

THE PHYSICAL DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
FOR THE SMALL COMMUNITY BUSINESS DISTRICT
A CASE STUDY OF OBERLIN, KANSAS

by

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B. Arch., Kansas State University, 1968

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Interdepartmental Program in
Regional and Community Planning

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude is expressed to Professors, Vernon P. Deines and Ray B. Weisenburger, who guided me in the development of this thesis. Appreciation is also expressed to Professors, Joseph E. DiSanto and Jack C. Durgan, who served on my committee.

Thanks is offered to Mr. James D. Bucher, who assisted me in establishing the categories of design project in Chapter III and to Mr. Howard Kessinger, editor of the Oberlin Herald, for his help and photographs.

Credit is given to Carmen Louis Bieker and Dennis D. McKee, Jr., who, besides myself, are responsible for the design of the Oberlin mall.

Special appreciation is given my wife, Deanne, who offered much valuable advice and worked very hard toward the completion of this thesis.

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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

Since the early Nineteenth Century, the process of urbanization has been an important phenomenon in the United States. The process of urbanization, as it is used here, is defined as the migration of population from rural to urban. People are moving to urban areas at a very fast rate. In 1960, according to Kingsley Davis, 53 percent of the population of the United States was concentrated in 213 urbanized areas, which together occupied only .7 percent of the Nation's land area.¹ This points up only one of the results of the urbanization process; that of rapid growth of urban areas. There is also an effect on the rural areas. As Davis points out, the only real source for the growth in the proportion of people living in urban areas is rural-urban migration.² For this reason, the pattern in the small rural communities has been one of decline in terms of both population and economy. Dale E. Hathaway points out that there are widespread indications that the out-migration has severely strained the social and economic structure of many communities.³

¹Kingsley Davis, "The Urbanization of the Human Population," Scientific American, vol. 213, no. 3 (September, 1965), p. 44.

²Ibid.

³Dale E. Hathaway, "Migration From Agriculture: The Historical Record and Its Meaning," in Regional Development and Planning, ed. by John Friedmann and William Alonso (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1964), p. 485.

THE PROBLEM

The social and economic decline of small communities is visible in the physical appearance. The decline is physical in that most buildings and streets are usually run down and many lots are vacant. This is particularly apparent in the business districts of these communities. The population of the area served by the business district has declined, resulting in abandonment of retail establishments. Many of the remaining establishments have become economically marginal, whether the buildings are empty or housing marginal establishments, it is the business districts of small communities located in rural areas which are generally unattractive.

Murray G. Ross points out that apathy is often a factor in the declining community.⁴ There is little incentive for the businessmen in these communities to improve the physical appearance of their stores and shops when the number of persons shopping in their community is steadily declining. Physical appearance seems relatively unimportant in such an atmosphere of economic and social decline. However, the political and social leaders of these communities are constantly searching for ways to halt this process of decline. They want to preserve the opportunity they believe only the small community provides; that of interpersonal social relationships and individual expression.

Additionally, there is an end in sight to the process of urbanization. Davis points out that urbanization is a finite process.⁵ This means that though the out-migration from rural areas may seem unceasing at this point,

⁴Murray G. Ross, Community Organization: Theory and Principles (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 124.

⁵Davis, op. cit., p. 43.

it will not continue indefinitely. Therefore, some people will still remain in a number of these small communities in rural areas.

These people will have a need for certain services. This will be largely in the area of convenience items such as groceries and drugs. The small community will thus serve in much the same capacity as the neighborhood shopping center in the larger cities. Improved means of transportation have made it possible for the rural resident to travel to the larger city, with its greater variety of goods and services, to satisfy his other needs.

Since the small communities located in rural areas are in a state of decline due to the process of urbanization, those that will remain will need physical redevelopment in their business districts. This will be necessary to provide the shopper with visually attractive areas in which to shop. Few small communities in rural areas have anyone with a design background who can provide the design services necessary for a renovation or redesign of the business district. Therefore, consultants with the proper background must be brought in from the outside.

Private consultants specializing in physical design have played a role in the revitalization of larger cities central business districts. However, up to this point, little work of this type has been attempted in small communities in rural areas. Consulting costs for design projects do not necessarily decline proportionally with the size of the community served. Therefore, the consultant's fees have generally been more than the small community in a rural area can afford. Local construction firms are often not equipped to deal with complicated or highly technical construction methods, which are often called for by the design consultants in plans for redesigning a local business district. For example, the reinforced concrete canopy which was designed and built for a mall at Atchison, Kansas, would

not necessarily be feasible in a small western Kansas town of 2,500 persons. Thus, the small community in a rural area has several problems which are unique in redesigning the business district.

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Many small communities in rural areas require redesign in their business districts in order to change their declining physical appearance. In reviewing case studies of design work done in small communities, and the general literature dealing with small communities in rural areas, one finds that little work of this type has been done. Furthermore, a uniform method has not been established whereby work of this type can be done. Therefore, this study will be an exploratory investigation of alternative techniques of design and construction practice to attempt to find a design process which will for use by design consultants provide to the small community in a rural area: (1) design consulting services at a fee which is consistent with the relatively limited budget of the small community, and (2) design solutions which can be implemented with the relatively limited construction techniques available in such a community.

STUDY PROCEDURE

This study will discuss the problem in three parts. The first part attempts to provide an operational definition of the small community for the purposes of this study. This definition will be stated in terms of the four parts of the environment as defined by Louis Mumford: social, economic, political, and physical.⁶ These factors will be used to tentatively define

⁶Lewis Mumford, The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), pp. 35-50.

the type of community being discussed in the following chapters. Also included in this chapter will be a discussion of the problems and methods involved in the designer working in a small community located in a rural area.

The following section review processes of design now used to renovate the business districts of cities and towns in Kansas. This will involve a step-by-step documentation of the processes. The amount and type of work now being done in Kansas will also be a part of this study.

The next section deals with a case study of Oberlin, Kansas. In this case study a shoppers' mall and entryway was designed for a small community of 2,377 persons in northwestern Kansas. An abbreviated design and development process was used to attempt to cut costs to the community. Construction techniques available in the local community were of major importance.

The concluding chapter of this study compares the design processes and document advantages and disadvantages of each. In this chapter conclusions are made on the feasibility of this type of project when the newly-suggested method of design is incorporated.

Chapter II

THE SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY DEFINED

It is proper and necessary to define what is meant by the term "small rural community" as it is used in this thesis. This will provide a set of general characteristics to assist the reader in understanding the type of community to which this thesis is limited.

This discussion of concepts will be based on the four basic parts of the environment as specified by Lewis Mumford.¹ These are: social, economic, political, and physical. The final portion of this chapter will be an attempt to use this concept of the small rural community to help identify the goals, problems, and means of working in these communities.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The social characteristics of a community are often least obvious to an outside observer. They are no less important because they underlie many of the economic, political, and physical phenomena which may be observed.

The traditional view of the social characteristics of the small rural community lies in the concept of the "folk society." This society is defined as being composed of a relatively small group of people who know each other well, have similar tastes and interests, are intimately connected with life in the community, and have a strong feeling of solidarity. Their illiteracy

¹Lewis Mumford, The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects (1st edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), pp. 35-50.

and inward focusing orientation tends to cut them off from other contacts, particularly urban ones. Behavior is fixed by convention and relationships are on a personal basis and determined to a great degree by kinship ties.² The stress is on primary group relationships rather than secondary relationships, as is the case in the urban community. Thus, cultural homogeneity is stressed in the rural environs.

Social values indicate how the member of the small rural community feels about his community in relation to mass society. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman state the following four values likely to be held by the member of the small rural community concerning this relationship:

1. That the basic traditions of American society - "grass-roots democracy," free and open expression, individualism - are most firmly located in rural society. The American heritage is better preserved in the small town because it can resist bad city influences and thereby preserve the best of the past.
2. That the future hope of American society lies in rural life because it has resisted all "isms" and constitutes the only major bulwark against them.
3. That much of the progress of society is the result of rural talent which has migrated to the cities. In this way rural society has a positive influence on urban life; rural migrants account for the virtues of city life. "Everyone knows that most of the outstanding men in the country were raised in small towns."
4. That "when you live in a small town you can take or leave the big cities - go there when you want to and always come back without having to live as they do." There is the belief that "if more people lived in small towns, you wouldn't have all those problems."³

²Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 52 (January, 1947), pp. 293-308.

³Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 80-81.

This ethnocentrism on the part of members of the small rural community is changing. For example, Vidich and Bensman also noted that the small rural community member recognized the superiority of urban and metropolitan society in technical and cultural areas.⁴ William and Loureide Biddle observe that values for measuring the quality of life "no longer reflect the bucolic values of country life."⁵ Rural people, because of such technical innovations as radio, television, and automobiles can see and experience the urban way of life every day. This has led to the diffusion of urban values to the small community. What seems to be taking place is that rural and urban values are moving closer together and tending to merge. This is a slow process, but is observable over the past decade.

Richard Dewey states: "Empirically, at least 'urban' can be independent of size and density. If this is true, then large size and high density of settlement are not always conditions for an urban way of life in any given community."⁶

There are several remaining differences in the society of the small rural community, however, which still seem important for some time in the future.⁷ One is anonymity. Members of urban communities have more anonymity than do the members of small rural communities.

The rural community population members remain more homogeneous, though

⁴Ibid., p. 79.

⁵William W. Biddle and Loureide J. Biddle, The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 162.

