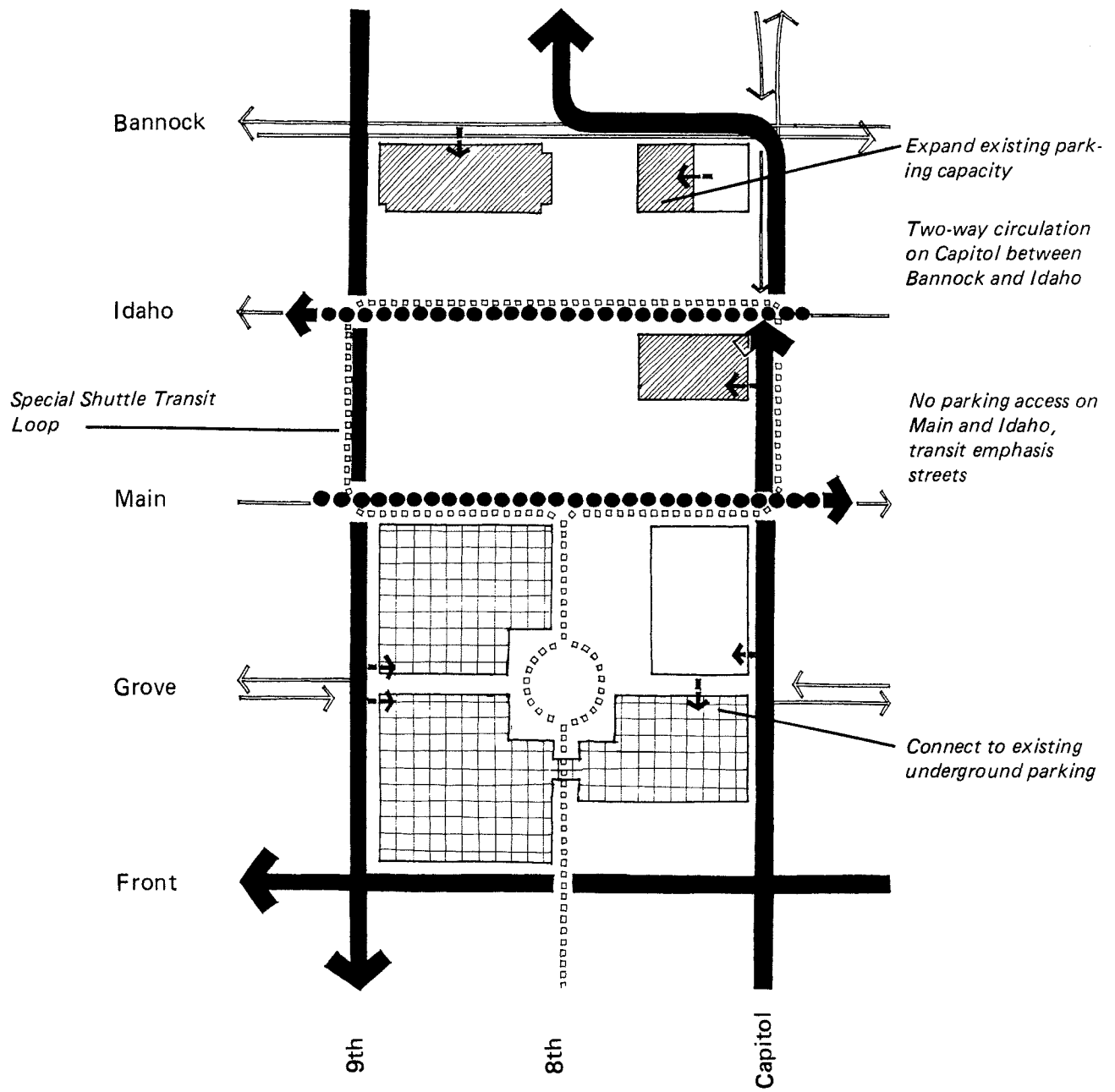
Long-term parking north of Main St. will be needed to support offices in restored historic buildings and in a new building on Bannock St. to the east of the Idaho Building. Available, unused parking nearby will supply some parking. Additional long-term parking will be provided in a new structure under the offices to be built next to the Idaho Building. This parking structure will be constructed as an extension to the existing structure on the corner of Bannock St. and Capitol Blvd. It may also include some short-term parking for visitors to the offices and for shoppers using adjacent retail.

South of Main St., parking will serve offices, the hotel and conference facilities, and some shops and restaurants. Most of this will be long-term parking, and much of it will be located underground. Access will be from Capitol Blvd. and from Ninth St.

Through-traffic will be concentrated on two one-way couplets. Northbound and southbound traffic will use Capitol Blvd. and Ninth St., respectively. Eastbound and westbound traffic will use Myrtle and Front streets. As soon as the east/west couplet becomes operable, the segment of Grove St. between Capitol Blvd. and Ninth St. can be removed. This section was realigned to run alongside Front St. in the early 1970's. Its removal will free land north of Front St. for development, and will permit substantial improvement of pedestrian access between segments of Eighth St. to the north and south.

