

**Saving Downtown Grand Junction,
Colorado:**

**A Business, Government & Media
Collaboration**

**Dr. Richard L. Lael
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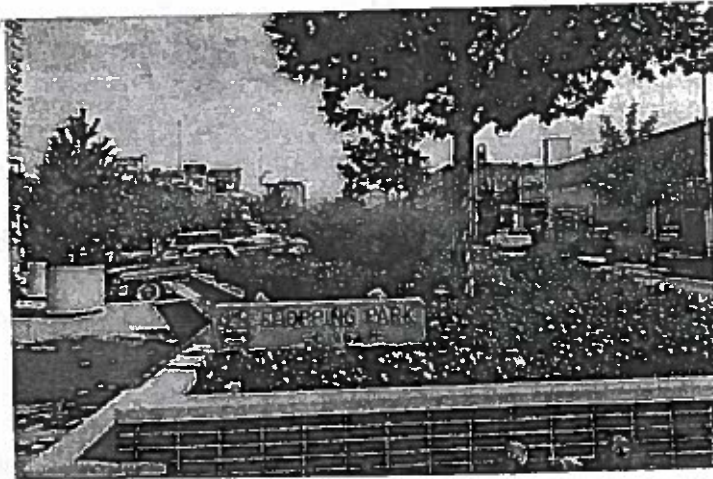


Plate I: Shopping Park Sign at 3rd and Main, 1962. Bill Thrall photograph, Lael Archives.

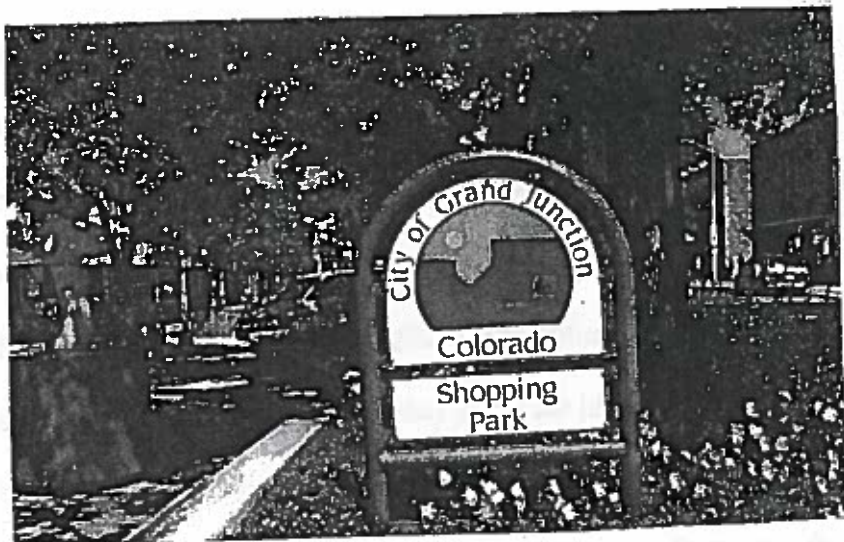


Plate II: Shopping Park Sign at 3rd and Main, 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

A “fine car” is the “sovereign right of a successful man”, proclaimed a 1956 Buick Roadmaster advertisement.¹ Refining a belief held by a growing number of Americans, company executives hoped to convince the prosperous customer to indulge himself: no longer did sovereign right entail just owning an automobile, but now it included owning a high-end Buick model. Such thinking, along with its associated advertisements in the 1950s, reflected a transportation revolution that had been under way since the beginning of the century.

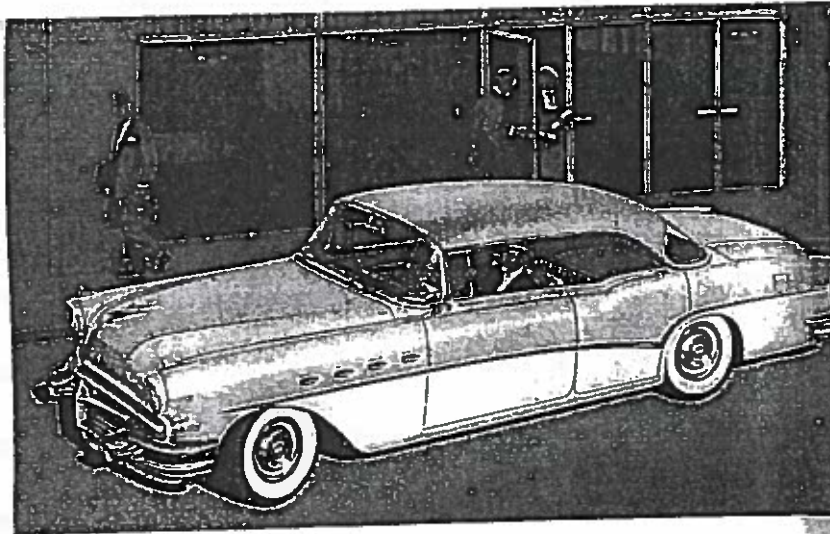
In 1910 fewer than 500,000 automobiles had been registered in the United States, one for every 218 people. By 1914 that number had tripled. By 1940 the number of cars, buses and trucks had soared to 32.4 million, one for every 4.6 people. While registrations declined 4.4% during the war, a post-war surge in consumption allowed automobile executives to boast in 1950 that there was one motor vehicle for every 3.1 residents. Seven years later it remained clear that the post-war popularity of the automobile had not waned. Vehicle registrations in 1957, totaled 67.1 million motor vehicles, significantly more than double those registered in 1945. The new figure also forced recalculation of the vehicle/people ratio to one vehicle for every 2.6 Americans.²

In 1944, although aware of the surge in traffic on the nation’s highways, the federal government justified its development of a limited interstate highway system on the basis of national defense, not traffic volume. In Colorado, under that initial proposal, an interstate highway, eventually known as I-70, would be built from Denver to the Kansas state line. There would be no mileage west of Denver.³

¹ “Sovereign Right of a Successful Man,” *Time*, LXVII (11 June 1956), 46. See Plate III.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), 7, 462.

³ “The History of I-70 in Colorado,” www.dot.state.co.us/50anniversarv/170.cfm, 1.



Sovereign right of a successful man

NATURALLY, a man of means has every right to spend his money as he sees fit.

He has no pretense to maintain, and no point to prove—except that he is his own judge of the worth of his possessions.

of Buicks—the very cream of the line of great automobiles that have won unparalleled popularity.

What does that mean? Just this:

ROADMASTER provides a new peak of distinctive characteristics for the many

But there is also this to consider:

ROADMASTER is the only car of the world's fine cars where you can enjoy the absolute smoothness and the instantaneous response of Variable Pitch Dynaflex—the only such car with the gas-saving action and the switch-pitch

Plate III: Time, LXII (11 June 1956), 46.

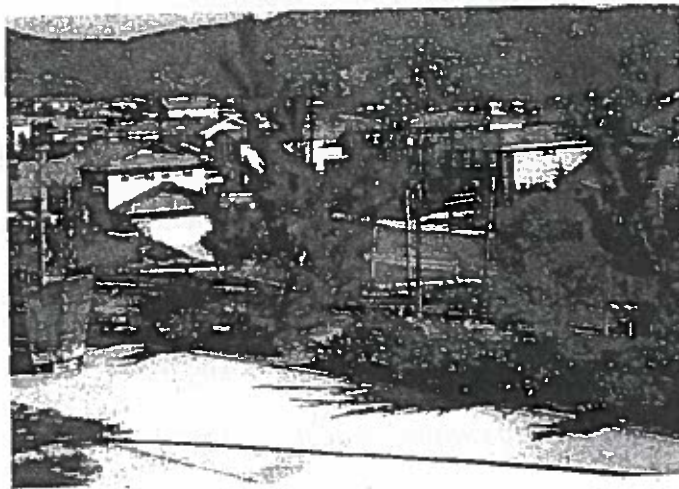


Plate IV: Suburban Growth, mid 1960s. Edith Sisac photograph, Lael Archives.

Not until President Dwight Eisenhower, in June 1956, signed a much more comprehensive highway act, committing almost \$25 billion to a massive construction fund, would plans be developed to establish a unified interstate highway system that not only could facilitate national security but could also accommodate the surge in traffic volume. As envisioned in this act, a new section of I-70 would eventually be constructed from Denver to US 91 in south central Utah.⁴ However, no company received the entire contract; rather, federal officials divided the proposed highway into segments and let bids on each segment. Construction on the first stretch in Colorado, therefore, did not begin at the terminus of the existing I-70 in Denver. Instead, in 1960, federal engineers shifted their focus hundreds of miles west to Colorado Highway 65. Over the next three years they would complete the first section of I-70 west of Denver, a twelve-mile stretch extending from Highway 65 to Clifton, Colorado, which also included a bridge over the Colorado River at Palisade.⁵ When completed, the western end of this section of I-70 would be within six miles of Grand Junction, the largest city in west-central Colorado.

Initially, to merchants and city officials across the nation, including those in Grand Junction, the popularity of motor vehicles and the expansion of the federal highway system was a positive development, making it easier for customers at some distance from a city to patronize downtown businesses. Indeed, consumers' desire to buy a car or truck often fostered the creation or expansion of dealerships in or near preexisting downtown commercial areas. But as residents in or near downtown began to move to newly constructed suburbs in greater numbers and as the volume of traffic rose, those same

⁴ Ibid. Also see "Federal Highway Act of 1956", U.S. Statutes at Large (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), volume 70, 374-402.

⁵ Ibid, 7. See Plate V.

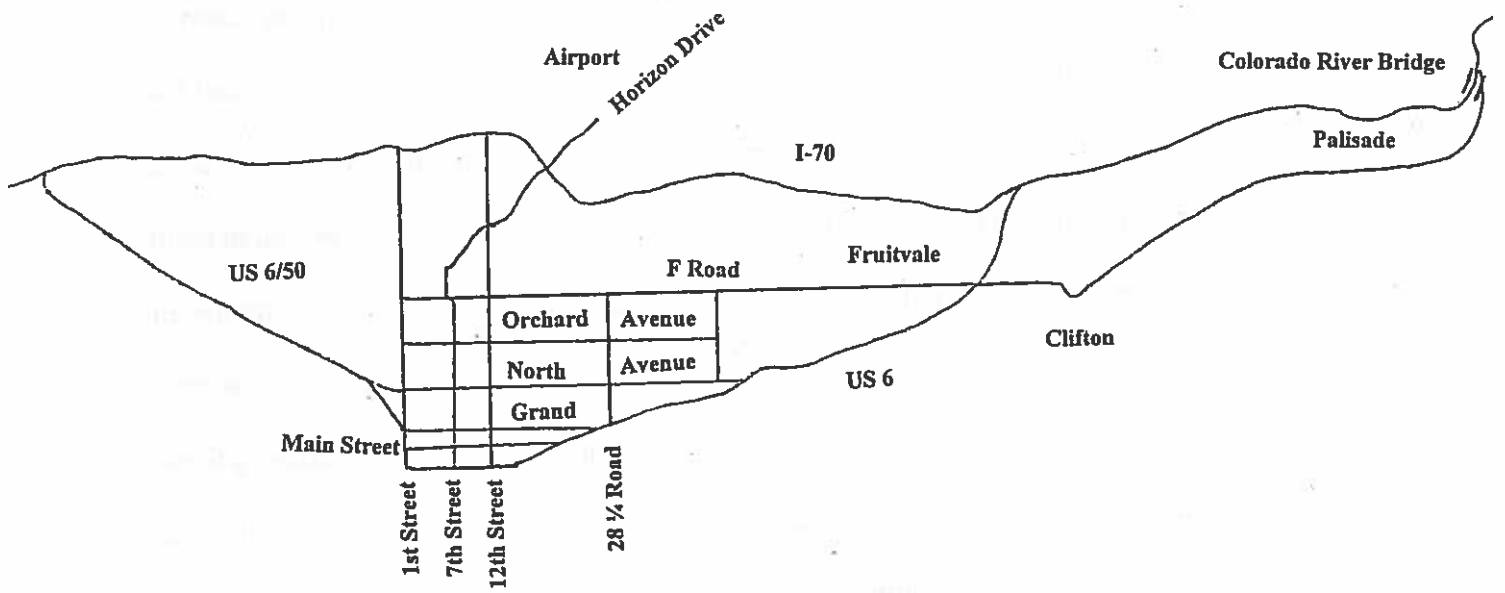


Plate V: Composite Schematic of Grand Junction and Surrounding Communities, circa 1958-1965.

merchants and city officials began to recognize some of the disadvantages of the transportation revolution.⁶

Even before the federal government launched construction of the Hwy 65 to Clifton section of I-70, commercial and civic leaders in Grand Junction and Mesa County had begun to raise questions about the impact of new suburbs and increasing traffic on their currently prosperous downtown. How serviceable, for example, would be existing streets and thoroughfares initially designed for the horse and buggy in the late nineteenth century and only minimally adapted to the automobile in the twentieth century? How much money would be required to enable downtown to cope with the dramatic growth of the volume of traffic since World War II? Would the growth of their suburban communities farther and farther from downtown foster competitive commercial and/or banking locations that would threaten the vitality and strength of downtown Grand Junction? How would the decisions of state and federal highway officials, who wished to redesign existing roads or build new ones in order to eliminate traffic congestion and speed traffic flow, impact preexisting commercial centers?

How well Grand Junction and Mesa County officials answered these and related questions, would help determine the long-term prosperity of their historic commercial center. To date, the city had prospered and had attained commercial dominance in the region. But, as these new questions emerged, so too did concerns that past success might not guarantee future security.

In retrospect, Grand Junction's rise to prominence in west-central Colorado and east-central Utah seemed surprisingly easy. Founded in September 1881 by three

⁶ See Plate IV.

entrepreneurs just north of the confluence of the Gunnison and Colorado (Grand) Rivers, Grand Junction's first general store opened in December.⁷ Although six months later it had grown to four general stores, seven saloons, three hotels/restaurants, three blacksmiths, one meat market, one pharmacy and five brick factories, its future, at least in the view of its founders, was not secure. Since their Grand Junction Town & Improvement Company still retained title to most of the property within the "city", they hoped to use land to focus the attention of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad onto their community. Approaching Denver and Rio Grande Railroad officials, the entrepreneurs offered half of their company's stock if the railroad would extend its line through Grand Junction and make the new community one of its divisional headquarters, building a roundhouse and related maintenance shops. Their gamble paid off: D &RG officials agreed, investing \$200,000 and quickly launching construction of line, depot and repair facilities.

Within a year, strengthened by the railroad agreement, Grand Junction became the county seat of Mesa County. By the time the railroad had finished construction in 1886, the city's population had risen to 1200, including eight attorneys, six physicians, and two shoemakers, along with four churches, two newspapers and two hardware stores. That same year saw the administrative consolidation of four water companies, ensuring fresh water to the city. However, by 1894 city leaders decided to establish their own municipal water system, supplied by creeks from Grand Mesa, a nearby 10,000 foot plateau.

⁷ The following three paragraphs are based on information contained in Kathleen Underwood's Town Building on the Colorado Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 9-71; and History & Business Directory of Mesa County, Colorado (Grand Junction: The Mesa County Democrat, 1886), 45-72. See Plate VI for the street configuration created by the city's founders. In 1921, the United States Congress formally renamed the Grand River, the Colorado River.

