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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DOWNTOWNS
OF TOPEKA, KANSAS. AND LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.

by

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INTRODUCTION

During recent years a number of major cities in the United States have seen their downtowns decline. Although this trend has not been common to all American cities, it has been substantial enough to concern several urban planners, as numerous books on the subject suggest. The reasons for the decline of downtowns are as varied as the cities and their specific problems. Yet certain common denominators are obvious in many downtowns.

The advent of the automobile as a common mode of transportation perhaps has affected downtown decline in a substantial manner. Due to the automobile it became possible for the first time to commute independently, long distances in relatively short time durations. This enabled the development of new suburbs on the fringes of the city. These suburbs generally afforded a better quality of life, away from the problems of the city proper such as traffic, pollution, crime and high costs. At the same time a person had access to the facilities of the city.

Suburban shopping centers and other facilities developed on the city outskirts to cater to the needs of the new communities and slowly the downtown lost the distinction of being the center of

commercial and cultural activities. Consequently, a steady decline of the downtown became noticeable in a number of cities as business started moving out of the city center to the suburbs. However, this decline was not common to all downtowns. Certain downtowns retained their distinction of being the city center despite suburban development, or in other instances the process of deterioration was reversed and a deteriorating downtown was revitalized through planned development.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the decline and rejuvenation of downtowns. To attain this purpose the downtowns of two cities were chosen for study. Lincoln, Nebraska and Topeka, Kansas have comparable backgrounds yet they have apparently different directions of development.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following are the specific goals of this report.

1. To compare the two downtowns in their regional, urban and local settings as defined under "scope".
2. If any major differences are found, to try to determine the causes for such differences.

3. To determine how the differences have affected the revitalization or deterioration of the two downtowns.

METHOD OF STUDY

Data have been collected on the two downtowns by studying various planning reports, urban and regional development master plans for both areas, and by visiting pertinent agencies to informally interview persons who could impart knowledge about the two areas.

During visits to the two downtowns, slides were taken to study and compare the appearance of the areas. Some of these slides are presented in this research as sketches. In addition primary sources on the history and background of the two areas were examined. Some newspaper clippings from this search are included that offer interesting insights into the two downtown areas.

SCOPE

The two downtowns are compared at regional, urban and local levels of scale. The factors of comparison are listed subsequently under this sub-heading. A brief historical comparison is included to provide some information about the evolution of the two areas.

The limited scope of this two credit hour report does not permit the inclusion of all the factors that can be compared between any two downtowns. Therefore, only those factors have been compared which had sufficient precollected data available. In certain instances there was sufficient data available on one of the downtowns, but corresponding data on the other downtown was not available readily. In these instances comparisons were not made.

The two downtowns are compared for the following factors:

(i) Regional Factors:

- a. History of the two regions.
- b. Location in the continental United States.
- c. Major cities within a one hundred mile radius.
- d. Towns and villages within a fifty mile radius.
- e. Inter-regional transportation.

(ii) Urban Factors:

- a. Size of the respective cities
- b. Location of the downtown within each city.
- c. Intra-city transportation and downtown accessibility.
- d. Location and number of various commercial centers within the city and their affects on each downtown.
- e. Employment opportunities in each city as compared to the respective downtowns.
- f. Agencies and organizations of the two cities affecting the respective downtowns

(iii)Local Factors:

- a. Size of the downtowns - Layouts.
- b. Transportation within the two downtowns - Circulation.
- c. Districts within the two downtowns.
- d. Landmarks and nodes.
- e. Landscaping, lighting and street furniture.

CONTENT

The report compares the downtowns of Lincoln, Nebraska and Topeka, Kansas. The reasons for the choice are as follows:

Lincoln, Nebraska and Topeka, Kansas share certain similarities but their downtowns are different in a number of respects. Both Lincoln and Topeka are situated in the midwest region of the United States, and they are capitals of their respective states. The population of Lincoln (171,932¹) and the population of Topeka (118,690²) are comparable. The population of Lincoln includes about 25,000 students enrolled in the University of Nebraska³ and Topeka's population includes about 7,000 students enrolled at Washburn University⁴. The economies of the regions surrounding Lincoln and Topeka are agriculture oriented. Both cities are located on or near major east-west interstate highways directly or indirectly connecting the east and west coast of the United States (see figure 1). In addition both cities are the centers of other regional highways (see figures 4 & 5). Both cities have to compete with bigger cities. Topeka is sixty two miles from Kansas City, Missouri and Lincoln is fifty six miles from Omaha, Nebraska.

The report begins with a brief historical background of Lincoln and Topeka, with particular attention given to the circumstances

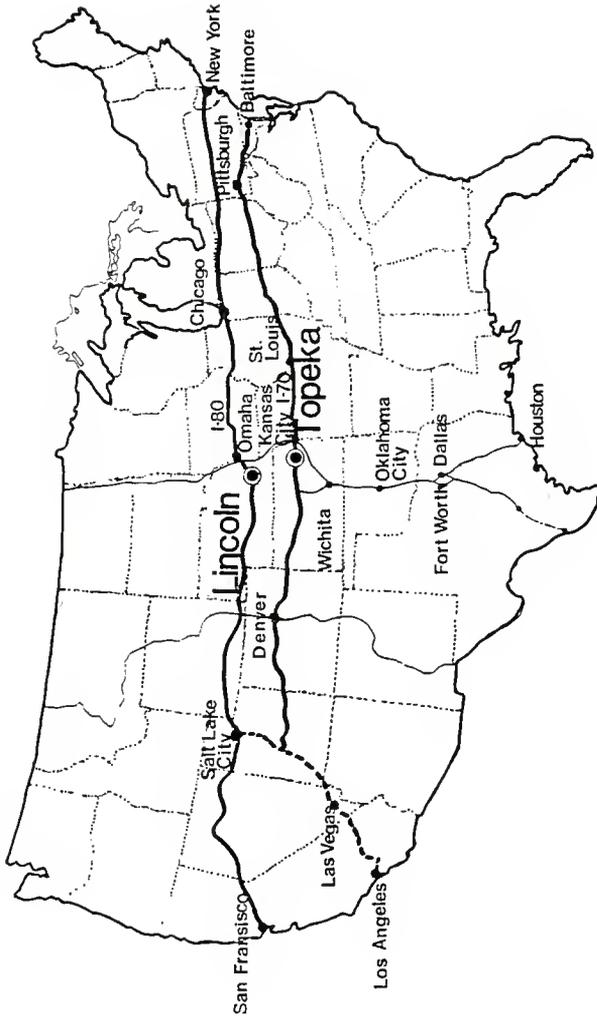


Figure 1

LOCATION OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA AND TOPEKA, KANSAS IN CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

under which they were settled and chosen as the capitals of their respective territories. In both cities the present downtowns were included in the first areas that were settled.

Next, the regions surrounding Lincoln and Topeka are compared with emphasis on analyses of the transportation networks in the regional vicinity of both the areas and the towns and cities within influence range. This is followed by a comparison of the cities with regard to their respective downtowns. Areas of comparison have been cited above, under the previous sub-heading. Finally the two downtowns are compared at the local level as discussed above, under "Scope".

The comparisons are followed by conclusions based upon previous discussions in the report, to determine how the differences have affected the revitalization or deterioration of the two downtowns.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TWO AREAS

(Chapter One)

The Kansas/ Nebraska Act was signed on May 30, 1854 by President Pierce to open an enormous area for settlement and urbanization in the midwest. Thus since inception, the states of Kansas and Nebraska have shared a common background, as settlements started forming in both areas simultaneously. Both territories shared similar emphasis on land speculation, excessive planning that resulted in many paper communities and ghost towns. Railways were promoted as a key to urban prosperity and conflicts over territorial and later state capitals were common to both areas. However, there were important differences in both the speed and character of urban growth. Development was rapid in Kansas as compared to Nebraska in the initial period (1850s to 1900s). In 1860 the population of Kansas was more than 100,000¹, while Nebraska had a third of that². Within ten years the population of Kansas increased to almost a million³, while Nebraska still had just half of that. The Kansas river, being deeper, was more navigable at least part of the year compared to the Platte river. Consequently more towns were settled in the interior of Kansas compared to Nebraska in the early period. Because of greater population dispersion, perhaps, no single town in Kansas could attain the size or population of Omaha, the largest town in Nebraska. However there were more towns in Kansas than in Nebraska.

SELECTION OF CAPITALS

In Nebraska and Kansas the selection of a capital for the territory was a bitterly fought event⁵. In those precarious times when newly born towns could easily become ghost towns, it was of primary importance to have the guarantees of survival and growth. Selection as a territorial capital assured a secure and prosperous future. Thus, selection as a territorial capital involved a lot of political manipulation among the new communities in Kansas as well as Nebraska.

Without going into the details of what transpired, it is sufficient to mention that in Kansas, the following towns were considered as suitable to be the capital at one time or another: Pawnee (near Fort Riley); LeCompton (between Topeka and Lawrence); Mineola; Leavenworth and; Wyandotte (presently a part of Kansas City, Kansas). Topeka was finally selected as the seat of the territory of Kansas.

Bellevue was the earliest settlement in Nebraska and seemed likely to have been selected as the capital. However, Omaha was selected as the territorial capital, which caused some bitter opposition, eventually leading to the creation of Lincoln, Nebraska, through an Act of the state assembly.

PLAN OF LINCOLN

Harvey's plan, shown in figure 2, was a regular gridiron plan in vogue in those days. Some interesting features of the plan include:

- (1) Generous provisions for public sites and open spaces.
- (2) Recognition that major public buildings could be located in a way that provided vistas down major streets.
- (3) Differentiation of lot sizes between those intended for businesses and those for residential purposes and
- (4) variations of street widths depending on proposed street functions.

According to historian John Reys, the plan "ranks high among those of Western America. Moreover and more important, the three dimensional city that developed on this two dimensional plan is one of the most impressive and pleasant communities of the country". Although the plan has several laudable features it has certain drawbacks too. The lack of creative effort on the part of Harvey and A.B.Smith, the other surveyor and planner involved in planning and laying out Lincoln, is demonstrated by the lack of variety in street form or block size. Although the city was being planned as the capital, no consideration appears to have been given to the visual or functional importance of the location of the site of the capitol building. It has to be real

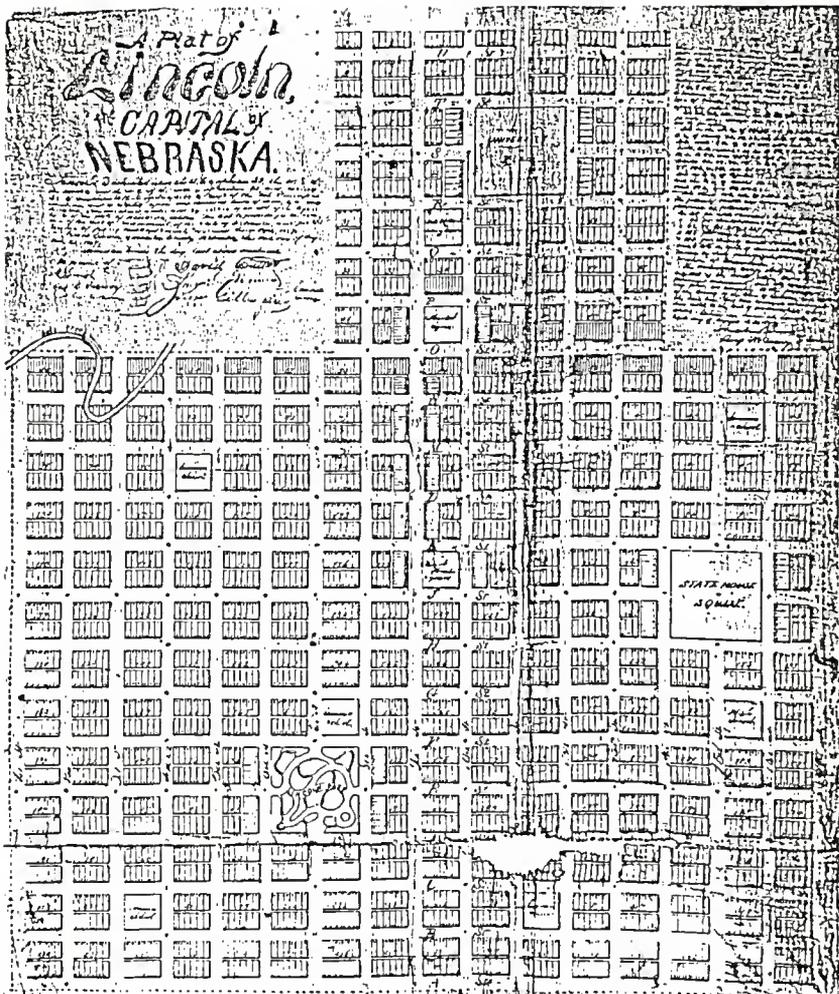


Figure 2

PLAN OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 1867

ized, however, that the plan was laid out in a hurry. On August 14, Lincoln was formally announced as the capital. By September 10, 1867 not only the plan had been completed but also every lot in the town had been staked out. In 26 days this important town had been planned and laid out, in a form which has not changed for more than a hundred years in its basics and is not likely to change in the near future. The considerations in planning the town are expressed in the report of the commissioners which states:

"The design (survey of Lincoln) is calculated for the making of a beautiful town. The streets are 100 feet and 125 feet wide and are calculated to be improved (on all except "O" and 9th streets and the other business streets around market square and the courthouse square) with a street park outside of the curb line; as for instance, on the 100 feet streets, pavements of 12 feet and park (or double rows of trees with grass plots between) 12 feet wide outside the pavements; and on the 125 feet wide streets the pavement and park to be each 15 feet wide. This will leave a road width of 52 feet on the streets 100 feet wide and 60 feet on wide on the wide streets, while on the business streets a 90 feet roadway will be ample room for the demands of trade.

Reservations of nearly twelve acres each (four square blocks) were made for the state house, state university and city park, those being at about equal distances from each other.

Reservations of one block each (were also made) for the courthouse for Lancaster County, for a city hall and market space, for a state historical library association, and several other squares in proper locations, for public schools."⁸

The city underwent rapid development after being named the state capital. The village of Lancaster on which Lincoln was constructed had not contained more than ten log houses⁹, but after

declaration as the capital , the population increased to 800 persons in a year and in 1870 the population was 2400. Within five more years it became the second largest city in the state with a population of 7,300. In 1880 and 1885 the population was 13,000 and 20,000 respectively¹⁰.

PLAN OF TOPEKA

Cyrus Holliday, the developer of Topeka, came to Kansas from the east with \$20,000 and the intention to develop a town. He chose the southern bank of the Kansas River to develop this town. The reasons for his choice are not known. He had the town platted and surveyed and established the Topeka Association in 1854¹¹. Like Lincoln, Topeka's present downtown was designed first and later on, as the city expanded, the downtown itself became a small portion of the city. Therefore it is important to discuss the original downtown plan, because this plan, like that of Lincoln, has remained virtually unchanged since its initial layout. The initial planning of the this area has affected today's downtown in several ways as discussed in Chapter (5). New Topeka was laid out with its longitudinal axis perpendicular to the Kansas River, following the gradual slope from the river. Figure 3, shows the layout of the town. Thus, the cross streets run parallel to the river and are almost level as they cross the slope at right angles. Most streets running east-west were made 80 feet wide, except 1st, 6th, 8th and 10th

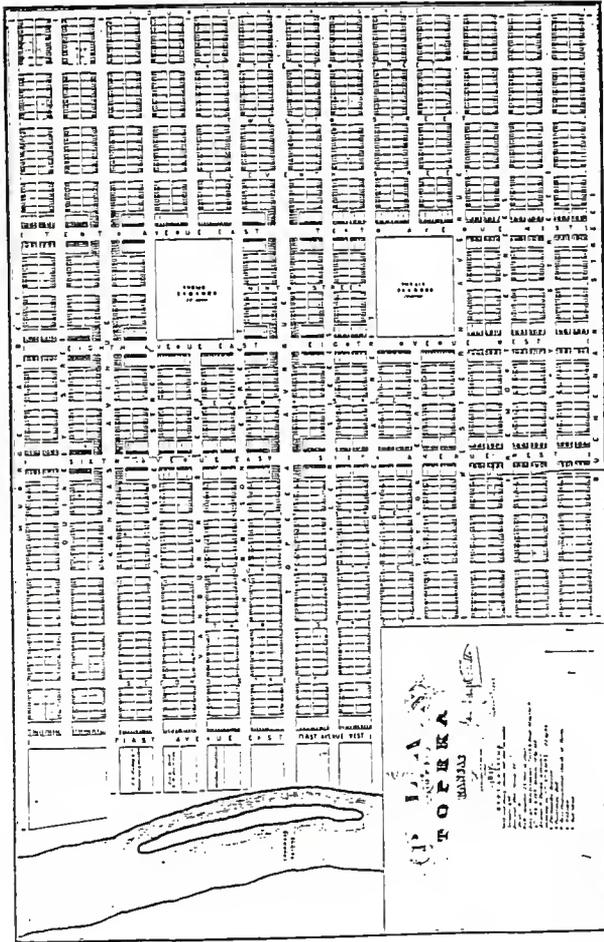


Figure 3

PLAN OF TOPEKA, KANSAS 1857

Avenues, which were platted 130 feet wide. On the north-south axis all streets were designed 100 feet wide except Kansas, Topeka and Western Avenues which were 130 feet wide.

All lots front the north-south streets except for those along the four wider streets crossing the town in its shorter dimension. Alleys provide rear access to all the lots. Two 20 acre lots between 8th and 10th streets, and Quincy and Jackson Streets were set aside for public usage. Eventually one of these lots was used as the site for the state capitol building when Topeka was declared the capital of Kansas. To enhance development and to attract settlers, a liberal policy was adopted under which lots were donated to persons who would erect needed buildings or start important trades.

The population of Topeka did not exceed three to four hundred persons for three to four years despite the promotional activities, and the fact that Topeka was fast assuming political importance.

It was after being declared the capital of Kansas in 1861 that the population increased substantially. By 1880 a population of 15,000 was reached, increasing to 35,000 within a decade (by 1889)¹². Topeka came to be considered one of the top twenty cities in the west at the turn of the century in population as well as a place of trading and manufacturing and as a government center.

REGIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE TWO DOWNTOWNS

(Chapter Two)

The landscapes around Topeka and Lincoln are similar with small towns and farm lands with relatively level, and, at places, rolling topography. Although Lincoln gets a bit colder than Topeka, the weather is quite similar. Both cities experience major temperature changes, from very cold winters (temperatures plunging to -15 degrees Farenheit or less)¹ to hot summers. The farming communities around the two cities have basically the same needs. They share a similar culture nurtured on farms, which, translated into communities results in mostly sparsely populated small towns as opposed to large metropolitan areas.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Transportation networks in the regions include road, rail and air routes that connect the cities to their surroundings. Rail and air service in the two areas hold a secondary position compared to the roadways from the standpoint of the downtown areas. Railways have certainly influenced both areas in numerous ways since the early days, but at present the importance of this means of transportation has dwindled, except for freight.