Local access traffic will use all streets in, and surrounding, the eight-block study area except for Eighth Street. Grove St. to the east of Capitol Blvd. and west of Ninth St. may once again become two-way to ease local access. The original alignment of Grove St. between Capitol Blvd. and Ninth St. will be restored for pedestrian access only.

-  *Major Arterial*
-  *Local Access*
-  *Transit Emphasis*
-  *Special Shuttle Transit*
-  *Existing Parking Facility*
-  *Proposed Structured Parking*
-  *Proposed Underground Parking*
-  *Parking Access*



2.3 Pedestrian and Landscape System

An attractive and convenient pedestrian access system is essential to the vitality of the downtown. This diagram shows how pedestrian routes through the eight-block study area will link adjacent streets and alleys. The diagram also shows in schematic form how landscaping will be used to enhance pedestrian spaces, shape streets where buildings will not create an effective edge, and signal important events, such as the intersection of Capitol Blvd. and Front St. which will function as a major gateway to the downtown for those arriving from the south and east.

Eighth St. and Grove St. will be auto-free zones within the study area. The diagram indicates a series of public open spaces along Eighth St. Each space will be designed to accommodate a variety of activities of a type and scale suitable to its particular surroundings.

Spaces between Main and Bannock streets will be oriented to the interests and activity of shoppers using Boise's downtown retail core. Programmed seasonal events may be expected to include carol singers and an illuminated tree at Christmas time, street vendors and strolling entertainers during the drier months. Merchants will be encouraged to extend their activities into Eighth St., adding to the vitality of this bustling area. In the warmer months, cafes and restaurants will spill out onto the street.

The major public open space will be a colonnaded circus at the intersection of the two auto-free zones: Eighth St. and Grove St. It will be largely surrounded by office buildings with some shops and restaurants at street level. To the southwest will be a major hotel and the conference center. This central open space will be large enough to accommodate the Idaho Shakespeare Festival theatre. At other times, it



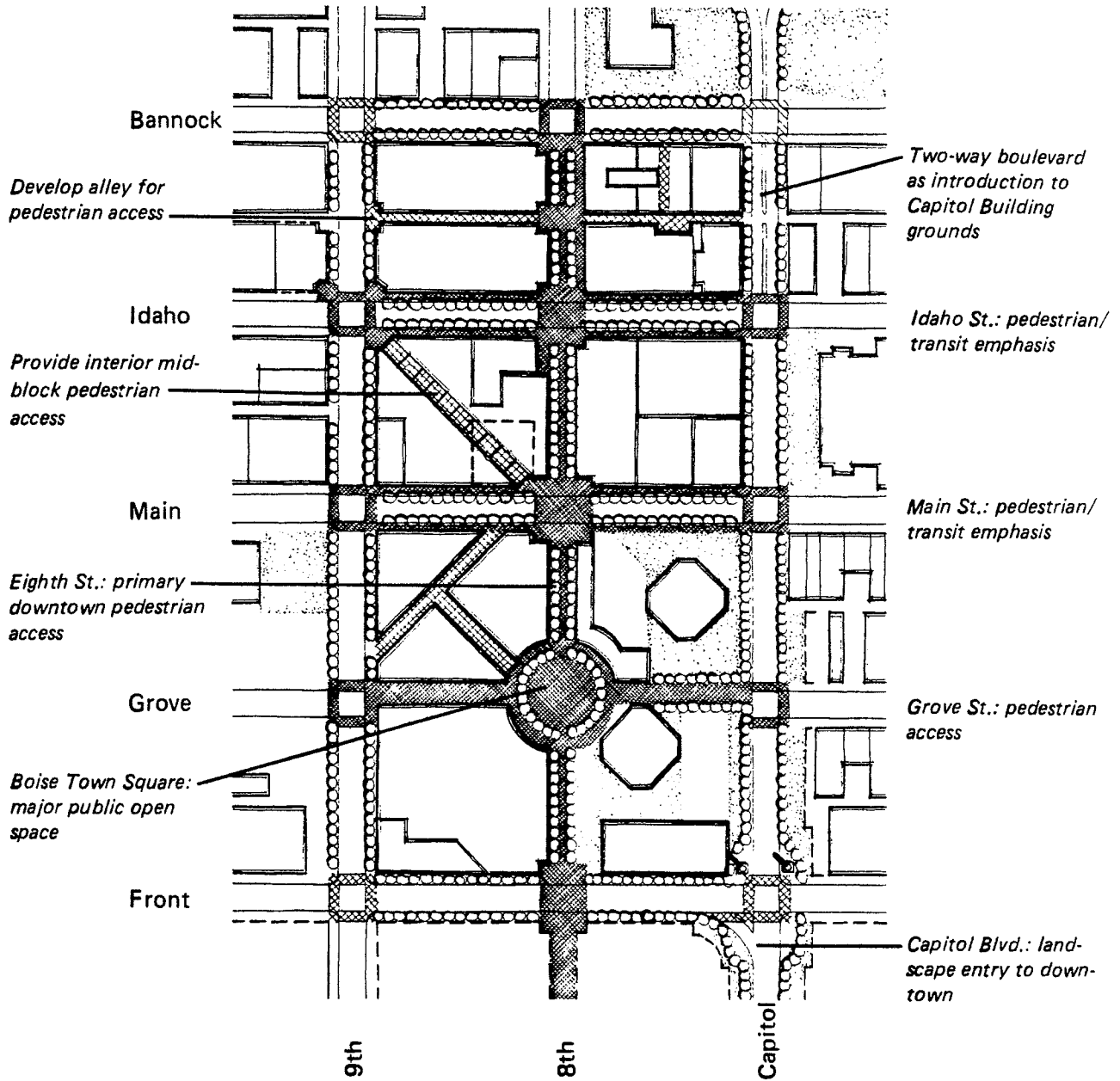
Primary Pedestrian Circulation and Landscape Open Space