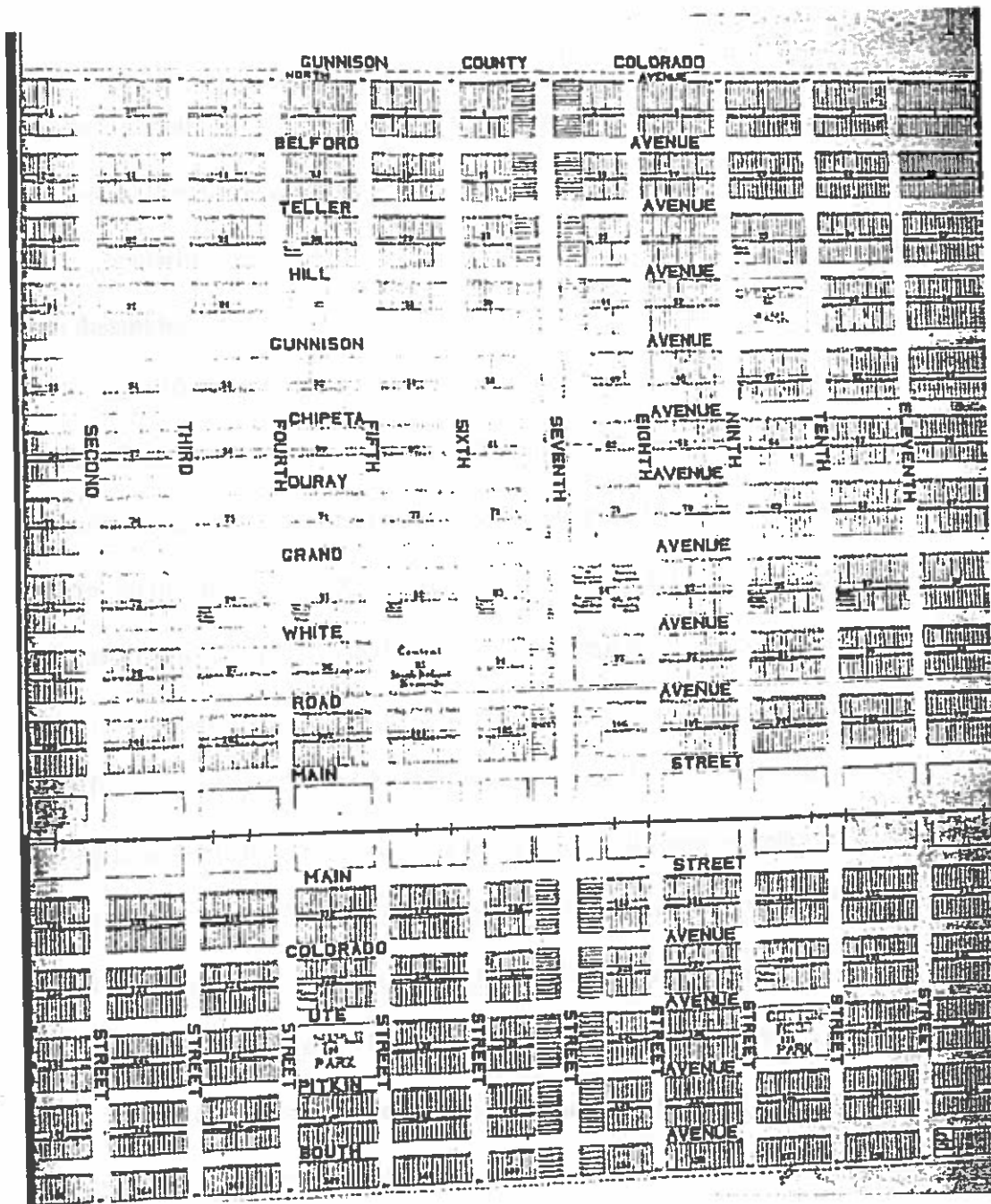


Plate VI: "Plat of the Town of Grand Junction", 1882. Museum of Western Colorado.

These early successes enabled the city quickly to become the largest city between Denver and Salt Lake City, serving as the commercial hub for individuals and communities in west-central Colorado and east-central Utah.⁸ As a result, initially, the rise in popularity and ownership of automobiles and trucks seemed to facilitate travel from distant locales into the city.

Not until 1947, as more shoppers traveled downtown, fostering greater congestion, did the City Council act to address two, closely linked, disadvantages associated with the automobile—too little parking and traffic congestion. In that year it authorized the installation of parking meters, charging a penny for each twelve minutes, as a means of discouraging all-day parkers and reducing the time a potential customer circled Main Street looking for a parking location. Likewise, to discourage trucks from blocking a lane of traffic, which also added to congestion and driver frustration, it also designated loading zones. Such disadvantages, however, were still seen as relatively minor irritants, not any major threat to the city's commercial dominance in the region.⁹

Nor is it clear that city or county leaders realized the potential disadvantage of federal engineers rerouting major US highways to facilitate traffic flow from one community to another. Indeed, they welcomed an announcement in 1949 that portions of US 6, one of the major roads into the city from Fruitvale, Clifton, Palisade and points east, would be straightened, eliminating the previous stair-step design. In this case, the straightening of a federal highway simply made it easier to reach downtown.

As the volume of traffic to and through Grand Junction mushroomed, the decision by the Colorado State Highway Department in 1951 to begin construction of an East-West

⁸ See Plates VII, VIII, IX and X.

⁹ Grand Junction Ordinance 742, 20 February 1947, Grand Junction ISYS Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.

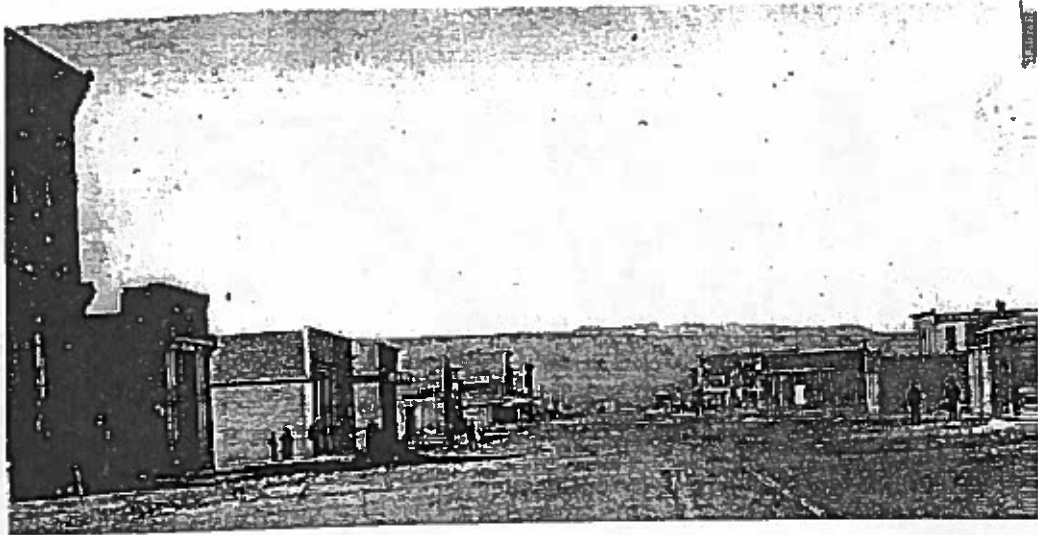


Plate VII: Looking west along Main Street from 6th Street, 1884. Museum of Western Colorado.

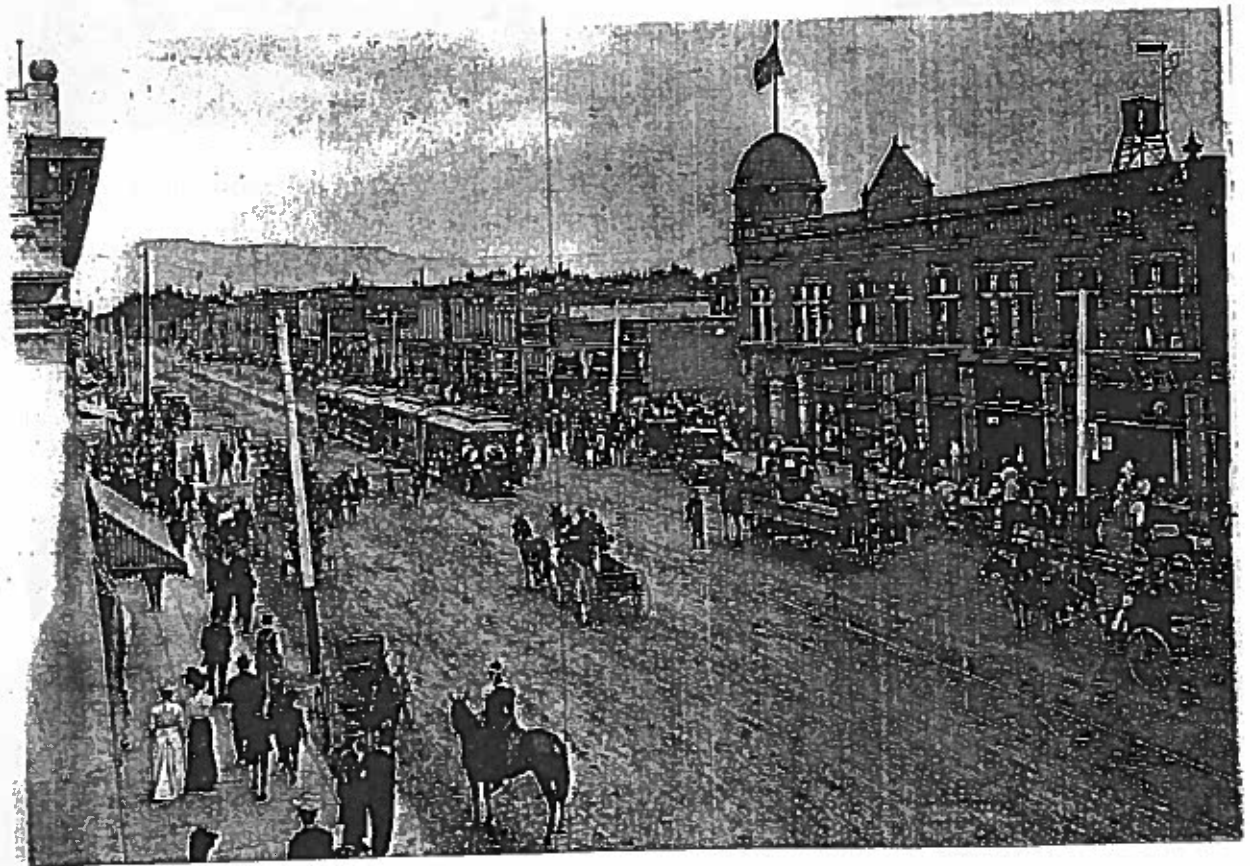


Plate VIII: Main Street, 1909. Museum of Western Colorado.

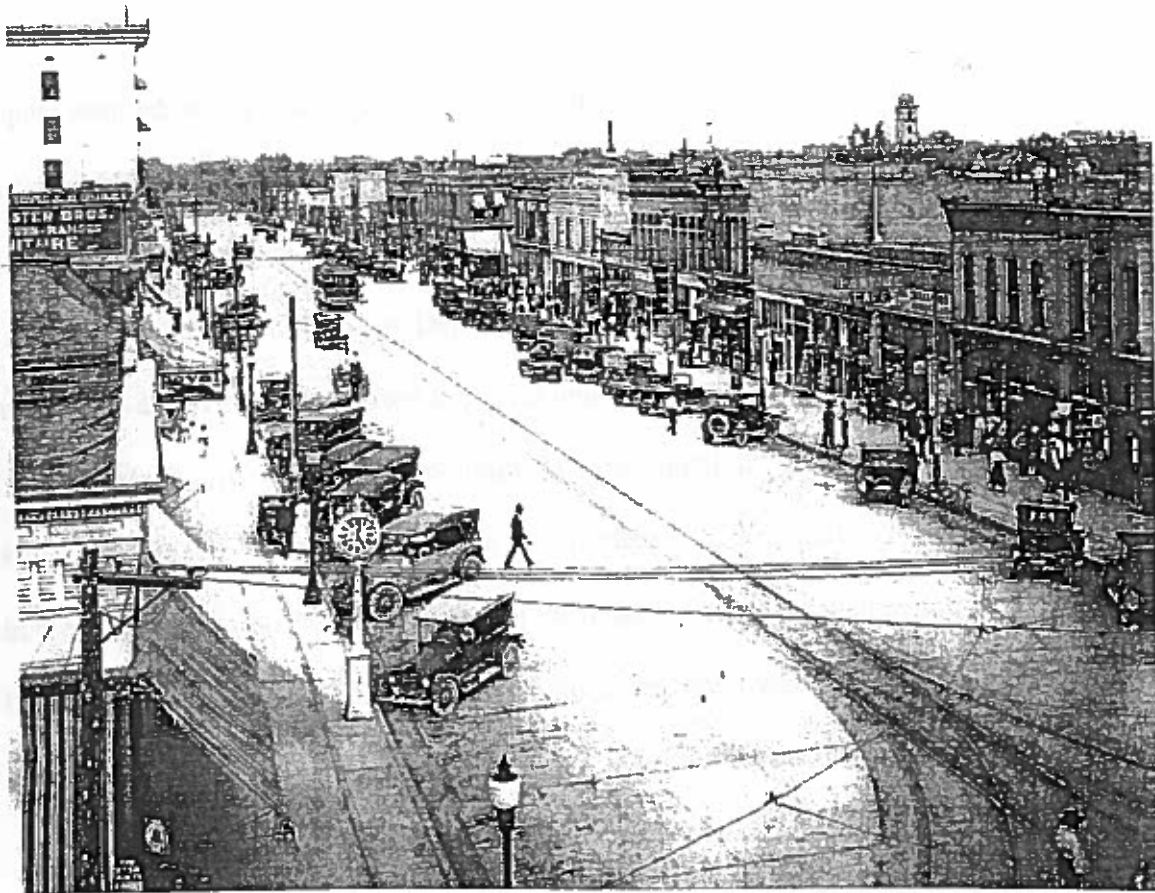
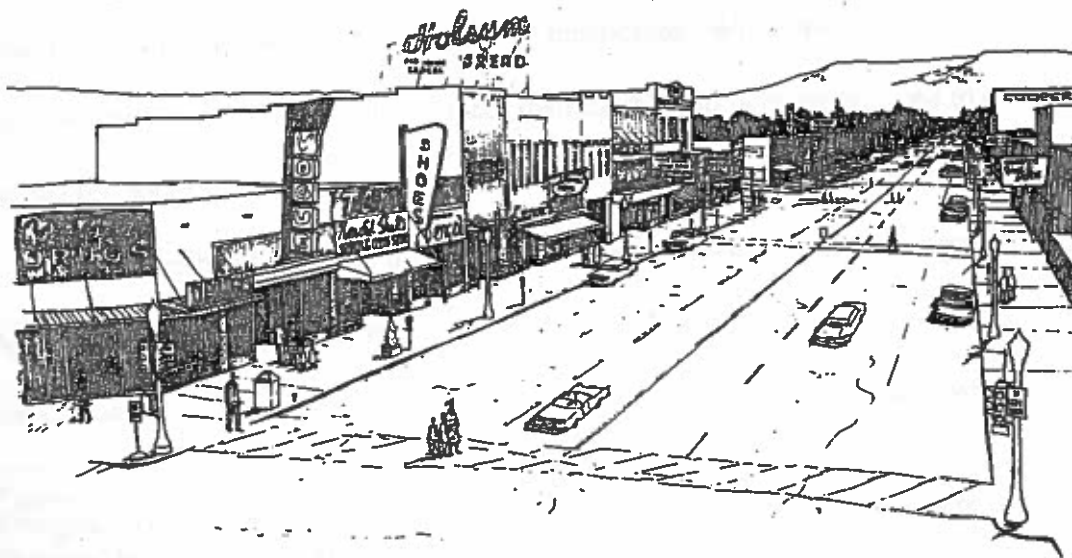


Plate IX: Main Street, no date. Museum of Western Colorado.



m a i n s t r e e t t o d a y

Plate X: Artist View of Main Street, 1960. Operation Foresight, I-17.