Lincoln still has five railway lines that connect it to various parts of the country². The zoning regulations of Lancaster County have imposed restrictions and some of the lines have had to be shifted to more suitable areas. In the development of Topeka, railways played an important role, but since the beginning, Holliday saw to it that the lines, especially the yards, stayed across the Kansas River. To control noise and air pollution he had the yards constructed downwind³.

In the following pages, railways have not been studied since they do not now significantly affect the downtown areas. Airports and their locations are important when it is considered that their locations can play an important role in the future. However, they do not have any substantial influence on the downtowns at present.

Lincoln and Topeka are located on two important, parallel and extensively used interstates (see figure 1). I-70, passing through Topeka, and I-80, passing near Lincoln, both run east-west and directly, or indirectly, connect the east and west coasts and major cities across the country. In the following passages, these and other factors are considered in further detail.

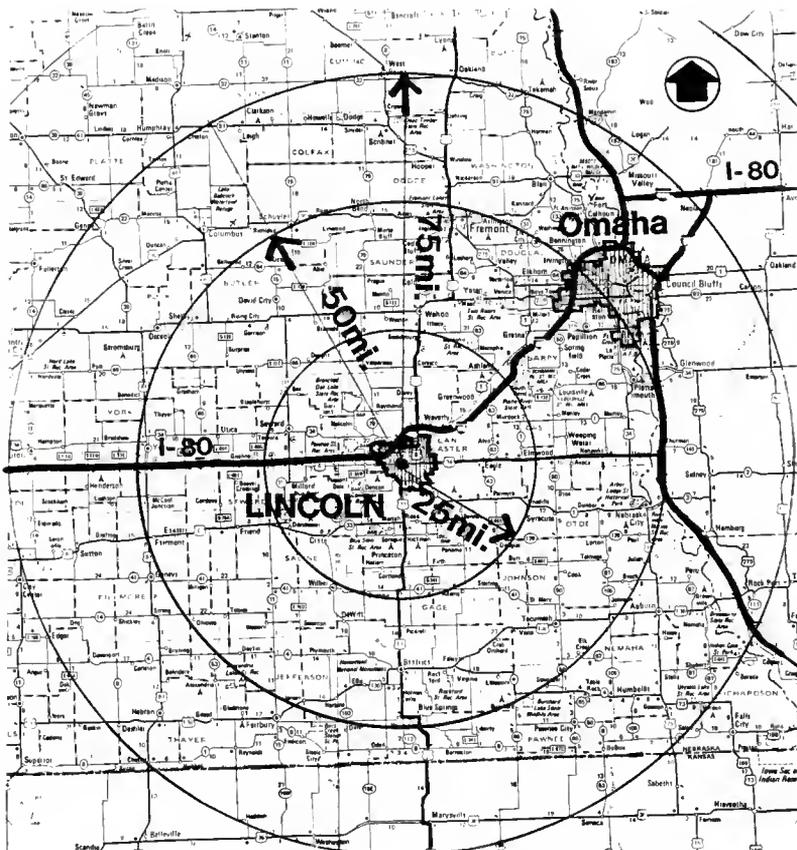


Figure 4

REGIONAL LOCATION - LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

LINCOLN

Lincoln is located on a major interstate (I-80) that connects important cities like New York, Chicago and San Francisco across the continental United States. In addition, major cities like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Des Moines, Omaha, Salt Lake City, Denver and Reno are also located on I-80. Other regional highways in the area include Highway 34, which converges into I-180 at the intersection between Highway 34 and I-80 (see figures 4 & 7). At the city limits I-180 converts into a couple of one-way streets, (9th and 10th) in the downtown, and it also acts as a feeder from the interstate (which runs three miles north of the CBD) as well as for the rural areas on the west and north-west.

Highway 77 running north-south, joins Highway 6 to form the Cornhusker, which subsequently joins I-180. Thus the small stretch of I-180, north of Lincoln, collects traffic from I-80, 77N, 34W and 6E. All of these in turn are fed into one-way streets, 9th & 10th Streets, which pass through the downtown. There are not as many highways south of Lincoln. Highway 77S, going south connects Lincoln to the rural areas in the south, such as Beatrice (population 12,891)⁴, Marysville, Ks., Manhattan, Ks., etc. This highway 77 South goes to Wichita, Kansas, Oklahoma City and onwards to Dallas and Fort Worth and beyond.

TOPEKA

The downtown area of Topeka is bounded on its north and east sides by I-70, with exits that directly feed into the downtown. I-70, like I-80, connects important cities on the west and east coasts. It is the best route to travel from Washington, Philadelphia or New York on the east coast to Los Angeles. Though it does not go all the way to Los Angeles, it leads to I-15 in Utah, which goes directly to Los Angeles, connecting with Las Vegas on the way.

Topeka is at the corner of a triangle which has Salina and Wichita at the other two corners. The Kansas Turnpike (KT) that connects Topeka to Wichita (pop. 279,272, 1980 census), the largest city in Kansas, also serves traffic between Kansas City and Wichita. Topeka is located in between. I-35 connects Wichita and Kansas City more directly and is partially toll free, unlike the Turnpike. Kansas Turnpike by-passes the downtown by miles.

Other highways that pass through Topeka are highways 40, 24, and 75. Highway 75 extends all the way from Winnipeg, Canada to Tulsa, Oklahoma and Dallas, Texas. Highway 40 extends in theory between Salt Lake City and Baltimore, but in most part, it goes concurrent with I-70, diverging at places only to converge back to the interstate. Highway 24 connects Denver, Colorado to Fort Wayne, Indiana. Although these three highways travel these long

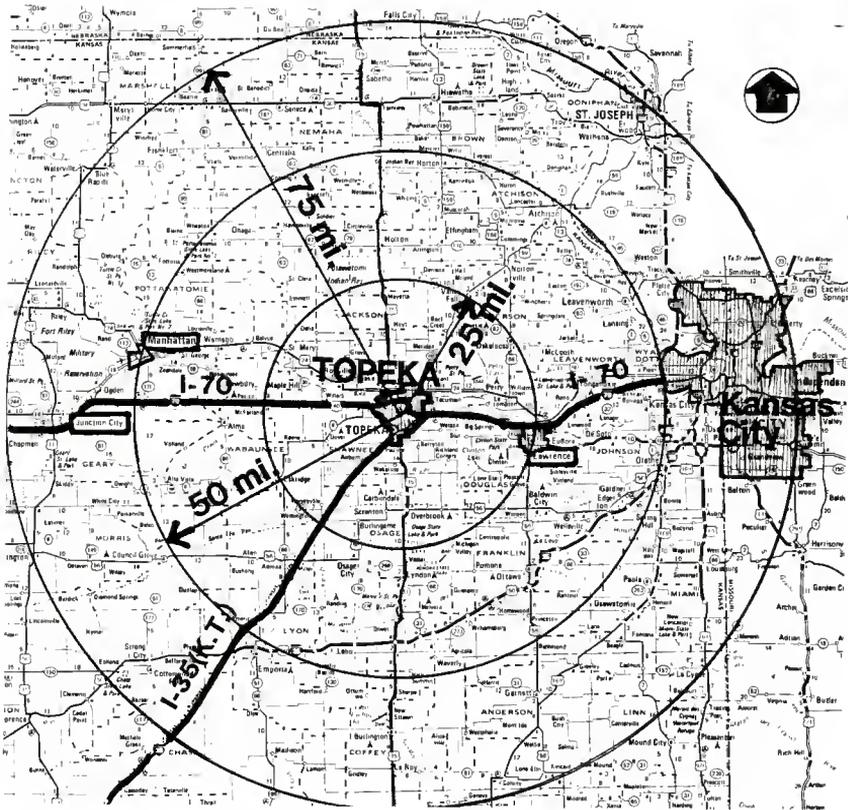


Figure 5

REGIONAL LOCATION - TOPEKA, KANSAS

distances, they are not comparable in traffic volumes to I-70 or Kansas Turnpike; but they do a good job connecting the regional towns to Topeka.

At a regional scale, the transportation system around the two cities of Topeka and Lincoln shares several similarities. These include the location of a major east-west interstate passing right through each city. Both cities are connected directly to major metropolitan areas through these interstates, Lincoln to Omaha and Topeka to Kansas city. The two cities also share a pattern of less significant highways in the north south direction, connecting them to smaller towns in the vicinity. The only exception is Kansas City Turnpike near Topeka, which connects Topeka to Kansas City and Wichita. Lincoln does not have a corresponding highway. The implications of these similarities and differences are studied below as well as in Chapter 5.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES AROUND LINCOLN AND TOPEKA

The towns around Lincoln and Topeka are similar in population and size. Most towns have populations less than 500⁵. Both Lincoln and Topeka have about 150 towns, villages and one metropolis (considering a metropolis to have at least more than 100,000 people) within a radius of 50 aerial miles⁶. Topeka has 157 small towns and Lincoln has 159 to be exact. In

a smaller circle of about 25 miles' radius, Lincoln has more towns than Topeka (it has 52 towns in this radius while Topeka has 38)⁷. The distribution pattern of these towns around the two cities is a bit different and interesting. This and the economic implications of such distribution on the two cities and their downtowns is studied separately for each town in the following pages, followed by a comparison in Chapter 5.

The existence of larger populations in some of the surrounding towns has, in a way, affected the downtown of Topeka adversely. Had Topeka been a larger city than it is, let us assume of the size of Kansas City, then these very towns would have brought more business rather than snatching it away. The rationale behind this assumption is that smaller population groups usually have a smaller economic base, thus can afford fewer facilities in comparison to a major population concentration. Thus smaller towns have to rely more on major cities in the vicinity, and not vice versa.

There seems to be a relation between the size of towns and the attractive force between them. The bigger the difference in size between two towns, the bigger the attraction of the smaller town towards the bigger one, due to the difference in proportion of the facilities that can be supported by each town. Had the populations of Manhattan, Lawrence and Junction City been distributed, instead of concentrated, as at present, and had the density of the region remained the same, Topeka in all

probability would have had a lot more business from the surrounding region than it presently has. Moreover, the shopping/commercial areas equivalent to the present Manhattan, Junction City, and Lawrence areas would have probably been built in Topeka instead of those towns, thus a larger choice of commodities would have offered greater competition to Kansas City. At present, a shopper can as well drive an hour more to go to Kansas City rather than shop in Topeka, because there seems to be a big difference in the quantity, quality and choice of materials and goods available in Kansas City as compared to Topeka. Kansas City has over three million square feet of retail area distributed among its three major shopping areas⁸. Had Topeka consolidated its commercial centers, at least it would not have lost as much business as it presently does.

Lincoln does not have any major towns or cities in its immediate vicinity except Omaha on its east. This makes the Lincoln Center the regional shopping area. Because no other towns in the vicinity, especially in the west of Lincoln, can adequately support a full variety of retail facilities, they have to depend on Lincoln to take care of their shopping needs. The comprehensive plan for Lancaster County considers this reality and makes provisions to maintain and enhance the importance of Lincoln Center.

In summary, Lincoln city holds a much stronger position as an important commercial center in the region because of fewer challenges from local cities and towns of any significant economic base as compared to Topeka. The transportation network around the two cities is different, but not different enough to affect the two cities significantly.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOWNTOWNS AND THEIR SURROUNDING URBAN AREAS

(Chapter Three)

In this chapter the downtowns of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Topeka, Kansas, are studied with respect to the following factors:

- i. Location of the downtown within the city and its significance.
- ii. Influences of shopping areas in the city on downtown businesses.
- iii. Transportation systems - Downtown accessibility.
- iv. Employment opportunities in the downtown compared to the rest of the city.
- v. Agencies and organizations within the city and the downtowns, influencing each downtown.

First the downtown of Topeka will be studied with respect to the city of Topeka. Then the downtown of Lincoln will be similarly studied in the context of the city of Lincoln.

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA

LOCATION : The downtown area of Topeka is located in the north central part of Topeka, slightly off center in the north-south axis towards east. It is defined on the northern and eastern sides by a well defined boundary of I-70. On the west it is contained by Topeka Avenue and on the south side 10th street defines it. The downtown area comprises about fifty blocks, covering an area of about half a square mile.

The city of Topeka is encircled by a loop formed by I-70 and Highway 470 (which merges on both the east and west side with I-70). The downtown is located on this loop and is directly accessible from the expressway, see figure 6.

Most of the city of Topeka lies south of the Kansas River except a small portion called North Topeka. This portion of Topeka is connected to the city of Topeka by two bridges across the river Kansas on Kansas Avenue and Topeka Avenue.

The river to the north has acted as a barrier for further expansion in that direction. Thus the development of Topeka has taken place more towards the southern direction. The distance



● EXISTING
 ■ NEW

Figure 6
 EXISTING AND NEW SHOPPING CENTERS
 TOPEKA METROPOLITAN AREA

between the southern edge of the city and the downtown is continuously increasing. Thus a physical barrier has somewhat forced the downtown to remain on the edge of Topeka.

Unless certain bold measures are taken, and North Topeka is developed, which seems unlikely at the present time, the downtown will probably stay on the edge of Topeka and the physical city center will continue to move away from the CBD.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOWNTOWN AND OTHER SHOPPING AREAS:

The downtown area of Topeka has to compete with twenty nine other shopping areas, big and small within the city of Topeka¹. These shopping centers range in size from very large, like White Lakes Mall (which has about twice² the general merchandise leasable area of the downtown) to small neighborhood shops.

In the city of Topeka, there are about 1.2 million³ square feet of general merchandise leasable area, GLA for short. This area is divided between the downtown (240,000 sq. ft. or 20.03%), White Lakes Mall (368,000 sq. ft. or 30%), Fairlawn Plaza area (133,000 sq. ft. or 11.1%), North Topeka (122,900 Sq. Ft. or 10.25%) and other Topeka locations (334,000 Sq. Ft. or 27.9%)⁴. Please refer to Table 1.

EXISTING GENERAL MERCHANDISE SPACE, TOPEKA TRADE AREA

Location	General Merchandise Area (1) (Sq. Ft. G.A.)	Percent of Total General Merchandise Space
Topoka CBI	240,000	12.7%
White Lakes Area	469,200 (3)	24.9
Other Topeka Locations	465,700	24.7
	Subtotal:	62.3%
Lawrence	133,000	7.1
Manhattan (2)	222,000	11.8
Junction City (2)	179,800	9.5
Holton	8,300	0.4
Emporia	167,000	8.9
Total General Merchandise Space:	1,885,000	100.0%

(1) Source: See Tables 1 and 2.

(2) All proposals have been made in both communities, but no space allocation has been made in this table.

(3) This figure includes the Slaggs and K mart store on 29th Street.
Barton-Asclam Associates, Inc.

EXISTING GENERAL MERCHANDISE SPACE, TOPEKA TRADE AREA

TABLE # 1

ACTUAL RETAIL SALES BY STORE TYPE FOR TOPEKA CBD AND MAJOR RETAIL CENTERS IN SHAWNEE COUNTY (1977)

Shopping Area	Retail Sales by Store Type (\$'000)									
	Convenience Goods (1)		Shopping Goods (2)		Retail Goods (3)		Other		Total	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Topeka CBD (4)	\$ 11,135	18.7%	\$ 41,051	68.8%	\$ 7,514	12.5%	\$ 59,700	100.0%		
MHC No. 1 (5)	6,599	32.7	10,575	52.5	2,982	14.8	20,156	100.0		
MHC No. 2 (6)	17,089	23.4	53,316	72.9	2,706	3.7	73,111	100.0		
Shawnee County	180,792	29.8	164,452	27.1	261,667	43.1	606,911	100.0		
--Percent of Sales in:										
Topeka CBD	6.2%		30.0%		2.9%		9.8%			
MHC No. 1	3.7		6.4		1.1		3.3			
MHC No. 2	9.5		32.4		1.0		12.0			

(1) food stores, eating and drinking establishments, and drug stores

(2) general merchandise, apparel, furniture and miscellaneous shopping goods stores

(3) building materials, automotive dealers, gasoline service stations, and miscellaneous retail stores

(4) area bounded by 2nd, Madison, 11th, and Tyler Streets

(5) Fairlawn Plaza Mall and establishments on West 21st Street and Fairlawn Road

(6) White Lakes Mall, Holiday Square Center, and establishments on S. Topeka Blvd. from 29th to 27th Streets.

Source: 1977 Census of Retail Trade; Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc.

ACTUAL RETAIL SALES BY STORE TYPE, TOPEKA CBD & MAJOR RETAIL CENTERS IN

SHAWNEE COUNTY (1977)

TABLE # 2

EXISTING SHOPPERS GOODS RETAIL SPACE; TOPEKA METROPOLITAN AREA (1981)

Location	General Merchandise Facilities	Square Feet (GLA)	Other Shoppers Goods	Square Feet (GLA) (1)
Topeka Club	Macy's Montgomery Ward	130,000(2) 120,000(3)	Apparel/Accessories Furniture/Appliances Miscellaneous Shoppers Goods	62,800 90,000 6,600
	Subtotal:	250,000	Total:	119,400
White Lakes Area	Sears J. C. Penney Richman Gordon Pelletiers	110,000(1) 120,000(2) 90,000(2) 18,000(1)	Apparel/Accessories Furniture/Appliances Miscellaneous Shoppers Goods	60,800 52,600 30,000
	Subtotal:	368,000	Total:	143,400
Fairlawn Plaza 21st and Fairlawn	Woolco J. M. MacDonald	105,000(2) 30,000(2)	NA	
	Subtotal:	135,000		
29th Street	K mart Alco Alco Skaggs Toby	84,200(2) 40,000(2) 48,000(2) 40,000(2) 12,000(2)	NA	
	Subtotal:	224,200		
North Topeka	K mart Alco	72,900(2) 50,900(2)	NA	
	Subtotal:	122,900		
Other	K mart Ardans	97,800(2) 12,000(2)	NA	
	Subtotal:	109,800		
	Total:	1,127,900		

(1) Source: Realty Development Research, Inc., "Fiscal Impact Analysis, Planned Shopping Center, Topeka, Kansas," June, 1981.

(2) Source: Capital City Redevelopment Agency, Inc., 1981.

(3) Source: Interview with store manager, July, 1981.

(4) Source: "1980 Shopping Center Directory."

NA = Not available.

Source: Barron-Aschman Associates, Inc.