Secondary Pedestrian Circulation



Secondary Landscape Open Space



will provide for lunch-time concerts, open air dance productions, and a variety of programmed and impromptu events.

During the winter, much of the space could be devoted to an ice rink. Around the year, it will be used as a place to meet people downtown; to eat a brown-bag lunch or to dally at one of the cafes and restaurants around its perimeter.

If the downtown is to function as an integrated whole, then safe and convenient pedestrian crossings over busy streets will be essential. As pedestrian activity is focused along the sidewalks throughout the downtown, streets must be crossed at grade. Subordinating pedestrian movement to vehicular flows through introduction of grade-separated crossings would be disastrous. It would have the effect of segmenting pedestrian activity in discrete sectors of the downtown, thereby denying the benefits of a downtown location for most uses. Consequently, the diagram emphasizes the importance of clear, convenient pedestrian crossings at every street intersection; with special emphasis on the intersection of Eighth and Front streets where serious dislocation of pedestrian movement currently occurs.

3.0 DESIGN GUIDELINES

The purpose of design guidelines is to provide a common frame of reference for all construction and improvements in the study area. All elements of design which contribute to the appearance and successful functioning of the built environment are addressed. Adherence to these guidelines by the designers of buildings and open spaces in the study area will ensure the predictable evolution of a successful urban environment. An environment which is uniquely matched to the heritage and achievable ambitions of downtown Boise.

3.1 Public Open Spaces

Purposes

To provide a variety of public spaces which will be inviting, accessible, and specifically designed to serve those public activities which are to be encouraged in the downtown. These spaces should be located and oriented to be highly visible. They should provide an order for downtown redevelopment. Existing public spaces such as the Capitol Mall and the riverfront parks provide the foundation for this system. However, the streets themselves provide the most visible and populous elements in the open space system downtown. Considerable attention is therefore focused on street design in this section, and in sections 4.3 and 4.4.



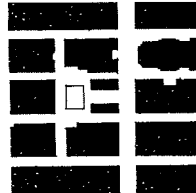
Guidelines

Places

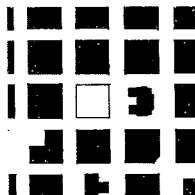
- o Design plazas to provide space, or a platform, for public activity on display. Plazas should be no larger than required by the activities they are projected to serve. One plaza may be designed as a focal point and principal downtown meeting place. Plazas should be linked via a network of sidewalks and other pedestrian areas.



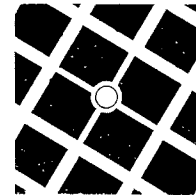
Piazza San Marco



Rockefeller Center

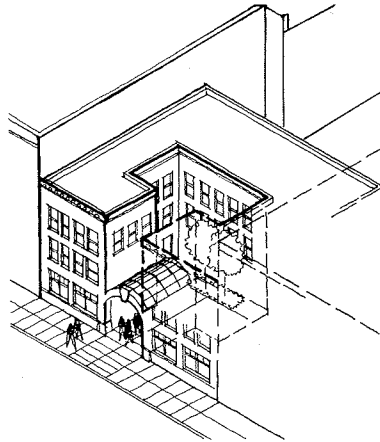


Pioneer Sq. - Portland



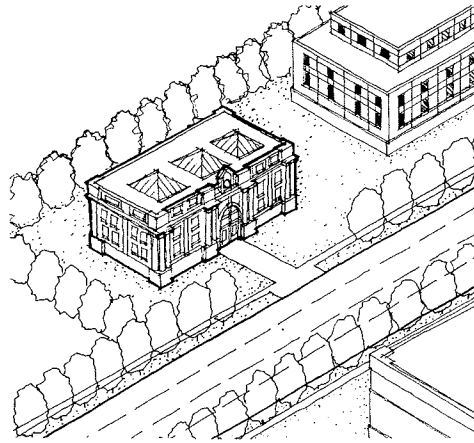
Town Sq. - Boise

- o Develop courtyards as open spaces within buildings to provide a public focus for building occupants.