⁶Richard Dewey, "The Rural-Urban Continuum: Real but Relatively Unimportant," The American Journal of Sociology, vol. LSVI, no. 1 (July, 1960), p. 62.

⁷Ibid., p. 65.

this difference has been partially erased by a greater division of labor in the community. Classes do exist in the small rural community.⁸ However, this is still less true in the small rural community than in the urban community.

There are fewer impersonal and formally prescribed relationships in the small rural community. Relationships are likely to be primary in nature, and primary groups are still very important within secondary groups, even though these secondary groups have become more important.⁹

There are two general points which should be brought out about the social change taking place in the small rural community. The first is in relation to the functional decline in these communities. Decline is taking place as an economic phenomenon, but is manifested, to some extent, in the social structure of the community.

The second phenomenon is more outwardly visible, since it is apparent in the form of the age structure of the population in rural communities. Since migrants are predominantly young people, the age structure of the rural population differs greatly from that of the urban population. This is illustrated in Plate I, on the following page. A much higher percentage of the population is typically thirty-five years of age or older, as can be seen by this pyramid. Rural areas are losing their young people. This means that the social values of these communities are of a more conservative nature than the urban area. This makes these communities more resistant to change.

⁸Vidich and Bensman, op. cit., p. 52.

⁹Everett M. Rogers, Social Change in Rural Society (New York: Appleton-Crofts, Inc., 1960), p. 70.

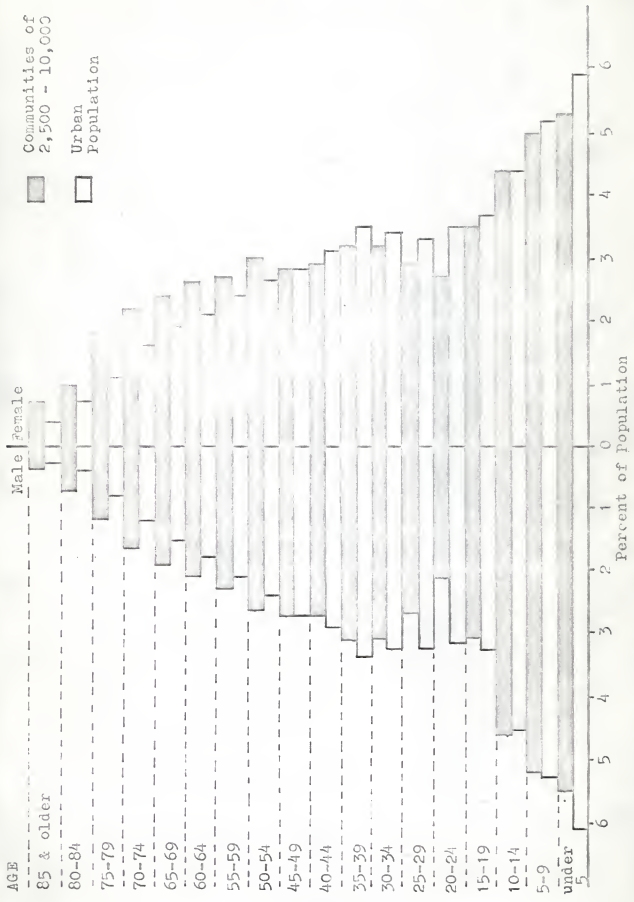


PLATE 1: AGE - SEX PYRAMID, BY RESIDENCE, KANSAS, 1960

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

In describing the small rural community in terms of its economic characteristics, it is possible to think of the community in terms of classifications of cities which have been outlined by several authors. (See, for instance, Raymond E. Murphy, The American City: An Urban Geography, who outlines several of these.)

Robert E. Dickinson identifies three types of trade center which are likely to be found in rural areas:

From the standpoint of merchandising, three types of trade centres are developing in rural areas. First, there is the primary service centre, a small town offering goods that are well standardized and frequently demanded. . . . Secondly, there is the shopping centre, a town which in addition to convenience goods, offers goods in speciality stores. . . . Finally, there is the terminal centre, which is large enough to offer the most specialized kinds of services.¹⁰

The small rural community which is being studied here would fit into one of the first two classifications as outlined by Dickinson. This type of community can provide the goods and services comparable to the neighborhood shopping center, but lacks the variety of the metropolitan trade center.

Philip L. Wagner points out that there is a continuum of economies in much the same manner of the continuum of societies from folk to highly urban. These progress in order from economies of types which are entirely nonmonetary to those in which monetary processes regulate economic activity.¹¹ On this continuum, the small rural community generally fits around the level of

¹⁰Robert E. Dickinson, City and Region: A Geographical Interpretation (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964), p. 105.

¹¹Philip L. Wagner, "On Classifying Economies," in Essays on Geography and Economic Development, ed. by Norton Ginsburg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 57-60.

a market-peasant class, as outlined by Wagner, whereas the urban economies of the United States fit closely in the category of the market-commercial class.

Of course, any economy has within itself economic subsystems, since economies as they exist in reality are not pure. Classifications serve to indicate the dominant character of the economy. They also serve to show how the small rural community economy relates to the economic milieu.

Within the small rural community, three economic subsystems may be defined. These are: (1) financial institutions, (2) households, and (3) industry (either basic or non-basic).¹² The way in which these three sectors interact within the local community economy, and with outside economies is shown in Plate II: The Community Economy, on the following page.¹³ As can be seen from this Plate, the interaction of the three sectors of the community economy and the economy's interaction with outside economies is quite complex, even in this simplified form.

In the small rural community the industry sector is relatively limited and specialized. This is especially true in the basic portion of the industry sector. This portion is almost wholly agriculture. This results in a majority of the population being dependent either directly or indirectly on

¹²Eugene T. McGraw and Thomas T. Vernon, The Economic Aspects of Urbanization: Economic Considerations in Community Action (Manhattan: Center for Community Planning Services, Division of Continuing Education, Kansas State University, 1968), pp. 13-14.

¹³Formulated by Vernon P. Deines and Thomas T. Vernon (Manhattan: Center for Community Planning Services, Kansas State University, 1968).

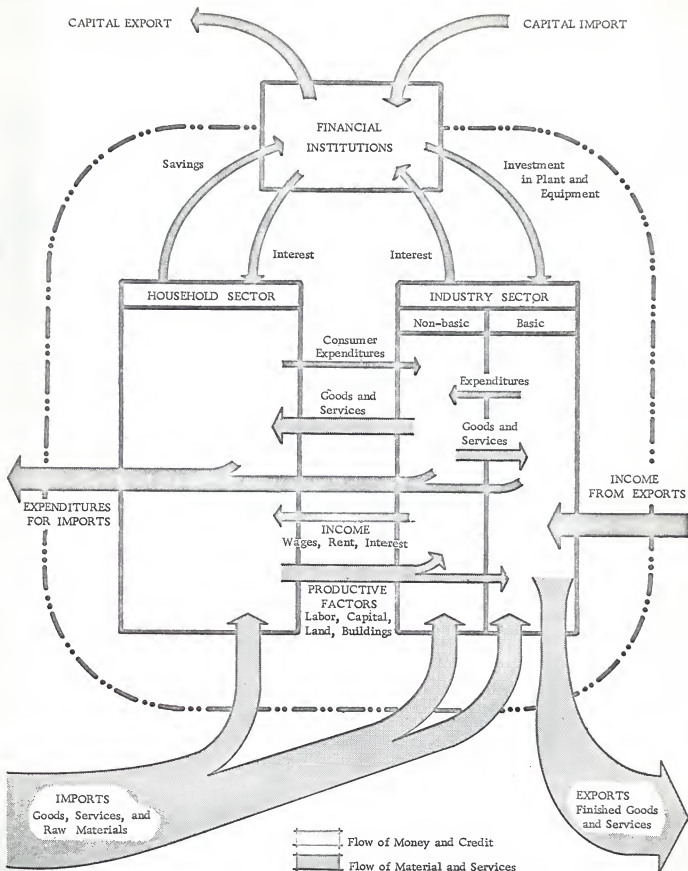


PLATE II: THE COMMUNITY ECONOMY

agriculture.¹⁴

"Agriculture has become more mechanized, consequently, less labor is required. During the same period there has been a rapid adoption of automobiles and development of highway networks."¹⁵ The former phenomenon has caused a decline in the small rural community's basic industry which has a multiplier effect in causing decline in the non-basic industries of the community (which are largely retail) because of the resulting decline in numbers of people needing services. The latter phenomenon, transportation improvements, has made it possible for the remaining people to travel greater distances to obtain services, causing further decline in the non-basic (retail) industries.

This leads to a phenomenon which has become the net result of the differences between the small rural community economy and other economies. This is that it is a much more "open" economy. Roland L. Warren points out that outside interests assert a large amount of influence on the community.¹⁶ Furthermore, "in general the smaller the size of the local economy the larger the share of total economic activity that is involved with these external linkages."¹⁷ This means that the local economy of the small rural community is very dependent upon sources outside its boundaries. This has

¹⁴Arthur H. Robinson, James B. Lindberg, and Leonard W. Brinkman, "A Correlation and Regression Analysis Applied to Rural Farm Population Densities in the Great Plains," in Spatial Analysis: A Reader in Statistical Geography, ed. by Brian J. L. Berry and Duane F. Marble (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 291.

¹⁵McGraw and Vernon, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁶Roland L. Warren, "Toward a Typology of Extra-Community Autonomy," in Perspectives on the American Community, ed. by Roland L. Warren (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1966), pp. 221-226.