EXISTING SHOPPERS GOODS RETAIL SPACE; TOPEKA METROPOLITAN AREA

Elmhurst Plaza shopping center which is about a mile from the downtown, is the closest shopping area near the downtown. As figure 6 shows, the city of Topeka has shopping centers spread all over. It is quite noticeable that most of these shopping centers are in the south and west of the city. In fact 13 shopping centers are located south of 29th street (the downtown is located between 6th & 10th streets mostly). Five more of these shopping centers are located west of Gage Blvd., north of 29th street.

The Washburn University campus area has two shopping centers in its immediate vicinity. In addition there is a smaller neighborhood shopping center three blocks west of the campus. In all, there are seven shopping areas which are closer to the university than the downtown.

In North Topeka, north of the Kansas river, there are four shopping centers. North Land Shopping Center is the biggest of them and is located to the extreme north of the city.

Although the downtown is surrounded by so many shopping centers, it has still managed to retain a substantial regional market share. This can be partially attributed to the Dillard Store, which is the only general merchandiser which offers upscale, quality soft lines in the Topeka area⁵. It offers a range of quality merchandise for all income groups. Dillard's is situated

in the heart of the downtown on Kansas Avenue. Another general merchandiser, Montgomery Ward is located in the northern part of the downtown.

Both Montgomery Ward and Dillards are performing relatively well compared to other facilities in the region⁶. Nevertheless, it has to be realized that the White Lakes Mall area has nearly 25% of the total regional market share⁷ while the downtown holds a much smaller share. It must be mentioned that the regional market includes the total GLA not only in the Topeka Metropolitan area but also in Lawrence, Ks., Manhattan, Junction City, Holton and Emporia⁸. The above information is tabulated in three tables accompanying the text. According to one study Topeka is be able to support another 190,000 sq. ft. of additional department store space⁹.

DOWNTOWN ACCESSIBILITY: The downtown is located on the expressway, and some of the major streets of Topeka pass through the downtown, which include Topeka and Kansas Avenues. The location of the downtown at the southern bank of the Kansas River makes it less centered physically in relation to the city of Topeka. Yet the downtown at the present time is closer to a larger area of the city of Topeka than most of the sub-urban shopping centers. White Lakes Mall is more centered than the downtown, but, has less direct access from some of the expressways encircling Topeka. However, distance in itself does not seem to make a big difference in sales at present, as most

people have automobiles, and Topeka is not too big for a car at this time. Thus if the downtown has competitive products to sell in enough variety it should not have any major handicap just because of its eccentric location.

*
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION : Downtown Topeka is the most accessible place by bus. The Intracity Transit Terminal or ITT located on Kansas Avenue and 8th street, is situated in the heart of the downtown. The fourteen routes within the city of Topeka all begin and end at the downtown terminal. Each route connects two different areas of the city to the downtown. There are two busses every half hour for each route. The manner in which various routes are interlinked, any part of the town can be reached within an hour. It is interesting to note that the downtown is accessible from most parts of the city within half an hour. Thus from the stand point of public transportation the downtown is the most accessible area in the city.* The fares are \$0.60 for adults, \$0.30 for senior citizens and the handicapped. Children under five years old with a fare paying adult ride free.

*
The other public transport facilities include "The Lift" designed especially for the elderly and the handicapped. There is the Ride'n Shop program which allows a free ride home if one shops in certain shops in the downtown. Park'n Ride is another

facility through which the inconvenience of finding a parking place could be avoided by leaving the automobile at a distance from the downtown. ✂

JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DOWNTOWN COMPARED TO THE CITY OF TOPEKA

The city of Topeka had a total of 85,000 jobs in the year 1980¹⁰. An estimated 30,000 of them, or 35.08% are employed in the downtown area¹¹. Kansas Power & Light, the banks and the government offices are major employers in the downtown area.

Between the years 1970 and 1980, the total non-agricultural wage and salary employment saw an increase of almost 20,000 new workers in the Topeka SMSA¹² which includes Jefferson, Osage and Shawnee counties. This was an annual increase of 3%. This includes the manufacturing as well as non-manufacturing sectors. The workers in the downtown area mostly belong to the non-manufacturing sector. During the past decade, service, wholesale & retail trade and government sectors saw the most significant gains. These sectors have had a total increase of almost 80% of the total increase in wage and salary employment. The federal, state, county and local governments provide jobs for almost 22,000 persons. About 19,000 are employed in the wholesale (5,200) and retail (13,600) sectors, and more than 17,000 are working in the service businesses¹³.

AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CITY OF TOPEKA

In a city like Topeka, there are numerous organizations that represent various interests. In the following discussion only those organizations are discussed which have a direct influence on the downtown.

Capital City Redevelopment Agency¹⁴: The CCRA was created by the City Commission of Topeka to promote commercial and residential development in the downtown. The creation of the agency took a period of extensive political negotiations. After agreement was reached in 1978, the board was appointed and the first staff members were hired.

The functions of CCRA include the following:

- i. The agency determines which areas of the downtown require redevelopment based on the degree of deterioration and obsolescence of the area.
- ii. To prepare a long range comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the downtown business area.
- iii. To promote private developments.

CCRA has the powers to apply for and receive federal, state and local grants. It can hold informational meetings with neighborhood groups and other residents who might directly or indirectly be affected by downtown programs.

The limitations of CCRA include not having the power to approve individual projects, for which only the City Commission is empowered. But to retain this power the City Commission is obliged to take prompt action on all recommendations of CCRA. The commission is also bound to follow established criteria for the selection of developers.

City Commission¹⁵:The city commission consists of five commissioners who are elected at large. Each commissioner administers one or more city departments. The Mayor administers the departments of police, fire and community development. The other four commissioners are the water commissioner, the finance commissioner, the parks and recreation commissioner and the streets commissioner. Each commissioner hires his own staff. The Mayor can not make appointments in other commissions. He does not have power to veto any city ordinances. The commissioners are elected every two years, and can be reelected indefinitely.

The Shawnee County Commission¹⁶:This has three commissioners each elected from a district. The commissioners are elected every four years with a chairman rotating yearly.

Topeka-Shawnee County Regional Planning Commission: After the incorporation of the city of Topeka in 1857, Cyrus Holliday was elected the first mayor of the city. After the initial guidance of Holliday (the founder of Topeka), there was a gap in the planning of the city. In 1920, the first planning commission was established to formulate the master plan for the city. Twenty one years later the Shawnee County Planning Commission was created with jurisdiction over a three mile area beyond the city limits. The two commissions were merged in 1960.

An additional planning commission was created in 1965 by the Board of County Commissioners for the purpose of planning outside the three mile area. In May, 1972 the three commissions were replaced by the Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission. This new commission consists of twelve members with one member each from the city commission and the county commission plus six citizens appointed by the city commission, and four appointed by the county commission.

According to a study conducted by Topeka R/UDAT in 1981 fragmented decision making has come up in regional planning decisions. The study indicates, that there is a distinct lack of cooperation between the two jurisdictions. When members vote, they consider their own jurisdiction rather than an overall regional over view. The study concludes "It is especially im-

portant for development issues to be viewed in a regional perspective . Indeed the rise of the suburban shopping malls is one substantial reason for the decline of the downtown"

The State of Kansas¹⁷:The State of Kansas, which is the largest single employer in Topeka, has a large say in various decisions about the city. A substantial amount of property in the downtown is owned by the state, causing a loss to Topeka's tax rolls. (It also has to be admitted though that the downtown enjoys the stable employment of several thousand people due to the state offices in the area). The State has completed several downtown building projects and plans two more in mid to late 1980s. At present there is little coordination between the state and the local governments¹⁸.

State Government/Capital Area Plaza Authority¹⁹: In 1965 this organization was created by the Kansas Legislation to develop a master plan for the plaza area. The Capitol Area Plaza Authority controls almost 60 acres of land in the CCRA area²⁰. It is empowered to modulate heights of the buildings in the vicinity of the capitol and to assure the maintenance of certain standards specified by the CAPA. This agency, is independent of some of the other agencies mentioned above due to the power vested in it by the state legislature.

Neighborhood Improvement Associations²¹: The neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area are represented by these agencies. They get concerned from time to time about downtown expansion. Some members remember the relocations caused by urban renewal efforts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and, consequently they tend to be cautious about any new projects. They have had trouble before with the downtown merchants. Many downtown merchants get concerned that protracted discussions would make parties interested in investing in the downtown shy away. Some of the legitimate concerns on both sides have been augmented by differences in social class, work style, language and approach.

The NIA members have indicated though, that they are very much interested in the revitalization of the downtown and would support it as long as it does not adversely affect their interests. Apparently more communication is needed between the CCRA and NIA, some of which has been accomplished.

Downtown Topeka Merchants' Association²²: This private association formed by some of the downtown merchants has been instrumental in unifying the merchants to take positive actions in their interests. However there seem to be some differences among the members about which area of the downtown is to be developed in what sequence. This has caused certain projects to be shelved.

In the preceding pages seven agencies were studied which have a direct or indirect say in the downtown affairs. Most of these have at least some influence over what goes on in the downtown and each seems to represent a separate interest. A combination of factors resulting from these different agencies has protracted several projects into oblivion in the downtown during the past few years. There is a definite need to coordinate these agencies if any substantial progress is to be made in downtown development.

In summary, the location of the downtown area is at the edge of the city of Topeka, and the expansion of the city to the south is increasing the distance of the physical center of the city of Topeka away from the downtown. The downtown has to compete with 29 other commercial centers, some of which are twice as large as the downtown. There is fragmented decision making on the part of the regional planners who do not consider the overall interest of the community, but make decisions on the basis of local interests. There is a certain lack of coordination and communication between agencies that directly or indirectly influence the downtown. These and other factors will be studied and compared again in the fifth chapter.

LINCOLN CENTER & THE CITY OF LINCOLN

The downtown of Lincoln is studied in a similar manner as downtown Topeka. The factors studied are, downtown location within the city of Lincoln, its relationship with other shopping areas, transportation systems, employment opportunities and various agencies affecting the downtown.

LOCATION: Lincoln Center, the downtown of Lincoln, is located on the western side of the city of Lincoln. It is well defined by two one-way street couples on its west by 9th and 10th streets, and, on the east by 16th and 17th streets, see figure 7. The northern boundary can be distinguished visually by the University of Nebraska campus, yet it allows for a smooth transition from the downtown to the campus as there are no edges on the east and west side.

The southern edge of the downtown is interesting. It is a visual axis formed out of landscaping and lighting on "J" street extending between the Capitol and the City County building. The traffic is smooth as it enters the downtown from the residential area on the south from one of the streets between 10th and 16th streets, through this visual axis.

New developments in the city of Lincoln have pushed the city eccentrically to the east. The area west of the downtown is not enjoying as much expansion. Most of the area west of Lincoln

Center is allocated for parks and industrial use. The airport is also situated on the west of Lincoln.

After a discussion with one of the city planning officers, it was found that further expansion to the east will be restricted in the future because of a topographical ridge which makes it difficult to bring pipelines without a sewage hoist, from the east ridge. According to him, a new plant is not under consideration at this point of time. So, further expansion to the east will probably be curtailed, at least for the time being.

There is some expansion now taking place to the south. New areas are developing along Highway 2. The plots in this area are spacious and most of them are on cul-de-sac. This new development is mostly residential. During a discussion with another city official it was hinted that the reasons for no expansion on the west could be political, but, he did not elaborate any further on that. Yet another official of the city thought the expansion to the west was slow because of the close vicinity of the airport, and the railway tracks.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOWNTOWN AND OTHER SHOPPING CENTERS

Lincoln City has thirteen shopping centers excluding the downtown area²³. Most of these shopping centers, eleven, to be exact, are neighborhood oriented and are spread out all over the city of Lincoln. Two shopping centers are relatively large and they cater to the city as a whole. Both of these shopping centers are located on the east side of Lincoln²⁴.

The Gateway Shopping Center, the older of the two, is located on east "O" streeton the intersection of 61st Street. This center boasts of 950,000 square feet and four major department stores . It also offers over sixty three specialty shops, restaurants and services. It has ample free parking and there is bus service to the center. This center has fifteen clothing stores, two drug stores, three food stores, six shoes stores, two sporting goods shops, four restaurants, four music stores and the rest are miscellaneous goods. The premises of this center are well landscaped, in addition to a fountain and other embellishments.

East Park Plaza is the latest addition to the Lincoln East area. Situated on 66th and "O" Street, five blocks east of Gateway, this shopping center does not have any major department store. However, it has about sixty eight specialty shops and abundant parking²⁵.

The Comprehensive Plan of Lincoln also proposes four other multipurpose centers on Highlands North (projected GLA 400,000 sq. ft.), 27th/Pine Lake (projected GLA 400,000 sq. ft.), 27th/ Superior (projected GLA 100,000 sq. ft.) and 56th/ Highwaw 2 (projected GLA 200,000). Refer figure 7.

Although these shopping centers seem to have the potential to challenge the downtown, such doubts are allayed by studying the goals and policies of the Lincoln City Lancaster County Comprehensive Regional Plan. According to this plan, other shopping centers are allowed to develop, but with the pace of development modulated. The following excerpt from the plan should elucidate the policy very clearly:

"THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE STRENGTH OF LINCOLN CENTER

As the historic center of town, with the location of almost 80 percent of office space and almost one-half of Lincoln's shopper's goods square footage, downtown Lincoln is truly the focus of the county. Moreover it contains huge amounts of public and private investment in the form of buildings, utilities and streets, and it continues to receive significant amounts of private capital. Therefore to allow Lincoln Center to lose its dominant role would be to waste millions of dollars of public and private investment made over time. In keeping with the conservation focus of the plan, the need to assure the continued maintenance and use of Lincoln Center is a critical issue. While there are many opportunities to challenge the dominance of this area, by the untimely development of other retail or office facilities, there are also opportunities to enhance the preeminent position of the downtown as the economic and cultural focus of the region. Many actions proposed in the plan have been designed to assure the continued strength of the area."

In spite of a favorable comprehensive plan, Lincoln Center has had some setbacks due to the development of other areas. Nevertheless, it still is very much the center of activities of Lincoln. Eleven of the thirteen movie theatres are located in the downtown²⁶. It also offers the greatest number of dining establishments in the city. There are sixty five restaurants offering a wide assortment of choice cuisines and libation²⁷.

The following newspaper headlines indicate that Lincoln Center was throbbing with economic activity even during the recent recession in the early eighties.

1. "BRANDEIS BUILDING TO BE REMODELED. A \$6 to \$8 million conversion of the Brandeis building into a retail and office complex was announced friday by the downtown Landmark's new owner, Cherry Hill Co."28

2. "DOWNTOWN'S A BUSTLE WITH BUILDING PROJECTS. Today's economy has closed some business doors but others are being opened.

With construction well under way and some projects more than 50% complete, progress on \$53 million worth of development in downtown Lincoln has extended far beyond the edges of drawing boards ..."29

3. "\$750,000 PROJECT REVEALED. Rehabilitation in store for Lincoln underground building.

A \$750,000 development project announced wednesday for the Burr-Muir Block in the Haymarket District brings to \$18 million the total amount invested in rehabilitation projects under way in downtown Lincoln."30

4. "29- STORY TOWER PROPOSED FOR DOWNTOWN LINCOLN. A 29- story tower housing 200 apartments and condominiums, offices and retail space is being planned for the south side of Q street"31

TRANSPORTATION

The city of Lincoln is served by a regular grid street system supplemented at places with streets cutting diagonally across. The older part of the city between 1st street on the west to the 70th street on the east has a reasonably regular grid of streets at half a mile intervals. This pattern tends to distribute the traffic rather uniformly over many streets producing relatively few concentrations of high volumes or points of high accessibility.

Where greater accessibility is needed, for example around Lincoln Center, this has been provided by constructing more streets, developing of one-way pairs, widening streets and using diagonal routes. The crossing of O Street and the street couple formed by one-way streets 9th and 10th, is a major point of traffic exchange.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: The city of Lincoln has an excellent public transportation system. The history of public transportation dates back to a hundred years, when the first public vehicle was inaugurated (a horse car line)³². In 1891 electric streetcars, also known as trolleys made their debut. Buses were introduced on the University Place and Agriculture College Lines in November of 1926. In 1945 these became the sole means of transportation when the last run of the street car was made³³.

The Lincoln Transportation System was created in 1971 when the city bought Lincoln City Lines ³⁴. The LTS has a network of 27 routes that connect most parts of Lincoln and serves on an average about 10,000 passengers daily³⁵.

The scooter service is provided within the downtown and is discussed under downtown transportation in Chapter Four. In addition to these services, there is a special service for the physically handicapped passengers. Other services include Park'n Ride and Ride'n Shop programs, similar to those discussed under Topeka's transportation system.

One interesting feature of the bus routes is, all buses without exception make a loop in the downtown area between J & Q streets and 11th and 14th streets stopping at eleven bus stops within this loop.

EMPLOYMENT

The downtown business district has a strong base in the number of government and private employers in the downtown area. Almost 27,000 people are employed within the one half square mile area of downtown Lincoln³⁶. Of those 27,000, about 14,000 work in the public sector and 13,000 are employed in the private sector according to the information received from the Lincoln Center Association. However, the data received from the Planning Department indicates a total of 17,719 workers in the downtown area.

It must be noted that the study conducted by the Planning Department does not include the eight blocks between K & I streets and 9th and 17th streets. This excludes all the workers in the City County building and the Capitol building and some other offices in those blocks. Thus the discrepancy between the two figures may have some basis.

According to the information provided by the Planning Department, the total work force in Lincoln is 90,909 (including the downtown). The area of the downtown is less than one percent of the total area of the city of Lincoln, which is about 54 square miles³⁷. Thus, downtown Lincoln is the work place of almost 30 percent of all Lincolnites.

The Chamber of Commerce provided the names of various agencies that offer employment in Lincoln. The purpose of including this data below is to show the broad base of the economy of Lincoln. The figures provided by the Chamber of Commerce are not very specific. Nevertheless, they provide a rough idea of the strength of these organizations in providing employment as follows:

The City of Lincoln, State of Nebraska, United States Government and the University of Nebraska each employ 2500 or more persons. The Lincoln Public schools, Lincoln Telegraph and Telephones, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company each employ between 1000 to 2500 employees each. The four major hospitals, two industrial and one

retail organization each employ between 500 to 1000 persons. About twenty seven other organizations in Lincoln employ between 200 and 500 employees each.

The above information was provided with the comment " this list was compiled to provide a picture of the diversity of Lincoln's economic base. Any ommisions are unintentional."³⁸.