Open and Enclosed Courtyards

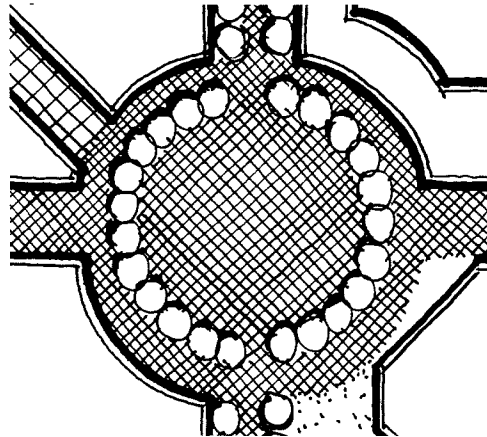
- o Encourage the development of introductory open spaces or "front yards" in the foreground of major institutional structures and at entries to downtown districts. Not all locations will be suitable for such spaces.



Fronts Yards on Capitol Boulevard

Scale

- o Develop public open spaces of a size and configuration appropriate to encourage the activities they are to accommodate. The nature of these activities will be related to size and uses of adjacent structures.
- o Develop a major public open space of approximately 30-40,000 square feet at Eighth and Grove streets to serve as a downtown focal point.



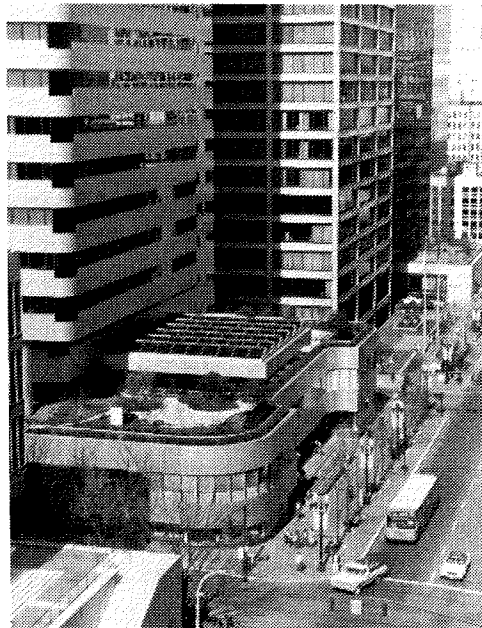
Major Public Open Space

- o Locate arcades as covered pedestrian streets to encourage consistent and intense pedestrian traffic regardless of weather. Discontinuous or improperly designed arcades can isolate ground-floor uses from the very pedestrian activity they are intended to serve.



Interior Arcade

- o Develop roof gardens as improved open space to be enjoyed by both building occupants and tenants of other buildings which overlook those gardens.



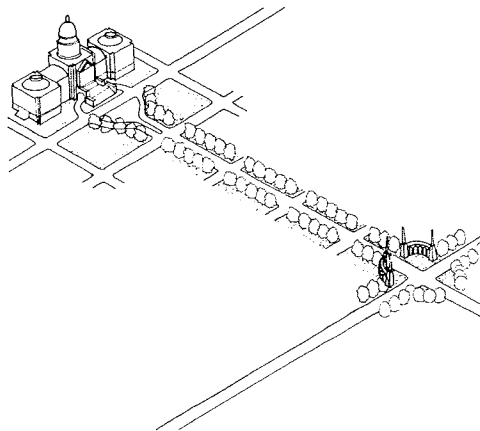
Roof Garden

- o Preserve parks as principal landscaped open spaces and natural refuges within the city.
- o Locate and interconnect parks to provide a regional system of landscaped open space.
- o Identify key streets to be established as visible channels of activity connecting adjacent districts and public open spaces.
- o Locate activities and access to them around intersections to reinforce the significance and presence of those intersections.



Main and 10th Streets - Boise

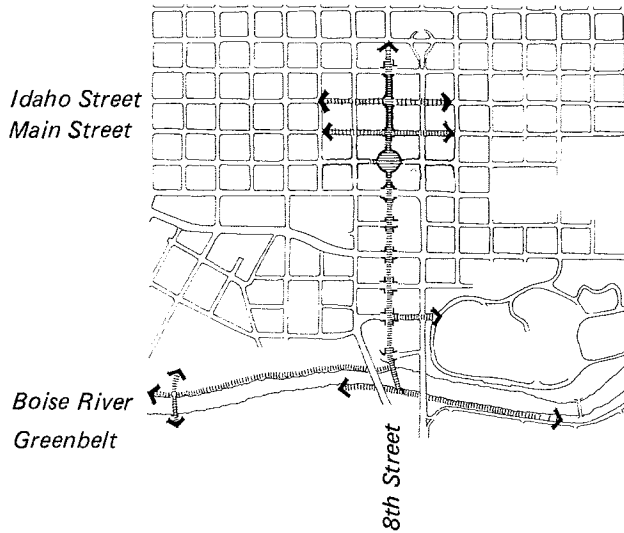
- o Establish gateways at important entries to downtown and downtown districts. Recognize and reinforce existing gateways.