Expressway along Ute Avenue to facilitate thru-traffic south of the business district, again seemed to city leaders a positive development. So too was the state's decision to begin widening North Avenue from its eastern end to 8th Street, which would facilitate traffic flow from the east/northeast.¹⁰

However, the State Highway Department did not stop with those measures. In 1955 the state's urban engineer alerted a Denver audience that "the traffic headache... [still] exists in every city of the state, [including] Grand Junction...." Only "bigger roads, better roads", he observed, could solve the problem.¹¹ Citing that same rationale earlier in the summer, Ralph McCoy, the state's local district engineer, had announced that the Ute Expressway would be extended north along 1st Street where it would join a new connector road which would join US 6-50 northwest of Grand Junction.¹²

Whereas in 1951 local leaders generally accepted state and federal decisions to reroute highways as progress, by 1955 alarm bells had begun to ring. Since the Ute Expressway lay only two blocks south of Main Street and, under the 1955 state plan, would turn north on 1st Street, crossing Main, before connecting to US 6-50 northwest of town, it still didn't seem to be a real threat to downtown businesses. While traffic would not automatically travel through the business district, it could perhaps be lured to divert one or two blocks to shop, relax or eat.

On the other hand, by 1955 the state's earlier decision to widen and improve North Avenue in order to facilitate thru-traffic and avoid downtown congestion, was proving too successful, at least in the eyes of downtown merchants. Perhaps their worst fear was

¹⁰ Grand Junction City Council Minutes, 11 July 1951, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹¹ "Highway Department Has Plans for Major Traffic Routes", The Daily Sentinel, 28 September 1955, 7. Hereafter The Daily Sentinel will be shortened to TDS.

¹² "Council, Chamber to Study Traffic, Parking Tonight," TDS, 6 July 1955, 11; and City Council Minutes, 6 July 1955, GJ ISYS Archives.

the emergence of a rival business district or districts along that corridor. Nor did that fear seem so far-fetched. Attracted by the increased traffic, new businesses, especially between 3rd and 5th Streets, began petitioning the city to rezone sections of North Avenue from residential to business. In 1954, the council also felt increased pressure to install a stop light at 5th and North to cope with the traffic at that increasingly dangerous intersection.¹³ By 1956 commercial owners along North Avenue had even established a North Avenue Businessmen's Association, which, with the support of the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, urged the state to further widen North Avenue and supported the state's decision to erect signage that made it clear that North Avenue was a "bypass", avoiding downtown completely.¹⁴

That the Chamber of Commerce, composed mostly of downtown merchants, supported bypass signage seems at first surprising. However, since 1953, the Chamber had been increasingly concerned with the negative impact of traffic congestion in the downtown business district. Following its own study of traffic circulation and volume, in May 1955 the Chamber reported to the City Council that downtown traffic congestion had since late 1953 become "a serious problem".¹⁵ Its report identified four major areas of concern. First: diagonal parking, long the norm for downtown, fostered narrow driving lanes, slowing traffic and adding to congestion. Furthermore traffic volume had become so heavy on key streets that parking of any kind hindered the smooth flow of traffic. Second: too many parking slots downtown were being occupied by "all day" parkers, forcing potential customers to either circle until they found a parking spot, or to

¹³ City Council Minutes, 7 July 1954, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁴ "Chamber Backs 'Bypass' Label for North Avenue," *TDS*, 29 June 1956, 5.

¹⁵ "Chamber of Commerce Report on Off-Street Parking, 13 May 1955", contained in City Council Minutes, 18 May 1955, GJ ISYS Archives.

travel further away from downtown to park. Third: downtown traffic signals were not coordinated and did not therefore provide an ideal traffic flow. And fourth: the risk to pedestrians as they crossed streets had dramatically increased in recent years.

It was, the Chamber representatives urged, time for the city to act. If it did not do so, they warned, some downtown businesses might relocate to avoid the congestion, lack of parking and other problems. Downtown businesses, it seemed increasingly clear, could lose their control of the regional retail market if either businesses or customers moved to outlying shopping areas, whether along North Avenue or Ute.

The City Council immediately considered the parking issue. Although its members agreed that abolishing parking along portions of streets, including 5th, Ute and Pitkin, and shifting to parallel parking on others, as the Chamber suggested, would ease congestion, they were concerned that it would also eliminate six hundred parking spaces. Their concern came as no surprise to the Chamber, which in drafting its recommendations had recognized that such a loss was unacceptable. To address that concern, the Chamber had also included a recommendation that the city fund off-street parking. Unwilling to embrace such radical suggestions, the Council instead agreed to install one-hour parking meters on Main Street in an effort to discourage "all day" parkers. It did, however, establish a three-man sub-committee to further study off-street parking. As for the other recommendations, it postponed them to some later date.¹⁶

Two months later, when the Chamber inquired about the council's progress on its other recommendations, the council reported that no decisions had been made, although it had just begun discussing the diagonal/parallel parking issue and the possibility of one

¹⁶ City Council Minutes, 18 May 1955, GJ ISYS Archives.

way streets. It also reported that it had authorized a survey of driveway and curb cuts downtown to see if any could be eliminated so parking slots could be added. Wanting a more systematic, professional survey of downtown traffic and parking issues before proceeding further, the city council decided to authorize the City Manager to hire a traffic engineer to conduct such a study. In response, at the end of July 1955, George Barton, representing Associated Consultants of Evanston, Illinois, arrived for a preliminary visit.¹⁷

By fall, the need for action intensified. The Daily Sentinel reported in November that the city “continues to be one of the busiest and fastest expanding cities of Colorado and of the intermountain empire.” Indeed between 18 and 25 November, the city had issued \$345,000 in new building permits, fifteen percent of the total eventually approved in 1956.¹⁸ However, despite such new construction and increased traffic, not until February 1956 did Adrian Koert of Associated Consultants meet with the Council to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations.¹⁹ His firm, now renamed George W. Barton & Associates, subsequently delivered its final report on April 2nd.

In that final report, Koert outlined seven key recommendations.²⁰ First, the city had so far failed to designate, in terms of long term planning, which streets would be “main” conduits and which would be “secondary.” For future planning, he noted, making those decisions now was essential. Second: the city needed to coordinate all traffic lights so as to ensure the most efficient flow of traffic. It also needed to consider adding traffic lights, especially at 5th and Colorado. Third: Given the rise in traffic volume, the city

¹⁷ City Council Minutes, 6 July 1955 and 3 August 1955, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁸ “Editorial: Still We Grow,” TDS, 28 November 1955, 4.

¹⁹ “Report on City’s Parking Problem Due This Month”, TDS, 6 February 1956, 3.

²⁰ “Traffic Plan for City Told,” TDS, 1 March 1956, 1; and City Council Minutes, 2 April 1956, GJ ISYS Archives.

needed to plan for a second bridge over the Colorado River—Barton & Associates recommended one be added at 7th Street. Fourth: Currently the city allowed traffic to back into thoroughfares from driveways. That not only was dangerous, but also slowed the flow of traffic. That practice should be banned. Koert's fifth through seventh recommendations focused on parking downtown.

Aware of the Chamber's earlier efforts to address the parking problem, especially by having the city acquire off-street parking lots, Koert first reported on a survey his firm had conducted at the prime business hour of 3 p.m. He began by reminding the city that between 1st and 8th and Ute and Grand, the city had 2520 parking spaces, 670 metered, 1000 unmetered, and 850 in private lots. Based on the firm's survey of downtown parking at 3 p.m., eighty-five percent of those spaces were normally occupied. The fifteen percent that were not, were on the fringe, generally considered by potential customers as undesirable. The survey also revealed that sixty-four percent of those parked downtown at 3 p.m. were employees or owners, fifteen percent were visitors to banks or doctors and five percent engaged in "other" business. That left only sixteen percent of the spaces occupied by "shoppers"!

The Barton Report applauded the city's adoption of one-hour parking, but urged that that concept be expanded to cover additional streets downtown. Furthermore, the city should establish nine-hour parking meters on the fringe of downtown specifically for owners and employees. However, it noted, even if the city added one and nine hour meters, there was still too little customer parking downtown. As a result, it recommended the city use parking meter revenue to fund off-street parking. Its final

recommendation on parking reminded the city that it had so far established no policy on alley parking, an omission that should be corrected.²¹

Despite receiving the Chamber's report in May 1955 and having the essential Barton recommendations in February 1956, the Council, after listening to Koert's presentation on April 2nd, referred the Barton findings to a six-man committee for further study, asking it to submit its own recommendations to the City Council on May 16th, the same date the Chamber of Commerce was also scheduled to present its ideas relating to off-street parking.²²

Perhaps one reason for the six week delay was rising tension between a majority of the City Council and City Manager W.D. Toyne. Hired in February 1950, Toyne and the Council seemed to work well together for the first few years of his service. But that began to change in 1955 as the city faced significant population, business and traffic growth. In a March 1955 editorial focused more on Council elections than on Toyne, The Daily Sentinel lamented on how voters knew "comparatively nothing about respective policies and aims of the men who seek to direct the course of municipal affairs in this crucial era of our local history."²³

County commissioners, by contrast, seemed more forward-looking and transparent. That same March, county leaders, surprised by the rapid rise of new subdivisions outside city limits acknowledged that they lacked a master plan for future growth or even clear standards to guide subdivision developers. Nor, until now, had they seen the need for an advisory body that focused on future growth and development. No longer, they

²¹ Ibid.

²² City Council Minutes, 2 April 1956, GJ ISYS Archives. The sub-committee consisted of three councilmen, the city manager and the city engineer. Also see "Council Cautious on Parking", TDS, 3 April 1956, 1.

²³ "Editorial: The Uninformed Electorate," 31 March 1955, 4.

concluded, could they guide the county with minimal planning or policies. As a result, the commissioners appropriated \$3,000 to create the Mesa County Planning Commission, initially charged with developing a county master plan, focusing particularly on regulations to control/guide future subdivision development.²⁴ When planning members realized they lacked the expertise to develop such a plan and that to qualify for federal aid they would need to consolidate local planning efforts, they convinced county leaders to approach Grand Junction and School District 51 officials, proposing they jointly hire a professional consulting firm, Local Planning Service, to formulate a master plan beneficial to all three. Both the Toyne administration and school leaders supported this effort at longer range planning.²⁵

However, despite Toyne's support for a county-wide master plan, he did not rush to formulate policies to address growth and increased traffic unique to the city itself. Nor, by fall 1955, did he seem appropriately attentive to some routine administrative functions. Since at least March, he and the Council had been in discussions with State Highway Engineer Ralph McCoy about plans to extend the Ute Expressway from Main Street, north along 1st, past Grand, to a new connector road that would merge with US 6-50 northwest of the business district.²⁶ But when the State Highway Department announced final plans in September, the City Council "protested that the proposed [1st and Grand] intersection would be dangerous and cause traffic congestion." A surprised McCoy, who had already modified the plans for that intersection in response to concerns

²⁴ "Planning Group Rules on Projects", TDS, 22 March 1955, 1; and "County Gives \$3,000 to Planning Commission", TDS, 22 March 1955, 2.

²⁵ City Council Minutes, 16 May 1956, GJ ISYS Archives. The new planning body became known as the Western Colorado Regional Planning Commission. The county and the city would contribute forty percent each to its budget while the school district would contribute twenty percent.

²⁶ "Freeway Extension to Be Sought," TDS, 31 March 1955, 1; "Council, Chamber To Study Traffic, Parking Tonight, TDS, 6 July 1955, 11; and City Council Minutes, 6 July 1955, GJ ISYS Archives.

by the Grand Junction Police Department, replied, noting that since these data had been given local officials “he had not heard from the city”. Clearly in the view of the Council someone—logically the City Manager—had dropped the ball. Therefore, it specifically instructed Toyne to consult immediately with the state.²⁷

One month later, in October, the Council learned that the City Manager had not yet completed a detailed city budget which was supposed to be considered at the Council’s upcoming traditional budget session.²⁸ However, despite these hiccups in Toyne-Council relations, no severe crisis emerged until seven months later, when United Air Lines suspended all flights into Grand Junction’s Walker Field, citing dangerous, inadequate runways. Responding to UAL’s charges of inadequate city maintenance, Toyne critics blamed the City Manager for using poor judgment in how he spent funds allocated for the airport. He had, they alleged, badly misjudged, spending money on runway repairs and patches rather than on new runway construction. Furthermore, in their view, he had moved too slowly to seek alternative sources of revenue to supplement city airport appropriations. Not until early March 1956, for example, had he sought Council approval to seek federal funds to improve Walker Field and to seek a public vote that would establish joint city-county ownership of the facility.²⁹ Too little, too late, in the view of his critics in May.

Immediately following a confrontation with City Council President Warren Lowe and Councilman John Harper over the airport on May 15th, Toyne penned a one sentence

²⁷ “Highway Department OK’s Plan for Right-of-way”, TDS, 28 September 1955, 4.

²⁸ “City Budget Session May Be Delayed”, TDS, 12 October 1955, 12.

²⁹ “City Manager Quits Post, Offers No Reason for Action”, TDS, 16 May 1956, 1; “Council Acts Tonight on Resignation”, TDS, 16 May 1956, 1; “Discord Marks City Council Session on Hot Questions”, TDS, 17 May 1956, 1,5; “Vote Shows Council Feelings on Toyne”, TDS, 17 May 1956, 1, 5; and City Council Minutes, 16 May 1956, GJ ISYS Archives.

letter of resignation and submitted it to the full council for action.³⁰ That resignation would now be considered at the same May 16th meeting where the Council would hear its sub-committee's recommendations relating to the Barton Report as well as the Chamber of Commerce recommendations on off-street parking.

Although he had submitted his resignation, Toyne remained City Manager and so attended the Council meeting that evening. There were, however, no recommendations from the six-man Council sub-committee relating to the Barton Report. On the other hand, Leland Schmidt, spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce, did present his body's recommendations relating to downtown parking.³¹ The Chamber, he explained, endorsed the idea of off street parking, funded in part from parking meter revenue. To increase that revenue flow, the Chamber also recommended adding more parking meters downtown. Acknowledging that such revenue had in the past been earmarked for other uses, the Chamber urged the city to adopt a graduated funding approach to acquire off-street parking. It recommended that in 1957 the city should earmark twenty percent of its meter revenue for off-street parking; in 1958 that percentage should rise to forty percent; then in 1959 and each subsequent year, it should rise to sixty percent. At the same time, it acknowledged that an alternative approach to help mitigate the parking problem would be to attract a corporation to establish a public transportation system downtown. However, it noted, the city had already unsuccessfully attempted to attract such a corporation. As to most of the other Barton recommendations, it remained silent, leaving those issues to be addressed by the City Manager and the full Council.