The city's major industries according to another publication of the Chamber of Commerce include "railroad, car building, pharmaceuticals, electronic and electrical components, food processing, rubber products and motorized vehicles". Other major employment area include retail and wholesale trade, finance, insurance and real estate, construction, transportation, utilities and service industries.

AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CITY OF LINCOLN

* In Lincoln there are several agencies that are involved directly or indirectly with the downtown of Lincoln. The key agency which has aggressively forwarded the downtown interest is the Lincoln Center Association. It is a private organization including members of the business community, property owners, professionals and interested citizens. The other agencies that influence the downtown of Lincoln are the Downtown Advisory Committee, the City Government which includes the City Council and the office of the Mayor and the State Government.

LINCOLN CENTER ASSOCIATION³⁹: Founded in 1972, the purpose of the agency is to promote the growth and development of the CBD. The following goals of the LCA are mentionable:

1. To make Lincoln Center a convenient and attractive place in which to live, work and shop, by encouraging owners, rentors and others to keep their buildings and surroundings neat and clean.
2. The improvement of transportation facilities into, out of and within the CBD for both vehicles and pedestrians.
3. Promote the development and coordination of all commercial, civic, residential and other buildings in the CBD.
4. Cooperation among parking garage operators, merchants, shoppers and others in the development and utilization of adequate downtown parking. Improvement and creation of off-street parking through ownership, construction, leasing and operation. Also coordination between bus transport and parking facility through various programs.

5. Planning and operation of promotions for the benefit and development of businesses in the CBD and in the public interests through advertising, special projects and other methods. *

Following are some of the accomplishments of the Lincoln Center Association:

1. Successful alley beautification program converting several alleys in the CBD which were previously dark, dingy and dirty areas into better places.
2. Encouraged the City of Lincoln to take over the dying bus system, and through its efforts converting it into a fine transit system. Development of the mini bus system or scooter Service in the CBD.
3. Created and funded the Park'n Shop and Ride'n Shop programs.
4. Played an important role in the location of the federal government offices in the downtown. The original proposal was to locate the offices either in another city or in another area of Lincoln.
5. Through the constant lobbying and hard work had the Centrum Parking facility, a city project, approved by the city council.

6. Through the maintenance and establishment of a task force, the LCA worked successfully to develop a skywalk system. The first phase of which connects several important department stores. Expansion of this system is under consideration.

7. After months of determined effort the new state building was successfully located in the CBD. (The City County building was initially proposed to be built elsewhere).

8. Was instrumental in the passing of LB61 Legislation, enabling businessmen to form districts for the maintenance of the core area.

9. LCA has procured a contract with the city to maintain the Downtown Beautification District renewed on a year to year basis.

10. LCA provides financial backing for the Downtown Advisory Committee.

11. LCA is considered the Chamber of Commerce of the downtown.

12. It is registered to lobby the legislature in matters important to the Lincoln Center Association and its members.

THE MAYOR: The City of Lincoln has a full time "strong" mayor and City Council form of government. City government is divided into departments, each headed by a full-time director appointed by the mayor with approval from the council. The mayor is elected at-large for a four year term. There is no limit to the number of times a mayor can be reelected.

CITY COUNCIL: The Lincoln City Council has seven members. Four members are elected by council district and the remaining three are elected at large. The City Council elects a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The chairman serves as acting mayor when the mayor is not in the city.

The legislative powers of the city are exclusively vested in the council. The council has the power to conduct investigations regarding operations of a department board or commission engaged in administrative affairs of the city. The council has the power to pass, amend and repeal any of the provisions of the City Charter.

The Council also determines the annual appropriations and the tax levy, and acts in a judicial capacity in the determination of property valuations and special assessment benefits. The Council may remove a mayor from office for reasons given in the City Charter and select a new mayor. The Council also approves appointments made by the mayor.

COUNTY COMMON: The County Commission of the Lancaster County is comprised of five members. Elections are held every four years and each member presides in turns. Among its various other powers and responsibilities, the County Commission reviews the Lincoln City Lancaster County Regional Plan and can adopt, amend or reject the plan after one public hearing. Most of the other activities of the County Commission are related to the county affairs and do not have a direct bearing on the City of Lincoln.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT: This department provides professional planning services to the city of Lincoln and Lancaster County. Planners assist the community in identifying and maintaining those qualities that make Lincoln a desirable place to live. Zoning and subdivision regulations are some of the responsibilities of this department. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan is developed and updated through this department. The director of the planning department is appointed by the mayor and approved by the City-County Board.

SUMMARY:

The major difference between the types of governments in the two cities is notable. Topeka has a commission form of government while Lincoln has a strong-mayor form of government. In Topeka each of the five commissioners heads a separate department or departments, (the mayor, who is one of the five commissioners heads more than one department). In Lincoln the mayor is the ex-

ecutive chief of all the city departments. This perhaps is the single most important difference in the governments of the two cities. Fragmented decision making and bureaucratic hurdles in Topeka contrast with the comprehensive planning in the city of Lincoln. Moreover, both the State of Nebraska and the Charter of the City of Lincoln require the development and maintenance of a comprehensive plan. The city of Topeka has no comparable regional master plan.

The city of Lincoln had a major urban and regional study done during the early nineteen seventies by a planning consultant from Chicago, Barton Aschman and Associates. In 1977 this firm came up with a comprehensive regional plan adopted by the city of Lincoln and Lancaster County. In addition work papers were adopted by the city of Lincoln to develop the downtown area of Lincoln and major visual uplifting work was done in the following years. Topeka city was considering to consult with the same firm in the early eighties. The final outcome is not known.

DOWNTOWNS OF LINCOLN, Nebraska & TOPEKA, Kansas

(Chapter Four)

The various factors that have been analyzed and compared in previous chapters are at a regional and metropolitan level. The factors dealt with were issues involving overall location, transportation, employment and agencies influencing the two regions. Although all of these issues directly involve the downtowns, they also include the respective cities or the regions too, to a certain degree.

In this chapter the downtown of Lincoln and the downtown or Central Business District (CBD) of Topeka, will be studied. The study of each CBD will be limited to a local level in which the city or the region will have very little role to play, if any. The factors discussed under these chapters are of a different nature. These in most part are less abstract, as most of them are physical. The following aspects of both downtowns will be studied.

1. Layout
2. Circulation
3. Districts within the downtowns
4. Landmarks and nodes
5. Landscaping

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the downtown of Lincoln and Part II is about downtown Topeka. Summary comparisons will be made at the end of the chapter. A more detailed and comprehensive analysis will follow in Chapter Five.

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN OR LINCOLN CENTER. (Chapter Four, Part I)

Visiting Lincoln is an unusual urban experience. Different areas within the downtown have distinct characters. The Capitol and its environ, the 15th street mall also called the Centennial Mall, O street, the University Place define and articulate their special activities. The scale of the downtown in most places is human, that is, through landscaping, street furniture, signage, kiosks, bus stops the width of streets is made to seem narrower than it is. The heights of downtown buildings have been similarly scaled down through landscaping. All in all this downtown has a Lincolnian identity. To say the least, Lincoln Center is not a typical downtown of a U.S. city. Let us study the various features of the downtown.

LAYOUT

Downtown Lincoln is a rectangle composed of seventy two city blocks. Each block is 315 feet square. Along the north-south axis there are nine blocks, and eight along the east-west axis as shown in figure 8.

The downtown of Lincoln is bound by R street on the north, H street on the south, 9th street on the west and 17th street towards the east. The one-way couple of 9th and 10th street on the west is the main feeder to and from the interstate and forms the western edge of the downtown. The less intensely used

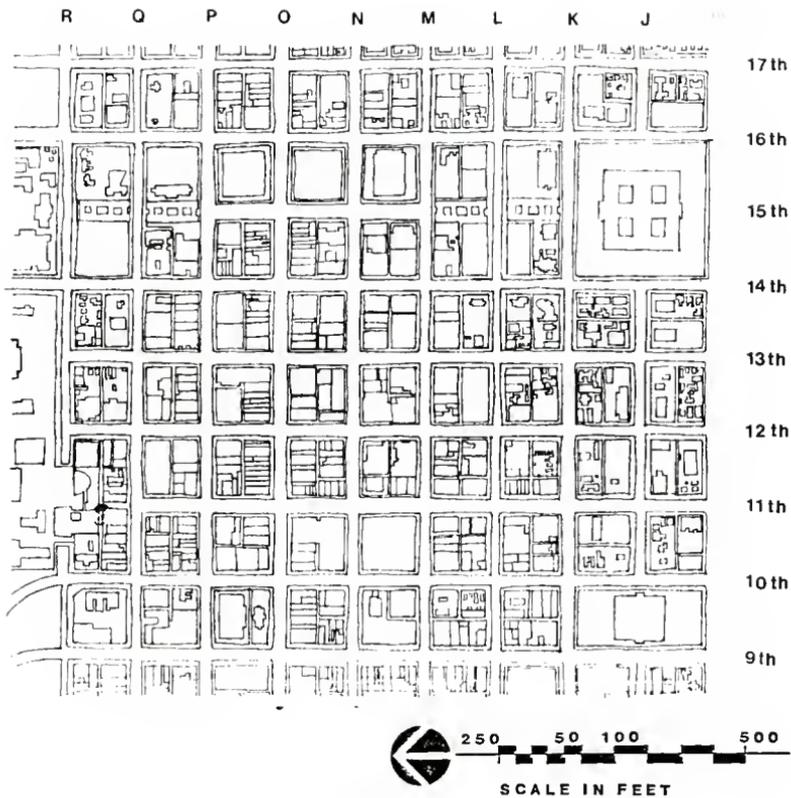


Figure 8

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - LAYOUT

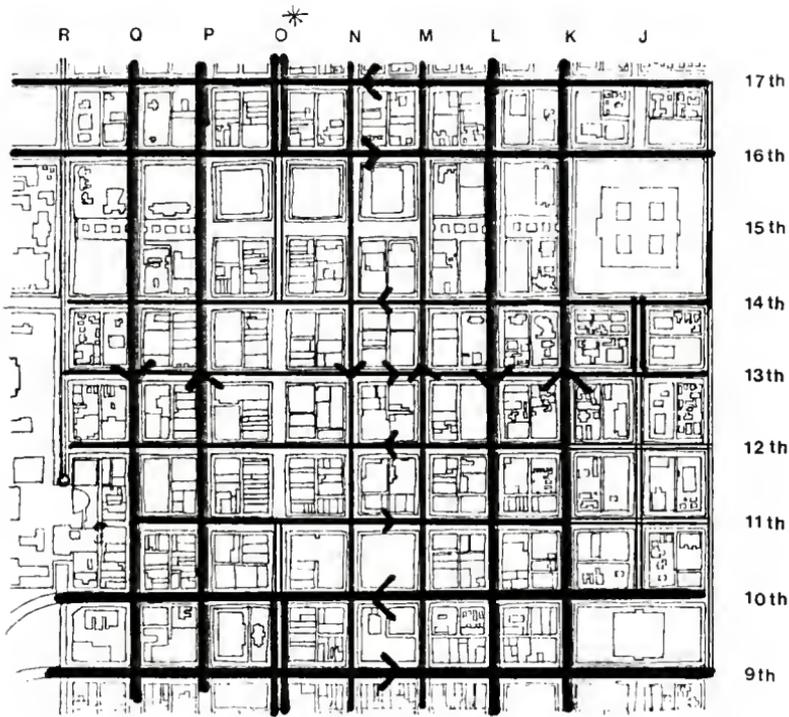
eastern couple of 16th & 17th streets defines its eastern edge. The university to the north and J street to the south are the other two edges.

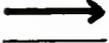
CIRCULATION

O Street is the primary street that passes through the heart of Lincoln Center's retail core. This street is the only two way street. All other streets in the downtown are one way. In the north-south direction, the main feeders to the downtown are 9th & 10th streets, a pair of one-way streets. This pair of streets combines at the northern edge of the downtown to form Highway 34, which connects the downtown to Interstate 80. All other streets play a secondary role in vehicular traffic circulation.

The Centennial Mall along 15th Street is the major pedestrian and visual corridor which extends between the university campus and the Capitol building. Although vehicular traffic is allowed on this mall, it is restricted by interruptions due to pedestrian plazas and fountains. *

Most of the traffic moving in the east-west direction uses three pairs of one-way streets, and traffic moving north south uses four pairs of one-way streets. Traffic is usually smooth because of all these one-way streets allow easy traffic distribution across the downtown.



MAJOR ARTERIAL STREET 
 MINOR ARTERIAL STREET 
 LOCAL STREET 



* ON "O" STREET RESTRICTED VEHICULAR ACCESS IS PROPOSED - BUT AT PRESENT (1983) - IT IS BEING USED AS A PRIMARY ROAD. PROPOSED LIMITED ACCESS IS SHOWN ABOVE.

Figure 9

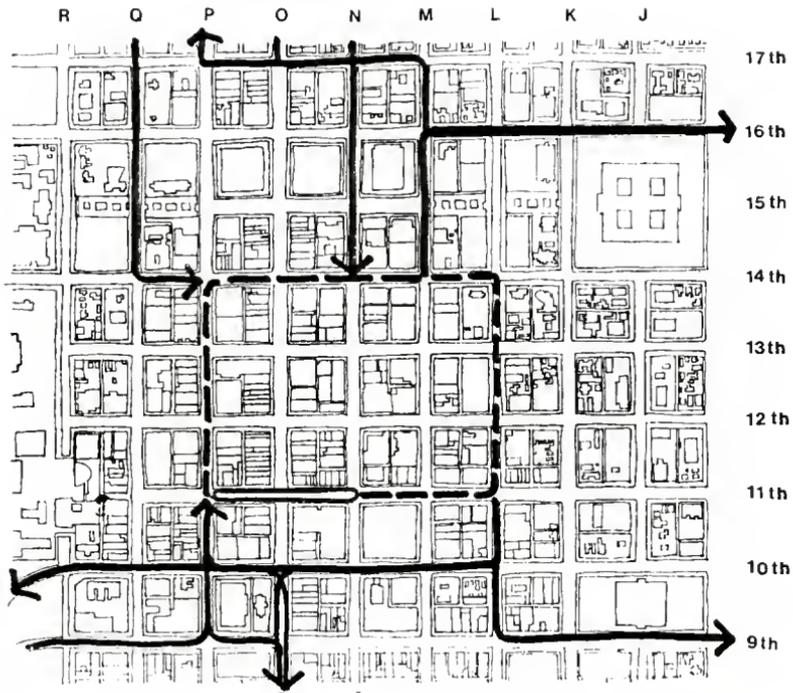
DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - VEHICULAR CIRCULATION SYSTEM

Bus Service: The twenty six bus routes in Lincoln that connect Lincoln Center with the city have a loop that is common to all the buses in the city¹. By staggering the timings the potential problem of having too many buses in the downtown is avoided, while at the same time ensuring adequate bus availability. In the previous chapter this is studied in detail therefore here only the scooter service will be discussed.

The Scooter is a smaller bus. It is designated by its orange, red and yellow stripes. It circulates throughout the downtown area touching the Capitol, City County building, the University of Nebraska campus and back to the Capitol. A map of its route is shown in figure 11. There is a bus every ten minutes on the designated bus stops. The ride costs ten cents to any part of the downtown unless a person has a passport, in which case the ride is free. The service is from 9:30 AM to 4:55 PM.

***Pedestrian Circulation & Skywalk System:** The pedestrian system can be subdivided into grade level and skyway systems. The on-grade system covers all of the downtown^{*} area and the program for this system is in its final stages of completion².^{*} The skywalk system is at a more modest scale,^{**} though there are more ambitious schemes that will cover a larger area.

There has been progress in developing the skywalk system. But it has been phased out over several years due to the enormous expense involved.^{*} At the present time the skywalk system is



CITY BUS ROUTES (SELECTED EXAMPLES) 

DOWNTOWN TRANSIT LOOP 

TRANSIT WAITING AND LAYOVER AREA 



Figure 10

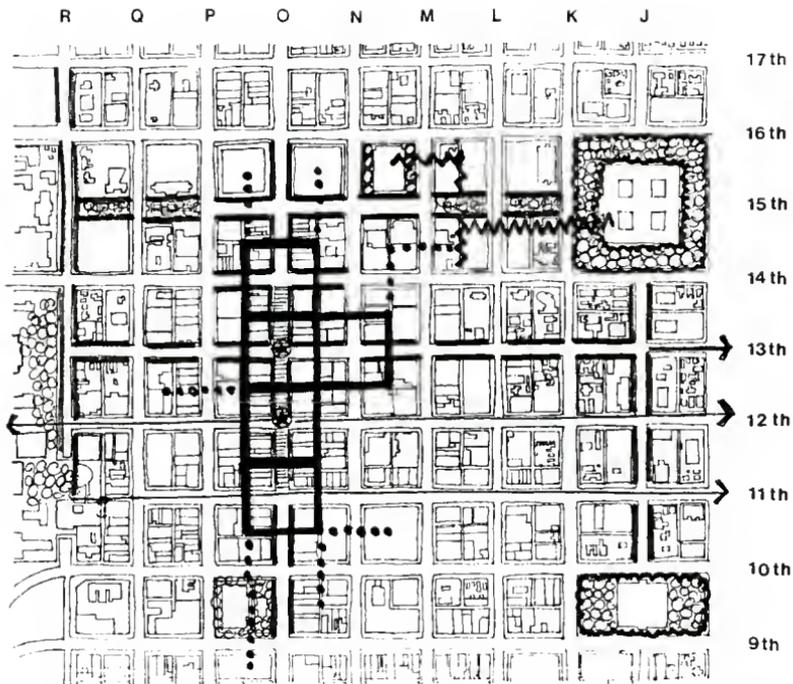
DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - CITY BUS CONCEPT

restricted to blocks around O street, which are being given more importance. Already, parts of a greater skywalk system are in existence connecting important retail facilities like Centrum and Gold's Galleria^{*} (see figure 13)³.

The pedestrian on-grade circulation program is in its later stages of completion. Wherever needed, necessary changes in street widths, street furniture, landscaping and pedestrian scale lighting installation have already been done. Curb cutting for the handicapped has been done for some time .

* On-grade pedestrian streets can be subdivided into primary and secondary streets. The primary routes link downtown's primary activity areas. They include the 13th street and J identity streets, the R street campus-way, the Centennial Mall and O street. The appropriate treatments oriented towards pedestrians include de-emphasis of vehicular traffic through reductions in street widths to increase sidewalk width. Other improvements are the provision of landscaping, pedestrian scale lighting, street furniture and other amenities.