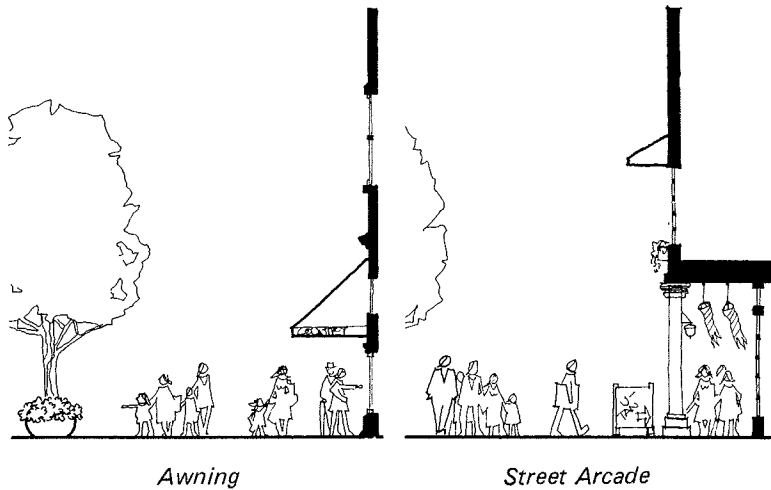
Capitol Boulevard and Front Street - Boise

Pedestrian Links

- o Link the major public open space at Eighth and Grove streets to the primary downtown pedestrian system, the principal components of which are the Eighth Street auto-free zone, Main and Idaho streets.



- o Provide a minimum right-of-way of 40 feet between building fronts along the Eighth Street auto-free zone, with clear pathways of 10 feet adjacent to building walls or merchant zones which extend into the street.
- o Incorporate awnings, arcades and greenhouse extensions in the street wall of the Eighth Street auto-free zone.



- o Use trees and a freestanding colonnade to enclose and define the major public open space and Eighth Street auto-free zone south of Main Street in the early phases of development.
- o Incorporate lighting, signage and other pedestrian furnishings into the colonnade.



Colonnade

- o Provide safe, grade-level crossings for pedestrians using Eighth Street between Bannock and Myrtle streets. Extend the system of pedestrian paving and furnishings to encourage strong connection to areas south of Front and north of Bannock.

Activity and Surrounding Uses

- o Program, design and promote the major public open space to generate and accommodate active day, night and seasonal uses.



Artquake - Portland

Neighborhood Fair

- o Design spaces so that they can accommodate variations in intensity of activity and use. These will vary with the season, the time of day and week. Examples range from passive recreation like sunning, brown bag lunching and socializing to staged events like noon-time concerts and theater. Seasonal events like harvest festivals, Christmas programs and spring flower shows add to year-round vitality.
- o About the major public open space and Eight Street auto-free zone with pedestrian-oriented street-level uses that extend into the open spaces [sidewalk cafes, displays, etc.]. Provide visual access by use of clear glass windows at street level in surrounding buildings.
- o Encourage freestanding retail and food outlets near the confluence of major pedestrian flows. These will tend to enhance the vitality of nearby public spaces.



Street Vendor

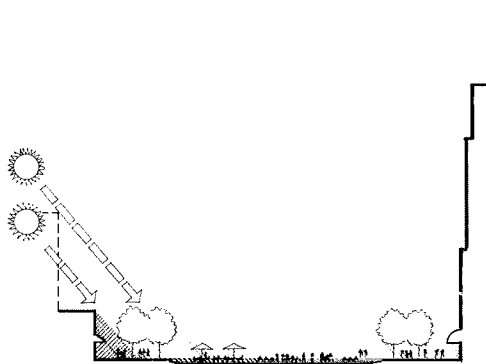
Outdoor Cafe

- o Integrate the Boise Visual and Performing Arts into the programming of public spaces. Consider their special needs in designing such spaces.

Environmental Exposure

- o Organize buildings and the spaces between them to provide the appropriate solar exposure during periods of peak pedestrian use.

- o Articulate the location and massing of structures adjacent to the major public open space to ensure that at least half of it is exposed to direct sunlight at noon on June 21. Trees, awnings and parasols can be used to provide shady spots in the summer.



Solar Access and Solar Control

- o Consider the impacts of building heights, configurations and juxtaposition on wind at ground level.

Landscaping

- o Use plant materials to define space, provide seasonal greenery, and a change of color and texture in public spaces.
- o Use deciduous trees to allow winter sun penetration and visibility of storefronts.
- o Plant trees on-grade in protective grates.
- o Select street tree species which reinforce the desired character of the streets they occupy.



Harrison Boulevard - Boise

- o Protect lawns and ground covers with curbs or seating walls.
- o Install and maintain all landscaping in a top quality condition.

Continuity

- o Establish continuity of furnishings such as lights, paving, trees and signage with the overall downtown pedestrian and open space system.

Pedestrian Furnishings

- o Enhance pedestrian emphasis streets and the major public open space by provision of elements for pedestrian comfort such as seating, drinking fountains, pedestrian lighting, signage and kiosks. Provide a flexible system of furnishings to extend continuity throughout the downtown.