³⁰ "City Manager Quits Post, Offers No Reason for Action", TDS, 16 May 1956, 1.

³¹ City Council Minutes, 16 May 1956, GJ ISYS Archives; and "Chamber Urges City Council to Tackle Traffic Problems", TDS, 17 May 1956, 5.

Deferring action on any recommendations at the conclusion of the presentations, the Council turned to Toyne's letter of resignation. Council President Lowe clearly welcomed Toyne's departure. In an interview with The Daily Sentinel on the 16th, Lowe acknowledged that Toyne's resignation had been discussed during their confrontation, "as it had been many times before."³² Four other councilmen joined with Lowe, therefore, to accept the resignation, effective in ninety days. Two councilmen, Herbert Wright and John Harper, however, felt the criticism of Toyne was unfair. To Wright, The Daily Sentinel's constant negative portrayal of Toyne was the key factor in the push for his removal. Despite their protest, the Council by a 5-2 vote accepted Toyne's resignation, effective in ninety days.³³

Moving promptly, Lowe contacted Robert Cheever, former mayor of Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1952 and 1953, to ascertain his interest in the job. Cheever's sister was a Grand Junction resident and his brother was a state senator representing Colorado Springs. Cheever did apply for the position, as did three other candidates. Without screening the other three applicants, the Council offered the job to Cheever, over the initial objections of Councilmen Wright and Harper who opposed the abbreviated process, although not to Cheever per se. The former Cheyenne mayor assumed his duties as city manager on June 25, 1956.³⁴

In a series of meetings that summer and fall, Cheever met with the off-street parking committee of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the desirability of funding off-street

³² "City Manager Quits Post, Offers No Reason for Action", TDS, 16 May 1956, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*; "Vote Shows Council Feelings on Toyne", TDS, 17 May 1956, 1; and City Council Minutes, 16 May 1956, GJ ISYS Archives.

³⁴ "City Council May Pick Manager", TDS, 20 June 1956, 5; "Decisions on Airport Lease, Zoning", TDS, 21 June 1956, 1; "Council Appoints New City Manager", TDS, 21 June 1956, 1, 3.; "Editorial: We Have a New City Manager", TDS, 24 June 1956, 4.

parking in 1957 and after with the graduated revenue plan it had proposed in May. Despite the Chamber's continued support for that idea, Cheever remained unconvinced. As a result, he proposed, and the Council agreed, to reject the Chamber's parking proposal. Instead, the city would immediately lease a parking lot at 8th and Main on which it would install meters. Those meters would pay for the lease. He and the Council also agreed to seek other available downtown lots that could be leased and funded in the same manner.³⁵ Although not the ideal solution in the view of the Chamber, those actions did finally commit the city to establishing off-street parking, although at a slower pace than some thought desirable.

Pleased that the city had begun addressing parking in a more effective manner, the Chamber now urged the City Council to blend the Barton recommendation calling for a master traffic plan into a comprehensive master plan to guide all future development. The Daily Sentinel enthusiastically endorsed such an approach.³⁶ While, over the next year and a half the city the city addressed many pressing issues, including the reconstruction of Walker Field, the rezoning of residential areas downtown into business districts, and the widening, redesigning, and repaving of North Avenue, it did so on a case by case basis, not guided by a master plan

Without such a document, gaps in city planning continued to be revealed. In 1958, for example, the Planning Commission, evenly split on whether to allow a filling station to be erected at 5th and Grand.³⁷ Opponents argued its construction would limit downtown business district expansion as well as contribute to traffic congestion at the busy intersection. Furthermore, in the judgment of Cheever, no additional filling station was

³⁵ City Council Minutes, 19 September 1956, GJ ISYS Archives.

³⁶ "Editorial: Master Plan Merits Serious Study", TDS, 14 January 1957, 4.

³⁷ Planning Commission Minutes, 30 June 1958, GJ ISYS Archives.

needed since one already existed at 6th and Grand. Proponents, on the other hand, felt refusal was rather arbitrary since there was no clear city guidelines on where such stations could be built or how close together was desirable.

Planning Committee members also noted before year's end that they lacked guidance from the council on how to regulate curb cuts within the city or even how to handle requests of annexation of property into city limits.³⁸ Howard McMullin, one of its members, argued that lacking such guidance, the Planning Commission itself should create a "firm and definite policy on areas to eventually be included in city limits". Personally he wanted a policy that refused annexation to lands lying south and west of the Colorado River and in the Redlands area west of the Gunnison River. Lacking a formal city policy on this and other issues before them, committee members simply reacted to the circumstances surrounding each demand for its action, a process that led to perceptions of favoritism and/or arbitrariness.³⁹ However, despite Planning Committee concerns, the City Council and Cheever still did not create a master plan for future development that would encompass all these issues.

In the view of Preston Walker, publisher of The Daily Sentinel, the businessmen of Grand Junction also were not sufficiently forward-looking. In November 1958 he chided the Chamber of Commerce for spending too little money to attract new businesses, tourists and vacationers to the city. "The comparatively small budget from Grand Junction is a sad commentary on the importance which our businessmen put on bringing business into their own city. Sooner or later they must raise their sights if Grand Junction is to grow and prosper as it should.... It will take more money and far greater capacity to

³⁸ Planning Committee Minutes, 29 October 1958, GJ ISYS Archives.

³⁹ Howard McMullin to Members, Planning Commission, 4 August 1958, contained as an attachment to Planning Committee Minutes, 30 June 1958, GJ ISYS Archives.

plan for the future if the people of Grand Junction are going to get what they want in the way of a modern progressive city. The businessmen seem to want it all right. They just don't want to pay for it."⁴⁰ His frustration with businessmen and the Chamber also extended to Cheever and other city leaders.

Within a month, Walker, on December 21st, proclaimed on The Sentinel's front page: "Lack of Planning Threatens City". In an "Editor's Note", appearing just below the headline, Walker wrote:

Hopeful that some concrete action may result before another 12 months have passed, The Daily Sentinel is today starting a series of articles on the crying need for planning in Grand Junction. The same need is a major problem in all western Colorado cities. Plans and suggestions made are not necessarily final answers—they are the basis for thinking on the part of communities. One fact brooks no argument—there is no planning as of now and if growth is to be possible, intelligent and realistic PLANNING AND ACTION is vital."

Disillusioned with the planning process, Walker blasted the Planning Commission that, although reorganized in 1957, still had developed no master plan for growth. The commission, he noted, "was alibiing that growth of the city created pressure which made it impossible to come up with a master plan." The result: "Business is huddled in one spot, residents in another, industrialists in another, not by planning, but as a sort of protection, like cattle in a blizzard."

City leaders had played Rip Van Winkle too long. Walker proclaimed in this first "editor's note" that Grand Junction's failure to plan for the future threatened to lead to "the disease... called 'decentralization'". By inaction, he asserted, city leaders are "courting the identical community disintegration which has exploded many other promising cities into a series of small time, disorganized shopping centers."

⁴⁰ "Editorial: Takes Money to Get Them", TDS, 19 November 1958, 4.

If the city does nothing, he added, then those shopping centers will eclipse downtown. “If Grand Junction offers [customers] nothing more than a series of decentralized shopping centers, it has nothing to offer them that they can’t get at home.” For Walker, the city’s future and its salvation lay in the downtown retail district where millions of dollars had already been invested and which currently serviced thirty-eight counties in Colorado and Utah as “the metropolis of the Western Slope”. If downtown wasn’t protected, Walker concluded, then “nobody is safe here in either his job or his investment.”⁴¹

The Daily Sentinel’s call for action just four days before Christmas was but the opening round in a series of five front page editorials, the last appearing on December 28, 1958. Walker’s second and third editorials continued to examine the problems facing the community, including its physical deterioration and its lack of jobs for a growing population.⁴² Ridiculing the Planning Commissioners who had seemingly thrown up their hands at crafting a master plan, Walker proposed his own ideas for downtown. His plan, however, did not focus on the larger problems facing the city, including its over-emphasis on wholesale distribution and service, its failure to attract new industry and workers, and its failure to establish sensible zoning. Southeast Grand Junction, for example, he had earlier lamented, is a “hodge podge” of factories, warehouses, derelict buildings, fire houses and slums.⁴³ But that, and similar problems he left to the city to address.

⁴¹“Lack of Planning Threatens City”, TDS, 21 December 1958, 1.

⁴² “How if the City Deteriorating?”, TDS, 22 December 1958, 1; and “Jobs Lacking for Bigger Population”, TDS, 23 December 1958, 1.

⁴³“Jobs Lacking for Bigger Population”, TDS, 23 December 1958, 1.

To develop his own downtown plan, Walker studied other cities with problems similar to Grand Junction as well as consulted with the local Chamber of Commerce, the city's Planning Commission and area citizens. At the paper's expense he also hired a Denver architect and city planner to assess the city's condition and offer suggestions for action. Based on input from these sources, he offered five key suggestions.

1. Zone the 36 square block downtown from 2nd to 8th and from Pitkin to Grand as commercial. The city would thereafter issue no building permit in that area except for business construction.
2. Designate 3rd, 5th and 7th streets as north/south thru-streets and Rood and Colorado as east/west thru-streets. Eliminate parking on all of them.
3. Close White, Ute, 4th and 6th as thoroughfares and use them for parking only.
4. Close Main Street from 2nd to 3rd and from 7th to 8th and use those sections for parking only.
5. Close Main Street from 3rd to 7th for pedestrian use only. Landscape those blocks. 5th Street would be the only thru-intersection to cross this pedestrian mall.⁴⁴

Downtown streets, Walker emphasized, also needed attention. They were simply "a disgrace", marked by chuckholes and, in many sections, old streetcar tracks that hadn't been in use since 1935.⁴⁵ Although the editor did not mention in these articles the antiquated sewer and water systems downtown, a front page photo in 1957 depicted a

⁴⁴ "Plan Offered to Rejuvenate City", TDS, 26 December 1958, 1.

⁴⁵ "Planning Decision Up to the People", TDS, 28 December 1958, 1.

flooded downtown.⁴⁶ Grand Junction's sewer system, dating back to 1900, combined both the sanitary sewer with the storm sewer.⁴⁷ In particularly heavy rains it simply could not cope, causing backups in basements and flooding in low lying areas.

The Sentinel's call for action simply increased pressure on businessmen and city leaders to act. For the businesses downtown, two separate proposals for shopping centers that year also sounded alarm bells about the desirability of doing nothing. In January the Planning Commission received a proposal to build the Teller Arms subdivision between 23rd and 26th Streets on North Avenue, a proposed mixed business/shopping center and residential complex. That proposal had been submitted by developer Dale Luke because he sought city annexation as well as rezoning of the land.⁴⁸

Although individual businesses had already emerged along North Avenue, the proposed shopping complex, if constructed, could pose a significant threat to downtown. Since the state had improved North Avenue from its eastern end to 8th Street in 1952, it had become an attractive route by which thru-traffic could bypass the downtown area. In late 1957 and early 1958 the state had also announced plans to widen it from 8th Street to 1st Street. That proposal gained general support of businesses from 7th Street to Fruitvale and general opposition of businesses between 1st and 7th. Despite the opposition, the City Council endorsed the state's plan but cautioned that the state should be "sensitive" to

⁴⁶ "I Want Down", TDS, 1 September 1957, 1. See Plate XI.

⁴⁷ "City Election of 1899 Fought Over Sewer Issue", TDS, 15 September 1957, "Conquest of Western Slope" insert, 6.

⁴⁸ Planning Commission Minutes, 29 April 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

THE DAILY SENTINEL

SUNDAY
Sept. 1, 1957

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Turn to Page 13 Col. 8



"I WANT DOWN" — Bobby Sarin, 12-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Sarin, 374 24th St., started to walk across the intersection at 5th and Colorado Saturday afternoon but a wave of water forced him to seek the precarious safety of a friendly fire hydrant. When Bobby, who sells Daily Sentinels for Martin Mason, started across the street the water was just to his shoe tops. A flood from the downtown area forced him to beat a hasty retreat, however. Daily Sentinel Photo by Norman Vanlandingham.

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the parking issue.⁴⁹ On May 21st, The Daily Sentinel reported completion of the widening, redesigning and repaving of that traffic corridor.⁵⁰

The idea for a second shopping center, first proposed in 1956 and then again in 1957, had initially been prompted by population growth north of the city.⁵¹ Additional impetus came when, in May 1958, City Manager Cheever reported that he had been notified by the state's highway department that "in the very near future" it would launch an extensive traffic origin and destination survey in the Grand Valley in order to help identify intersections once I-70 construction began.⁵² Current population north of town, perhaps supplemented by the possibility of increased traffic along 12th Street toward the airport and likely location for a major I-70 interchange, convinced developers in 1958 to again request approval for a shopping center two blocks long on 12th Street and one block long on Orchard. Citing the residential nature of the area, the Planning Commission denied the rezoning request. The City Council, on the other hand, voted 5-2 to override Planning. Since city policy required a two-thirds vote of Council to override Planning, the denial of rezoning stood.⁵³

The 12th and Orchard developers, representing owner Frank Jaros, resubmitted their request in late spring 1959. The city had already widened 12th Street on either side of North Avenue and it seemed clear that widening would continue south to the Ute

⁴⁹ City Council Minutes, 19 June 1957 and 8 July 1957, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁵⁰ "Editorial: Our Brand New Street", 4. In December 1958 the City Council endorsed another state plan improving North Avenue. It also, in February 1959, formally turned over to the state, control of North Avenue from its eastern end to 8th Street. See City Council Minutes, 10 December 1958 and 4 February 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁵¹ "Planning Commission Puts Off Hot Rezoning Decision", TDS, 1 March 1956, 10; and "City Council Denies Liquor License to Operator of Filling Station; Argues Rezoning of Orchard", TDS, 7 March 1957, 17.

⁵² Planning Commission Minutes, 6 May 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁵³ Planning Commission Minutes, 2 June 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

Expressway and north to Airport Road. Widening 12th north across Orchard would virtually guarantee heavier traffic volume by the potential shopping center site.⁵⁴

In this latest request, the developers noted that while there were some businesses at that location already, that area of Grand Junction still “badly needed” a local shopping center that included adequate parking. Their rationale: “Since the primary advantage of local shopping centers is their easy accessibility from the home of the people they serve, those that specialize in convenience goods should be spread for one...half mile to one mile apart, so that no person will have to travel more than one-half mile to a center.” Furthermore, they added, such decentralized shopping centers in Grand Junction would help relieve downtown congestion.⁵⁵

Attending the Planning Commission meeting where this request was discussed, Regional Planning Director Gene Allen opposed the rezoning, emphasizing that most of Orchard Ave was residential.⁵⁶ Furthermore, he cautioned against case by case rezoning for shopping centers, instead reinforcing earlier calls by the Chamber of Commerce and Preston Walker for a long range planning document. Although accepting the idea that shopping centers should be approximately one mile apart, Allen hoped any long range plan would anticipate three shopping centers in Grand Junction: one at 28 Road and North Avenue—the Teller Arms--; one at 1st and Patterson; and one at 12th and Patterson. Since no such long range plan existed, and since the Commission could not

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Allen served as director of the Regional Planning Commission, formally established in May 1956, but which emerged out of Mesa County's Planning Commission established in March 1955.

agree on a formula to guide shopping center zoning, on June 2nd, 1959 it voted 6-2 against the developers' rezoning request.⁵⁷

The absence of a zoning plan, however, did not prevent the Commission or the City Council two weeks later from approving the annexation of the lands that would comprise the Teller Arms project on North Avenue and approving its developer's subdivision proposal calling for one-third of the property to be devoted to business and two-thirds to residential.⁵⁸ Developer Dale Luke again appeared before the Planning Commission in December with an artist's sketch of the first building in the Teller Arms complex, a Texaco station at the corner of 23rd and North. At that meeting he indicated that within a week all old structures on the proposed site would be removed and new construction could begin. He expected to submit to the Commission by 1 February 1960 the plans for a supermarket. By March 1st he hoped to have under construction the entire center, composed at present of a filling station, supermarket, drug store and variety store. The Planning Commission approved the filling station and indicated that it looked forward to examining future plans.⁵⁹

Despite dragging its feet on long range planning for traffic flow and zoning, Cheever's administration in late 1958 and the first half of 1959 did finally act in three areas. In late spring 1959, acknowledging that sidewalk repair had long been ignored, it launched a special sidewalk district to begin to address repair and construction needs between 1st and 12th Streets.⁶⁰ However, despite badly deteriorating downtown sidewalks, the city delayed action there until it could decide exactly what it wanted to do to rejuvenate

⁵⁷ Planning Commission Minutes, 2 June 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁵⁸ City Council Minutes, 17 June 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁵⁹ Planning Commission Minutes, 30 December 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁶⁰ "Sidewalk Plan Formation Date Set for August", TDS, 12 May 1959, 1.

downtown, making it more attractive to customers who might otherwise be drawn to shopping centers such as the proposed Teller Arms.