Secondary pedestrian ways complement the primary streets. Their function is to link the various development districts and also connect the surrounding areas and residential neighborhoods to the downtown. These represent pedestrian routes that are being extensively used. These streets however, have not been embellished as the primary streets are. But through pedestrian



ABOVE GRADE
 SKYWALKS 
 TUNNELS 
 POTENTIAL TUNNELS/SKYWALKS -
 CENTRAL AREA 
 GREEN SPACES 

COVERED/OPEN "0" STREET
 GRADE LEVEL PATHS 
 PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN 
 SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN 
 COMMUNITY PLACES
 OR NODES (PEDEST.) 



Figure 12

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - PEDESTRIAN/OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

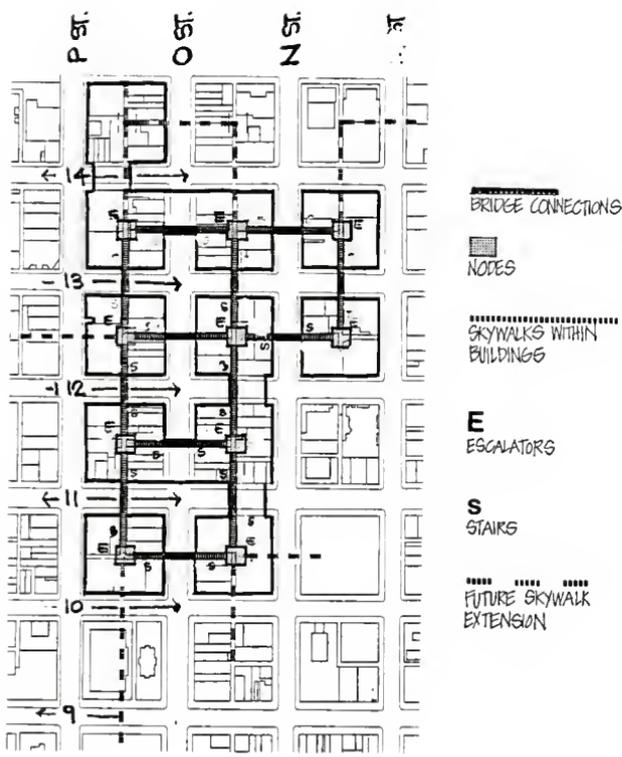


Figure 13
DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - SKYWALK SYSTEM

phasing on traffic signals, restrictions on curb cuts, providing continuous sidewalks these secondary streets have been made more amenable for the pedestrian. ✖

DISTRICTS

The downtown can be broken down into several districts as illustrated in figure 14. They are :

- ✖ (a) The Retail Core
- (b) Que Place
- (c) Office Service District
- (d) Office and Supporting District
- (e) Special Office-Housing District
- (f) The State Capitol/ Office District
- (g) Auto Oriented Regional Commercial District
- (h) ~~Auto Oriented East District~~
- (i) The Old Town or Haymarket Area. ✖

These districts can not be distinctly outlined with precision as different land uses meander here and there. Rather, the above differentiation is based on the overwhelming land uses rather than single land uses for each district.

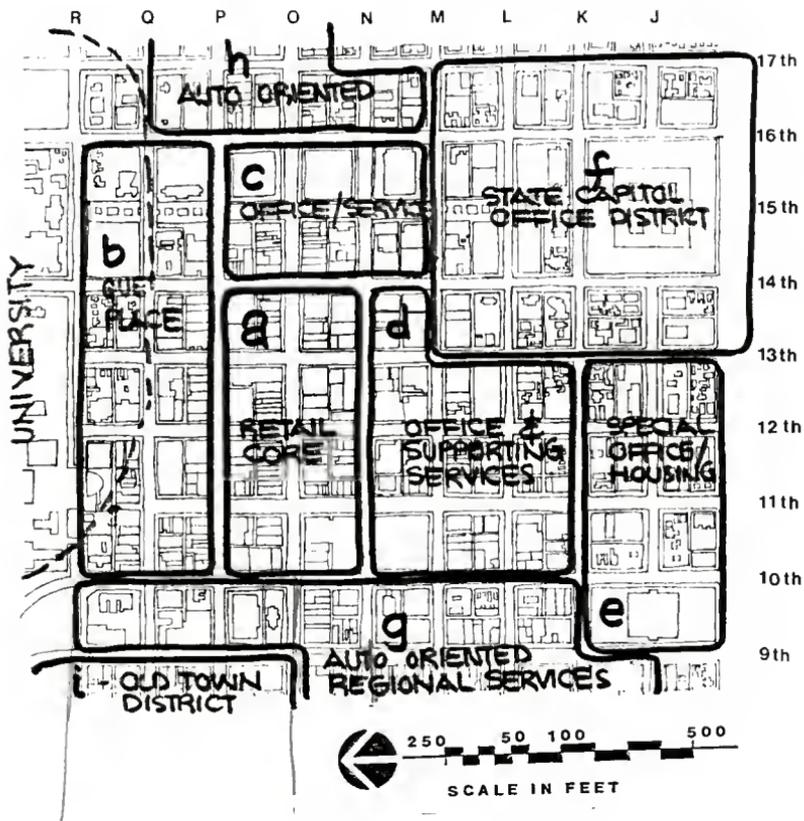


Figure 14
 DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

*

(a) Retail Core: This consists of approximately 8 blocks lining O street, between 10th and 14th streets. It contains major retail facilities like Gold's Galleria, Centrum, Atrium, Brandeis, Mileer & Paine and Penneys. Nebraska's Bank of Commerce, YMCA, the Stuart Bldg. are all located in this intensely developed and prestigious area of downtown Lincoln. This area will be discussed further in the following pages.

(b) Que Place: This is a twelve block area between 10th and 16th streets bound on the north and south by R & P street and named after the central street of this district, Q street. The Que Place area is located between the downtown retail core and the university and has developed into an entertainment district. About four night clubs and six theatres are located in the district in addition to several sports oriented shops, boutiques, ice cream parlors, pizza shops and restaurants. Many of the businesses in this district are oriented to attract students.

Housing is being encouraged in this district. Q street is being enhanced and reinforced as a distinct visual edge for the university. The area north of Q street has been developed into moderately dense, pedestrian oriented campus type area with good landscaping with predominantly university oriented facilities such as printers, stationery and book shops. The area south of Q street is also a pedestrian oriented area of higher density as compared to the area north of Q street. There are two parking facilities in this area.

(c) The Office Service District: This six block district is located between P & M, 14th & 16th streets. The major office building in this district is the Federal Office building. Tourist information, Senior Citizen's Center, Lincoln Center Building- Foundation Garden, Nebraska Central Saving and Loans are other mentionable buildings. The Pershing Auditorium, YWCA and Bennet Martin Library are some of the non-office buildings situated in the area. Three restaurants and a few entertainment facilities are also located in this district.

East of the retail core, this area is a special high density of office and service district with a sprinkling of other uses. It occupies a key location in the downtown and development in this area strongly relates to the Centennial Mall which passes through its midst, to end at the State Capitol, two blocks south of this area.

(d)Office and Supporting District:~~South of the retail core, this twelve-block area has a high density. A range of activities take place in this area which include offices, secondary retail, long and short term parking facilities and housing. Portions of this district are directly connected to the retail core through 13th street. There is a proposal for a second level pedestrian-skywalk in this area.~~

Due to the concentration of financial institutions in this district it can be considered the financial center of the downtown, city of Lincoln, perhaps even the region. It also has a diverse mixture of facilities including printers, travel agents, hotels and entertainment facilities. A large number of high rise buildings are concentrated in this district.

(e)Special Office/ Housing District: This area covering eight blocks is situated on the southern edge of the downtown. J street runs through the center of this district. Extending between the City County building and the State Capitol this street has been lined with trees and lighting forming a visual corridor to the Capitol. Special building height and set back regulations are enforced here to ensure that the visual corridor to the Capitol is not infringed upon. Moderate to high density housing is allowed on the southern side of J street. All new housing developments are required to be on large sites to create an appropriate residential environment. There are not very many significant office buildings in this district other than the Farmer's Mutual, an insurance company.

(f)The State Capitol District: The twenty block area, ^{with} by far the ^{is} largest district in downtown Lincoln, does not include the whole "Capitol Environs" district. The Capitol Environs area spills into the residential areas south and east of the

downtown. To the north the Capitol Environs area extends all the way to R street, to blend into the Nebraska University campus at the northern fringe of the downtown.

The district, within the downtown, is defined by M street to the north, G street to the south, 13th and 17th streets on the west and east sides respectively. The imposing State Capitol dominates this district, not only with its stature but also through the vistas that culminate at the Capitol. State buildings are proposed to line the Centennial Mall. The state offices covering an area of about 415,000 square feet are located in this district on M, 14th and 15th streets covering almost half a block. The Governor's Mansion lies south of the Capitol. There are several historic buildings situated south of the Capitol, but as they are outside the district under consideration, they will not be discussed.

(g & h) Auto Oriented Commercial District: These two separate districts are located as shown in figure 14, with the core commercial and other districts in between. The "g" district on the west side of the downtown is oriented to cater to regional customers. Its location on the ingress from the six highways entering the city of Lincoln makes it an ideal place not only as a regional auto district but also as a travelers' place, with

motels, hotels and restaurants. The six highways mentioned above include I-80, highways 77, 6, 24, 2 & 34. There are parking facilities here as well as access by Scooter bus service.

The "h" district to the west of the downtown is oriented more towards the local community. It is situated on the heavily used couple formed by 16th and 17th streets. This area too has most of the amenities present in "g" district. In both of these districts it is planned to reduce conflict between land use and the traffic.

(i) The Haymarket or Old Town District: This district situated to the north west corner of the downtown is a six block area between O, R, 7th and 9th streets. Haymarket area has had a few renovations lately, including the Candy Factory renovation and the Haymarket Junction. This district lies at the entrance to the downtown. A program of rehabilitation and preservation has revived this area through developments to create a pedestrian oriented environment. Although it has the potential to be developed as a unique district with a historic flavor, its location beyond the heavily used couple of 9th and 10th streets is detrimental to its development.

Interrelation Between Districts: The various districts discussed above have one aspect in common. All of them have a variety of functions. It is only the proportion of the various functions

that differentiates one from another. Some of the districts in the previous paragraphs can be redefined depending upon how a person looks at the downtown. However most of the districts have certain basic ingredients that make them special even if a couple of blocks are removed or added to the ones indicated in this report.

* It is readily noticeable that the downtown has a pattern of a very dense retail commercial core , located mostly on O street and 13th street forming a cross. As the distance increases from this core, the functions seem to diffuse into a variety of land uses. The university is located to the north of the downtown. In its immediate south is the Q Place area, the entertainment district of the downtown which also has campus oriented services and activities. *

LANDMARKS & NODES

Lincoln Center has a number of landmarks of which the State Capitol is by far the most significant. Designed between 1920-24 by Bertram Goodhue after a national design competition⁴, the present Capitol was completed in 1932. It is the third capitol building of the city of Lincoln⁵. The previous capitols were located on the same site and were dismantled to allow the latest capitol to be built.

This present Capitol acquired national prominence as a result of the competition held in 1919. The State Capitol rises to a height of 400 feet and an additional 13 feet of sculptor Lee Lawrie's sculpture of "The Sower", the Capitol is visible miles from the flat prairie land surrounding the city of Lincoln. It is a landmark not only for the downtown but also for the city of Lincoln and its regional vicinity.

The old city hall, significant locally for its historic background, is located at a key entrance to the downtown. The significance of these two structures is greater than their role as visual focal points. Other landmarks of importance at the periphery of the downtown are the university library, the Memorial Stadium and the City County building. In addition to these the cluster of high rise buildings in the core area form an impressive visual feature visible miles away from the downtown.

These major landmarks are supplemented by several local landmarks which may include some of the important department stores. Centrum and Gold's Galleria, St. Mary's Church and other prominent buildings and churches can be included as landmarks.

Landmarks have to be situated as to be noticeable. In Lincoln, most major landmarks are located either at the intersection of important routes or at the terminal point of a street (eg. University Library).

As defined by Kevin Lynch nodes are focal points in an urban setting. Either major intersections or plazas can be defined as nodes. Lincoln Center has several nodes. Some of these nodes are places where people gather, such as the Capitol or the fountains on Centennial Mall and the Centennial Plaza. Such nodes make the downtown more lively, weather permitting. The close vicinity of the university campus has been helpful in keeping these areas full of activities.

In addition to pedestrian oriented nodes there are some that are formed by the intersection of major roads, such as O Street and 13th Street. Such nodes have been emphasized in Lincoln Center through colorful circular designs at the points of intersection of several roads.

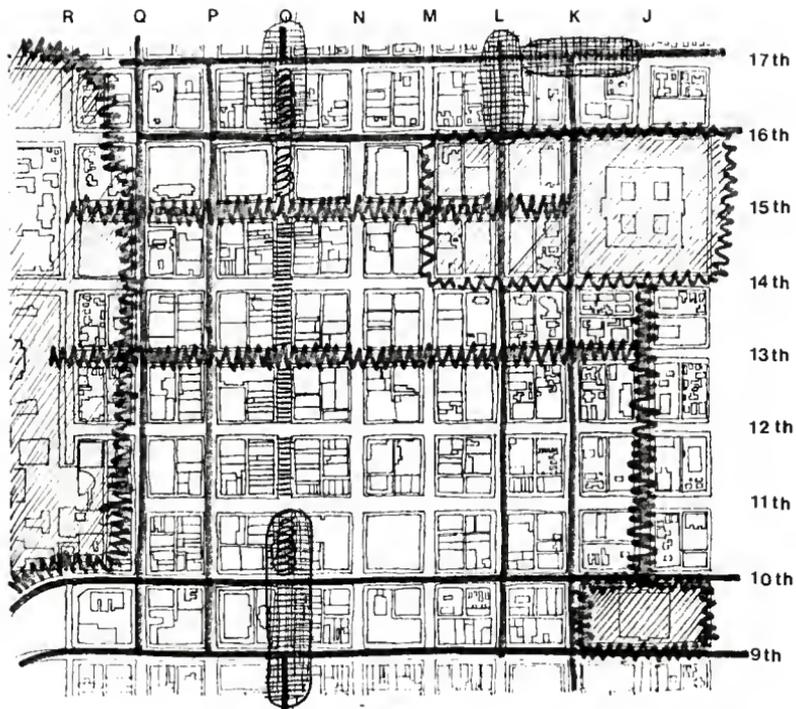
In addition to outdoor nodes there are several indoor nodes such as the Gold's Galleria, Centrum Mall and Gunny's Atrium.

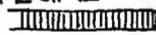
* LANDSCAPING

The central district of Lincoln has a well designed landscaping system. Landscaping performs several important functions within the CBD. Landscaping has been used to mask noise, absorb pollutants, soften the streetscape and even modulate the microclimate of the downtown. In particular it is effectively used to emphasize major routes, pathways, landmarks, vistas and special areas of activity. By articulating these key elements, landscaping has made the downtown more understandable and memorable as well as pleasant and attractive.* In the following passages the landscape concept of Lincoln Center is presented as explained by the designers, Barton Aschman and Associates, a Chicago based architectural/ urban design/ landscape firm, involved in the rejuvenation efforts of 1977⁶.

The concept provides an overall framework for systematically introducing landscaping in the area. It uses landscaping to reinforce and define downtown's key activity and movement systems.

Major arterials are intensely landscaped to highlight their importance and to reinforce their sense of direction. Where these arterials enter the downtown, special landscaping creates unique and easily recognizable entranceway areas. Certain key internal streets receive special treatments to give them special identities. The basic elements of the landscape concept are described below.

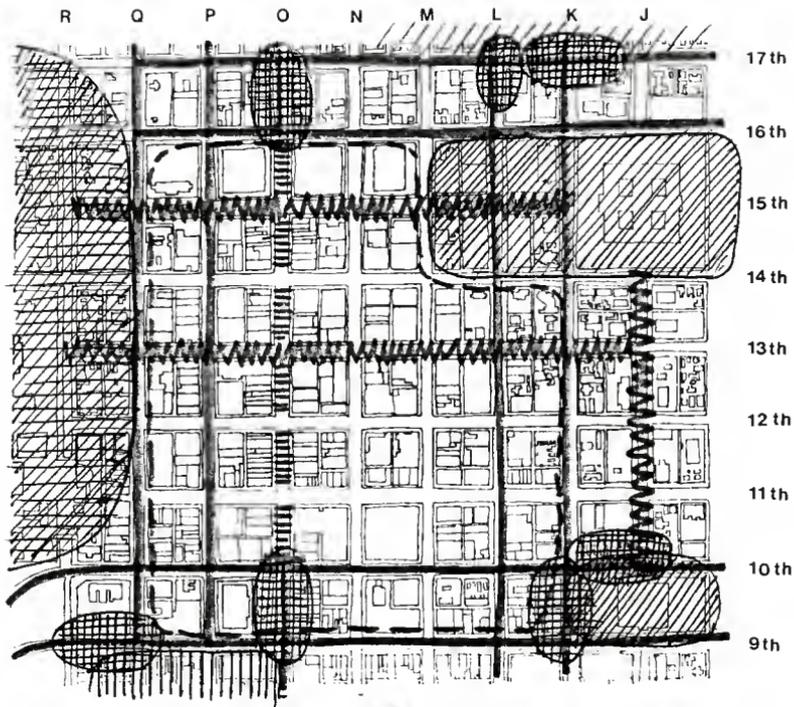


SPECIAL LANDSCAPING DISTRICTS 
 IDENTITY STREETS 
 'O' STREET - SPECIAL TREATMENT 
 AND BEAUTIFICATION 



MAJOR STREET LANDSCAPING. 
 SPECIAL "ENTRANCEWAY" LANDSCAPING AT MAJOR ENTRY POINTS 

Figure 15



STREET LIGHTING

MAJOR STREET LIGHTING

- SPECIAL IDENTITY STREET LIGHTING 
- ENTRANCEWAY LIGHTING 
- SPECIAL "O" STREET LIGHTING 

AREA LIGHTING

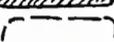
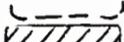
- INSTITUTIONAL LIGHTING 
- GOVERNMENTAL LIGHTING 
- COMMERCIAL AND RELATED AREAS LIGHTING 
- RESIDENTIAL LIGHTING 
- OLD TOWN DIST. LIGHTING 

Figure 16

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - LIGHTING CONCEPT

Major Street Landscaping: This consists of regularly spaced parkway trees reinforcing the linear quality of the street. The trees are high branched, high crowned, and of a size that does not interfere with the adjacent movement systems or traffic control devices. The landscape character of these streets reinforces their vehicle carrying role and it also provides a landscape frame for the CBD.

Special Entrance Landscaping: At the entry points to Lincoln Center special landscaping is provided to emphasize entrance into the CBD. This includes distinctive plantings coordinated with other entrance features such as lighting and signage.

