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Central Square: Kansas City, Missouri

Thomas Knittle

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Central Square

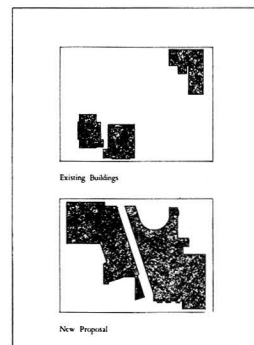
Kansas City, Missouri

Thomas Knittle

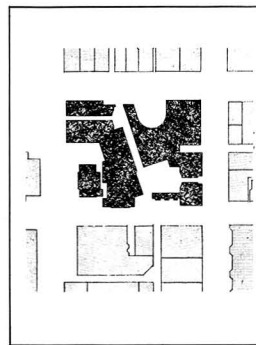
Critics: Dale Bryant
Richard Longstreth
William C. Miller

The program for this project outlines uses both specific in nature (a YMCA, restaurant, and club), and speculative in nature (new commercial and office space). Three buildings currently occupy the site. The historic Coates House Hotel, forming an "L" on the northwest corner of the site, was partially destroyed by fire in 1978 and the surviving northern section has been heavily damaged by vandalism. On the southeast corner of the site is the Financial Assurance Building, which is the only building on the site not included in the project redevelopment. The Central Fire Station, directly to the north, was the building selected to house the new YMCA, restaurant, and club. Complete design flexibility was possible in this case because the building's interior and finish materials were thought not worth retaining. The scheme was planned to take advantage of Missouri's 353 tax abatement plan, which would freeze taxes on all the buildings over a 25-year period.

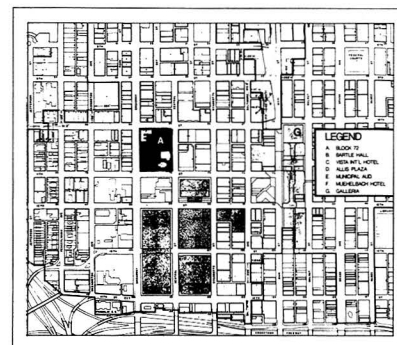
The intent of the overall scheme was to provide a terminus to what is known as the "Central Street Corridor." Within the three blocks to the south there are two theatres, the Lyric and the Folly, the Municipal Auditorium, Bartle Exposition Hall, and the new Vista International Hotel. This area is a vital part of the city, creating a place to serve the business community during the day and the hotel and theatre crowd during the evening. A primary concern throughout the de-



Old/New



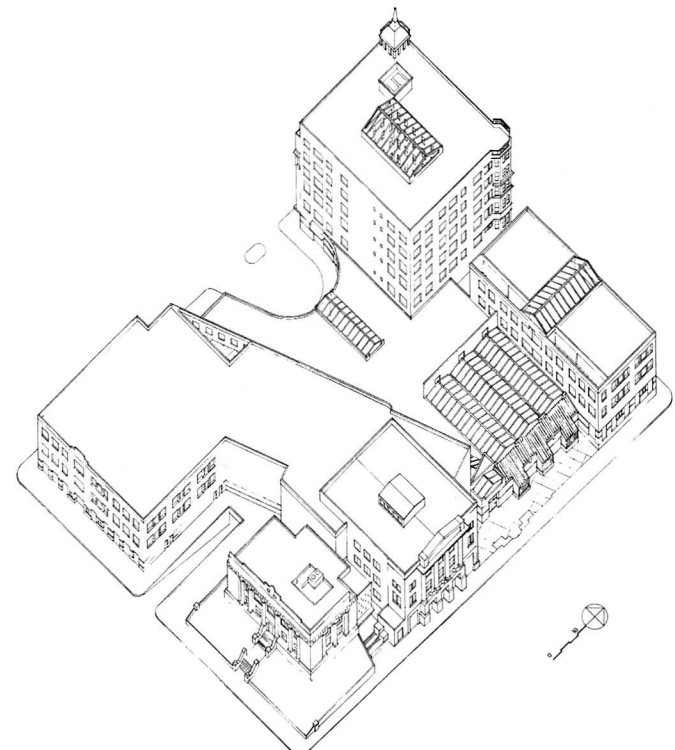
Context



Location

sign process was to support and enhance these functions.

The general part of the commercial/office development is subgrade parking with ground floor commercial and second level office space. With existing buildings defining the northwest and southwest corners of the block, the design continues this order by creating new buildings on the other two corners. A public square, fronting on Central Street, evokes images of open air markets or winter gardens. At this square, the dominant east-



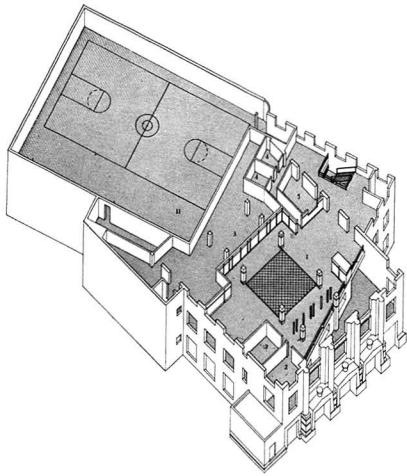
Block Axonometric

west axis is rotated, permitting a singular element—the enclosed alley—to connect the two new buildings at opposing corners of the block.