¹⁷McGraw and Vernon, op. cit., p. 10.

affected the growth and stability of the community negatively. These are the outward signs of the economic decline.

POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In studying the political characteristics of the small rural community, the two areas of study should first be identified and defined. These two areas are politics and government. First of all, politics is the means by which conflict among diverse goals and the means to achieve these goals are resolved or accommodated in society. Government is the institution which formally enacts and administers the rules of the society. Politics, then focuses on the process by which rules are made or changed, while government emphasizes how the rules are effectuated.¹⁸

Oliver P. Williams and Charles R. Adrian identify four functions of government: (1) promoting economic growth, (2) providing or securing life's amenities, (3) maintaining (only) traditional services, and (4) arbitrating among conflicting interests.¹⁹ These are the images which the people living in the community have of their government.

In examining the functions of government from a more basic standpoint, Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson identify two: (1) the "service function," which is supplying goods and services; and (2) the "political function," which is managing conflict in manners of public importance.²⁰ These seem to

¹⁸William A. Schultze, The Political Aspects of Urbanization: Political Considerations in Community Action (Manhattan: Center for Community Planning Services, Kansas State University, 1968), p. 1.

¹⁹Oliver P. Williams and Charles R. Adrian, Four Cities: A Study in Comparative Policy Making (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), p. 18.

²⁰Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, City Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 18.

synthesize the roles of government into two relatively simple statements which cover the realm of governmental functions.

Turning to the politics of the community, Floyd Hunter points out that in resolving conflicts, there are some persons in the community who wield more power than their neighbors. He states, "In every community which I have visited, worked, or studied, there has been a well-defined, relatively small group or people whose activities, related to policy-making, constitute a social power structure."²¹ Hunter points out that there are three residual categories of power. These are: (1) historical, (2) motivational and other psychological concepts, and (3) values, moral and ethical considerations.²²

From these three categories of power, Hunter believes that there are seven types of people who are most likely to become leaders. These are, in order of their likelihood of becoming leaders: (1) directors of large commercial enterprises, (2) financial directors, (3) professionals, (4) industrial directors, (5) government personnel, (6) labor leaders, and (7) leisure personnel.²³

There are still doubts as to who makes up the power structure of the community, or that such a power structure exists. Robert Dahl, in a study of New Haven, Connecticut, found no evidence of such a monolithic structure.²⁴ However, it does seem evident to this author that a power structure does

²¹Floyd Hunter, Top Leadership, U.S.A. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 5.

²²Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 3.

²³Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁴Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

exist in the community. One should be careful, however, in identifying it in too bold of terms, as it remains a rather unknown quantity. It is well to recognize its presence, but not to place great faith in its absolute definition. The designer should consider that this is one facet of this type of community with which he must deal.

Banfield and Wilson point out three explanations of political patterns in small rural communities. These areas are as follows:

- [1] For one thing, there is not much at stake in small town politics; no large formal organizations are concerned in it and, since the governing body spends very little, citizens and taxpayers have little to gain or lose by what it does.
- [2] For another thing, the leaders of the town depend for support upon personal associations and friendships and being "good fellows," not upon interest groups and organized constituencies.
- [3] The most important consideration, however, is probably that the intimacy of small town life makes harmony, or at least the appearance of it, almost indispensable. Where everyone is in frequent face-to-face contact with almost everyone else, it is essential that all be on good terms. . . . Nothing in small-town politics is as important to most people, consequently, as the preservation of peace and harmony and the maintenance of easy personal relations. The style of this politics therefore reflects this view of things. The tacitly accepted rule of unanimity and the rambling, pointless character of public discussion, for example, are both functional; they insure that no one will be put on the spot, as they probably would be if there were split votes, firm positions, and clear arguments.²⁵

Based on Banfield and Wilson's conclusions, and this author's own experience in small rural communities, of the two areas within the political character of the small rural community, politics and government, politics seems to be the dominant area. While this is true to some extent in the urban area, this feature is not dominant to the extent that it is in the small rural community. The underlying decision-making process behind the governmental action is at least much more open to the community public in

²⁵Banfield and Wilson, op. cit., p. 25.

the small rural community. Within the context of the small rural community, this underlying decision-making process is accepted, and the governmental function is much less formal, not having to keep up any pretense of being a decision-making body. Thus, many decisions are public knowledge before the governmental body with jurisdiction actually meets. Such is the informality of the small rural community.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The physical characteristics are the most outwardly noticeable characteristics of any community. They are the outward results of the social, economic, and political characteristics of the community. The process, however, is not strictly one-way whereby the social, economic, and political characteristics dictate the physical characteristics. The physical characteristics also affect each of the three others in a complicated, reiterative fashion. The physical characteristics are, then, an important part of the community.

The first physical characteristic which will be discussed is population size. The population size of the small community in a rural area can vary greatly. Robert E. Dickinson has listed requirements for size of population necessary to support certain functions necessary to a community. Under this listing, a bank would require 500 people; a doctor, a church, or a newspaper, 1000 people; and a local school system, 3000 people.²⁶ United States Senator Carl Ellender wrote in a report to Congress on rural planning that in functional communities the total population will be large enough to justify

²⁶Robert E. Dickinson, City and Region: A Geographical Interpretation (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD., 1964), p. 106.

employment of resident specialists in such areas as medical and educational services, local government services, economic activities, and other such services.²⁷ For this reason, and to coincide with the United States Census definition of an urban area, the minimum population of the small community in a rural area has been set at 2,500 persons for this thesis.²⁸ Ellender also wrote that there were few towns of 10,000 persons in rural areas.²⁹ This is used as the maximum population of the small community for the purposes of this study.

In reality of course, these population limits are not absolute. It is possible that communities either above or below this population category otherwise qualify as small communities in rural areas. These limits are set only for the purposes of study and are not meant to be all-inclusive. The reader should also remember that some communities within these population limits will not qualify as small rural communities, as the term has been defined here, because they do not exhibit the required social, economic, and physical characteristics. This could be because of nearness to a metropolitan center, or some other reason. The mistake should not be made of classifying all communities of 2,500 to 10,000 population as small rural communities. This is merely one of many other characteristics. For the purposes of this thesis the small rural community will be assumed to be located outside any Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, as defined by

²⁷United States Senate, Community Development Act of 1967 (Senate Report 214; Washington: 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967), p. 11

²⁸United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: 1960, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population (Part 18, Kansas; Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1963), p. XIV.

²⁹United States Senate, loc. cit.

the U.S. Bureau of the Census.³⁰

Another physical characteristic of any community is its physical arrangement. Several types of city pattern have been identified. These basic patterns are: the gridiron plan, the radiocentric plan, and the linear plan.³¹ These identify possible physical layouts of cities with respect to streets and topographical objects. They are not descriptive of the positioning of land uses as are some concepts. These land use pattern concepts have little use in the small rural community because of the size of the community and lack of variety in land uses.

The small rural community usually is of the gridiron pattern, with two major streets intersecting near the center of town, at which point is located the business district. The business district contains most or all the retail uses, and the rest of the community is limited mainly to residential uses. The exception is when a major highway runs through town; then there are retail uses the length of it.

The last portion of the physical characteristics of the small rural community important to this study is the physical condition of the buildings, streets and other physical objects in the community. These reflect the social and economic decline of the community. This is most evident in the business district. In addition, as is true in most other cities, ". . . streets, especially the commercial ones, are crowded corridors, where auto and pedestrian are hopelessly intermingled with ugly, uncoordinated street furniture. Utility poles and wires, lamp posts, traffic lights, traffic

³⁰United States Bureau of the Census, loc. cit.

³¹J. Beaujeu-Garnier and G. Chabot, Urban Geography, translated by G. M. Yglesias and S. H. Beaver (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., Ltd., 1967), pp. 212-217.

signs, street signs, commercial signs, bill boards, etc. really create a mess."³²

So, in the physical characteristics of the small rural community are found the manifestations of the social, economic, and political characteristics. Here too, the dominant change seems to be one of decline.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PHYSICAL DESIGNER TO THE SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY

The first item which should be discussed is the reason for the physical designer working in the small rural community. There are those who question the validity of developing the small rural community. Speaking for those with this attitude, one author says, "The people in rural areas will be better off if many of these towns are allowed to die."³³ This may be true of some towns, especially those with populations less than 2,500, as pointed out by Richard Pollay. Speaking of towns of this size he says, "It would appear that even the best that a small town can offer as a retail trade center is inferior to what can be offered by a more urban center and it does not serve as an effective device for the retention of population."³⁴

This is not necessarily true of towns of more than 2,500 persons. Nesmith states that there is a need for some of these retail centers to remain to supply goods and services for the surrounding agricultural country.

³²North Georgia Chapter, American Institute of Architects, et. al., Improving the Mess We Live In (Atlanta: North Georgia Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1963), p. 1.

³³Dwight A. Nesmith, "What to do About 'Problem' Towns," U.S. News and World Report, vol. 52, no. 19 (May 7, 1962), p. 79.

³⁴Richard Pollay, "The Death of the Small Town: Some Comments on Causes and Cures," Kansas Business Review, vol. 20, no. 4 (April, 1967), p. 8.

He suggests 5,000 persons as a minimum population for these centers.³⁵ However, it does seem possible that a town of 2,500 can supply these goods and services if its market area were of sufficient size.

What seems important here is that some communities will remain. The ways in which the communities which will survive are determined is now by natural competition that are mainly economic and social. Community development seems to be a way in which a community can give itself a head start in the development of natural competition.