Identity Streets: Prominent prestigious downtown streets like O street have special landscaping to give them a distinct character and identity. It can be readily seen that O street has a different character from 13th street or Centennial Mall.

Special District Landscaping: The intensity of landscaping has been used to differentiate between districts. This element of landscaping has not been extensively implemented except in and around the university boundary. In some of these areas landscaped surface areas such as lawns have been used to differentiate them from more paved areas elsewhere.

At various places landscaping has been used to outline pedestrian spaces, such as through low height shrubs between the vehicular right of way and sidewalks. Small patches of lawns on the sidewalks at places break the monotony of the flooring material.

The skillful use of landscaping has been one of the important elements in the visual enhancement of Lincoln Center. Landscaping can be relatively inexpensive in the initial costs, but maintenance can be potentially more difficult unless a single agency takes the responsibility. Lincoln Center Association has taken this responsibility for certain districts. By organizing task forces, well landscaped and clean surroundings are maintained.

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA

The downtown of Topeka is under-utilized. Its forty seven blocks have the potential to be developed more intensely than they presently are. The area most intensely used includes the blocks around the Capitol building. The thirty two acres of land within the downtown is mostly vacant⁷. Only 23% of the land is used in the downtown area for commercial purposes, 7% of the land is under residential land use and the rest is either used by the government or is under other non-commercial uses⁸. Less than 30% of the area is in tax generating use. Dillard's is the most important retail store in the downtown. Montgomery Ward, located north of the downtown, is another major retail store which attracts some business.

According to a study conducted about the buildings by the city of Topeka in 1981, the buildings in the northern part of the downtown are not maintained properly, and several sites are considered deficient⁹. An area is considered deficient if it is not fully developed to the extent allowed legally according to an officer in the planning department. The deficiency rate is 60% or more in all blocks between 6th and 2nd streets and Kansas and Topeka Avenues (except three blocks) in that sixteen block area. A total of seventeen blocks in the downtown

have a deficiency rate of more than 60%. Nine blocks are 40% deficient, three have a deficiency rate of 21% to 40 %. Sixteen blocks mostly containing government or corporate buildings fall in the zero deficiency category¹⁰.

In the following passages, Topeka is studied for its, layout, circulation, districts within the downtown and their inter-relationships, landmarks, nodes and landscaping.

LAYOUT

Downtown Topeka is located in the northern part of Topeka. It is bound by Interstate 70 on its northern and eastern border. Topeka Avenue can be considered its western edge and 10th Avenue contains it on the south side. The Capitol perhaps is the most important building in the area. Situated on a four block site in the south western corner of the downtown, it is surrounded by multistoreyed structures. The State Court, a modern building, is located on the south of the Capitol.

Kansas Avenue is the most important street in the downtown area. Most of the high rise structures like Kansas Towers, First National, Capital Federal, Kansas Power & Light and Dillard's are located on this avenue. There are some others on Jackson street. Facing the Capitol on its east side is the Santa Fe building situated on this street. Merchant's bank and Jayhawk Towers are other high rise buildings in the area.

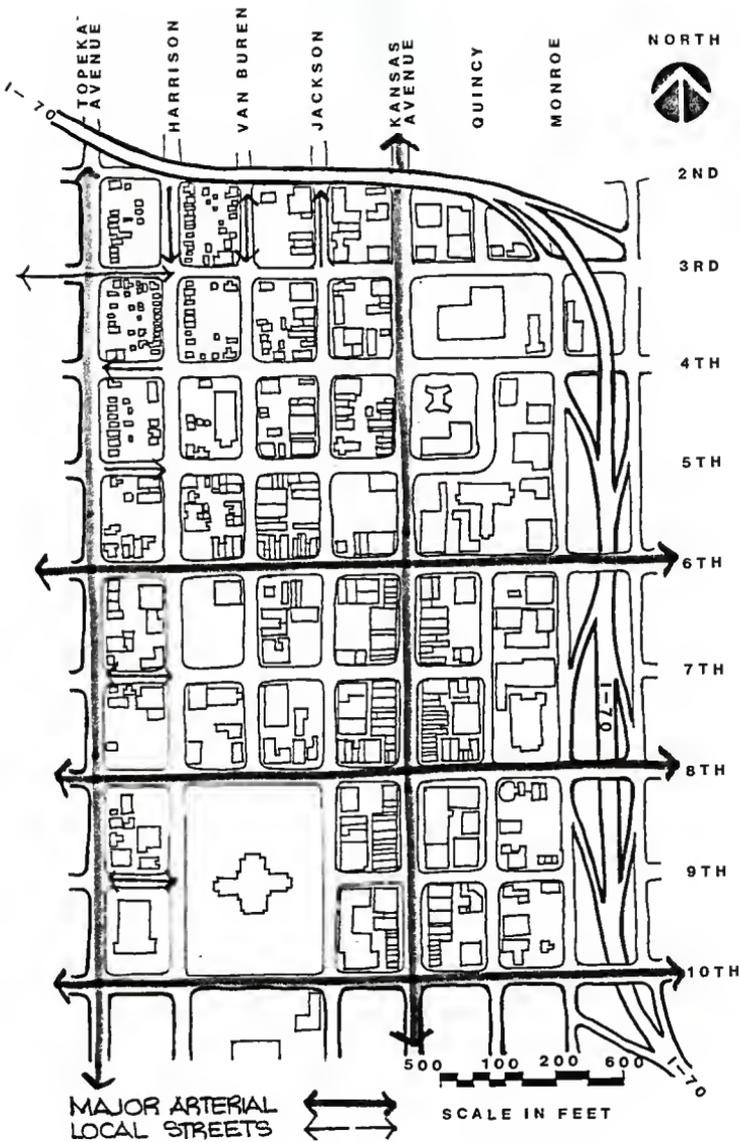


Figure 17

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - LAYOUT AND CIRCULATION

The downtown has a substantial area under the utilization of the state, county and city governments. In addition to the four block area of the State Capitol building, eight additional blocks around the Capitol are under state use¹¹. Six of these blocks are technically not included in the downtown because they are south of 10th street. However, they do have a substantial influence on the downtown. Two blocks between Monroe and Quincy, 6th and 8th are used by the local government, and one more block on Kansas Avenue is being utilized by the federal government. In addition to these, there are a few government buildings here and there in the downtown.

Much of the retail shopping is concentrated on Kansas Avenue. So are a number of office buildings. This commercial belt is sandwiched between the two government zones.

There are about four blocks of residences in the north western part of the CBD. Kansas Tower is a major residential building in the heart of the downtown, on Kansas Avenue. In addition to these land uses there are a few industrial buildings, especially on the northern boundary abutting the highway. There are also five churches and three schools within the CBD.

CIRCULATION

The main circulation through the downtown is on Kansas & Topeka Avenues. These are the only two streets that connect the city of Topeka to the northern parts of the city, beyond the Kansas river. These are the primary arterial streets. Across the shorter direction of the downtown two other arterial streets, sixth and tenth street, carry a little less heavy traffic. There are two exits from the I-70 into the downtown each leads to Monroe street. The three direct exits from the downtown are also on Monroe street. All these exits and entries are from the I-70 lanes heading east. Going west there are no direct exits or entries from the downtown to I-70.

The downtown has several one-way streets. There are two pairs that run in the north south direction, and one pair that runs east west. These are shown in figure 17, one of the north south pair runs on either side of the Capitol site. The pair running east west connects Topeka Avenue with Kansas Avenue.

Van buren street has the potential to be developed into a boulevard. At present it is a two way street. It is the north south axis of the Capitol.

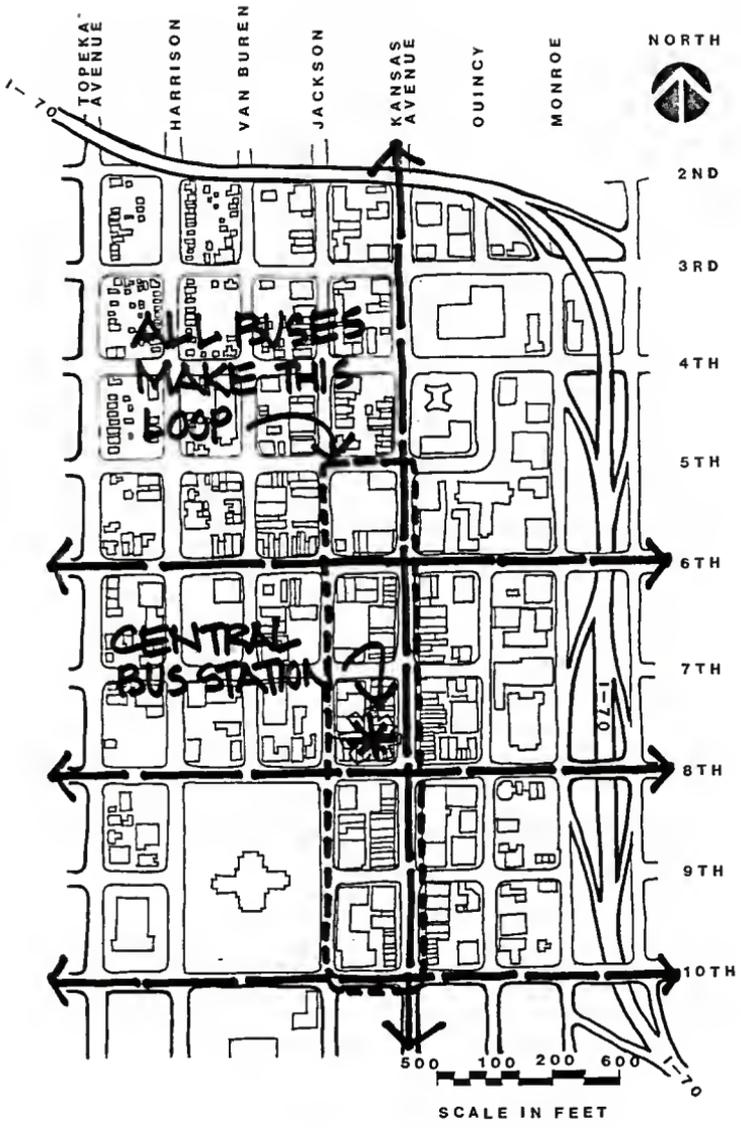


Figure 18

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - BUS ROUTES

BUS SERVICE: The public bus service to the downtown has been discussed in the previous chapter in more detail. The fourteen routes that connect downtown Topeka with the rest of the city make the CBD the most accessible place by bus in the city of Topeka. The Intra City Transit terminal on Kansas Avenue and 8th street is located in the heart of the downtown. There is no separate scooter service within the downtown. All buses do make a four block loop, which makes most areas within the downtown within easy access of a bus stop (see figure 18).

DISTRICTS

The districts within downtown Topeka are composed of a multitude of land uses as briefly discussed before. The comprehensive planning and development study for the downtown area conducted by the city of Topeka indicates sixteen separate functional land use areas or districts within the forty seven blocks of the downtown. The major districts in the area are the following.

State Government: This is one of the largest districts in the downtown area, covering eleven blocks. Most state buildings are located in this district including the State Capitol. This area is controlled and maintained by the Capitol Plaza Authority. There is a twenty three block control area around this district within which the Plaza Authority can approve or over ride the

Metropolitan Planning Commission. The original capitol area comprises nearly 60 acres of land within the downtown or area under the jurisdiction of the Capital City Redevelopment Agency.

The master plan developed by the Plaza Authority states that the land of the Capitol Plaza will be used for the State Capitol, the Supreme Court building, general use office space and parking facilities. The goal of the Plaza Authority is to reinforce the image of the plaza area, while integrating it into the land use, utility, and access patterns of Topeka.

Office/ Institutional District: This six block area is located north of the of the state government district. It is composed of several office buildings, one industrial building, one commercial building four churches , a school and a few residential buildings. This area has off street parking facility. It has not been developed to its full potential.

Secondary Commercial: The seven block area of this district surrounds the primary commercial area to its south, west and partially to its north. This area has a state museum, multi-storeyed buildings such as the Santa Fe and Merchants' Bank in addition to the First National Bank. It also has covered parking facility. A hotel is located in the area on Jackson and 7th street. This area is relatively more intensely developed compared to some of the other parts of downtown Topeka,. It has a substantial office commercial square footage.

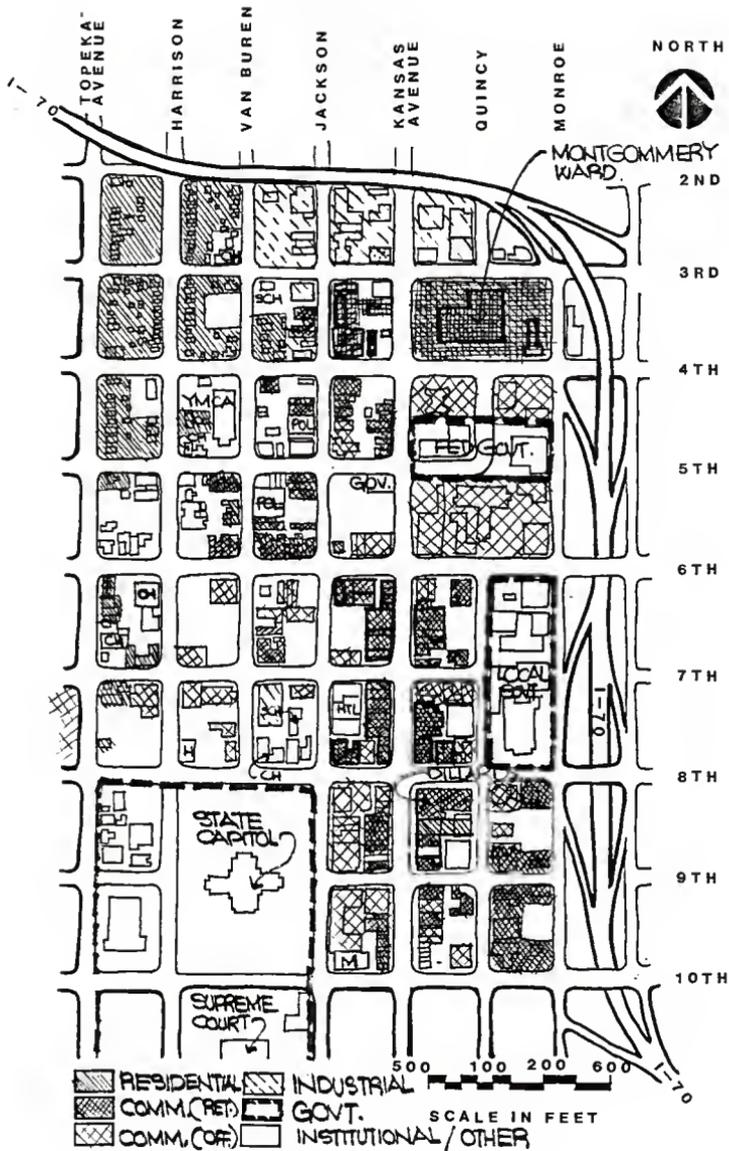


Figure 19

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

Mixed Use Area: About five blocks between Topeka and Jackson, and between 6th & 7th, 4th & 5th street comprises of this district. Although this area is not very different from the office/ institutional district, it has the potential to have more residential development in the future. therefore this area has not been designated for non-residential uses only. Its close proximity to the residential district to the north is one of the reasons for such designation.

This area is not in a very good condition. There are a number of commercial and office buildings in the area. The YMCA and a church is situated in this area.

Residential District: This is not a very well maintained district. Situated on the north west corner of the downtown, the district is contained along its northern boundary by I-70, which could be one of the reasons for its decline, but this has not been confirmed. The five block area does not contain any commercial facilities. There is one school and a church in the area and the rest of the buildings are residential, mostly single family houses. Open space for parking is available at one place on 3rd and Van Buren streets.

Auto Oriented Services: This area of a block and half is the smallest district in the downtown. Located on 4th street, it is in a relatively internal area of the downtown to attract sub-

stantial business from the interstate. There are no signs that lead to the area, thus it probably is oriented towards local customers.

Primary Retail: The heart of the downtown or the primary retail area of the downtown is almost a strip development along Kansas Avenue. Although it has mostly commercial buildings, there is a residential tower, the Kansas Tower, a nine storey structure on Kansas Avenue. This structure has other land uses in its lower floors. Dillard's, a major anchor for the downtown, with its five storey parking garage is located on this street. The parking garage is located on 8th street. This area has several, mostly one and two storey shops.

County & Local Government District: This area of two blocks has the state auditorium and county offices. The two blocks in the area have been combined, and it is relatively well maintained. This area has just the two buildings mentioned above. There was a proposal for the development of a plaza and a mall in this area, but the plan has been shelved.

Office/Government district: The federal government buildings in this area of office buildings is sandwiched in the center of the office buildings. Two of the four blocks have been combined to form a single block, causing discontinuity of Quincy street at 6th street.

Retail Area: This area located on the north east corner of the downtown is being used by Montgomery Ward. This area was previously developed as an urban renewal area. It has no other retail facility except the Ward and a big parking space.

Industrial District: The industrial area sandwiched between the Montgomery Ward and the residential district is not in the best condition. This is also located on the northern entrance into the downtown. Except for two office buildings most remaining buildings are used for light industry.

Interrelationship Between Districts: The first noticeable feature of the districts in Topeka is their relatively small size. Most of the information used under the sub heading 'districts' was borrowed from the subdivision done by the Planning Department of the City of Topeka, therefore no major changes in the district outlines were suggested, because such new layout of districts would have required a lot more research to support it than presently available. However, it needs to be mentioned that the downtown of Topeka actually has about five discernible districts.

These probably would include the retail district which is a linear district mostly along and in the vicinity of Kansas Avenue. Two clearly recognizable government districts pertain to the state government and the local governments (city and county offices). The residential district is the fourth well

defined district, and the rest of the downtown is really a very mixed land use area. The character of various districts as defined in the above passages does not differ enough as to recognize a number of them as separate districts. Certain noticeable features of the downtown districts are as follows:

The better districts such as the retail core, are mostly located on the southern portion of the downtown. The State Capitol and the surrounding state buildings are all located in this southern part of the downtown. Farther north, the condition and quality of buildings seems to deteriorate, except on Kansas Avenue, which has certain good buildings in the northern part of the downtown too. This could be due to the location of the river and the highway to the north.

The location of the bus terminal on Kansas Avenue provides direct access to the retail core. The location of the core in between various office buildings probably helps some of the businesses in the retail core, especially certain restaurants which are full during lunch break.