Movable Chairs

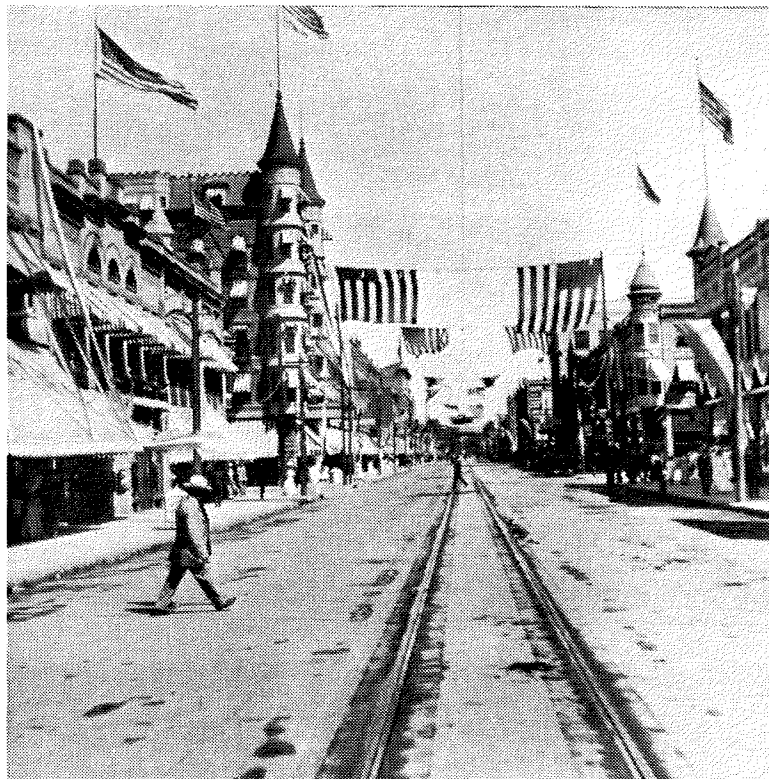
Fixed Benches

- o Make generous seating provisions in a variety of forms: benches and movable chairs; walls, steps and planter ledges.
- o Use paving materials to define activity areas and give visual continuity.
- o Provide "barrier-free" design throughout public spaces.

3.2 Streets

Purpose

Streets determine the scale and organization of activity in a city. Guidelines for their development and maintenance should clarify how they accommodate a variety of transportation modes, how they look and how they feel. Streetscape guidelines should define how streets are enclosed by abutting structures. Guidelines should specify the functional requirements of appropriate street-level uses, street furniture and landscape elements, street uses, storefront development and weather protection.



Guidelines

Street Classifications and Functions

- o Provide for the redevelopment of all downtown streets to serve more effectively the activities for which they are designated.
- o Consider the moving, standing and access requirements of the five basic circulation modes accommodated: private, transit, and service vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.
- o Preserve street rights-of-way to maintain the grid structure of the city.

Transit Streets

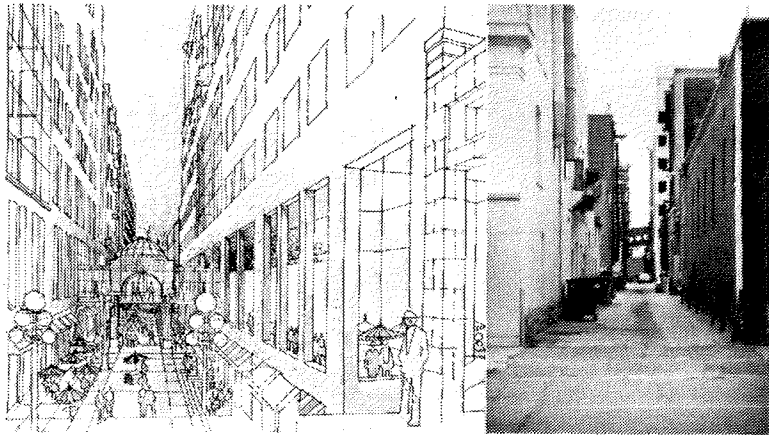
- o Establish operating and design standards for the following transit streets:
 - mixed traffic with or without exclusive transit lanes
 - transit malls; two-way streets and couplets
- o Establish design standards for transit stops and their immediate environs.



Transit Mall

Alleys

- o Encourage the redevelopment and preservation of mid-block alleys. Use alleys to organize and promote full-block development by providing total service access and/or ancillary pedestrian spaces.



Post Alley - Seattle

Alley - Boise

Service Access

- o Identify adequate truck drop-off and pickup areas near the entries of major buildings. (These may be distinct from required loading bays.)
- o Locate curb cuts for loading and parking so that they disrupt neither arterial traffic nor pedestrian circulation.
- o Design exclusive pedestrian streets so that limited service and emergency access can be accommodated.



Truck Loading

Signage and Signalization

- o Develop coordinated standards for downtown signage and signalization.
- o Remove overhead highway signs from downtown streets.
- o Provide a comprehensive information system for short-term parking.



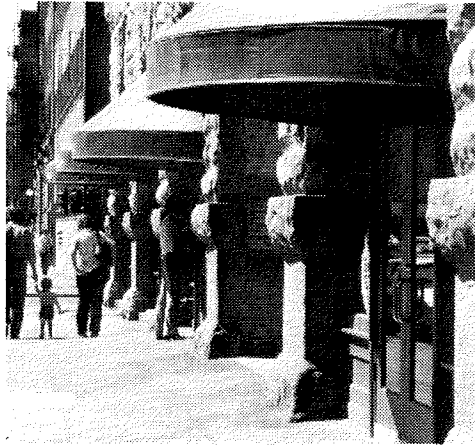
Pedestrian Streets

- o Provide sufficient width for pedestrian walkways so that anticipated through-traffic volumes, and local pedestrian activity can be served.
- o Establish activity zones within each pedestrian street for through-traffic, window shopping, entry, vending, sitting, standing, landscaping, and street furniture.