This brings up a word of caution for the planner working in the small rural community. Based on this author's experience, the people of the small rural community, especially the community leaders, are, in many cases, looking rather desperately for ways to halt what they recognize as the decline of their home community. When they hire someone to find the means to stop this decline, there is a tendency for them to view the hiring of the professional as an end to their problems, and may view any activity which he may suggest might help in solving their optimism as a panacea. Their enthusiasm tends to be high and their optimism for the future of their community unbounded. They can only be disappointed in the end, probably spending large amounts of money on the way to this end. The community development agent's responsibility in this area seems to be to: (1) advise the community as to what projects and programs may be helpful to their particular circumstances and (2) advise them as to what the outcome of these projects and programs might be, both good and bad. The last seems highly important. It is a mistake to show such communities only what the best outcome is; they are bound to be disappointed.

³⁵Nesmith, loc. cit.

Now, why should this community development be of a physical type? This decision, of course, comes only after an analysis of the community's needs and wants. If these factors do point to physical development, it is usually in conjunction with other facets of total development.

Roland L. Warren points out two major purposes of community development. These are: (1) the need for improvement of material conditions of life and (2) the need to develop a concern for problem solving and a spirit of self-reliance in communities which have typically depended upon others for the solution of problems.³⁶ Under the right circumstances, physical development can at least partially meet both these purposes. It can satisfy the first purpose by upgrading the physical environment. The second purpose can be fulfilled by the organization of the community around the design project.

It is believed that the physical planner or designer can provide a stimulus for finding and developing the programs to fit the social and economic needs of the community. Otto G. Hoiberg points out that, without even considering this advantage, small communities would be much more satisfying places to live if more attention were paid to beautification.³⁷ If the design project in the small rural community provides nothing else, it provides the residents with a more pleasant place to live.

The process which is used in this community development is important. This process seems to be one of the community development agent acting as an "encourager."³⁸ This word is used because the best policy in the

³⁶Roland L. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1963), p. 329.

³⁷Otto G. Hoiberg, Exploring the Small Community (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 183.

³⁸Biddle, op. cit., p. 47.

community seems to be one of self determination of goals and programs with the consultant acting in an advising capacity. This is important for a feeling of accomplishment by the community because, ". . . changed attitudes in people are as important as the material achievement of community projects during the initial stages of development."³⁹

This type of process emphasizes two points: (1) the consultant's role of "encourager," with community residents doing as much of the decision-making and work as possible and (2) the formation of a permanent nucleus of community residents who are both interested in, and able to carry on the process as a reiterative one. Community development, then, is a process of "people development." Physical design should be thought of in its proper perspective within this process. It is but a small part, an initial push or focus in a larger process.

The advantages of this process are: "(1) It enables them [the people of the community] to accomplish more with their limited resources, (2) it helps 'develop' people, (3) it helps develop a 'we feeling' and (4) it provides many opportunities of education and influencing people."⁴⁰ These are perhaps the most valuable results from working in the small rural community. At least, they should be kept on an equal level with improving the conditions of living.

There are two other important considerations. The first is that in this type of process, the attitude of the consultant is highly important. The important attitude is of working "with" (on the same level), and not "for"

³⁹Joel M. Halpern, The Changing Village Community (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 47.

⁴⁰T. R. Batten with Madge Batten, The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 15.

(from above) the community. The second consideration is that when one works within any community, there are two groups: the common community members, and the power structure.⁴¹ An effort must be made to identify both, and to be sure that all groups are heard. This is essential to good community development, planning, and design.

This type of process has been used successfully by community development agents for some time. It seems that it is also applicable to the physical designer's work in the small rural community.

SUMMARY

The physical inadequacies of the small rural community are a manifestation of the social, economic, and political decline in these communities. It is important that the physical designer understand the first three characteristics of the small rural community before attempting to correct the physical ills. This is important for three reasons: (1) so that his design solutions will reflect the values of the community; (2) so that he will not offer his design solutions as a panacea for the social, economic, and political decline; and (3) so that his design solutions will be presented in such a way as to be accepted by the small rural community.

⁴¹Floyd Hunter, Ruth Conner Schaffer, and Cecil G. Sheps, Community Organization: Action and Inaction (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956), pp. 25-52.

Chapter III

AN ANALYSIS OF DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL COMMUNITIES IN RURAL KANSAS

The first part of this chapter will analyze the extent to which design work has been done in small Kansas communities located in rural areas. The second part will analyze the ways in which business districts of communities in Kansas are or have been renovated.

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTING FIRMS' DESIGN PROJECTS

According to the United States Census of Population, there were 42 communities in Kansas in 1960 with populations of 2,500 to 10,000, and which were not located in one of the three SMSA's in the state.¹ The 11 located within the SMSA's were eliminated so that the 42 indicates the number of small communities in rural Kansas.

The amount of design work being done in small communities in rural Kansas has not been studied to any extent. Progressive Architecture conducts a yearly survey of consultants, but this information is tabulated on a multi-state regional basis and is not broken down into classes of communities of the sizes studied here.

So, in order to determine the amount of work being done in these communities, the types of work being done, and the methods of design used in

¹United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population - 1960, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 18, Kansas (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1963).

these projects, a questionnaire was sent to the 84 architects, landscape architects, engineers and city planners listed by the Kansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the American Institute of Planners. This questionnaire surveyed the work done by these architects and planners in a calendar year period (1968). (A sample questionnaire is located on the following three pages.)

Table I shows that 50 firms responded to the questionnaire. Eight were discarded because the respondents were retired or did not answer the questionnaire. Therefore, 42 questionnaires, or 50 percent, were tabulated. The number of jobs by category can also be found in Table I.

TABLE I
ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING CONSULTANTS
IN KANSAS: GENERAL BACKGROUND

	%	No.
Number of firms to whom questionnaires were sent.....	100.0	(84)
Total number of questionnaires returned.....	59.5	(50)
Number of questionnaires tabulated.....	50.0	(42)
Number of firms located in cities or towns of populations of:		
greater than 25,000.....	73.8	(31)
10,000 to 25,000.....	21.4	(9)
2,500 to 10,000.....	2.4	(1)
less than 2,500.....	2.4	(1)
Average number of years firms have practiced in Kansas.....		16.4
Average number of professionals per firm.....		5.8
Number of projects in which these firms were involved during 1968, by type:		
architecture.....	52.1	(514)
engineering.....	38.1	(385)
planning.....	3.1	(31)
combination (which includes planning)	6.0	(60)
other.....	0.2	(7)
Average number of jobs per firm.....		73.6

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire pertaining to your firm and the type of work in which you are involved. It is a survey which is a part of a masters thesis in Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University.

Your cooperation in answering the questions on this form as accurately as possible will be appreciated. All answers and names of respondents will be kept confidential. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning the questionnaire. Please return this sheet with the questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and information.

NAME OF FIRM: _____

STREET: _____

CITY: _____

ANSWER EACH QUESTION AS COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE.

1. Is your firm's main office in Kansas? (Circle one.) Yes No
2. In what size city or town is your firm's main office located? (Check one)

Greater than 25,000 population- _____
 10,000 - 25,000 population _____
 2,500 - 10,000 population _____
 Less than 2,500 population _____

3. How long has your firm been practicing in Kansas?

Number of years _____

4. How many persons are employed in your firm and what is their education?
 (Fill in the number of persons employed in each category in the space
 corresponding to their highest educational attainment.)

No Degree	B.S. or B.A.	MS, MA, or MRCP	Ph.D.	Other advanced degree
--------------	-----------------	--------------------	-------	--------------------------

Architects

Engineers

Planners

Architect-
Planners

Engineer-
Planners

Other
Professionals

Other
Employees

5. How many separate projects was your firm involved in during 1968 in Kansas? (Specify number in each category.)

Architecture _____
 Engineering _____
 Planning _____
 Combination (which includes Planning) _____
 Other _____

6. Of the projects with which your firm was involved during 1968 in Kansas, specify the ones which were concerned partially or wholly with the central business districts or shopping centers of cities or towns. (Use one line for each project and check each column which applies to that project. If your firm was not involved in projects in the CBD or shopping centers, skip this question.)

PROJECT & STUDY CITY	INVESTIGATIVE FEASIBILITY STUDY (market study, preliminary drawings of urban design, etc.)	SHORT RUN DEVELOPMENT PLAN (preliminary site, parking, & circulation plans, etc.)	DETAILED DEVELOPMENT PLAN (detailed site, parking, & circulation plans, & urban design)	WORKING DRAWINGS & SPECIFI- CATIONS	TOTAL DOLLAR VALUE OF PROJECT

IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED, PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THIS SHEET. ALSO MAKE ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET. PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE USING THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INFORMATION.

The categories of projects were established through interviews with several consultants who are involved in business district projects in small communities. These categories are:

- (1) The investigative feasibility study, including a market study and conceptual urban design;
- (2) The short run development plan, including preliminary site and circulation and parking plans;
- (3) The detailed development plan, including detailed site, circulation, and parking plans and urban design features; and
- (4) The working drawings and specifications.