By summer 1959 the council had also approved for the first time a city-wide curb and driveway policy to insure that future construction would not hinder efficient traffic flow or unnecessarily eliminate much-needed downtown parking.⁶¹ Months earlier, in December 1958, finally responding to a chorus demanding off-street parking, the council had entered into negotiations to buy a parking lot at Rood and 6th. It, however, moved too slowly and that lot was instead purchased by Mesa Federal Savings and Loan, which then offered to lease it to the city for parking "for the present time".⁶²

By November 1959, the Cheever administration, despite optimistic beginnings and considerable pressure from the Chamber of Commerce and The Daily Sentinel, had not made significant progress on a master plan for city growth and development. The widening of North Avenue, its growing attraction to businesses and the knowledge that I-70 was clearly not going to guide traffic into downtown Grand Junction had not evidently been sufficient motivation to move swiftly. Indeed, arguably the most innovative experiment adopted by the city under Cheever's administration succeeded because of the work of Mesa Federal Savings and Loan officials, not the city manager, his Planning Commission or the City Council.

Mesa Federal officials in December 1959 had circulated a petition among downtown merchants requesting the city to launch an experiment in the 500 block of Main Street. While some downtown merchants in that block did not agree with the idea, the majority did. The proposal called for changing parking in that block from diagonal to parallel; at

⁶¹ Ordinance No. 1081, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁶² City Council Minutes, 7 January 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

the same time, parking in the 500 block of Rood would shift to diagonal from parallel. Mesa Federal officials and like-minded merchants argued that Main was simply too narrow to accommodate diagonal parking on both sides while also efficiently handling two-way traffic. Their proposal left up to the Council which of two options parallel parking should take. Option 1 called for traditional parallel parking in spaces twenty-two feet long. Option 2 called for paired parallel parking where two parking spaces of eighteen feet each were joined. In front of and behind those joined spaces would be a no-parking gap of eight feet. Time studies demonstrated, the merchants explained, that men took eleven seconds to park in the paired spaces, while women took seventeen. However, men took twenty-eight seconds to park in traditional spaces, while women took thirty-seven seconds. To insure the most efficient flow of traffic, therefore, paired parking seemed the better choice. The council agreed and in those weeks before Christmas authorized on an experimental basis the changeover in the 500 block to paired parking.⁶³

The Cheever administration's inability to produce significant progress in the city's planning efforts hinged in part on deteriorating City-Manager, City Council relations. By November 1959 a tug-of-war had hamstrung city government. City employees appeared evenly split into pro-Cheever and pro-Council factions. Who controlled policymaking seemed unclear. The City Manager/City Council deadlock had led to inaction on a retirement program for city employees as well as inaction in zoning. By year's end, the city's case by case approach to zoning, approving requests like the Teller Arms while

⁶³ "Downtown Parking Gets Brand New Look Friday", TDS, 3 December 1959, 1; and "Paired Parking Plan Cuts Maneuvering Time in Half", TDS, 3 December 1959, 1.

rejecting those like the 12th and Orchard development, had already sparked seven zoning lawsuits against the city.⁶⁴

Anger at Cheever had sparked the creation of an anti-Cheever group that became active in City Council elections in 1959. Not only were its supporters concerned about his inaction on planning and his differences with other city officials but they also believed that his annual salary and automobile allowance were much too high. The Council was split, five members opposed to Cheever, two in favor. In response, Cheever submitted his resignation. At a special meeting prior to its regular meeting on November 18th, the council, by a 5-2 vote, accepted the resignation, effective on 1 January 1960.⁶⁵ As with his predecessor, Toyne, Cheever's resignation was coerced. The following day, one Daily Sentinel article noted "Cheever axed".⁶⁶ Another, entitled "Primed Councilmen Accept City Manager's Resignation", observed that while the Council allowed its two dissenting members to speak for twenty minutes, it refused to allow public input and simply ignored a petition "by prominent citizens" supporting the city manager. An angry Herb Wright, one of the two dissenting councilmen, observed afterward that "a city manager would have to have holes in his head to come to Grand Junction after a deal like this."⁶⁷

Unlike the very abbreviated search that had led to the hiring of Cheever, this time the City Council took its time reviewing applicants. When it became clear that the search process would not be completed by January 1st, the City Council named John Burton, Superintendent of Public Works, as interim city manager on December 23rd. Not until

⁶⁴ Joe Lacy Address to Oral History Meeting of the Museum of Western Colorado, 6 January 1999, Oral History (OH) Tape 2145, Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.

⁶⁵ "Primed Councilmen Accept City Manager's Resignation", TDS, 19 November 1959, 1.

⁶⁶ "With Cheever Axed, Employees Worrying", TDS, 19 November 1959, 1.

⁶⁷ "Primed Councilmen Accept City Manager's Resignation", TDS, 19 November 1959, 1.

21 January 1960, did the city council announce that the assistant city manager of Englewood, Colorado, Joe Lacy, would assume leadership on 19 February.⁶⁸

In his former job, Lacy had been engaged in purchasing, budgeting, personnel, city planning and traffic engineering. But in order to effectively bring his expertise to bear on addressing Grand Junction's problems, including its lack of clear policies and long range planning, Lacy realized that he must first avoid the blurry lines of authority between the Council and its City Manager that had derailed his predecessor. Therefore, between 21 January and 19 February, he worked with the City Council to create, and sign, a formal mutual understanding that clarified the division of authority in city government, thus hopefully avoiding a repetition of the struggle between Cheever and the Council. Under that agreement, Lacy would advise the Council on policy recommendations, the Council would enact policies and then Lacy would administer those policies. The Council would no longer try to micromanage city administration once it had formulated the policies to be implemented. On the issue of compensation and automobile allowance, Lacy's salary dropped from the \$13,200 paid Cheever to \$10,500. His automobile allowance was slashed from the \$100 per month paid Cheever to \$35. When asked about his compensation package, Lacy diplomatically indicated that it was in line with other Colorado cities, although lower than national norms.⁶⁹

Dale Hollingsworth, who had been selected as the manager of the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce in 1957, later recalled that Lacy "came with the vision of doing something significant in city administration." He also observed that by the time Lacy

⁶⁸ "Council Will Discuss Four City Manager Applications", TDS, 21 December 1959, 1; "Engineer Burton Assumes Acting City Manager Post", TDS, 23 December 1959, 1; and "Council Hires Joe Lacy as Junction City Manager", TDS, 22 January 1960, 1.

⁶⁹ "Council, Lacy Prepare Policy for Strong City Management", TDS, 22 January 1960, 1; and "Council Hires Joe Lacy as Junction City Manager", TDS, 22 January 1960, 1.

arrived most downtown merchants realized that retaining the status quo was not in their best interests.⁷⁰ Put more succinctly, Pat Gormley, whose father opposed the status quo, later observed: “Nothing acts like fear” to get businessmen moving.⁷¹

But what form that movement would take was still unclear in early 1960. Downtown hardware store owner Leland Schmidt, a major supporter of “doing something” and chair of the Chamber of Commerce’s parking committee, still believed, as did many of his colleagues, that all that was really needed was significantly more parking downtown. Indeed, on the evening of the day Lacy interviewed for city manager, downtown businessmen were meeting to organize the Downtown Improvement Association to act on the parking problem. Schmidt invited candidate Lacy to attend that organizational meeting. Listening to their discussion about parking and possible solutions, Lacy cautioned that simply adding parking, whether on-street or off-street, would not be enough. They were viewing the problem too simplistically and too narrowly. What Grand Junction needed was a comprehensive plan to address not only parking, but also the many other problems facing modern cities in 1960, some of which had already been raised by Preston Walker, the Barton report, the Chamber of Commerce and others in the last few years.⁷² Under different circumstances, Lacy’s frankness, and his willingness to challenge the narrower vision of downtown business leaders, might have cost him a job offer. But that frankness, coupled with his experience and obvious understanding of the issues facing the city, helped him shine above the other applicants.

⁷⁰ Dale Hollingsworth Interview, 1 April 1987, OH-988, Museum of Western Colorado.

⁷¹ Pat Gormley interview with Richard Lael, 29 July 2008, Lael Archives, Fulton, Missouri.

⁷² Leland Schmidt Interview, contained in KREX-TV Special: “Downtown: The Years of Foresight”, 1992, V-0005, Museum of Western Colorado.

In the summer and fall of 1960 the list of problems facing the new City Manager and his Council was impressive. Although the Cheever administration had accepted the principle of city-funded off-street parking it had moved very slowly to secure lots. A more positive accomplishment, however, was its decision to establish a curb and driveway policy to minimize traffic disruptions and perhaps to save a few additional parking spaces. And while it had in 1959 authorized an experimental parking solution in the 500 block of Main, it had not initiated that idea--Mesa Federal officials had. These few accomplishments meant that the majority of the problems facing the city in the late 1950s still faced the city and its new City Manager in February 1960.

Taking to heart his own advice to Schmidt and members of the Downtown Improvement Association, once hired, Lacy quickly identified many areas needing immediate attention, not just the parking problem. By August, for example, his administration had secured Council approval on how to evaluate areas seeking annexation and had submitted procedures for passing zoning ordinances.⁷³ The old zoning policy, passed in 1948, Lacy argued, no longer met the needs of a growing modern city. As a result, he, Regional Planning Director Gene Allen and City Attorney Gerald Ashby consulted with the American Society of Planning Officers, the Urban Land Institute and the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers as they prepared new zoning procedures and a new city map with proposed zoning modifications.⁷⁴ The Daily Sentinel on 29 August ran a special section of the paper devoted solely to the proposed

⁷³ City Council Minutes, 3 August 1960, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁷⁴ Planning Commission Minutes, 14 September 1960, GJ ISYS Archives. For comments by Lacy on zoning, see City Council Minutes, 7 December 1960, GJ ISYS Archives.

zoning, encouraging citizens to inspect the map and associated materials at City Hall and talk with their city representatives.⁷⁵

On January 4, 1961, the City Council formally approved the new zoning procedures and policies.⁷⁶ They covered land use, building locations and sizes, signs, fences, yards, population density and fire zones. The Council also encouraged, but did not specifically require, new businesses to establish off-street parking, although, it added, the absence of such parking could be considered by planning officials when issuing permits.

The off-street parking proposal was, in fact, quite detailed. Hotels, for example, were to have one parking space for every two guests; churches, one space for every five seats, and retail businesses up to 7500 square feet, must create parking equal to one half their floor size. Over 7500 square feet, buildings needed parking equal to their floor size. These new proposals also identified “arterial” streets that would carry a large volume of fast moving traffic through town as well as “funnel” streets that would carry mostly local residential traffic to downtown. Neither the Toyne nor Cheever administrations had identified such streets even though it was one of the key recommendations made by the Barton consultants in February 1956.⁷⁷

By December 1960, the council had also approved construction of a diagonal road, later known as Horizon Drive, connecting the airport and the I-70 interchange to be constructed there, to 12th and 7th streets.⁷⁸ Both of those streets would also be widened to handle anticipated traffic volume from the interstate to downtown.

⁷⁵ “Legend and Summary of Existing/Proposed Zoning Regulations for Grand Junction”, TDS, 29 August 1960, 8.

⁷⁶ Ordinance No. 1126, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Plate V.

In January 1961, the Council also reorganized the Planning Commission, renaming it the Planning and Zoning Commission, and created a new Board of Adjustment and Appeals, removing the City Council as the only appellate body for planning and zoning decisions.⁷⁹

Council action by January 1961 reflected the new energy and enthusiasm that Lacy seemed to have generated with his arrival the preceding spring. Nor was planning and zoning in Lacy's first year the only signs of activity. In September 1960, the Planning Commission, responding to pressure from downtown merchants, urged the Council to create a citizens advisory committee to work with Planning and Lacy as they considered ways of improving downtown.⁸⁰ Holding its first meeting on 28 September, that group would be named the Citizens Committee on Downtown Development (CCDD).⁸¹ Its goal, officials indicated, wasn't to keep all business downtown or to harm present or future shopping centers. Instead, it was to revitalize a downtown business center that had had no major capital improvements since a 1940 project repaved Main Street.

Lacy and the Council named Leland Schmidt (Schmidt Hardware) as the chair of the committee of seven. The other members were Amos "Bill" Raso, the largest downtown property owner as well as the attorney for many other owners; Robert Van Deusen, architect; Jim Gormley, President, Mesa Federal Savings and Loan; Rudy Susman (Gordon Stores) property owner; Howard McMullin, President, Home Loan & Investment Company and former chair of the Planning Commission; and Barbara Hyde, a current member of the Planning Commission and the only member with horticultural

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ City Council Minutes, 21 September 1960, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁸¹ Citizens' Committee for Downtown Development, Operation Foresight: A Plan for Redeveloping Central Grand Junction, Colorado (Grand Junction: City of Grand Junction, 1 September 1961), 1-5.

training. Schmidt, Gormley, Raso and McMullin “either owned or [legally] represented about sixty percent of the downtown real estate.”⁸² Chamber Manager Hollingsworth, who believed that the city needed leaders of talent and vigor, characterized these members as individuals who knew the past but who also looked to the future, an important combination in those whose focus was to save downtown.⁸³

Initially acting as a fact-finding body, the committee agreed first to find out how other cities across the nation were addressing the rise of suburbia, the surge in traffic, the competition of shopping centers and the rerouting of major highways to bypass downtowns. Based on those findings, the committee agreed to focus on cities most like Grand Junction or that were addressing problems similar to those in Grand Junction, perhaps visiting them if necessary. While researching other cities, the committee also agreed to develop a local survey to solicit customer input on the issues that most concerned them. Simultaneously the City Engineer would collect data relating to identified needs and desires in Grand Junction while the downtown merchants and the Chamber of Commerce would continue to study and make recommendations on parking.