Sidewalk Use Zones

- o Provide weather protection along key-pedestrian corridors.



Awnings

- o Bias the location of peak-pedestrian activity to capitalize on appropriate seasonal solar exposure.
- o Develop a land use pattern which encourages pedestrian trips along the pedestrian streets.
- o Provide a range of engineering standards for surface improvements (including drainage) which minimizes the scope of necessary reconstruction.



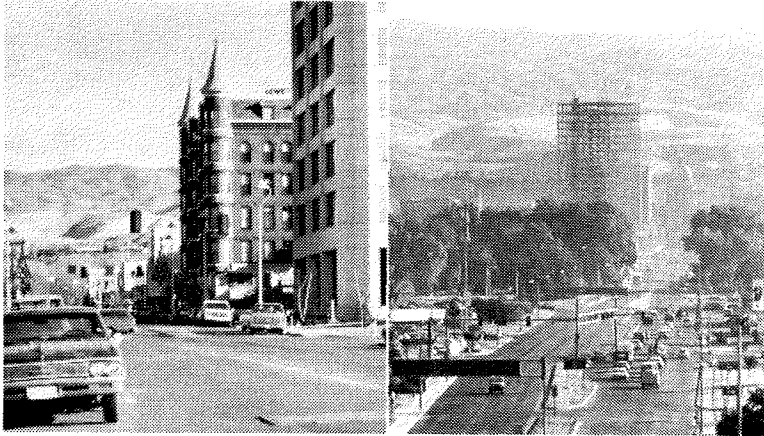
Valley Gutter

Bicycle Routes

- o Provide continuity between established bicycle routes.
- o Indicate by signage those pedestrian streets and spaces which are not suitable for shared use by cyclists.

Views

- o Preserve key views along north/south street corridors by discouraging skybridges, overhead signage and other visual obstructions.
- o Reinforce views by establishing appropriate building setbacks which focus or expand important sightlines. These may be upper-story setbacks in some instances.



Mountain Views

Capitol Boulevard

3.3 Historic Buildings and Related Infill Developments

Purpose

To redevelop historic structures and districts in a manner which both preserves a heritage and stimulates downtown development. In a reluctant economy, the renovation of small-scale structures can provide continuity and intensification of downtown activity.



Guidelines

Renovation

- o Encourage renovation projects which improve the entire building for full occupancy.
- o Encourage building uses which capitalize on the character and configuration of the existing building, thereby minimizing potential conflicts with its architecture.
- o Identify and respect the distinguishing qualities of each historic building and its site.
- o Avoid "historicist" alterations which are alien to the original architecture of the building.
- o Disallow contemporary alterations and additions which destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural qualities of the original building. Ensure that modifications are compatible with the size, scale, proportion and character of the property and with the adjacent environment.



Yamhill Market - Portland

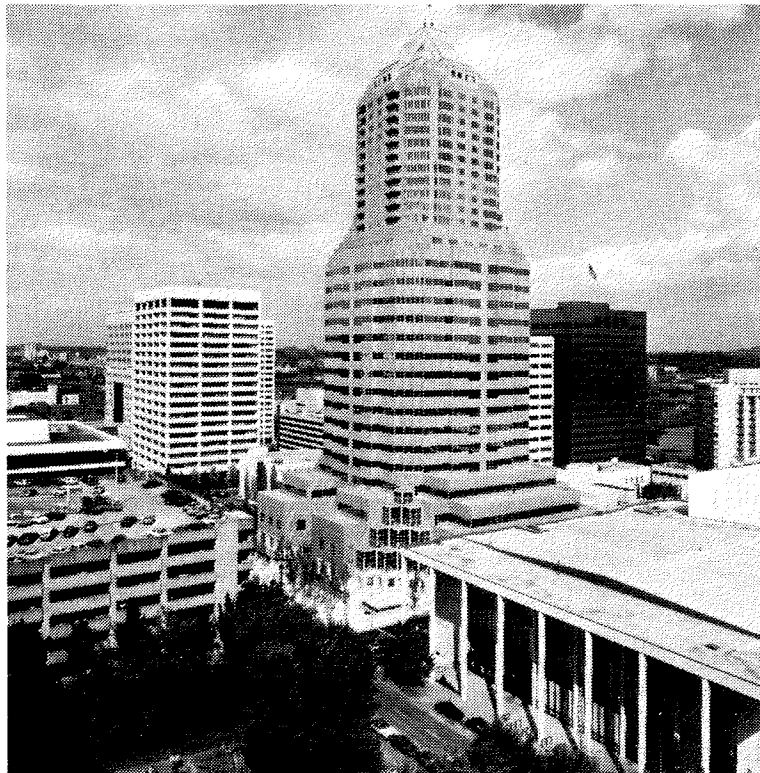
Infill

- o Develop infill structures to be complementary to and compatible with adjacent buildings.
- o Consider elements of scale, proportion, materials, and relationship to neighboring structures and open spaces. The scale and rhythm of fenestration is particularly important, as is the continuity of cornices and belt courses.
- o Provide side-yard setbacks from existing historic structures to preserve adequate access to light and air.