The central business district projects done in Kansas during the survey year are tabulated in Table II. The 42 responding firms reported nine central business district projects done in Kansas during 1968. Four of these were in cities of populations greater than 25,000 persons; none were in cities of 10,000 to 25,000 persons; three were in communities of 2,500 to 10,000 persons; two were in communities of less than 2,500 persons.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PROJECTS DONE IN KANSAS DURING 1968 BY 42 RESPONDING ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING FIRMS, BY TYPE OF PROJECT AND SIZE OF CITY

CITY SIZE	NUMBER OF CITIES IN THIS SIZE CATEGORY IN KANSAS	INVESTIGATIVE FEASIBILITY STUDY	SHORT RUN DEVELOPMENT PLAN	DETAILED DEVELOPMENT PLAN	WORKING DRAWINGS & SPECS.
Greater than 25,000	7	2	1	1	0
10,000-25,000	20	0	0	0	0
2,500-10,000	53	0	3	0	0
Less than 2,500	520	0	2	0	0

Of those projects done for small communities of 2,500 to 10,000 persons and those less than 2,500 persons, all were short run development plans. The three projects were all done by one firm. Only five firms listed a planner among their staff. However, 12 firms reported doing planning projects of some type.

One may conclude, by comparing the number of projects done with the number of small rural communities of 2,500 - 10,000 populations, that only 5.6 percent had design work done during this year. In addition, none of these projects has resulted in any construction to date.

Only 22 planners were employed by consultants in Kansas. This is 18.8 percent of the total persons employed by these firms. These were employed by five, or 6.0 percent of the firms. These facts are shown in Tables III and IV. These tables also show that eleven of these planners held Bachelor's Degrees. Only one had a Master's Degree, the usual level of a professional degree in Planning. The remaining ten held no college-level degree.

TABLE III
 NUMBER OF ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING FIRMS
 IN KANSAS EMPLOYING PERSONS OF EACH
 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSION²

TYPE OF EMPLOYEE	NO DEGREE	B.S. OR B.A.	M.S., M.A., OR MRCP	PH.D.	OTHER ADV. DEGREE	TOTAL
Architects	7	38	5	0	0	50
Engineers	4	13	1	0	0	18
Planners	1	2	1	0	0	4
Architect- Planners	1	1	0	0	0	2
Engineer- Planners	2	1	0	0	0	3
Other Professionals	2	5	0	0	0	7
Other Employees	24	9	0	0	0	33
Total	41	69	7	0	0	117

²Two of the largest planning firms (in Wichita and Salina) are not included in this tabulation because they did not return the questionnaire.

TABLE IV
 NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES OF ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING
 FIRMS IN KANSAS, BY EDUCATION AND PROFESSION

EMPLOYEES	LESS THAN 2 YRS. OF COLLEGE	B.S. OR B.A.	M.S., M.A., OR MRCP	PH.D.	OTHER ADV. DEGREE	TOTAL
Architects	20	130	5	0	2	157
Engineers	12	36	11	0	0	59
Planners	3	7	1	0	0	11
Architect- Planners	1	1	0	0	0	2
Engineer- Planners	6	3	0	0	0	9
Other Professionals	2	5	0	0	0	7
Other Employees	92	74	0	0	0	166
Totals	136	256	17	0	2	411

ALTERNATE APPROACHES TO DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Approximately ten Kansas communities have had their central business districts redesigned and rebuilt during the period since 1950. In terms of methods used in design and implementation these projects fall into three general categories. These are: (1) the full scale renovation process, (2) those done by "package" store front firms, and (3) self-help projects designed by local artists and built by local craftsmen.

The Full Scale Renovation Process

The first of these, the full scale renovation process, is typified by a project completed in Atchinson (1960 population: 12,529) and one underway in Parsons. This approach is generally used in communities of populations greater than 10,000.

The type of design proposed for the Parsons central business district is pictured in Plate IV: The Proposed Mall for Parsons, Kansas.³ This is typical of this type of project. As can be seen from this Plate, the Federal Urban Renewal Program can be used by larger communities to good advantage in redevelopment of their central business districts.

Other cities in Kansas in the planning stages of these projects are Coffeyville, Kansas City, Dodge City, Salina, and Olathe. These projects seem to be limited, at least from observations of work done in Kansas, to cities with populations greater than 10,000.

They usually go through the whole process of investigative feasibility study, short run development plan, detailed development plan, through working drawings and specifications, in addition to preparing the surveys and documents required by the Federal authorities.

A typical investigative feasibility study in a Kansas city of approximately 45,000 persons involves about 1800 man-hours of work. This was documented by a consultant firm as it proceeded through this part of a project. This included approximately 1000 hours of schematic design and design development.

³Urban Programming Corporation, Planning and Urban Design Study: Downtown Parsons, Kansas (St. Louis: Urban Programming Corporation, September, 1968), p. 27.

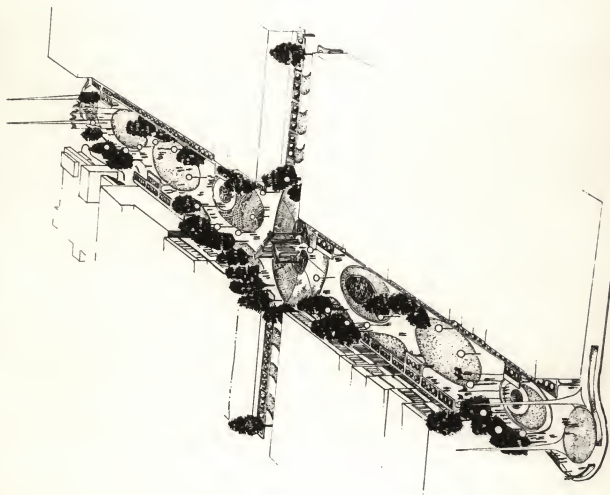


PLATE IV: THE PROPOSED MALL FOR PARSONS, KANSAS⁴

⁴ Ibid.

The American Institute of Architects states that schematic design and design development involve about 35 percent of the design process. The construction documents stage, receipt of bids, and construction inspection, would make up the remaining 65 percent of this process.⁵ If this percentage were applied to this project, the design and building stages would entail almost 3000 man-hours on the part of the consultant. When this is totaled up, approximately 3800 man-hours would be spent on such a project by a planning consultant. At an average cost of \$10.00 per man-hour, this work would cost such a city approximately \$38,000.00 in consultant's fees. This does not include time involved in preparing documents and surveys required by Federal regulations in Urban Renewal projects or construction costs.

The cost of consultants arising from the time they must spend on such a project is one factor in limiting these projects to cities of populations greater than 10,000. These costs do not necessarily go down in direct proportion with the size of city for which it is used. Another limiting factor is the fact that these projects must be locally administered, a task for which the governing bodies of few communities of less than 10,000 residents are prepared.

The "Package" Store Front Projects

The second type of design, those done by manufacturers of "package" store fronts, are more common in small rural communities of 2,500 to 10,000 residents. These usually involve the sale and installation of a large number of store fronts of nearly the same design, by a firm who manufactures

⁵American Institute of Architects, Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice, Chapter 11, "Project Procedures" (Washington: American Institute of Architects, 1963), pp. 3-4.

a large number of these fronts. They are usually altered only slightly to facilitate their hanging on the individual store front.

This type of project has been completed in McPherson (1960 population: 9,996) and Paola (1960 population: 4,784). They were done in much the same manner, and with similar results. Before and after pictures of Paola are shown in Plate V. These photographs are from a brochure published by that city to help convince the business owners and managers of the desirability of such a renovation.

The Paola store front renovations began with a committee of businessmen and civic leaders meeting and deciding upon a list of objectives for the improvement of their central business district. Among these objectives was to provide new store fronts for the 29 buildings facing on the downtown square, and to provide a walk cover in front of these buildings. In comparing costs of various methods of achieving these objectives, this committee decided upon an aluminum store front manufacturer as the most inexpensive means. This manufacturer installed 29 store fronts at a price of \$27,214.00 and a walk cover in front of these fronts at a price of \$20,028.00. This total cost of \$47,242.00 is an average cost of approximately \$1,600.00 per store front, including front and walk cover.

In addition, the city installed new water lines, sidewalks, and a 70 car parking lot. These improvements cost a total of \$38,855.00. New lighting standards and underground cables were provided at a cost of \$1100 per year by the local power company. This brings the total cost of this project, for a community of approximately 5000 persons, to \$86,097.00, plus \$1100.00 per year for lighting.

This type of project has two main advantages. The first of these is the relatively low cost in comparison to the full scale urban renewal project.



FIG. 1: MAIN STREET 1931



FIG. 2: MAIN STREET 1967



FIG. 3: THE DESIGN FOR THE RENOVATION

PLATE V: THE PAOLA, KANSAS, STORE FRONT RENOVATIONS

The second is probably the most important. This is that the project was entirely locally initiated and implemented. This provides the people of the community with a direct method of getting what they want. In addition, it provides a way to develop the "community" spirit in the community, as was discussed in Chapter II. In Paola's case, this has become an important result, as evidenced by improved demand for space in the central business district, and the continuance of the community to work for new community development projects.

The important disadvantage is, of course, the resulting design quality. This is true in the pure design sense and in the sense that it ignores the cultural and historic background of the community and its buildings. The design cannot compete with the design involved in an Urban Renewal project, which is usually done by a consultant who specializes in such work.

The Self-Help Project

The third type of design project in small rural communities, those designed and built by local craftsmen, is typified by work done in Lindsborg, Kansas, a community of approximately 2,700 residents. This community is one of exceptional cleanliness throughout and is the home of Bethany College, a religiously backed institution. Many of its residents are of Scandinavian descent.

A local artist, Mr. Anton Pearson, drew up a plan of all the buildings in the central business district. With the endorsement of the local Chamber of Commerce he worked to sell his ideas for store fronts of wood and stone which reflected the Scandinavian background of the community.