As their plan of action made clear, Schmidt and fellow members had embraced Lacy’s recommendation to not simply focus on parking. Lacy’s energy and vision were critical components of the ultimate success of the CCDD. However, acknowledging that he was city manager of the entire community, not just downtown, he made plain early in his tenure that whatever plan emerged must not funnel a disproportionate amount of city funds toward downtown renovation. To do so would make it appear, he argued, that he

⁸² Joe Lacy Address to Oral History Meeting, 6 January 1999, OH-2145, Museum of Western Colorado. Pat Gormley estimated that CCDD members owned or represented 40-50% of downtown real estate. Pat Gormley Interview with Richard Lael, 29 July 2008, Lael Archives.

⁸³ Dale Hollingsworth Interview, 1 April 1987, OH-988, Museum of Western Colorado.

and his administration was in the pocket of downtown businessmen and bankers. Such an appearance would doom reform from the outset.⁸⁴

Lacy was an astute politician who recognized that ultimate success required a broad base of support. Although he knew he had strong support among downtown merchants, he tried to woo those who still opposed doing much more than addressing the parking issue. Chamber Manager Hollingsworth was more blunt about the opposition. In one interview reflecting over the whole planning process, he explained that while most merchants were enthusiastic for change, a minority “thought everything was fine and nothing needed to be done.” Then he added, “fortunately those with some vision and understanding prevailed.”⁸⁵ Perhaps Lacy would privately have agreed that the minority lacked vision and understanding, but that was not a view he expressed publically, either during or after the process.

Instead he and the CCDD argued principle, not personality. “A city cannot stand still. It either is moving ahead or slipping behind the changing times that are characteristic of our age.”⁸⁶ Pat Gormley, whose father was on the CCDD and who would, himself, later be a major player in downtown renewal, described Lacy as a city manager who “had this gift of getting a batch of unwilling-to-cooperate people to sit down and [act].... Lacy believed [downtown renewal] could succeed only if everyone got something.”⁸⁷ That approach served Lacy well not only in dealing with reluctant downtown merchants or businessmen outside downtown but also with his generally supportive CCDD members. Chairman Schmidt admitted that some of the CCDD meetings were themselves “kind of

⁸⁴ Joe Lacy Address to Oral History Meeting, 6 January 1999, OH-2145, Museum of Western Colorado.

⁸⁵ Dale Hollingsworth Interview, 1 April 1987, OH-988, Museum of Western Colorado.

⁸⁶ Operation Foresight, I-1.

⁸⁷ Pat Gormley Conversation with Richard Lael, 15 July 2008; Pat Gormley Interview with Richard Lael, 29 July 2008, Lael Archives.

hairy”.⁸⁸ Having a diplomatic city manager who sought inclusion, not exclusion, helped the committee get through those combative sessions.

Lacy’s decision to tackle, almost immediately upon assuming his job, a number of recurring problems associated with an absence of clear city policies, allowed the newly created CCDD to focus more specifically on downtown renovation. The problems facing Lacy and the CCDD were impressive. The ongoing growth in traffic volume continued to cause congestion downtown, in part because the traffic lights were not synchronized for the most efficient flow—a problem first identified by the Chamber of Commerce in May 1955 and repeated by the Barton firm a year later.⁸⁹ More vehicles also meant a greater demand for parking and heightened the trend where owners and employees monopolized the best locations, leaving customers the option of circling the block waiting for an open space or of parking in a fringe area. The addition of automobiles and delivery vans also raised growing concerns about pedestrian safety, especially the jaywalkers who crossed whenever there was an opening in traffic. Again, as with traffic synchronization, these problems were not new: all had been identified by both the Chamber and Barton as early as 1955.

Following years of inaction, the streets and sidewalks downtown also badly needed renovation. Preston Walker, in one of his front page editor’s notes in December 1958, had specifically called attention to the deterioration of roads downtown.⁹⁰ But no city action had followed. In addition to unsightly and unsafe streets, downtown sidewalks had long been deteriorating. While the city had funded sidewalk construction and repair

⁸⁸ Leland Schmidt Interview, contained in KREX-TV Special: “Downtown: The Years of Foresight”, 1992.

⁸⁹ City Council Minutes, 18 May 1955, GJ ISYS Archives; “Traffic Plan for City Told”, TDS, 1 March 1956, 1.

⁹⁰ “Planning Decision Up to the People”, TDS, 28 December 1958, 1.

elsewhere in the city, it had since late 1959 suspended such work downtown, pending a decision on what else might need to be done there. A problem related to the sidewalks was the height of some downtown curbs, initially designed and installed prior to World War I. Those curbs were now too high for bumpers on modern vehicles, resulting in customers hitting them as they parked or scrapping across them as they entered or departed a parking space. To avoid damage to their vehicles, customers could park further from the curb, but in doing so their vehicle projected further into the street, impeding the efficient and safe flow of traffic.

Another problem that had not been previously addressed was out of sight, but not out of mind. The city's combined storm and sanitary sewer system downtown dated back to 1900. While City Manager Toyne in 1956 had successfully secured passage of a sewer bond issue, it only funded a revamped sewer plant and new sewer lines outside downtown.⁹¹ A downtown flood, following heavy rains in 1957, was a stark reminder of the sewer's inadequacy.⁹² Nevertheless, neither the Toyne nor Cheever administrations had acted to correct the problem in the waning years of the decade.⁹³

There also existed a tangential problem that could not be directly solved by the city or its citizens' panel, but one that could significantly impact making downtown more appealing to shoppers. Some downtown building owners had allowed their stores, both inside and out, to become unattractive, so that downtown looked shabby.⁹⁴

⁹¹ "Council Session Goes from 'A to Z'", TDS, 8 March 1956, 1; "New Issues Would Cost 1 Mill: Toyne", TDS, 3 April 1956, 3; and "Measures Carry in All Districts", TDS, 18 April 1956, 1.

⁹² "I Want Down", TDS, 1 September 1957, 1.

⁹³ "City Manager Explains Reason for Proposed Sewer Rate Hike", TDS, 16 October 1957, 8. Cheever did propose a sewer rate hike but only to pay for bonds coming due, not to address sewer inadequacies.

⁹⁴ "Planning Decision Up to the People", TDS, 28 December 1958, 1.

Finally, Lacy and the Citizens' Committee realized that the rerouting by state and federal traffic engineers of thru-streets both north and south of downtown, coupled with a new interstate highway, would likely foster the development of more shopping centers similar to the Teller Arms project. Such projects could pose a direct commercial threat to downtown. So while the Lacy administration had made impressive gains in 1960, much was left to Lacy, the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the CCDD to do.⁹⁵

Their plan of attack was two-fold. First, the Lacy administration would uniformly apply newly adopted policies and regulations to typical day-to-day decisions as well as to its backlog of cases/problems. Having clear written policies and procedures would allow the city to be consistent and transparent, enabling it to avoid the appearance of arbitrariness or favoritism that characterized earlier city administrations. At the same time, since membership in the merchant's Downtown Improvement Association overlapped with membership of the CCDD, the Citizens' Committee, working closely with Lacy, would become the focal point for resolution of the parking problem. In addition, it would also simultaneously address the much larger question of a master plan for downtown renewal.

Placing this phase of downtown planning in the hands of the CCDD, which included leading owners, merchants and bankers, was an astute move. Lacy anticipated possible opposition to major changes downtown, especially from older merchants and property owners. By heavily involving community leaders and opinion makers, whatever resulted

⁹⁵ Members of the City Council: C.E. McCormick, President; Harry Colescott, Arthur Hadden, Charles Love, Warren Lowe, Ray Meacham, Herbert Wright.

Members of Planning & Zoning: Elmer Nelson, Chairman; Alex Bauer, V.L. Colony, Eleanor Diemer, Arthur Hadden, Barbara Hyde, Ray Meacham.

would become “their” plan, not something imposed on them by city administrators. In addition, especially relating to the perennial parking problem, two CCDD members, Schmidt and McMullen, brought years of study and reflection to the table since both had been heavily involved in previous Chamber studies and recommendations. Furthermore, the City Council, given its recent internal divisions and conflicts, did not seem the best venue for plan formulation. If businessmen and property owners, as Lacy hoped, generated and strongly supported a plan for saving downtown, the Council was very likely to embrace it.

Having identified problems that needed to be considered as they formulated a plan, and having agreed upon a division of responsibilities, the most difficult remaining question facing members of the Citizens’ Committee was how they should proceed to develop that master plan. Until Lacy’s arrival, Grand Junction’s problems had most often been viewed in isolation—a local issue—even though communities across the nation faced similar obstacles and difficulties. But in formulating the city’s complicated zoning policy during his first months in office, Lacy not only consulted local experts but also consulted major national organizations. Most, if not all, of the problems the city faced, he realized, were also being faced by communities across the nation. Why, then, not learn from the experiences of others, borrowing ideas as relevant? Committee members, embracing Lacy’s thinking, therefore concluded that the place to begin their efforts was a search of the relevant available literature.

While individuals in the Lacy administration and the CCDD identified, acquired and read the relevant literature, solicited local input and corresponded with urban renewal experts, they also addressed narrower, although related issues. Lacy’s new policies on

zoning and annexation adopted by the City Council in January 1961, for example, created a flurry of work for his administration and the Planning Commission in the following months. After April 1959, since the city had decided that it no longer wanted to zone or annex on a case by case basis, most zoning issues had simply been postponed until some sort of policy could be crafted. As a result, there was a backlog of proposals needing study and action.⁹⁶ Furthermore, now that the city knew the exact route of I-70 and the location of its interchanges and since it had approved a diagonal road connecting Airport Road to 12th and 7th Streets, it had to decide how the zoning policies would be applied to properties along what would likely be heavily traveled corridors.

Another decision city leaders needed to make related to how they planned to address the problem of the many downtown sidewalks that needed repair or replacement. However, Lacy, as had Cheever, hesitated to act until a comprehensive downtown redevelopment plan had been adopted. Nevertheless, while reviewing city policies, Lacy discovered that the city had never approved a uniform set of specifications to guide sidewalk construction. So, in what was becoming a trademark of his leadership, he crafted a clear set of specifications on how future sidewalks would be constructed, securing city council approval in February 1961.⁹⁷

His review of city policies also revealed that the city actually did not directly control the repair or replacement of sidewalks. Under current policy, long in place, property owners were responsible both for the cost of sidewalks and for hiring the contractors to build or repair them. Lacy found that unacceptable. He therefore submitted a new

⁹⁶ City Council Minutes, 7 December 1960, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁹⁷ City Council Minutes, 15 February 1961, GJ ISYS Archives; and Ordinance 1128, 15 March 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

procedure in March to the city council, which it approved.⁹⁸ Under that policy, owners still bore the cost, but the city would now construct and reconstruct sidewalks, assessing the costs on a pro rata per front foot basis to adjacent landowners. Under these new procedures the city, once it decided on a sidewalk project, did not have to wait on a property holder to act.

While Lacy, members of his administration and the City Council adopted and/or applied new policies, the Citizens' Committee in February 1961 inaugurated conversations with owners to lease three downtown lots for off-street parking. For \$300 per month rent for each lot, the owners agreed to lease them to the city. The Committee then secured the approval of businessmen in and near the 400 block of Main to raise \$1700 to pave the lots. Once paved, the city would install signs, striping and parking meters. The three lots would add thirty-six parking spaces downtown while costing the city virtually nothing. Lacy explained that monthly parking revenue in each lot, conservatively estimated, would raise \$306, covering the lease and enabling the city to quickly recoup the costs for meters, striping and signs. Enthusiastic about the proposal, the City Council unanimously authorized Lacy to lease the lots, under these terms, for two years.⁹⁹

Despite focusing on some narrower city problems and policies while also performing their "regular" jobs, Lacy and his fellow members of the CCDD, continued to read literature on urban renewal and to solicit suggestions from professionals across the nation. Between February 21st and August 1st, the Committee received advice from fifteen "qualified authorities". Included among these were the U.S. Chamber of

⁹⁸ Ordinance 1128, 15 March 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

⁹⁹ City Council Minutes, 15 February 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

Commerce, the American Automobile Association, The Colorado Department of Highways, the Institute of Traffic Engineers, and the National Parking Association. It also received advice from leaders in Casper, Wyoming; Beaumont, Texas; Loveland, Colorado; Abilene, Texas; and Baltimore, Maryland.¹⁰⁰

Members also consulted over forty publications that focused on similar problems being faced by city planners across the nation.¹⁰¹ One quarter of those, examined how best to address downtown parking. Eleven examined projects already started or being considered by Amarillo, Texas; Stamford, Connecticut; New Haven, Connecticut; Portland, Maine; Grand Rapids, Michigan; St. Paul, Minnesota; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Muskegon, Michigan, Terre Haute, Indiana and Hartford, Connecticut.

A roundtable discussion of national business and banking leaders recorded in The Architectural Forum in June 1955, revealed that Grand Junction wasn't alone in facing the transportation revolution.¹⁰² Participants warned that no longer could "our existing cities...somehow just amble along and 'survive as they always have.'"¹⁰³ They also observed that their cities' "shabby, dull, dingy condition ...can no longer be tolerated now that the people are being given a new vision of shopping in the country, living in the country, [and] working in the country."¹⁰⁴ Cities must plan for more than maintaining the status quo. They must now generate "a plan for new development, a plan for something inspirational, a plan that will encompass elements of beauty as well as overcome physical and psychological obsolescence."¹⁰⁵ However, in forming such plans, one observer

¹⁰⁰ Operation Foresight, III-1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, III 1-4.

¹⁰² "How to Rebuild Cities Downtown", 122ff.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

warned, cities must deal with reality—not things as they would wish them to be. Since the automobile “still appears to be the preferred form of transportation in our central business district”, cities shouldn’t expect public transit systems to be a solution. “Whether [the use of the automobile] is the sound or economical way to travel is not the question. I think it’s a deep-rooted urge in the average American which we have to accept and try to work with rather than trying to change.”¹⁰⁶

Those present also agreed that any piecemeal approach was likely to fail. Cities shouldn’t just look at parking, or traffic flow, or pedestrian patterns or traffic regulations or even public transportation. They must examine all of those and much more if they were to be successful. Exactly where cities should focus most attention was a matter of contention. Simply adding parking, for example, or making an area more aesthetically pleasing by adding trees, flowers and benches was not going to convince customers to travel downtown if there wasn’t a wide selection of merchandise. Citing “a number of studies”, one participant observed that “as much as I would like to believe the attractive quality and parking are major factors, it would appear they only represent about a quarter of the actual reasons for shopping in a particular location.”¹⁰⁷

The following year, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce published How To Get The Most Out Of Our Streets. “The traffic jam,” it warned, “is a serious threat to the economic health of every community in the land....” The dramatic increase in the numbers of vehicles “has swamped our antiquated street systems”.¹⁰⁸ However, instead of offering solutions, the article focused on the process that should guide a city’s response to the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 182, 188.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁸ (Washington: Transportation & Communication Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United State, 1956), 1.

traffic crisis. The leaders of that process must be the businessmen themselves.

