

# UC Berkeley

## Places

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### Author

Turnbull, William, Jr

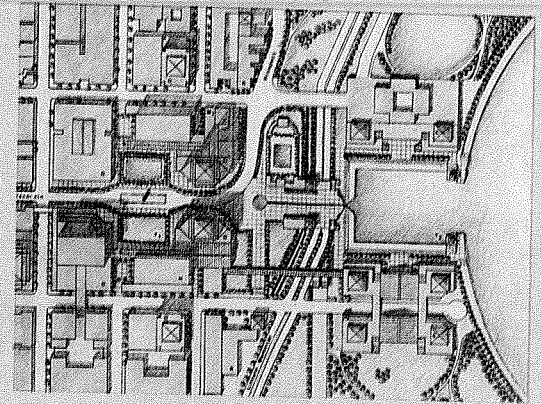
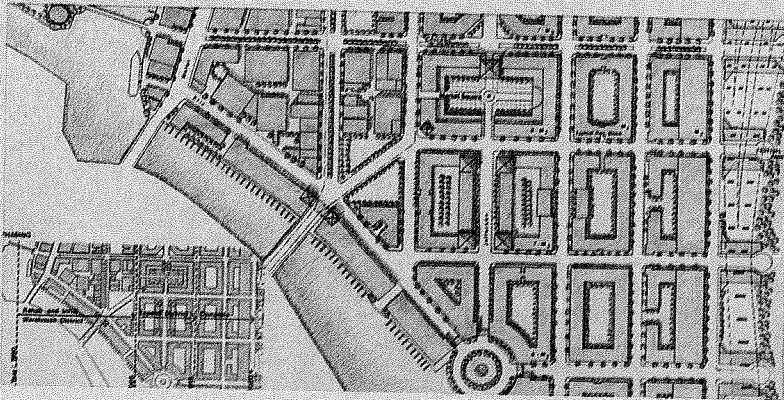
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The urban character of the city center would be extended to the south:

- The underlying grid would be continued.
- Housing would be street-oriented, with minimal setbacks.
- Interior courts would be enclosed within a block, creating space for semi-private gardens, play areas and parking.
- Buildings at corners would vary in form to accommodate shops.



The meeting of Wisconsin Avenue and the lake is a symbolic focal point. Because pomp and ceremony are essential to urban life, formal areas are as important as informal ones. A sequence of squares and plazas, a reshaping of the waterfront, and public and private buildings would combine to demonstrate the drama and power created when a city's built form is united with its most important natural asset.

## Places Are Not Impositions

*William Turnbull, Jr.*

Reviewing the entries for the International City Design Competition in Milwaukee, I was struck by the similarity of the attitudes expressed to those of previous generations who had addressed this problem, whether in literary form, as in George Orwell's *1984*, or in architectural drawings, as in Tony Garnier's ideal city of 1917.

Frustration with the failure of the design community to meet reasonable environmental expectations has led the explorers of the future to make bold strokes of prognosis. Just as Big Brother is the literary outgrowth of big bureaucracy, megastructures are the descendants of the linear city and Corbusean ideals.

What seems to be missing in the competition essays into futurism is an awareness that we have already looked at the future and found it to be us.

"Us" is not metaphorical. "Us" is the multiplication of the species. More and more humans inhabit a limited planet that is stressed by our atmospheric pollution and ozone depletion.

For an increased population to coexist in harmony, not chaos, requires rules of deportment, rules that are stratified and organized into regulatory laws and municipal codes. The

ones that concern the city of the future are municipal zoning and planning ordinances and building codes dealing with public health, safety and welfare. These are our constraints, the invisible boundaries that normally encompass us and wall in the enthusiasm, idealism and energy that can be expressed in design competitions.

Once, not so long ago, these walls were broken down in the United States by the Federal Government under the programs of urban renewal. Wholesale house cleaning was the model of the day in the 1950s and early 1960s. Whole blocks and older neighborhoods were leveled in cities across the country; in some the Corbusean ideal of city living was attempted, others became pastures of urban weeds.

For the most part our fellow citizens, the clients and inhabitants of our efforts as designers, did not rejoice in these utopian visions of the future. The comfortable and known, albeit tired and dirty, had given way to the unfamiliar, unremarkable and all too often socially disastrous places of inhabitation. The visionaries' dreams of the future disintegrated with the dynamited remains of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis.

People responded in the voting booth by electing officials whose priorities lay elsewhere; they cut off funds to existing urban renewal programs and evolved new ones with tax incentives to rehabilitate existing structures.

People were saying, in effect, the world around us gives us security, emotionally as well as physically. The professionals can play their games of one-upmanship with the latest fashions if the corporate and private patrons will support such childlike activities. But we the public do not wish these games played on our turf, in our neighborhoods.

And the people drew this old armor of laws and codes and zoning around them and settled down more aware than ever of the physical and social-political values of Little Italy, Chinatown, Over-the-Rhine, or whatever their ethnic neighborhoods were called.

But the problems of life still exist. Indeed, they are exacerbated by the continuing increase in the number of people—affordable housing, decent education, jobs proximate to where we live, parks, recreation opportunities and safe streets.

It seems to me, looking over the visionary energy invested in this competition, that the grass is not always greener on the other side of the street; the bold stroke cuts the Gordian Knot but kills the fabric of the community.