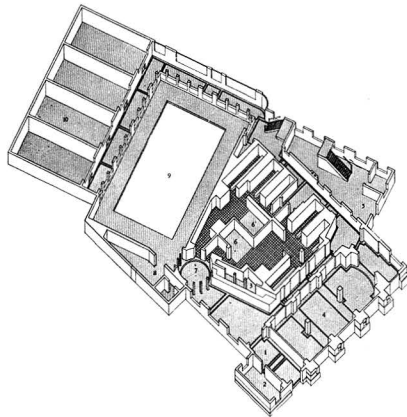
This rotation resolves itself in the back of the fire station. The entire brick facade is removed, allowing certain elements to penetrate the building shell, while the primary structure remains unaltered. The building organization is such that the large clear-span areas, such as the swimming pool and racquet ball courts, occur in the new structure behind the fire station. In

general, the character of the development responds to the commercial building of the old garment district located to the north and west of the site.

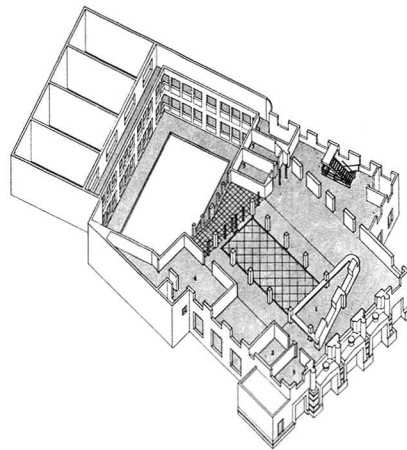
During the preliminary design phase, the scope of the project was enlarged beyond that of the initial program. As a result, the opportunity arose to develop a detailed design of one particular facet of the project. The overall concepts were elaborated into specific forms and surface treatments—constituent elements in the creation of a sense of place.



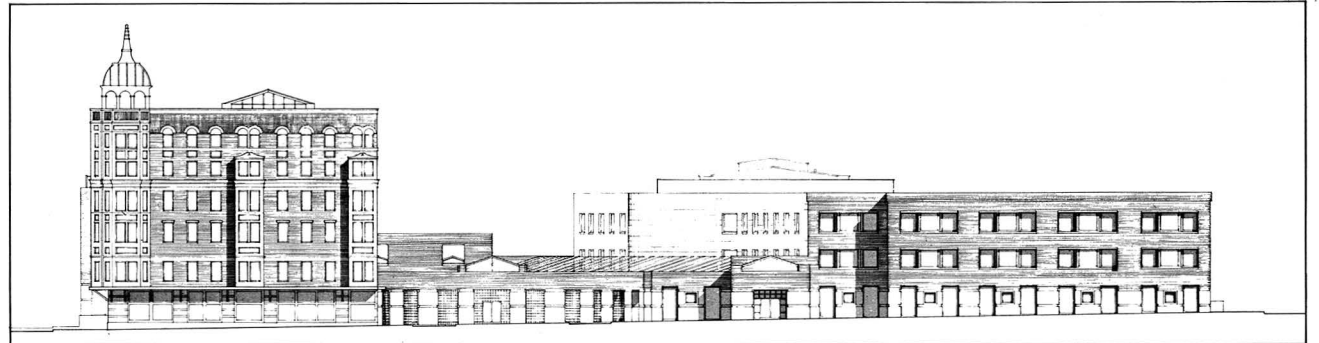
1. Dining Room
2. Meeting Rooms
3. Kitchen
4. Restrooms
5. Maitre D'/Coat check



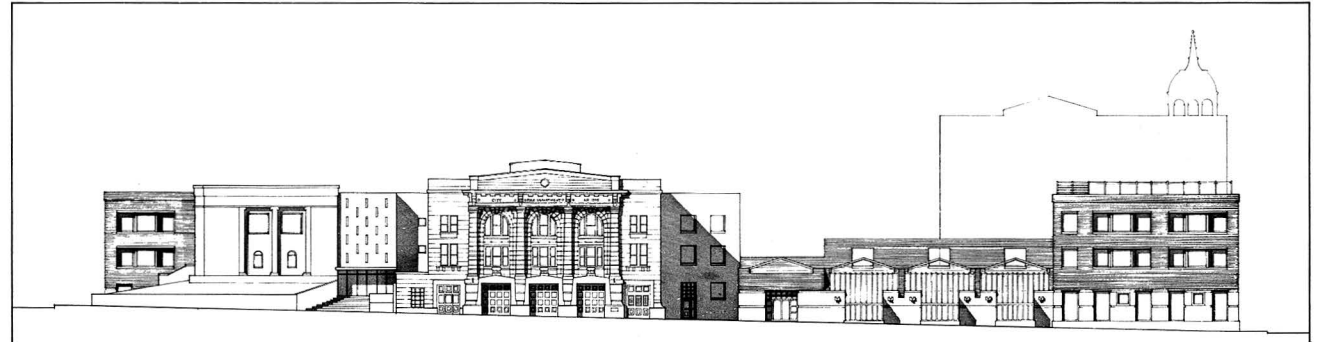
1. Entry
2. Office
3. Desk
4. Weight Room
5. Club Entry
6. Locker Rooms
7. Pool Entry
8. Pool Storage
9. 25 Meter Pool
10. Racquetball Courts
11. Gymnasium



1. Bar/Informal Dining
2. Service
3. Game Room
4. Kitchen
5. Restrooms



Broadway Elevation



Central Street Elevation