“Providing aggressive leadership in street transportation improvement is both good citizenship and good business.”¹⁰⁹ Chambers of Commerce should take the lead initially, gathering merchant support and then incorporating other civic leaders into the process. While cities needed to act promptly, they should not act rashly. While speed is desirable, it should only come after extensive study of the problems facing each community. The effectiveness of any solution “is strictly conditioned on careful prior analysis of all pertinent facts—technical study of street capacity, traffic volumes and characteristics, speed and delay, parking and loading demands, land use and other basic data.” These facts would then form the basis for an appropriate response.¹¹⁰

For city planners, one of the most comprehensive and useful publications in the 1950s was Downtown Idea Exchange, a twice monthly bulletin service that focused on all aspects of urban development and redevelopment. It discussed both process and specific solutions. As to process, it echoed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Businessmen needed to lead since they had the most to lose. But that leadership needed to be as a cohesive unit, not as individuals pulling against one another. As a result, “formation of a real working downtown association...is a must [their emphasis] if downtown is to make significant advances on all fronts.”¹¹¹ Again, reflecting the Chamber’s approach, the Idea Exchange hammered on the need to gather facts relevant to each problem, whether metered parking, token/merchant validation parking, merchant corporations formed to finance off-street parking, loading/unloading zones or volume of traffic. Without reliable data no reform would likely succeed.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹¹ 250 Best Ideas from Downtown Idea Exchange (New York: Downtown Idea Exchange, 1958), 4.

By 1958, a number of Idea Exchange articles lauded the downtown mall which would consist of “Trees. Grass. Open areas. And no private car traffic . Light. Air. Recreation facilities. And less wear and tear on the human system. A way of life—not something from which to flee.”¹¹² While no city had yet gone this route, one article reported that Springfield, Oregon had launched a several day experiment, closing main street to traffic. Labeled a “shoppers paradise”, city leaders reported that seventy-five percent of shoppers surveyed wanted the experiment to be made permanent. “Nevertheless, at the end of the experiment, Springfield went back to normal parking and traffic flow.”¹¹³

Once city leaders followed the advice of the Downtown Idea Exchange authors and had organized a downtown merchants association, had collected critical data and had thought about specific solutions, what next? To secure a wide base of support, the plan would then have to be sold to a wider audience of consumers, city leaders, taxpayers and businessmen. The Idea Exchange offered suggestions on how that could be done. Those who had initially developed the idea should form a “citizens’ action committee” to spearhead activities. “When major downtown improvements are planned [this group would] prepare a movie or slide film showing the steps you want to take in improving downtown and what the results will look like. Show it at meetings of clubs and organizations to build wide popular support for your program.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² “Public Vehicles and Private Fleet”, 27 Most Influential Articles from Downtown Idea Exchange (New York: Downtown Idea Exchange, 1958), 25-26. Also see “Are Downtown Malls Good Business, *Ibid.*, 50; and 250 Best Ideas from Downtown Idea Exchange, 7-15.

¹¹³ “Are Downtown Malls Good Business”, 27 Most Influential Articles from Downtown Idea Exchange, 50.

¹¹⁴ 250 Best Ideas from Downtown Idea Exchange, 7.

Many of the recommendations suggested in the literature, especially about process, Grand Junction leaders took to heart. Although many city offices assisted, the responsibility for collecting extensive local data relating to many downtown problems fell heavily on the Western Regional Planning Commission, the Grand Junction Police Department and Grand Junction's City Engineer and Development Director. Among those data collected were the attitudes of downtown consumers obtained in a postcard survey. Eight hundred twenty consumers returned the cards. In order of preference, the shoppers recommended 1) more parking, 2) less thru traffic on Main Street, 3) more modern merchandizing, 4) store front remodeling, 5) more beautification (trees, shrubs, etc), and 6) better street lighting. Eighty-three percent reported that they normally had difficulty finding a convenient parking space. Eight percent defined convenient as being within one-half block to most shopping; forty-one percent, within one block; twenty-one percent, within one and one-half blocks; and thirty percent, within two blocks. Seventy-nine percent preferred angled parking to parallel.¹¹⁵

Shoppers also identified specific areas of concern. Improvements in existing sidewalks and crosswalks were needed, while new crosswalks in mid-block would be desirable. Given traffic volume, the city should also consider walk lights for pedestrians. Customers also expressed frustration that clerk service downtown was often not courteous, that merchandise options were too limited, and that stores closed too early.

Reflecting over the literature, technical data, letters and conversations with other community leaders and urban planners, as well as the postcard survey, the CCDD and

¹¹⁵ Operation Foresight, III-5, 6.

Lacy's administration crafted by 1 September 1961 a plan to redevelop downtown Grand Junction, naming it "Operation Foresight".

Relying heavily on the logic and language found in planning literature, that proposal called for a five phase renewal process. Phase I would add a new storm sewer on Colorado Avenue that, at its southern end, would follow 1st Street to Main. This project, by adding 12" to 42" pipe and by sealing the old downtown system from surface drainage, would eliminate the periodic flooding and relieve pressure on the city's west-side sewage treatment plant. These changes would also enable the city to redesign downtown streets, curbs and sidewalks, especially eliminating unusually high curbs, without causing flooding during heavy rains, as occurred in 1957. The projected cost for this phase: \$148,845.¹¹⁶

Phase II would reconstruct and widen Rood and Colorado as well as Main from 3rd to 7th Streets. It would also widen 4th and 6th Streets between Rood and Colorado and 5th Street between Grand and Ute. The four blocks of Main Street would become a "Shopping Park". These changes, the plan explained, would create "a unique, restful and convenient shopping center which would be a major shopper and tourist attraction while also generating private improvements." The projected cost of this phase: \$402,304.¹¹⁷

Phase III would provide "conveniently-located off-street parking, free to the customer, in the core area where the demand far outweighs the supply." Planners that September did not, however, know exactly where such lots might be located. They left those decisions up to the city Planning Commission. But they did have a specific recommendation on how to make parking free—shift to a parking time validation system.

¹¹⁶ Operation Foresight, I-8,9, 11; II-1-8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., I-10, 12-18; II-9-37

Under that system merchants could provide to customers who made minimum purchases, parking slugs for use in existing meters. The cost for this phase was unknown, since sites of future lots had yet to be determined.¹¹⁸

Phase IV would not be undertaken by the city but by the voluntary actions of individual building owners and/or businesses. Lamenting the deterioration, both inside and outside, of businesses downtown, Lacy and the CCDD hoped and believed that adoption of the other phases of the plan would convince owners and retailers to launch modernization, upgrades or replacement of shabby, worn or outdated structures, floor layouts and/or displays. Since this was a voluntary program, no costs were estimated.¹¹⁹

Phase V envisioned the construction of arcade walkways from off-street parking lots to Main Street. These would be well-lighted and include restrooms and information centers. Likely locations would be old narrow buildings whose business occupants were no longer able to compete successfully with new, larger retail outlets. These buildings would be acquired by the city, torn down and replaced with arcades. The Citizens' Committee provided no estimates on costs associated with this phase.¹²⁰

How to pay for this ambitious plan was much on the minds of Lacy and members of the CCDD. Opposition to a city-wide property tax increase that focused expenditures on only one part of the community would virtually guarantee rejection of the project. Seeking state or federal assistance wasn't seriously considered, in part because outside funding brought external expectations and restrictions.

Howard McMullen, a member of the CCDD, and Gene Allen, the Western Regional Planning Director who was actively involved in Foresight discussions, had both in 1957

¹¹⁸ Ibid., I-10, 12-19; II-38-63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., I-2-; II-64-70.

¹²⁰ Ibid., I-21.

served on the Western Colorado Regional Planning Commission when it had sought federal urban redevelopment funds. Upon learning that the Commission's application had been denied, McMullen, as well as three other members, criticized the federal government's handling of the application, arguing that its officials apparently had "a complete lack of understanding...of the problems now existing in the Grand Valley." As a result, The Daily Sentinel reported, commission members "turned their backs on any further efforts to obtain federal aid," believing that they were better off by going ahead on their own, "being shed of the strict supervision the government attempts to exercise."¹²¹ Perhaps their experiences in 1957 helped shape the decision in 1960 to not seek external funding for the Foresight proposal.

Considering financing alternatives, Lacy proposed to the Citizen's Committee that the funding be generated by a business-city partnership. The bulk of the cost would be paid by improvement districts, composed of those owners who benefitted from the upgrades. Wherever possible, the city would reduce those costs by using, as appropriate, its normal operating budgets and by utilizing city employee labor whenever possible.

Embracing his suggestion, the final plan spelled out carefully how the critical phases would be financed.¹²² Phase I (Storm Sewer): 88.4% would be financed by ten year bonds paid for by a special improvement district ad valorem tax on property owners in the district. The remainder would come from the city's capital improvement budget. Phase II (Street Improvements): 72.3% would be financed by ten year bonds paid for by a special improvement district front footage assessment on property owners in the district. The remainder would come from the city's capital improvement budget,

¹²¹ "Regional Planning Commission Turns Back on Federal Aid Try", TDS, 18 July 1957, 1.

¹²² The following paragraphs discussing financing are based on Operation Foresight, I-1-II-70.

extended over three years. Phase III (Off-Street Parking): Without precise costs, the plan offered several suggestions for funding. If the city adopted a parking validation system, a special improvement district of merchants would be necessary to guarantee bond payments. However, if acquisition of land and construction of off-street lots did not exceed \$200,000 for each eighty parking spaces, bond payments could be fully funded over twenty years from city-wide parking meter revenue at the rate of ten cents per hour. In the long term, after the initial cost had been paid, a portion of future meter revenue could go toward additional parking projects. Phase IV (Store Modernization): This would be the sole responsibility of individual owners. Phase V (Arcades, Restrooms, etc) This would initially be fully funded by the city from excess parking meter revenue and capital improvement funds. Long term maintenance would be covered by the city's general funds.

Although city ordinances allowed the City Council to establish street improvement districts, the normal practice in Grand Junction was to do so only after property owners in the proposed area submitted a formal petition to the city containing the signatures of owners of no less than one-third of the property frontage to be improved. Property owners who opposed the creation of such a district could also circulate a petition for presentation to the council. If a petition in opposition contained the signatures of property owners who represented a larger percentage of front footage, then no district could be created.

While city ordinances authorized sewer improvement districts, they did so only on a lot's square footage basis. Since vacant lots, under this system, would be assessed the same rate as developed lots, the CCDD opposed this option. Instead it recommended the

city follow a state approved alternative method whereby special district assessments could be based on an ad valorem tax basis. These districts could only be formed when property owners submitted a petition to establish a special tax district. No district could be formed if fewer than ten percent of the property owners signed the petition. If at least ten percent, but fewer than fifty percent signed, then a special election would be held among affected property holders to determine, by simple majority vote, the fate of the proposed district. However, if the initial petition contained more than fifty percent of the affected property owners, the district could be created without a vote of all owners.¹²³

Success for Operation Foresight, therefore, hinged on two factors: 1)securing approval of the five phase plan, especially the radical renovation of Main Street into a shopping park; and 2) convincing property owners and the city council to adopt the funding formulas as outlined. To achieve both goals, Lacy and the CCDD orchestrated a “sell the idea” campaign. In July, although no formal proposal had yet been submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission or the City Council, they briefed The Daily Sentinel on the plan’s goals, projected costs and method of financing, emphasizing that no city wide tax increase would be necessary. A two column center front page article on 19 July proclaimed “Bold New Look Tailored For City”.

Seven days later, on the 26th, Lacy and Regional Planning Director Allen appeared before the Planning Commission with a preliminary report summarizing the plan and the work of the past eight months.¹²⁴ Lacy reiterated that while no city wide tax increase would be needed, the City Council would be asked to shift the bulk of its capital improvements budget for the next two to three years to help fund the project. When

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴Planning Commission Minutes, 26 July 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

asked about process, he replied that a formal descriptive proposal was being crafted that was being designed to address the many questions likely to be raised. Until that document was ready, certainly by October, no public campaign would be launched. Once the public had an opportunity to review the details, there would need to be formal public hearings before the Planning Commission and again before the City Council. At the same time, merchants would need to secure the required percentage of signatures to approve creation of the critical special assessment districts. At the conclusion of his explanation, Planning Commission members were clearly on board, labeling the plan “very good”.¹²⁵

It didn't take the CCDD three months to finalize the plan. On 13 September it presented the plan to the city, with a public unveiling occurring at the La Court Hotel on 19 September. The city's Planning Commission convened a special meeting devoted solely to “Foresight” on October 6th. It enthusiastically approved motions to recommend to the City Council immediate adoption of Phases I and II. It congratulated CCDD members for an “outstanding accomplishment” and forwarded to the City Council a recommendation that although the CCDD had completed its original charge, it be retained as an advisory body until completion of Phases III through V.¹²⁶

To generate support among customers, businessmen and city officials, the CCDD in late summer had prepared a slide show to help sell the concept. Chamber Manager Hollingsworth recalled that Lacy, normally with two or three CCDD members, would meet with “anyone or everyone”, including service clubs and government groups, to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ “Facelift Plans Given to City”, TDS, 13 September 1961, 1; and Planning Commission Minutes, 6 October 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

present the slide campaign.¹²⁷ KREX-TV also carried the program into homes across the valley.

At the City Council's public hearing on the plan on 18 October, Lacy reported that, excluding the KREX viewing, the slide show had been shown to twenty-three groups. Lacy shared endorsement letters from Industrial Developments, Inc., a group working to expand existing industry in Grand Junction as well as attract new development, and from the Grand Junction Business & Professional Womens' Club. The President of the Chamber of Commerce, Don Sparn, also conveyed his body's support.¹²⁸

Not everyone was enthusiastic. Frank Jaros, Sr., a property owner on North Avenue, indicated that he and others would oppose this if it involved taxpayers' money. His concerns were recorded in the minutes: "[Jaros and others] felt it was not right for certain groups on Main Street to be running to the Council all the time asking for something.... He didn't think planting grass and trees on Main Street would help the businessmen. [However,] he had nothing against any improvement on Main Street provided no taxpayer's money would be used on the project...."

Jaros' observations had been anticipated by Lacy and the City Council before the Foresight project had been launched. They had indeed crafted a funding formula that did not create a special group of favored businessmen at the expense of those outside downtown. Responding to Jaros, Leland Schmidt affirmed that "the downtown people are not asking for any favors; only that the Council treat them the same as they would any other areas of the community. They want no conflict with shopping centers which will come when they are economically feasible." He admitted that some downtown

¹²⁷ Dale Hollingsworth Interview, OH-988, Museum of Western Colorado.

¹²⁸ City Council Minutes, 18 October 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

merchants opposed the project, but quickly added that the vast majority were “very enthusiastic”. That enthusiasm was shared by the City Council, which, by unanimous vote, adopted the entire five-phase proposal, including the funding formulas laid out in the formal report of the CCDD.¹²⁹

Securing the unanimous support of both Planning & Zoning and the City Council left only one major hurdle remaining—convincing property owners downtown to approve the funding formulas by which they would shoulder the bulk of the costs of Operation Foresight. Although he and fellow CCDD members had spent months selling the Foresight idea in individual meetings and in slide show presentations throughout the community, Lacy was uncertain how long it would take to secure the financial support of the required percentage of property owners. What he didn’t know, he later admitted, was that his fellow CCDD members, Schmidt, Gormley, Raso and McMullin, either owned or legally represented a clear majority of the downtown real estate in the proposed improvement districts. By personally carrying the petitions to their fellow property owners, they secured more than enough signatures in only three days.¹³⁰

On December 20th, Lacy formally reported to the City Council that owners controlling seventy-one percent of property frontage downtown had signed the petition favoring street improvements while sixty-four percent of affected owners favored the sewer project. Given that support, Council immediately established two improvement districts, one for street, gutter, curb and sidewalk improvement and one for sanitary sewer improvement. A storm sewer improvement district was subsequently created on February 7, 1962.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Joe Lacy Address to Oral History Meeting, 6 January 1999, OH-2145, Museum of Western Colorado.