LANDMARKS & NODES

The most important landmark in the downtown is the State Capitol. The Capitol City Plaza Authority has the responsibility to maintain the Capitol and also to make sure that other high rise buildings do not conceal the Capitol building

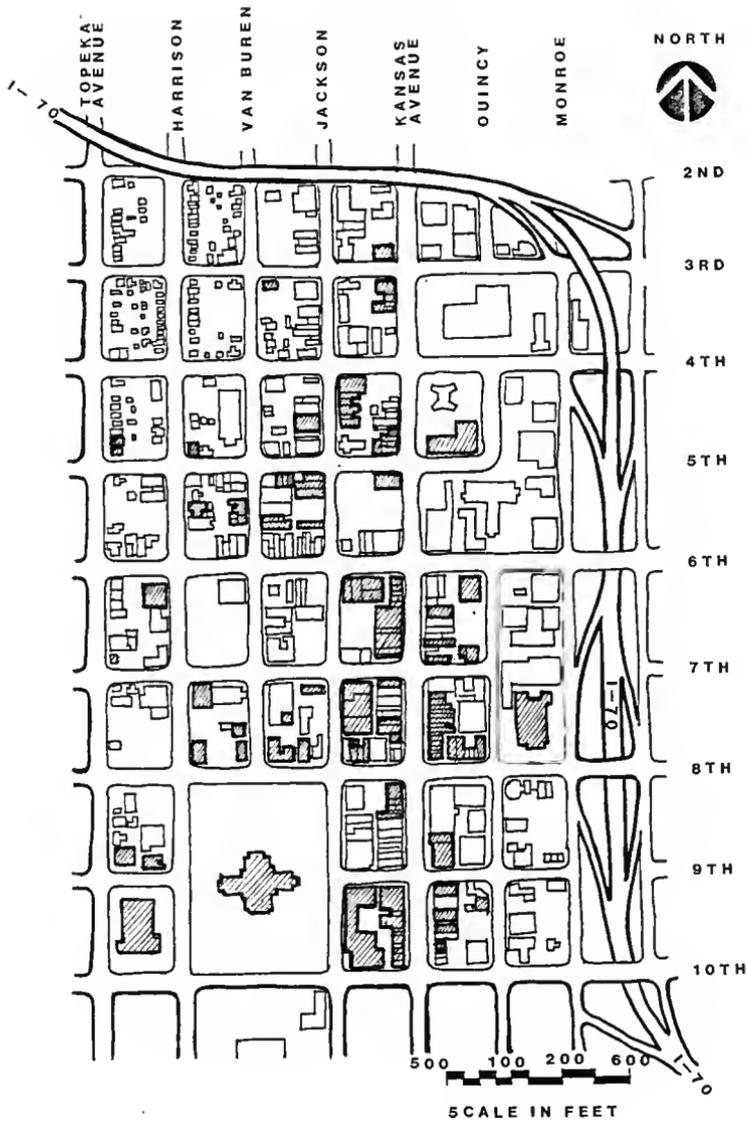


Figure 20

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - HISTORIC BUILDINGS

at least along its four axes. The Capitol is located on a site comprising four city blocks. Van Buren street forms its north-south axis, 9th street forms its east west axis. The capitol is located between Harrison & Jackson streets and 8th and 10th street. It has an enormous open space around the cross shaped building which is well landscaped and clean. The Capitol and its environ is the most pleasant area in the downtown. The open space around the Capitol ties in with the open space of the Supreme Court building across 10th street. The Capitol plaza can also be considered the most important node in downtown Topeka.

Some of the other major landmarks in the downtown area mostly include buildings. The Santa Fe towers both old and the new building under construction are imposing structures visible from several miles. KPL building, S.W. Bell Telephone's building, the State Historical Museum, The Merchants National Bank, First National Bank, Capitol Federal, Capitol Towers and the Kansas Towers can be considered some of the landmarks in the downtown area.

The important nodes would include the Capitol Plaza, as mentioned earlier and certain off-street areas on Kansas Avenue. It is difficult to pin point any specific outdoor nodes in the downtown area, except for the several seating areas provided on the walkways of Kansas Avenue. The crossing of 8th street and Kansas Avenue can be called the physical center of the

downtown, however it has no special quality to set it at a different level from some of the other intersections on Kansas Avenue in the downtown area. Dillard's Store can be called an important indoor node after the Capitol building, but it really does not have a big public meeting space, as some of the modern malls have.

LANDSCAPING

The downtown of Topeka on the whole does not have a comprehensive landscape concept. The best landscaped area of the CBD is in and around the Capitol Plaza and the Supreme Court building. Some landscaping has been attempted on Kansas Avenue, along the median. Some more planters have been placed along this avenue on the sidewalks. This is one element of the downtown which definitely needs some thoughtful innovation. Some shrubs and plants have been planted, but these are scattered and sparse, and a coherent pattern is not visible. There is really not much to say about landscaping except that the Capitol Plaza has some huge lawns and some well placed trees.

PROJECTS IN THE DOWNTOWN

A brief summary of new and proposed projects is included below, which indicates that the downtown is still developing, and efforts are being made to stop deterioration and to rejuvenate the downtown. At the writing of this report in 1983 several

projects are being considered for construction by various private sector organizations. These projects include several office buildings, the largest of which is a \$40 million dollar project, the new Santa Fe Office building. In addition, several retail projects and one 250 room hotel is being considered for building. If most of these projects are built, the downtown will receive a much needed boost to its image and may perhaps attract businesses to the downtown.

On this optimistic note the chapter on downtown Topeka is being ended. The above factors will be reviewed and compared with downtown Lincoln in the next and last Chapter Five.

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

(Chapter Five)

The various factors studied in the previous chapters can be utilized to make certain comparisons and draw conclusions. It must be mentioned that the conclusions will be based only on the information presented. Certain important factors have been excluded from the report as they were beyond the scope of this research or because they pertain to a different field of study. The most visible exclusion is the absence of a detailed economic analysis of the two regions, both cities and the respective downtowns.

Some of the other features that might have contributed to the downtowns which have not been addressed in the research include the demographic patterns within the two cities and in the whereabouts of the downtowns, and a study of socio-ethnic backgrounds of the residents of the cities. Political events during the last several years may have surely contributed to the development of the downtowns, including the leadership qualities of the elected and non-elected officials who may have influenced the downtown one way or another.

Thus it must be stated that some of the conclusions drawn in this chapter are subject to change in the light of new and/or additional information. Nevertheless, in the following pages the various advantages and disadvantages of the two downtowns will be discussed on the basis of the data presented.

COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF THE TWO AREAS

While the states of Kansas and Nebraska were settled almost simultaneously, there was a basic difference in the settlement patterns. Kansas had several settlements spread all over the state. In contrast Nebraska had relatively few settlements deep inside the territory. In Nebraska the population was concentrated on its eastern border. The city of Omaha is and always has been the most populous city in Nebraska, and Lincoln always was and continues to be the second most populous city in the state¹.

In Kansas several other cities sprang up, even deep inside the territory, thus spreading the population over a larger area². This may have had some implications on the downtown of today's Topeka. While downtown Lincoln has just Omaha to compete with, retaining the regional market of most of the communities west of Lincoln, downtown Topeka has to compete with several big and small cities including Kansas City, Lawrence, Junction City, Manhattan, Emporia and Holton, (all in Kansas within a one hundred mile radius).

The differences in the plans of the two cities of Lincoln and Topeka have influenced the respective downtowns. The city of Lincoln was designed as the Capital of the state of Nebraska, and then the city was laid out. Topeka on the contrary, was an existing city which became the capital after several other candidates were considered and rejected³. Thus the city had to accommodate the new functions in the already existing urban fabric. In Lincoln on the contrary, every thing was planned before it was developed.

There are two notable effects of the initial planning of the two cities. The state university was required by law to be located within the city limits of the City of Lincoln. Thus the University of Nebraska is located adjacent to the downtown. This provides some additional business to the downtown and some parts of Lincoln remain active until the early morning hours on certain days. The Washburn University in Topeka has several differences in this regard. First, it is not as large as the University of Nebraska, and it is located far enough from the downtown to have little if any effect on its business.

The second effect of the initial plan is the provision in the plan of Lincoln for parks and landscaping. This has resulted in a very well developed landscape system in the downtown of Lincoln. On the contrary, in downtown Topeka not only was no provision made in the initial plan for a landscape system, but there

were coal chutes created under the sidewalks of major streets such as Kansas Avenue, which are not used anymore⁴. The chutes must be filled up to plant larger trees, but the cost of such a project is prohibitive, making landscaping efforts difficult. Thus this is another area in which the downtown of Topeka was affected negatively by the initial plan.

Lincoln has a disadvantage compared to Topeka, in regard to the location of railway lines. Holliday, the planner and developer of Topeka, had the presence of mind to restrain the railway warehouses to the north of the Kansas river, while providing railway access across the river to the city of Topeka⁵. In Lincoln, however, some of the railway lines went right through the downtown causing disruptions in downtown activities. In fact this led directly to the decline of areas west of the railway line⁶. More recently, however, the city had some of the busier railway lines moved away from the downtown and the railway lines pose less of a problem today than they did several years ago.

Being the capitals of their respective states has helped both Lincoln and Topeka. At the turn of the century, both towns were included among the largest twenty towns west of the Mississippi⁷.

Topeka suffered depletion of population when the state of Oklahoma was opened for settlements, when migration from Topeka to the new territory took place. However after the initial loss of population the numbers remained relatively steady for almost two decades. Lincoln also faced some population depletion problems in its very early days. Some of the plots were bought by the sellers themselves to create a demand in the first decade of its existence.

To sum up the comparison, Lincoln was designed as the capital of the Nebraska and Topeka was adapted as the capital of Kansas. Landscaping provisions in the original plan of Lincoln have been helpful in landscaping the downtown of Lincoln while in Topeka the location of coal chutes within the downtown have hampered landscaping. The state university was required by law to be in the vicinity of downtown Lincoln but there was no such requirement in Topeka. Railway lines passed right through the downtown of Lincoln, but in Topeka the railroad was not allowed in the vicinity of the downtown.

REGIONAL COMPARISON

The regional conditions seem to have contributed substantially to the health of the two downtowns. Lincoln, not having any major town in its immediate vicinity, has been able to retain its position as a regional center covering a substantial area. Omaha is the only town which can compete with Lincoln on an equal (or better) footing within a sixty mile radius. Although Omaha does take away some business from Lincoln on the east, there are no towns to the west, north or south which have even a tenth of Lincoln's population.

Topeka has Kansas City on its east at almost an equal distance as Omaha is from Lincoln. In addition to Kansas City, Topeka has to compete against at least three towns which are large enough to support their own shopping centers. Lawrence, Kansas, is the biggest of the three and also the nearest to Topeka. In addition, Manhattan and Junction City have independent commercial districts of their own, which almost completely fulfill not only the needs of their own communities but also of other smaller towns in their vicinities.

It is readily noticeable that Lincoln holds a much better position as far as regional business is concerned. With no town bigger than 13,000 people Lincoln virtually has a monopoly, especially in the west of the region. Topeka on the other hand,

has strong competition in the region, with challengers like Lawrence almost half as big as Topeka. Lincoln's nearest contender is more than thirteen times smaller. In addition, Lincoln Center is well protected from within, too. While downtown Topeka has to compete with 29 other shopping areas.

Given their very similar historical backgrounds and cultural conditions, why does Topeka have so many large towns nearby while Lincoln has none? One possible explanation is the location of two major universities (at Manhattan & Lawrence) and a big army base (Junction City) causing bigger concentrations in the towns surrounding Topeka, Kansas. Moreover, the Platte River which is not navigable most of the year, never allowed any large concentrations in most parts of western Nebraska, while the reverse was true in Kansas. Lincoln, on the other hand, does not have any major city for miles except on its east, allowing Lincoln to form a large economic regional base due its market monopoly. Topeka lacks this advantage.

In Chapter Two I-70 and I-80 have been compared as similar with regard to the respective cities because of their overall layout in the nation. From the stand-point of the downtowns, I-80 is more comparable to Kansas Turnpike (KT) which by-passes Topeka in a similar manner as I-80 does in Lincoln. If this is considered, then I-70 in Topeka really does not have a parallel in Lincoln, considering its direct accessibility from the downtown. Again it remains a question whether having a major interstate

in the immediate vicinity of downtown assures anything except noise from the automobiles. Is there a sufficient volume of business from the travelers on the interstate to put up with the noise? There is definitely one advantage and that is that the expressway loop provides residents of Topeka with easy access to the downtown. At present, Lincoln does not have a comparable expressway loop.

COMPARISON OF BOTH DOWNTOWNS' POSITION IN EACH CITY

The downtown of Lincoln holds a more advantageous position in its city as compared to the downtown of Topeka in the city of Topeka. Lincoln has fewer shopping centers competing with its downtown. Although some new shopping centers have come up on east "O" street, they still are no comparison to the diversity of facilities available in Lincoln Center, which has a substantial number of shopping, eating, entertaining as well as public and private office facilities.

Topeka has a few major disadvantages within the city as compared to Lincoln. White Lakes Mall and White Lakes Plaza were developed when the Forbes Air Force Base was in use. In addition to these there were numerous other shopping areas developed in the south of Topeka, some near Washburn University, and some more in the North Topeka area. Altogether more than twenty nine big and small shopping centers compete with

the downtown in the Topeka Metropolitan area. This has two negative effects. Firstly, due to the dispersion of facilities a consumer living in the city has to travel to various different locations to fulfill his shopping needs. Secondly, the dispersion of the shopping areas within the city does not encourage regional shoppers to come to Topeka; instead they go to Kansas City. Had all the different shopping centers been consolidated in a single area, perhaps they would have collectively done relatively better than they are presently doing with the facilities spread all over the town.

The public transportation in both Lincoln and Topeka is good. It is a little better perhaps in Lincoln as it has more bus routes and more buses. However, since Lincoln is bigger than Topeka, it is possible that the advantage of having more buses is traded off with the larger service area. In both cities the nerve center of the public bus system is located in the downtown. Since neither town has any subway or any other rapid transit systems, they probably stand equal in a comparison of public transportation systems. Topeka does not have a "Scooter Service", while Lincoln does, but due to the smaller size of downtown Topeka, it does not make a big difference. Perhaps, Topeka has a better organized system overall, with a ring road around it. But Lincoln matches it by having a fairly regular gridiron system that distributes most of the city traffic fairly uniformly across the city.

Lincoln has a well organized and cooperative system of agencies which work together for the benefit of the downtown and the city. It is apparent from the study in Chapter Three that the city of Topeka has several independent agencies that have a say in the downtown matters. Differences in interests of some of the agencies somewhat complicates the matter. Even within the downtown business community there are differences about what areas are to be developed first⁸. There is nothing wrong in having differences as long as everyone cooperates at least in matters of mutual interest. It was found that this cooperation was lacking among the seven or more agencies influencing the downtown Topeka area. Cooperation and coordination among various private, quasi-public and public agencies needs to be intensified. Bureaucratic gyrations need to be reduced to acceptable levels to encourage developers and other businessmen, especially outsiders, to be encouraged to invest in the area without the fear of a potential stalemate. Apparently some progress has been made in this direction as the latest figures on new construction in the downtown area indicate.

On the contrary, in Lincoln, the Lincoln Center Association is extended cooperation from government and quasi-government agencies. The County and the City have mostly cooperated in decisions regarding Lincoln Center. There seems to be a sense of civic pride among the citizens regarding their downtown. It is understood that one of the previous Mayors was influential in

amalgamating various agencies to push for a better Lincoln Center. Whenever necessary, different agencies have ad hoc meetings to precipitate decision making on important issues.

The Lincoln Center Association is deeply involved in what happens in the downtown area. They even have regular lobbyists in the legislature to protect their interests. Various programs are implemented from time to time to keep up the interest of the community in the downtown. However, their interests are not the only important ones. Thus the city retains the right to allow developments which may compete with the downtown in the interest of the community as a whole. The establishment of shopping malls in east Lincoln and elsewhere show that the city has followed an evenhanded policy of healthy overall development.

On one hand such developments keep the downtown businesses in healthy competition with other areas . At the same time the city protects the downtown by not allowing certain types of developments in other areas. Location of cinema theaters through zoning is a good example. Eleven of the thirteen cinema theaters in the city are located in the downtown. Thus Topeka has several handicaps in this regard too, in comparison to Lincoln.

Both downtowns have major employers located in the downtown area. Substantial numbers of people are employed in the downtown as compared to the city in both Lincoln and Topeka. Topeka seems

to have about thirty percent of the total work force employed in the downtown. Accurate figures could not be procured for the city of Lincoln. Nevertheless, through three separate sources it was confirmed that the downtown employs up to twenty percent of the total work force in the city of Lincoln. Both downtowns have government offices which are a relatively stable source of employment.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO DOWNTOWNS

The most apparent difference between the two downtowns is in their sizes. The downtown of Lincoln has almost seventy two blocks, whereas the downtown of Topeka has only forty seven blocks. Lincoln Center has a predominantly commercial land use, in fact very few residential buildings are in existence in the Lincoln Center. The downtown of Topeka has several blocks under residential land use and several more are used for non-commercial (institutional) uses. This by itself significantly affects the comparative critical mass of commercial activity. Moreover, the downtown of Topeka has a greater percentage of blocks under the utilization of government agencies including the federal, state and local governments, further reducing the number of blocks under commercial use. Thus, Lincoln Center supercedes downtown Topeka in commercial activity as well, if the number of commercial establishments is considered as a gauge of such activity.

Lincoln Center has a circulation system that systematically redistributes the traffic arriving from out of the downtown so that most of the through traffic passes by without interfering with the downtown activities. The couple comprised of 9th & 10th streets is the major carrier of through traffic especially from the highways, running north and south. This pair of one way streets is supplemented by 16th and 17th streets, another pair of streets running north-south on the east side of the capitol building. In the east west direction P and Q streets form a one way pair passing through the northern section of the downtown supplemented by K and L streets in the southern section. Before the 1970s development, O street was the major east west arterial street, as it is one of the few streets which continues on in both the east and west direction beyond the city limits. However, at the present time traffic on this two way street has been controlled by narrowing the width of traffic lanes and increasing the sidewalk widths to create a pedestrian plaza. Thus most of the through traffic has been diverted away from the heart of the downtown, at the same time retaining vehicular access to the retail core.

Kansas Avenue and Topeka Avenue are the two major north-south arterial streets which connect the city of Topeka with North Topeka. 6th and 10th streets provide access to the downtown in the east-west direction. The interstate adjacent to the downtown carries most of the through traffic and to a certain extent can

be compared to the 9th & 10th couple in the Lincoln Center. Kansas Avenue is comparable to O street, for it passes through the heart of the downtown but carries through traffic going to North Topeka and towns beyond. However it shares some of its traffic with Topeka Avenue which runs parallel about four blocks away, at the edge of the downtown.