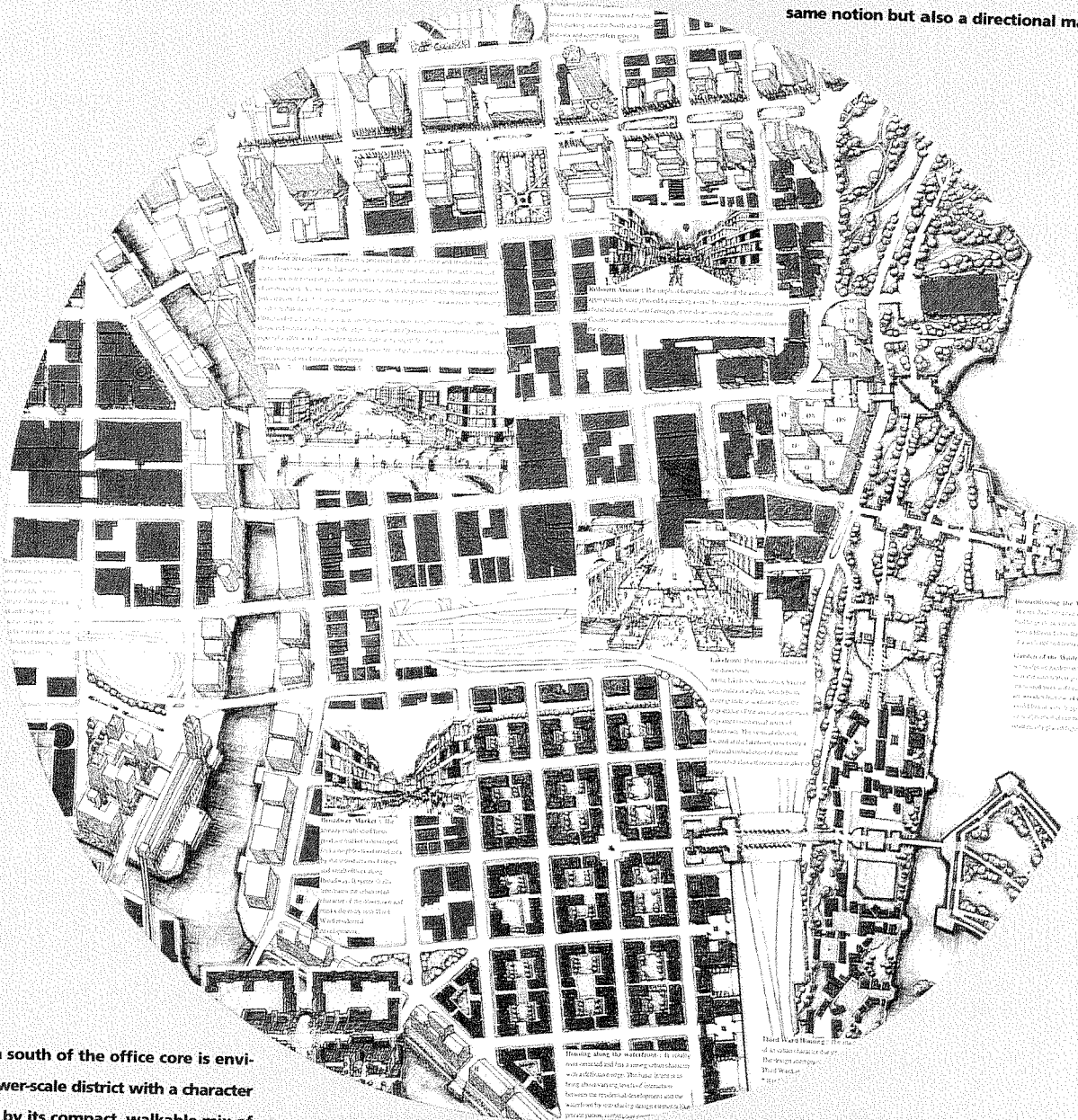
A better design attitude might be to take a myriad of little steps based on an understanding of how people inhabit space, both their own and that of the common realm. Add to it gently, repair it when it is broken and reinforce its qualities in the consciousness of inhabitants. The tyrannies of Haussman made Paris a great whole, but little people, wrestling with pragmatic daily problems of keeping afloat, created the wonders of Venice.

To make a “place” need not be an act of imposition; that is a violence all too easy to acquire. To work with the opportunities inherent in people, place and circumstance takes longer and is harder for a young designer, but in the end produces the physical settings our society chooses to protect and conserve. From Beacon Hill to Telegraph Hill, places are for, by and of the people. To make them you must understand the inhabitants and their feelings and needs. Only then is our future believable.

Journey home, my friend, know the flowers in your own garden before trying to pick the stars from the sky.

**The river is perceived as the commercial and residential spine of downtown. The additions and alterations to the river would implicitly conform to the existing urban character and create a sense of cohesiveness. A continuous street would be maintained along the river edge in order to prevent privatization of a public amenity. Office and retail activities would capitalize on the river, maximizing their frontage by opening shops and outdoor cafes along the edge. This would enliven the riverfront during and especially after work hours. River taxi stops would be located to facilitate travel along the river and to initiate retail development.**

The lake front is the recreational area of downtown. There, Wisconsin Avenue terminates at a plaza, which by its sheer grandeur acknowledges the importance of the avenue as the most significant commercial artery of downtown. The vertical element located at the lake front is not only a physical embodiment of the same notion but also a directional marker.



The peninsula south of the office core is envisioned as a lower-scale district with a character made distinct by its compact, walkable mix of uses in new and old buildings; it forms a bustling urban waterfront. The development of the district would follow the grid system, but pedestrian use of streets and sidewalks would take precedence over automobile use of those spaces. The narrow street and alley, the arcade and through-block gallery, and the court and atrium are all time-honored urban design devices used in the district to thread together and reinforce the pedestrian circulation system.

**Project team:**  
**Simon Atkinson, Meera Sanghavi, Naila Shamsi, Sunalini Hegde, Sandhya Savant, Shoba Sivakolundu (Gold Medalist)**