Four fronts were renovated as a result of his work before his death in late 1966. Immediately thereafter, in the spring of 1967, seven more fronts

were renovated. Not all of these followed his design proposals. Two of these store fronts are shown in Plates VI and VII. The cost of renovating these store fronts varied from \$50.00 to \$750.00 per front.

This type of project seems to provide the opportunity for the same advantages as the previous method of "package" design. These advantages are low cost and community involvement. In fact, the community involvement could be even more intimate than that of the "package" method. This aspect seemingly failed in Lindsborg, however, since the community involvement was largely on the part of one man. So the apparent advantage became a disadvantage in this case.

A disadvantage to other communities in using this process is, of course, the lack of artists such as Lindsborg has. If these artists are available, however, it provides a relatively inexpensive means to good design. Artists interested in a community as Mr. Pearson was, are likely to provide inexpensive design talent.

SUMMARY

Each of these three methods of design and construction has its special advantages. Each, however, also has its disadvantages which may eliminate its use in the small rural community.

The advantages of the full scale renovation process include its comprehensiveness and possibility for design quality. The "package" design process is less expensive. The designs done by local artists are the least expensive and provide the possibility for design quality.

However, the full-scale renovation process costs too much in consultant's fees. The "package" store front manufacturers' work lacks design quality and comprehensiveness. The self-help process is open to few communities

because of the lack of local artists.

It seems possible that some method might be devised which has many of the advantages of each, and eliminates these disadvantages.



PLATE VI: A LINDSBORG STORE RENOVATION



PLATE VII: A LINTSBORG STORE RENOVATION

Chapter IV

THE OBERLIN, KANSAS, "MALL PROJECT"

This chapter will deal with a case study of a mall design which was done for the small western Kansas community of Oberlin.¹ It will outline the initial involvement of Kansas State University in the community, document the process of design, and describe the actual design. The design process is particularly important, since it is an attempt to combine the advantages of the three processes described in the preceding chapter, without their inherent disadvantages.

THE INITIAL INVOLVEMENT

In the spring of 1966, the Oberlin, Kansas, civic leaders decided to look into the renovation of their business district. At that time, the most plausible approach in their minds was one of all new store fronts. This was presented to them by an aluminum store front manufacturer.

Howard Kessinger, the local newspaper editor, however, was not satisfied with this type of solution. He appealed to the Dean of the College of Architecture and Design at Kansas State University for a critique of the aluminum store front scheme. This request was referred to two professors in the Department of Regional and Community Planning, Eugene T. McGraw and Ray

¹For a more detailed account of the economic and social characteristics of Oberlin, see James Hsing Tung, Analysis of Change in a Rural Community: A Case Study of Decatur County, Kansas (An unpublished MRCP Thesis, Kansas State University, 1968).

Bradley Weisenburger. These two professors replied to this request, indicating their concern with design which did not emphasize the historical character of the community and which seemed to lack consideration for planning or urban design.

As a result of this exchange of ideas, and a subsequent visit to Oberlin by these two professors and Patrick Smythe from the Cooperative Extension Service, an undergraduate urban design class prepared studies of alternate redevelopment ideas for the central business district. Most of these designs were variations of a mall approach. They were presented at a town meeting in the spring of 1967.

These designs pointed out to the people of the community what the possibilities were for the business district. As a result, high enthusiasm was created for the possible redevelopment.

In the fall of 1967, three graduate students, Carmen Louis Bieker, Dennis D. McKee, Jr., and this author, accepted as a research project the redesign of the Oberlin central business district.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

The process used was an abbreviated one, limited by the financial capabilities of the community and the time resources of the designers. This process is outlined below.

The first step in this process was that of meeting with the civic and social leaders of the community to find out what the needs and wants of the community were. Surveys of building conditions, land use, and parking space in the business district were included in this preliminary step.

The second step was the preliminary design. The preliminary drawings were presented to the community when they were completed. These were accepted

by the community, paving the way for the final step.

The final step was the preparation of a final design, presented in booklet form. Since the preliminary design was so completely done and accepted as it was by the community, very little time was spent in this step.

So, this process involved the following steps:

- (1) The initial involvement (the request for assistance);
- (2) Goal identification by community leaders;
- (3) Survey and inventory of conditions;
- (4) The preliminary design, its public presentation, and receiving criticism from the community; and
- (5) The final design and its presentation in report form.

In this process, working with the community very closely to identify their needs and wants was emphasized. This serves two purposes. The first is that the design reflects the needs and desires of the community as closely as possible. The second benefit of this approach is that this is accomplished with a minimum amount of design and drawing work by the designers.

Before the mall was done, some very definite ideas from the community were gathered as to what this should consist of in terms of all kinds of items from the overall layout to use of materials. Each store owner and manager were consulted before the redesign of his front was developed. In this way, the design for that front was in line with his ideas and his financial situation, as well as the total design concept and character of the mall.

Perhaps the most important feature of this design process is that in working so closely with the community, many ideas and much advice was transmitted to them on a personal, informal basis. This has three advantages. The first is time saving to the designers by alleviating time spent on presentation drawings. The second is that ideas and advice offered on a

personal basis seemed to be more easily accepted by the people. This applies especially to such things as identifying delapidated structures which should be razed. The third advantage is that of the understanding of the ideas and advice on the part of the people of the community. Few people in any small rural community are trained to quickly conceive complicated architectural drawings.

The final feature of this process is that of omitting of the formal working drawings, specifications, and construction drawing phases. The total design was done based on the construction methods available in the area with the design subject to modification where it did not conform to these methods. Sketch drawings were provided to explain necessary details to contractors. These were the only construction drawings prepared.

The man-hours spent, by project phase, are listed below:

Field surveys and meetings.....	195 hrs.
Preliminary design	
Entry.....	120 hrs.
Mall.....	380
Store Fronts.....	260
Total.....	760
Faculty advisory time.....	400
Clerical time.....	<u>100</u>
Total.....	1,455

Thus, by using this process, the whole central business district was designed in less than 1,500 man-hours. In addition, much time was spent by community leaders in publicity and promotional activities.

It is felt that the biggest advantage lies in the building of a feeling of "community" in the town. The people are totally involved in the project from start to finish and all this will, it is hoped, supply the uniting force in the community necessary to undertake other community improvement and development projects in the future. It is felt that, because of this goal the actual design, though important, holds a secondary position to the process.

THE DESIGN SOLUTION

The design for the central business district consists of two distinct parts. First, an entry was decided to be a necessary part of any plan for the central business district. The drive to the central business district was in very poor condition. In addition, there was little indication of the existence of a central business district as one passed through town on Highway 36.

For these reasons, the entry to the central business district pictured in Plates VIII, IX, X, and XI on the following four pages was designed for Oberlin. Plate VIII shows the overall plan of the six blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue from Highway 36 to the central business district. At the north end of Pennsylvania Avenue where it meets Highway 36 are the entry median and sign which are shown in Plate IX. These announce the main street to passers-by and provide turning lanes to allow traffic to turn toward the central business district.

As one turns onto Pennsylvania Avenue, the sight is drawn down a hill which levels off for one block and effectively blocks the view past that point of leveling. At this point is located the first median strip which is pictured in Plate X. This strip is designed in such a way that the sculpture at its north end is the visual focus from Highway 36. The sculpture has been designed and a model built. This was done by Mr. Fritz Felton of Hays, Kansas and is pictured in Plate XI. It is called "Pioneer Family" and reflects the rich history of the area in depicting the basic unit of that history, the family.

Such an entry, in tying the central business district to the highway, also provides the community with the beginning of a historical center, which is a theme carried to the mall.

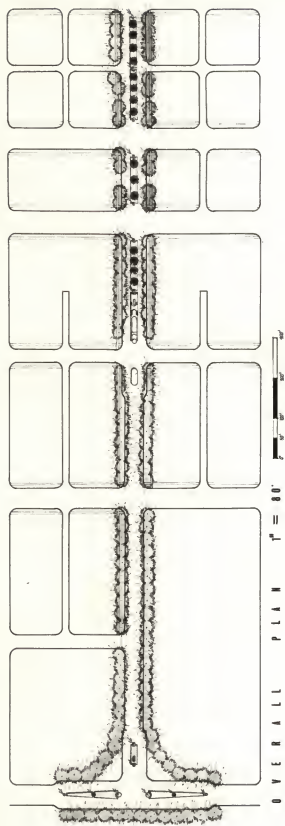


PLATE VIII: THE ENTRANCE PLAN

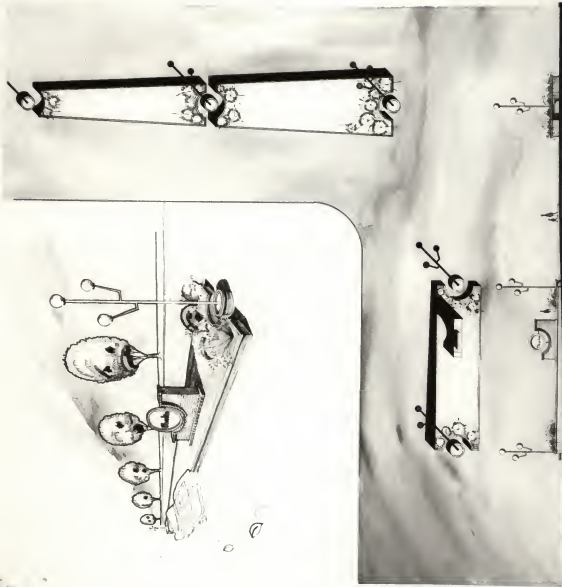


PLATE IX: THE HIGHWAY 36 ENTRANCE

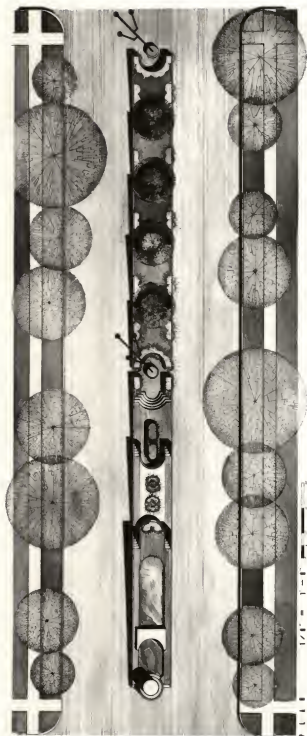


PLATE X: THE PLAN AND SECTION OF THE MEDIAN SCULPTURE SETTING



PLATE XI: "PIONEER FAMILY"