Although both downtowns have regular gridiron streets, there are differences in their internal circulation patterns,. Some of the east- west streets in Topeka do not have outlets because of the location of the interstate to the east . Lincoln Center has a regular system of one-way streets which does not exist in the downtown of Topeka. There are several one-way streets in the downtown of Topeka too, but they do not follow a consistent system. But, due to the smaller depth of the downtown in the east-west direction and relatively scant traffic, the inconsistency does not pose any major traffic problems in Topeka.

The circulation system in both downtowns is smooth and no major problems are in evidence. Topeka might have had some problems had it been of a greater size than it is in the east-west direction.

Some of the major differences in the two are the presence of an interstate highway in the immediate vicinity of downtown Topeka, whereas, in Lincoln the traffic has to pass through the downtown at a slow speed . In one way the interstate creates a



Figure 21

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - VIEW OF KANSAS AVENUE



Figure 22

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - VIEW DOWN "O" STREET

complete separation of through traffic in downtown Topeka, raising the argument that people have been provided a choice to completely ignore the downtown in contrast to Lincoln. On the other hand it also provides easy access to the downtown if one wishes to visit the downtown. Some of the traffic bound for North Topeka has to pass through the downtown, so, in a way the downtown is not completely isolated from through traffic. Although no figures are available, it is quite probable that the close vicinity and easy access of the downtown from the interstate attracts some people to take a break and stop to use some of the facilities of downtown Topeka.

Landscaping is an area in which the downtown of Topeka definitely needs improvement. It can be safely concluded that Lincoln Center is better landscaped than the downtown of Topeka. The system of landscaping in Lincoln Center covers most if not all of the downtown. Through intensive planting, certain areas within the downtown have been emphasized, which include O Street, portions of Centennial Mall, and parts of R Street.

The street cavity can be improved significantly by planting well located trees. The visual quality of a street is markedly altered by introducing trees, for it works favorably in several ways. Landscaping can bring a natural flavor to a human made environment. If used strategically, it can conceal some of the less handsome buildings. If proper trees are chosen, a unity of design can be achieved in spite of the possible differences in

material, color and fenestration of the facades of the buildings lining a street . Thus variety and unity are attainable at the same time through landscaping. Shades and shadows cast by the trees softens the starkness of unattractive buildings. In addition to visual factors landscaping helps in the reduction of noise and absorption of exhaust fumes. With well designed landscaping it is possible to control and direct cold winds, and provide shelter from elements. Retention of water runoff through landscaping eases the sudden flow of water to storm sewers during heavy thunderstorms.

In Lincoln the sidewalks have shrubs and grass incorporated in a design that defines the limits between the pedestrian and the automobile. Parked cars are semi-concealed by some of the shrubs from the pedestrian side in addition to creating a visual and physical barrier between humans and the cars. After close observation it was realized that if landscaping was added to Kansas Avenue (or if it was removed from O Street), the difference in appearance would be substantially reduced between these main streets in each downtown. Although street paraphernalia, buildings, road width and sidewalk flooring material and pattern, have all influenced the appearance of Lincoln Center, landscaping has played a major role in beautifying the CBD.

The difference in appearance between the two downtowns is summed up in the accompanying comparative sketches. The two Capitols and their environs are compared in figures 23 & 24.

Both downtowns are rich in landmarks both historic as well as physical. The two capitols are perhaps the most important landmarks in each area. There are churches, museums, highrise commercial buildings and more in both downtowns. Lincoln Center, because of its greater size has more landmarks than Topeka, but the difference is in emphasis. The comparison of the two capitol buildings indicates the difference in quality in the environs of these central landmarks in the two downtowns. The capitol of Lincoln has been made to be the centerpiece in the area, whereas in Topeka the capitol has transformers and electric conduits in its immediate vicinity. Such comparative examples abound, which indicate the substantial visual edge Lincoln Center has over downtown Topeka. However just a few examples have been included in this report.

The downtown of Lincoln has a quite a few interesting "nodes", where people gather. Centrum is one such area. There are several others on O Street. Various street furniture elements, such as benches, water fountains, information kiosks, telephone booths and disposal cans have been used to create interesting sitting areas. For visual comparison of some of the street paraphernalia see figures 27, 28, 29 and 30. There are no nodes equal in quality in downtown Topeka. The fountains on Centennial Mall have no comparable examples on Kansas Avenue or elsewhere in downtown Topeka. Lincoln is filled with examples of well designed and coordinated street furniture, which shows that at-

tention was paid to create a designed environment. In contrast Topeka is pretty much devoid of examples displaying a concerted design effort.

SUMMARY

The similarities and differences between the two downtowns can be summarized as follows:

SIMILARITIES

(1) The States of Kansas and Nebraska share a common history, similar economies (agriculture based), comparable geographic location (in the midwest) and climatological conditions.

(2) The cities of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Topeka, Kansas, are situated on major interstates connecting the east and west coasts of the continental United States. Both cities are capitols of their respective states. The population of Lincoln (171, 932) and Topeka (118,690) are comparable.

(3) Both cities have to compete with bigger cities. Topeka is about 62 miles from Kansas City, Missouri and Lincoln is about 56 miles from Omaha, Nebraska.



Figure 23

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - VIEW OF STATE CAPITOL

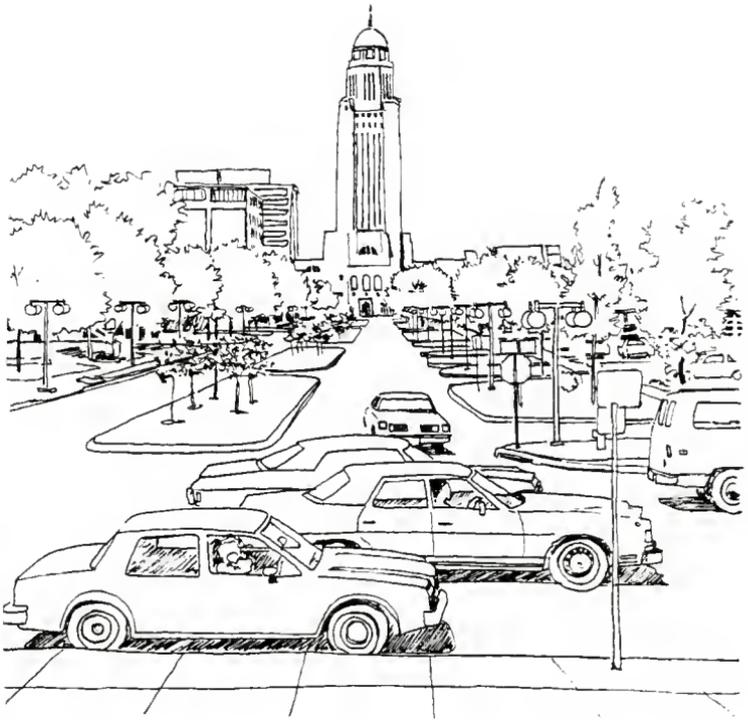


Figure 24

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - VIEW OF STATE CAPITOL



Figure 25
DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - STREETSCAPE, KANSAS AVENUE

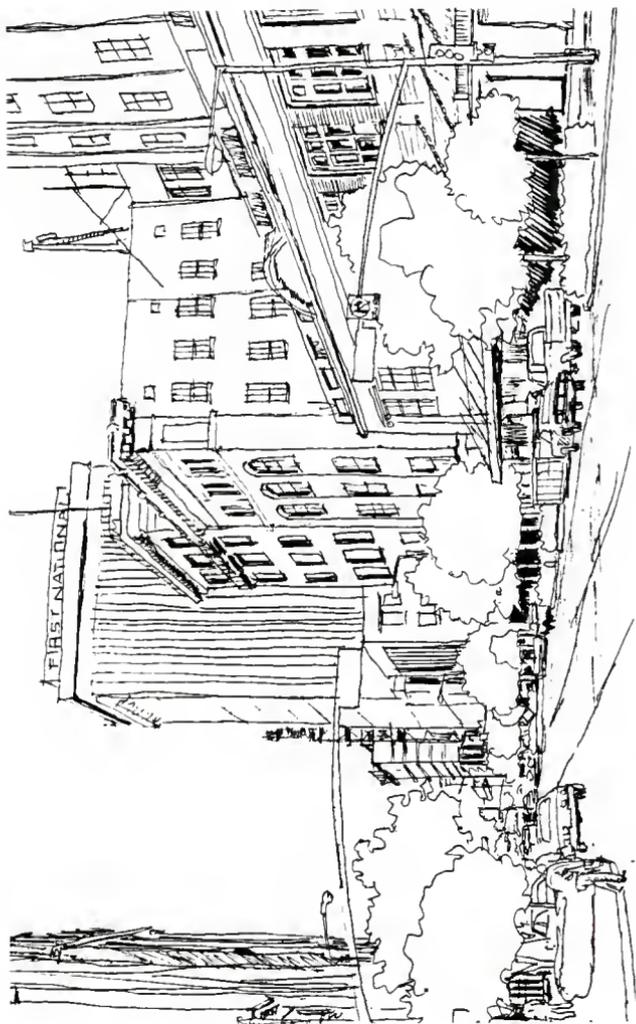


Figure 26

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - STREETScape , "O" STREET

(4) Both downtowns are located in the capital cities of their respective states. Thus most of the Federal and State Government buildings are located within the downtown, making the two downtowns major employment centers of their respective cities.

DIFFERENCES:

(1) Lincoln Center is the regional center for most towns in a 60 mile radius, except for Omaha, while Topeka's downtown competes with several towns like Lawrence, Manhattan, Junction City and Kansas City in a similar regional radius, in addition to local competition. This is a major disadvantage for Topeka in comparison to Lincoln.

(2) Downtown Topeka is located on a river bank. With the city expanding to the south due to this natural barrier, the downtown has become more and more eccentric geographically from the city center, as the city grows. This is not the case in Lincoln.

(3) Downtown Lincoln has the largest concentration of gross leasable area (GLA) within the city of Lincoln, while downtown Topeka does not have this distinction and it has to compete with twenty nine commercial centers, some containing more GLA than the downtown itself (White Lake Mall, having twice the GLA in comparison to the downtown). Topeka has suffered regionally too, because of this dispersion of retail facilities. Had the retail

centers been more consolidated, Topeka would have competed better with other regional towns than it can under the present conditions.

Compared to downtown Topeka, Lincoln Center has a bigger variety of commercial facilities (thirteen cinema theatres, sixty five restaurants, several major department stores and numerous shops and offices). This concentration of facility has given Lincoln a better chance to compete not only with local competition, but also with regional challengers such as Omaha. In comparison, Topeka's position is very weak.

(4) Lincoln center is planned to be the regional focus by the Lincoln City Lancaster County Comprehensive Regional Plan. Moreover, various organizations within the city (public and private) have combined their efforts to enhance the downtown.

On the contrary, downtown Topeka does not have such wide based support. Not only there are frictions between various public and private agencies, but also there are differences within the downtown merchants' organization, hampering outside investment in the downtown due to fear of prolonged opposition to development in the area.

(5) Lincoln has a Strong Mayor government allowing collective authority over various city agencies. In contrast Topeka has a City Commission form of government allowing fragmentation of agencies under various department heads.

(6) Due to major rejuvenation efforts in the seventies, Lincoln Center seems visually more attractive than downtown Topeka. Lincoln Center has a comprehensive landscaping and lighting plan, unlike Topeka. It also has well designed and coordinated street paraphernalia including kiosks, signage, telephone booths, planters, benches, bus stops, traffic signals and awnings. Downtown Topeka does not have a coherent street furniture system. These differences are obvious in the sketches comparing the two downtowns. There is a distinct difference in image between the two downtowns.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the basis of the factors presented above, it is found that downtowns of Lincoln and Topeka have several similarities in their backgrounds. But when it comes to differences, it is noticed that in all the factors compared, Lincoln Center has either a substantial superiority in comparison to downtown Topeka, or at least a definite edge over it.

The study indicates that regional and urban planning has a substantial influence on the deterioration or revitalization of a downtown. One of the reasons for Lincoln Center's well being in its regional setting has been a strong and comprehensive regional plan. Had the regional plan not established certain clear goals and controls, it is imaginable that various commercial centers in the Lincoln metropolitan area could have decentralized a strong cultural and retail center that Lincoln Center is.

For Lincoln Center's strong regional base, complete credit can not be given to the Regional Master Plan. The fact that no major cities evolved in the immediate vicinity to challenge Lincoln (except Omaha) may just be a coincidence. Perhaps, it can be conjectured that a university town (like Manhattan or Lawrence, Kansas, near Topeka) was not established in its vicinity, because of the statutory requirement of establishing the state university within the precincts of Metropolitan Lincoln. Regardless of the reasons, Lincoln Center has substantially benefited from not having more than one regional challenger.

Downtown Topeka on the contrary, not only had regional competition, but also, it had strong local competition as well, as discussed in the report. Perhaps no single agency can be held responsible for the development of regional competition from



Figure 27

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - TELEPHONE BOOTH



Figure 28

DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - TELEPHONE BOOTH



Figure 29

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA - BENCH AND PLANTER



Figure 30
DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - BENCH AND TRASH CONTAINER

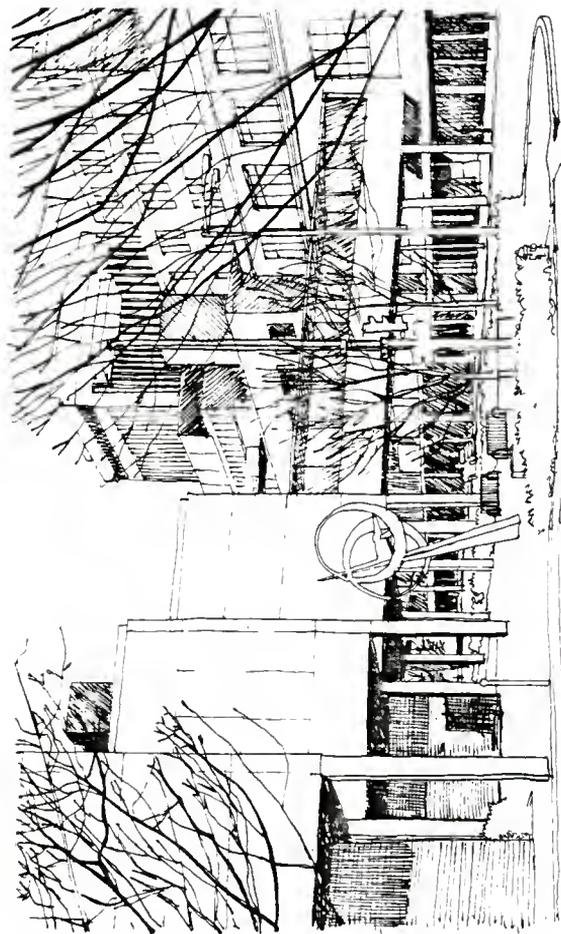


Figure 31
DOWNTOWN LINCOLN - SKYWALK, SCULPTURE PLAZA

Manhattan, Lawrence and Junction City. But the dispersal of a strong retail and cultural center is definitely the result of weak planning at the urban level.

The advent of the automobile can be cited as a reason for such dispersal of commercial activities. But in Lincoln such dispersal was not allowed to happen through a planned development policy, although Lincoln is larger in size than Topeka.

Thus it seems likely that the woes of today's downtown Topeka, in part, perhaps, are due to lack of comprehensive planning policies. There might be other reasons, which this report did not address which may be an interesting topic for another research project.

Lastly, the image difference between the two downtowns shall be discussed. In the mid-seventies, Lincoln Center was visually improved through a comprehensive plan. In accordance with this plan, landscaping and lighting programs were implemented, new plazas were created and the overall image of the downtown was improved. Special street furniture was designed, sidewalks were repaved and redesigned, facades of existing buildings were refurbished. These improvements are especially visible on certain major streets and malls.

In Topeka such improvements on a large scale are absent. However, this is one of the least important differences between the two downtowns. Ironically it is also the easiest and

(relatively) least expensive characteristics to change. The other differences are more deeply rooted, and, consequently, more difficult to change. For example, the regional and urban decentralization caused millions of dollars worth of damage, not only to downtown Topeka, but also to the other shopping districts within Topeka due to the inability to compete with more consolidated shopping areas such as Kansas City's shopping districts.

The disadvantages that Topeka faces in the regional and urban context seem irreversible in the near future. Most of the other differences discussed can be remedied. Cooperation between various agencies can be improved, and landscaping, lighting and other visual improvements can always be made. But, it is very difficult now to reverse the dispersion of commercial facilities throughout the city of Topeka. It is yet more difficult to recapture markets lost to other regional cities.

Attempts are being made to revitalize the downtown, as the new projects and renovation programs in the downtown Topeka show. Attempts are also being made to improve the visual image of the downtown. In fact at the writing of this report, in 1983, negotiations were in progress with the same design team from Chicago, that had refurbished downtown Lincoln. It may be difficult, but it is always possible for downtown Topeka to regain at least part of its share in the commercial activities of the Topeka Metropolitan area. Its biggest and most stable assets are

its government and corporate offices at the present time. Perhaps if the commercial establishments that have been proposed recently are actually built, downtown Topeka will change for the better.

In this report an overview comparison of the two downtowns is done. There are specific areas that can be studied in further detail. The rejuvenation of downtown Lincoln in 1977 may be an interesting topic for future research to see what improvements were made in the downtown and how these improvements enhanced the image of downtown Lincoln and its well being today. It can be studied if similar improvements were made in downtown Topeka, would that change the present conditions of the downtown Topeka.

END

FOOT NOTES

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DOWNTOWNS
OF TOPEKA, KANSAS. AND LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements of the degree

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas.

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ABSTRACT

The report contains a comparison of the downtowns of Lincoln, Nebraska and Topeka, Kansas. The two cities share several similarities in their backgrounds, yet their downtowns are different in a number of respects. To find out why, certain regional, urban and local factors of the two areas were compared.

It was found that the two areas share a common history, similar economies, geographic location and weather conditions. The cities of Lincoln and Topeka have comparable populations, both cities compete with one large metropolis in their vicinity, and both cities are capitals of their respective states.

The downtowns of the two cities are different in several respects in spite of the similarities in their respective regions. Lincoln Center was found to hold a much better position as an important regional commercial center as well as a socio-cultural focus of the city of Lincoln, while Topeka's downtown has regional as well as local competition from numerous commercial districts.

Downtown Topeka is not the social and cultural focus of the city of Topeka. Lincoln center is better landscaped and maintained than the downtown of Topeka.

The primary reason for their differences was found to be in the difference in emphasis in the regional and urban planning of the two areas. At the present time no easy solutions seem available to improve the condition of downtown Topeka substantially (in comparison to Lincoln).

END