3.4 New Building Development

Purpose

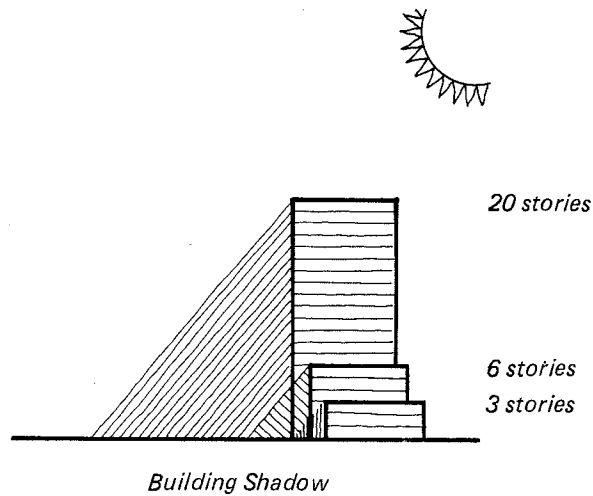
New buildings can have a profound influence on the character of downtown Boise. Guidelines should promote compatibility with valued historic buildings. New buildings have particular responsibilities in the ways in which they can help to define and animate streets. The guidelines specify a number of key elements in new buildings by which these responsibilities can be met.



Guidelines

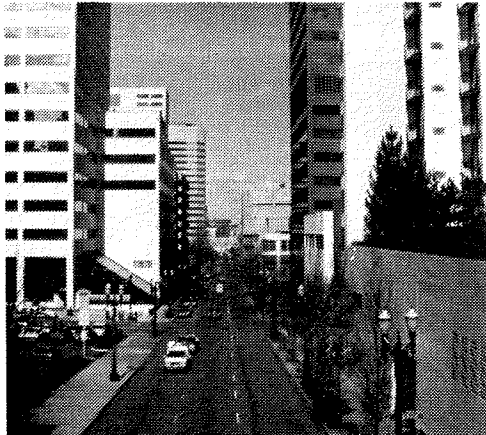
Building Height and Configuration

- o Establish and adhere to a policy on building height and configuration based on the scale and orientation of the existing urban fabric and on a desired image of the downtown as an integrated whole.
- o Consider the impact of building height and configuration on the solar access of adjacent streets and public open spaces.



Setbacks

- o Maintain a recognizable enclosure of space along streets and around public open spaces.
- o Consider upper-level setbacks in tall buildings to preserve valued public views.



Street Enclosure

Building Walls

- o Vary the character of the walls of multistory buildings. Differentiate between lower floors or base which relate to street-level pedestrian activity, the shaft or mid-level occupancies, and the rooftop which may become a prominent feature of the Boise skyline.



IB&T Center - Boise

- o Control building shapes and materials to minimize reflection of the sun into adjacent structures and public open spaces.



Building Glare

Ground Floor Uses

- o Encourage ground-floor uses which tend to support an intensification of pedestrian activity, particularly along Eighth, Main and Idaho streets.
- o Develop the ground level with public spaces which encourage frequent communication between pedestrian activity within and outside the building.



Fulton Market - N.Y.C.

- o Encourage the design of flexible ground-level space which can readily accommodate a variety of uses in the life of the building.

Building Entries

- o Locate major building entries for office and residential uses away from building corners to preserve their potential for retail development.



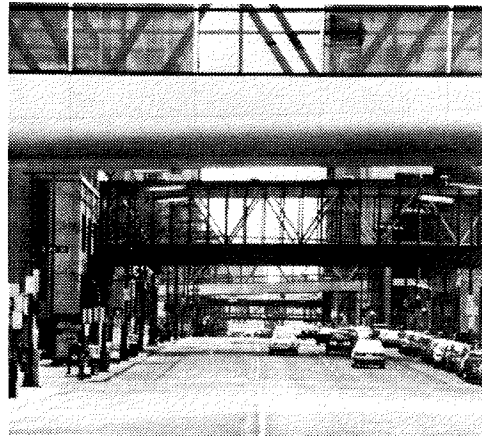
Mid-block Office Entry

Service, Loading, Drop-off and Pickup Areas

- o Locate service, loading, drop-off and pickup areas to serve building functions efficiently so that they minimize disruption to major vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns.

Skybridges

- o Consider the potential of skybridges to diminish pedestrian activity at street level.
- o Recognize that skybridges may block valued views and disrupt the sense of continuity in a street.
- o Compensate for the lack of light and air beneath skybridges.



2nd Avenue - Minneapolis

Construction Impacts

- o Schedule major construction to minimize its impact on existing downtown business activity.
- o Produce interim public "spaces" and events to celebrate and compensate for the disruption caused by new construction. Maintain and promote the vitality of downtown at all times.