The second part of the design for Oberlin is the actual design of the central business district. Plate XII, on the following page, is a site plan of the business district of Oberlin, including the mall, surrounding parking and circulation, and the general area. The use of the mall concept was decided upon during meetings with community and civic leaders. These leaders decided that they wanted to "go all out" in the business district, and the mall was to be a part of this program. They felt that this type of feature in Oberlin could help produce the results they were looking for in terms of providing a pleasant shopping environment and the feeling of "community," both of which were in need of some sort of boost in their community.

The CBD is conceived of as having three general areas. These areas of the CBD are:

- (1) A Historical Center in the northern block,
- (2) An Agricultural Center in the southern block, and
- (3) A Shoppers' Center in the central block.

The mall includes the Historical Center and the Shoppers' Center, which consist of primarily pedestrian oriented functions. The Agricultural Center is an extension of the retail functions of the CBD, but is to contain the functions which are primarily machine and automobile oriented.

The automobile traffic has been rerouted from Pennsylvania Avenue to the two neighboring streets for the two blocks. These two blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue are now restricted to pedestrian traffic. Parking is provided for 231 cars at the rear of the retail stores and near the historical museum. This is approximately double the number of spaces which were eliminated on Pennsylvania Avenue for the mall.

The Historical Center has as its focus a historical museum to be built as it is shown in the middle of what is now Pennsylvania Avenue. This building,

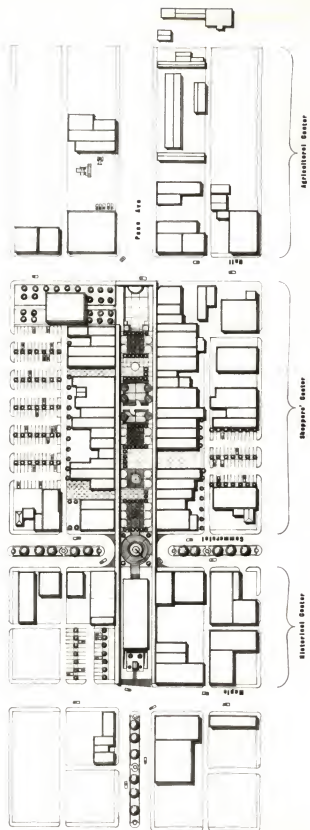


PLATE XII: THE OBERLIN, KANSAS, MALL

and its accompanying structure, a sod house, are to act as the visual focal point of visitors after they pass by the "Pioneer Family" sculpture on the route down Pennsylvania Avenue from U.S. Highway 36 to the CBD. In addition, located in the Historical Center would be a home for retired persons (converted from what is now a hotel) and dining and drinking establishments.

This Historical Center can play an important part in revitalizing Oberlin. The community now has a historical museum and sod house which are located in an area which is not well-related to the CBD or Highway 36. This relocation emphasizes the importance of the historic background of Oberlin as the location of the last Indian raid in Kansas. It is visualized as being an important item in drawing visitors to Oberlin.

The Agricultural Center is conceived of as an area adjacent to, but not on the pedestrian mall which would contain sales, show, and repair areas for farm machinery, trucks, and automobiles. Experimental test plots would be located in this area in conjunction with the Kansas State Extension Service which would also be located in this area.

This Agricultural Center would serve the purpose of concentrating all farm and automobile related functions for the convenience of those making use of them. The traffic and noise associated with these functions are removed from the pedestrian oriented functions.

A detailed plan of the shoppers' portion of the mall is shown on Plate XIII, on the following page. This one block section of Pennsylvania Avenue is the main retail sales area in Oberlin. It is located between the Historical Center to the north and the Agricultural Center to the south. It is entered by pedestrians from the parking lots behind the retail buildings via the three pedestrian entries. One of these, the entry from the west, is shown in Plate XIV. Each of these entries includes a directory of the mall, as this

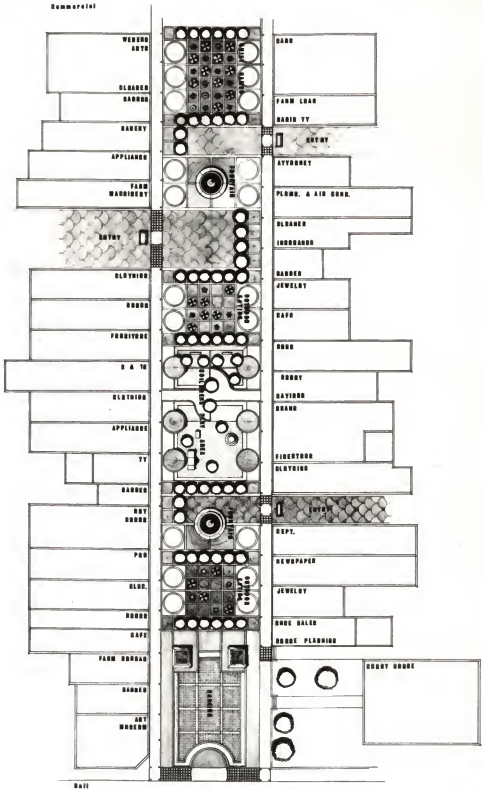


PLATE XIII: THE SHOPPERS' CENTER

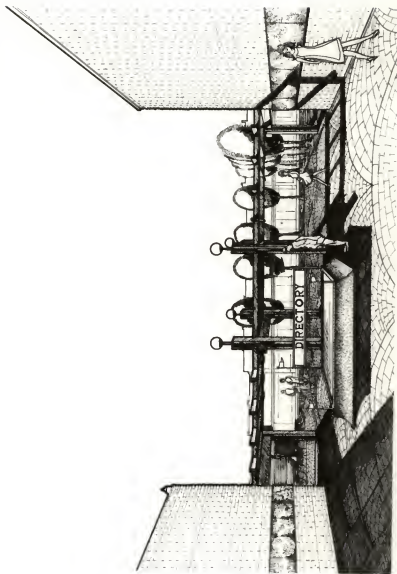


PLATE XIV: PEDESTRIAN ENTRY

drawing shows.

These three pedestrian entries enter into two plazas, each of which contains a sculptural fountain. These plazas are defined by brick patterns and trees, and serve to break the relatively long block into three distinct activity sections. The first of these activity sections is a quiet game area in close proximity to the proposed retired persons' home. Here, chairs and tables with shading umbrellas are provided for these uses. In the center activity section there are two parts. One is a large play area for children whose parents are shopping on the mall, which is sunken below the shoppers' level. The other is an area of tables and chairs for the tired shopper to rest. This is located near a restaurant so that food and drinks can be brought outside during the summer. The third activity area to the south contains another outdoor sitting area near a restaurant and a lowered area for dancing. This area is pictured in Plate XV.

All of these areas are designed in such a way as to allow unhindered pedestrian traffic across the mall. For example, a shoppers' level ramp is provided across the rather large childrens' play area for this purpose. Tunnels are provided under this for the childrens' access and enjoyment. A continuous heavy timber canopy runs the full length of the mall. This canopy is used as a unifying element for the mall and store fronts as well as for the protection of shoppers from the elements. Parts of this canopy can be seen in Plates XIV and XV.

Several store fronts were designed as examples of what could be done. Part of these are shown in Plates, XVI, XVII, XVIII and XIX. Plate XVI and XVII show three of these store fronts as they appeared before any work was done on them. Plate XVIII is the drawing done for these three fronts and one other front, and Plate XIX shows one of these fronts as it now appears. The materials

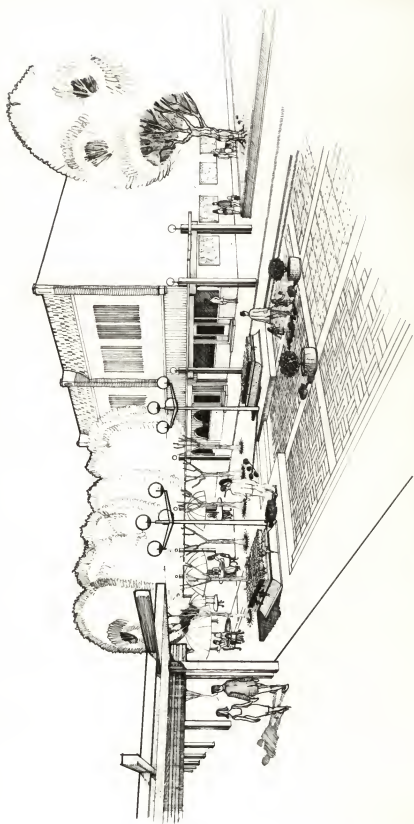


PLATE XV: VIEW OF THE MALL FROM THE SOUTH



PLATE XVI: THE ORIGINAL STORE FRONTS



PLATE XVII: THE ORIGINAL STORE FRONTS



PLATE XVII: THE DESIGN FOR THE RENOVATION OF THE STORE FRONTS

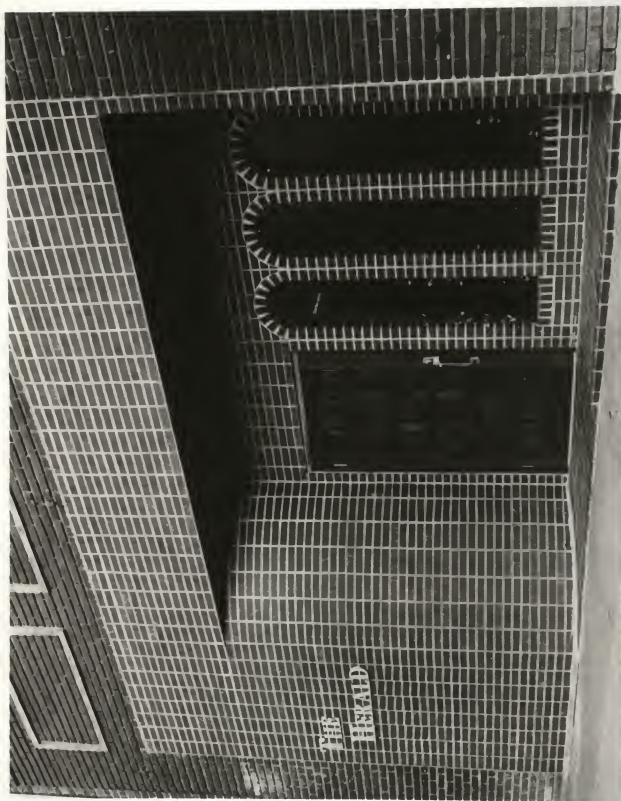


PLATE XIX: A FINISHED STORE FRONT

used throughout are coordinated so as to create a unified effect. The basic materials are brick and exposed-aggregate concrete in the paving, and brick, stucco, and wood in the structural elements.

By using this plan, the Oberlin central business district can become a pleasant environment and activity center for shoppers, children, and the elderly.

PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROJECT

Several store owners on the mall have begun work on their store fronts at their own expense. One owner, who intends to build in the near future, plans to build the canopy in front of his establishment as a part of this construction.

It is hoped that this type of enthusiastic support will continue in Oberlin. At present the expectations are that whatever gets built will be by this type of individual and group effort with assistance from the city on self-help projects which might be used to build the mall in increments. It is felt that they may be the best method in terms of building and keeping a "community" feeling, as well as providing a shoppers' mall for Oberlin.

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

It was stated previously that there are a number of small communities in rural Kansas which could use a design for business district renovation. Of 42 small communities in rural Kansas, 14 declined in population from 1950 to 1960, some as much as 20 percent. The others, while gaining, rose less than 10 percent in population in most cases. Most that rose in population more than this were of populations of greater than 5,000 persons.¹ Most of these communities need physical, as well as other redevelopment. Others are also in need of physical redevelopment.

There is little design work now being done for the business districts of small communities in rural areas. The few design projects prepared by consultants have not yet ended in construction. Few consulting firms in Kansas are equipped to work in small communities in rural areas. The cause of this is partially due to lack of viable means for consultants to use in the small rural community has been developed. Present methods cause the consultant's fee to be more than the small community can afford.

When design projects are implemented in cities and small rural communities they are of three basic types. These types are: (1), the full scale renovation project; (2) the "package" store front manufacturer's installation; and (3) design and construction by local designers and craftsmen. Only the first involves a professional design consultant.

¹Population Studies Laboratory, Reference Tables: Population Changes of Incorporated Places in Kansas 1940-1960, pp. 1-17.

Each of these has certain disadvantages which may eliminate its use in the small rural community. The full-scale renovation process is generally too expensive in terms of consultant's fees for these communities. The "package" store front manufacturer's installation often lacks design quality and comprehensiveness. The self-help project is ruled out for most communities because of a lack of local designers and craftsmen.

Each also has advantages. The full-scale renovation process combines comprehensiveness with the possibilities of good design quality. The "package" store front installation is usually inexpensive. The self-help process combines the use of local initiative with the possibility of good design quality.

The Oberlin, Kansas case study was an attempt to find a process of design which would include as many of these advantages as is possible while eliminating the disadvantages, which hinder physical development in the small rural community. It should be pointed out that the Oberlin business district type of study is not new in one sense. This is the type of process which has been used by community development agents for some time, in that it stresses working with, rather than for the community.

It seems that the process of design and implementation has several advantages. The first advantage is hinted at above. The community is involved directly in the project. This is possible because: (1), the community leaders are involved throughout the process; and (2) , local firms do all the construction work.

The second advantage is that it is possible for the quality of design to be high. This is an advantage over the "package" front designs. Professionals do the design work, just as in the Urban Renewal project or when the work is done by local artists.

The third advantage is that the consultant's fee can be held relatively

low while providing this quality of work. It is believed that by using this method the consultant can compete with the "package" store front manufacturer while providing work for local construction firms. This is done by eliminating much of the time spent by designers on construction drawings and shortening the process of design.

The final advantage is the possibility for comprehensiveness and large scale projects. This is because the project is guided by a professional who is trained in comprehensive planning. This gives it an advantage over a local artist not trained in comprehensive planning or a store front manufacturer whose main interest is in making a sale of store fronts.

Therefore, it seems that the small community can be provided with a renovated business district through a modified process which has many of the advantages of all three of the previously described processes. This modified process is without the disadvantages of the other three which have generally eliminated their use in the small community up to this time.

The major drawback of the use of the modified process is the lack of understanding of most architectural and planning consultants of this type of approach. These professionals would do well to study the work done by community development agents in this respect. Their process seems more suited to the small rural community.

Another item which might be looked on as a disadvantage to this modified process is that of time. This process takes more time to achieve visible results since it relies primarily on self-help. This may, however, become an advantage by achieving a community spirit through sustained action by the community residents working together.

Of course, the question may be raised as to the validity of design professionals working in small communities. Some would argue that these

communities are destined to die, no matter what is done to stop decline. This may or may not be true in all cases, but it remains to be determined. What is relevant here is that if the communities are not all to die, this modified design process could help to stabilize the trend. At least it would provide a more pleasant physical environment for living and shopping. In the short run most important here is that the consultant must be honest. He must not promise immediate growth, nor imminent doom. He must state the possibilities clearly to community leaders and avoid building false hopes.

This thesis was not intended to decide the future of the small community. It merely attempted to investigate the means to provide design services to these small communities.

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THE PHYSICAL DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
FOR THE SMALL COMMUNITY BUSINESS DISTRICT
A CASE STUDY OF OBERLIN, KANSAS

by

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B. Arch., Kansas State University, 1968

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Interdepartmental Program in
Regional and Community Planning

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

Small rural communities are declining due to the process of urbanization which results in out-migration of population. However, some of these communities will remain since the urbanization process seems to be finite and will end before all small rural communities disappear.

Design is a way to alleviate the physical effects of this community decline. One question is whether design services can be provided to the small rural community at a price which the community can pay. Another question is whether this design service can provide designs which can be built by local construction firms using what are, to a certain extent, limited local techniques.

The small rural community was defined utilizing a rural-urban framework. This definition was based on social, economic, political, and physical characteristics. The reasons for, and the techniques of the designer working in the small rural community were also discussed. The technique selected was that the physical designer should work this community in much the same way as the community development agent has for some time.

This author determined that there were 42 small communities (population: 2,500 to 10,000) in rural Kansas in 1960. A survey showed that little design work is being done by professional design firms in these small communities. Additionally, no construction has resulted from the design work which has been done.

There are three types of design projects being done in all classes of cities and communities of Kansas. There are: (1) the full scale renovation process, (2) those projects done by "package" store front manufacturers, and (3) those designed and built by local craftsmen. Only the first of these involves any work by a design consultant. Each of the three processes has disadvantages which may eliminate its use in many small communities in

rural areas. Primarily, these disadvantages are: (1) the full scale renovation process is too expensive, (2) the "package" store front scheme lacks comprehensiveness and design quality, and (3) the local craftsmen are not available to most small communities.

The design project for Oberlin, Kansas, business district was used as a case study to test the feasibility of a new strategy for the design process in the small community. By using this abbreviated design process, and making the design relevant to local construction techniques, it was proposed to achieve the desirable elements of the other three design processes and eliminate the disadvantages of each.

The design for Oberlin consisted of a mall concept, with related parking and store front designs. The design was an attempt to retain the historical and cultural character of the community while providing general improvement of the area.

By comparing design time and results of the other three approaches, the Oberlin type approach seems to provide an opportunity for the small community to receive design services which, for various reasons, were not otherwise available. Several advantages of this type of process were determined. Most of the disadvantages of the other processes were apparently eliminated.

One question left unanswered by this thesis is whether the small rural community can actually be stabilized through this design process, in any other way than merely improving the environment for living until the community dies. This is subject to further study.