Between December 20, 1961 and the following May, city officials drafted the necessary paperwork to sell bonds and to implement the financial formulas as well as prepared the precise details and specifications needed to advertise for bids on the various phases of the project. By the end of May, most water, sewer and street improvement contractors had been identified. Work began almost immediately.¹³¹ Celebrating the launching of Phase I, The Daily Sentinel proclaimed that “it has been many years since Grand Junction as a community worked as a unit for anything so vital to its future.”¹³² On July 25th, The Sentinel reported that “rumors of ‘unrest among the merchants’ [as construction disrupted customer traffic] seem to come from the perennial calamity howlers”. However, it added, its own efforts to substantiate the rumors had revealed no substance to them. Rather, it concluded, “businessmen are immune to the stories and proving themselves good sports, realistic businessmen and solid boosters for the glamorous future they know is ahead.”¹³³ By August, businessmen incorporated the disruption into their merchandising campaigns, urging customers to take advantage of “Downtown ‘Obstacle Course’ Specials”.¹³⁴

The Sentinel in July, and periodically thereafter, included a block by block chart showing the percentage of work completed for the removal of old improvements, grading, installing waterlines, pouring of concrete and paving.¹³⁵ By early September, all work had been completed in the 100, 200 and 300 blocks of Main Street.¹³⁶ By mid-

¹³¹ “Foresight’s Phase I Underway”, TDS, 3 May 1962, 1. See Plate XII.

¹³² “Editorial: Taking First Step”, TDS, 29 May 1962, 4.

¹³³ “Editorial: Foresight Schedule”, TDS, 25 July 1962, 4.

¹³⁴ TDS, 13 August 1962, 14. See Plate XIII.

¹³⁵ “Operation Foresight Yields to Sales”, TDS, 22 July 1962, 1.

¹³⁶ “Foresight Questions Get Answered”, TDS, 2 September 1962, 14.

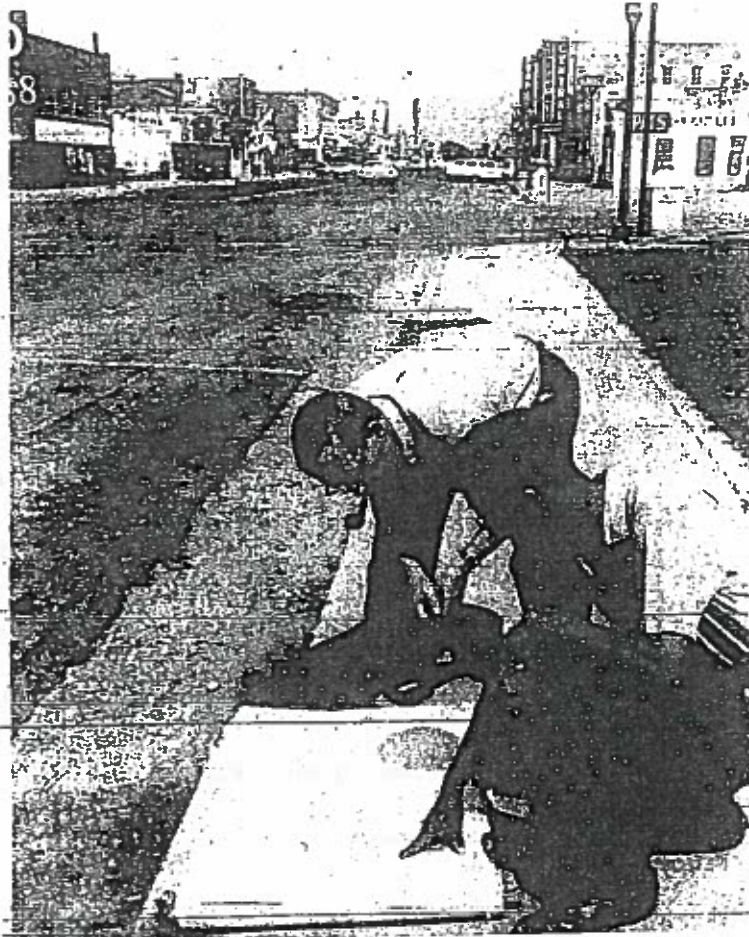


Plate XII: Jerry Fossenier, Grand Junction City Engineer, and Ted Wing, Foresight Project Engineer, study blueprints before construction begins. TDS, 23 June 1962, 1.

Sale-ing! Sale-ing! Over The "Bounding Main"! EVERY TUESDAY!

DOWNTOWN "Obstacle Course" SPECIALS!

STEDS JUST SAY— "CHARGE IT!" AT HESSTEDS	GIRLS' BOUFFANT-STYLE PETTICOATS 69¢ By Her Majesty Steps 4 to 12 Reg. 3.00	Manuel's Tuesday Only Freight Special! BATES PRINTED FABRIC 66¢ Regular 3.00 One Lot—Tuesday Only	DOUBLE KNIT WOOL & COTTON JERSEY \$2.98 FABRIC LANE
4-PC MIXING BOWL SET 4 deep 4 deep with only 99¢ OUR LOW PRICE Famous Fire King Oven-Free! Ware	Gordon's MATTRESS & BOX SPRINGS 576 COIL Reg. Price 49.50 Each Just 29.00 2 for 99¢	Manuel's CHILDREN'S MOULDED SANDALS to walk and dance, stain & in 3 \$2.00 value. Reg. Just 77¢ WOMEN'S COTTON SHIRTS 100% cotton, 100% fine Tuesday only Just 49¢ Many Famous Name Brands, a marvelous value for your money.	602 Main St. Phone 243-3232
PLACE-SETTING 16 pieces Heavy Duty, only 99¢ 16 place—can go from main to table to refrigerator case, covered containers etc.	Samilton TUESDAY REDUCTIONS! DOMINION Plastic	304 MAIN 243-4258	

Plate XIII: Creative advertising that pokes fun at construction disruptions. TDS, 13 August 1962, 14.

October workmen had reached the 600 block.¹³⁷ On November 9th, The Sentinel announced that on December 1, the city would celebrate completion of the heavy work of Operation Foresight, together with the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. Despite rain and 38-degree temperatures, approximately 6000 persons “jammed” downtown to celebrate both events.¹³⁸

Between February and May 1963, finishing touches to Phases I and II were added, including the erection of concrete canopies under which shoppers could rest, the planting of mature sycamore trees, and the addition of hundreds of geraniums in beds along Main Street.¹³⁹ These two most disruptive phases of the project had been completed in twelve months. When the final three phases of the project--establishing off-street parking lots, fostering renovation of downtown business storefronts and interiors, and constructing arcades connecting Main Street to off-street parking lots—would be completed had always been imprecise. However, Leland Schmidt, who continued to chair the CCDD, announced in late October that downtown merchants and property owners who had formed the Downtown Parking Corporation, had just purchased two sites between Main and Colorado that would be converted to off-street parking lots which would then be leased to the city.¹⁴⁰ On November 20th, the City Council formally signed a lease-purchase agreement with the company. Under that plan, meter revenue collected from each lot, together with appropriated funds from parking meters elsewhere downtown, would be transferred to the company until the lots were completely paid for. At that

¹³⁷ “Foresight on Schedule”, TDS, 14 October 1962, 2.

¹³⁸ “Editorial: Foresight Celebration”, TDS, 9 November 1962, 4; and “Spectators Jam Downtown Area”, TDS, 1 December 1962, 1.

¹³⁹ “Umbrella Takes Shape”, TDS, 13 February 1963, 11; “Imported Shade”, TDS, 1 March 1963, 1; “Planting Time”, TDS, 29 March 1963, 15; and “That Final Touch”, TDS, 9 May 1963, 18.

¹⁴⁰ City Council Minutes, 2 October 1963, GJ ISYS Archives; and “Private Parking Lot Purchased”, TDS, 23 October 1963, 1.

point, when the city would both own and operate the lots, parking would be free. Until that time, customers could “feed the meter” with coins or with merchant-issued parking tokens, given to customers who made minimum purchases.¹⁴¹

This lease-purchase model proved so popular that in December 1964, the city and the Downtown Parking Company entered into an open-ended contract along these lines to acquire off-streets lots for years into the future.¹⁴² Three years later, in November 1967, for example, the city was still acquiring additional off-street parking lots from the company in a similar lease-purchase agreement.¹⁴³ Phase III, then, was successfully being implemented only five months after Phases I and II had been completed.

Phase V, creating arcades between off-street parking lots and Main Street, obviously could not be launched until those parking lots had been established. Therefore, construction of the first arcade, at the United States Bank, did not begin until late fall 1967.¹⁴⁴

That left Phase IV, the voluntary phase that urged property owners and merchants to renovate store exteriors and interiors. As Lacy and CCDD members had initially hoped when they formulated the entire plan in the spring and summer of 1962, the dramatic refashioning and beautification of Main Street did serve as the catalyst for significant property improvements by individual owners and businesses.

By the end of 1963, therefore, each of the five phases of Operation Foresight had been completed, or were on track to completion. However, for city leaders, members of the

¹⁴¹ City Council Minutes, 20 November 1963, GJ ISYS Archives; and “Council Approves Lease for Downtown Parking Lot”, *TDS*, 21 November 1963, 20.

¹⁴² Contract, 3 December 1964, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁴³ City Council Minutes, 1 November 1967, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁴⁴ Planning Commission Minutes, 25 October 1967; City Council Minutes, 6 December 1967, GJ ISYS Archives.

Citizens' Committee, downtown businessmen and customers the more vital issue was whether all the planning and work would actually allow downtown to remain the commercial and banking center of west-central Colorado and east-central Utah.

Without question Grand Junction's civic leaders were proud of what they had achieved. Convinced that Foresight was something special, they submitted an application to the National Municipal League and Look magazine seeking All-American City recognition. Their invitation to meet with the All-American City Jury on November 17th, 1962 in Washington, D.C. gave them an opportunity to see if other professionals would share their enthusiasm. Joe Lacy, Dale Hollingsworth and Leland Schmidt represented the city, the Chamber and the CCDD respectively. Joining them was Frank Wagner, representing Industrial Development, Mayor C.E. McCormick, representing the City Council, and Tom Clark, representing the Lion's Club.

City Manager Lacy made the formal presentation.

An impressive series of community advancement programs culminated in 1962 with the construction of "Operation Foresight", Grand Junction's downtown redevelopment. The program's name signifies the forwardness of the undertaking which has completely rebuilt 27 blocks of streets and other public facilities in the central city without the use of a cent of Federal or State funds. The nearly one million dollar project includes new waterlines, sewers, street lights and signals, sidewalks, streets, and a four-block "shopping park".... It is significant that this program was locally planned, administered, and financed by citizens who sought advice from every source, but who decided for themselves what the final plan would be.... Of great importance, it has brought all segments of the community closer together in a proud determination to continue working on better community facilities and programs.... Grand Junction is not a city that has had to rise from the depths of corruption, blight, or economic chaos. Our people pride themselves on having recognized the symptoms of stagnation that comes from leaving well enough alone.... Grand Junction, Colorado [is] a city not satisfied with "marking time", but dedicated to "making history".¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ "Our All-America City Story as Presented Before the All-America City Jury, Nov. 17, 1962", contained in Special Insert: "City of Grand Junction Annual Report, 1962", TDS, 29 March 1963, 3. See Plate XIV.

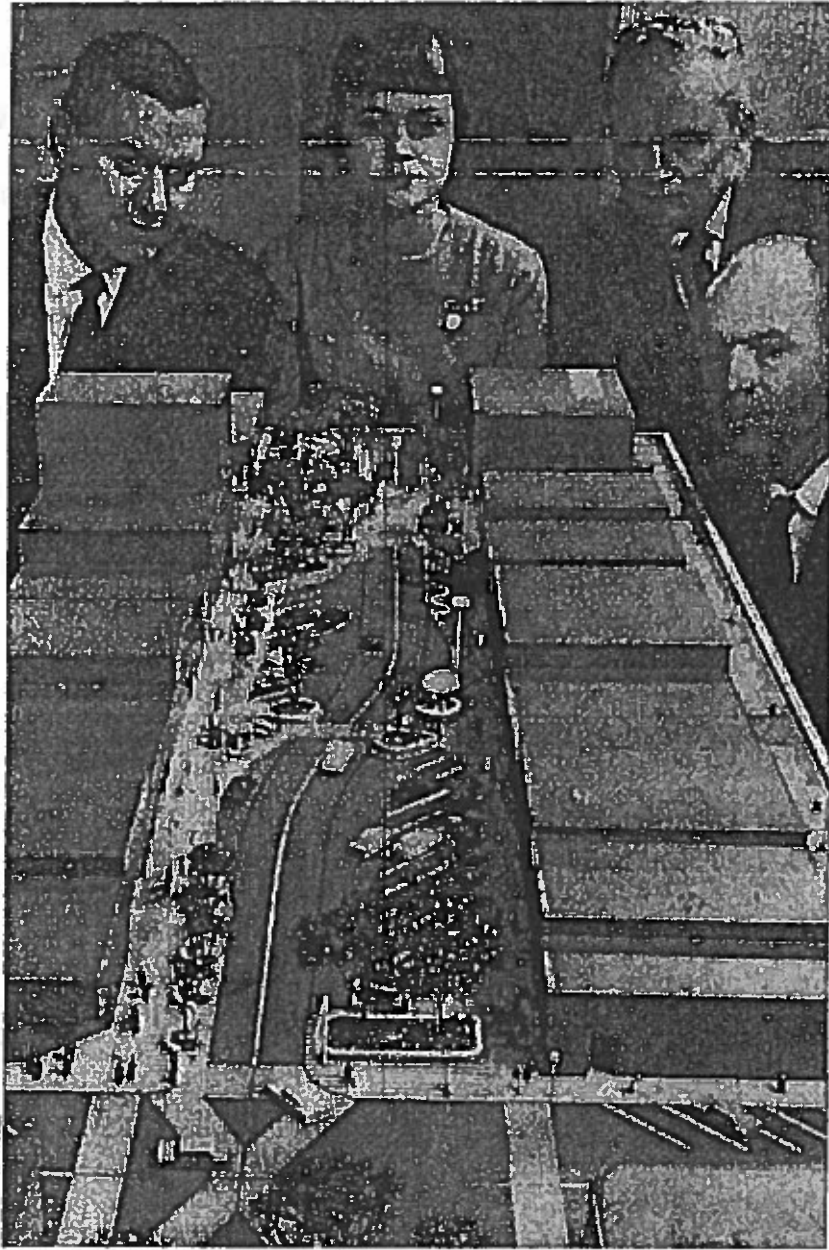


Plate XIV: Dale Hollingsworth, Barbara Hyde, Leland Schmidt and Joe Lacy examine a model of the downtown shopping park. "All America Cities", Look, 23 April 1963, 110.

Whether the jury would agree with Lacy's analysis wouldn't be known for months. But on March 28, 1963 The Daily Sentinel proudly proclaimed on its front page, "Grand Junction Announced As An All-American City", one of eleven in the nation.¹⁴⁶ Preston Walker was just as proud as the civic leaders who had flown to Washington, but he also wanted the city to continue to look toward the future and not rest on its laurels. "In a few weeks," he wrote, "we're going to take time out to celebrate [All-American City designation] and toast the new milestone. But it is just a milestone; we don't stop here. With the eyes of the nation upon us and our eyes upon Grand Junction's future, our battle cry must be: What's next?"¹⁴⁷

While the eyes of the entire nation were not actually focused on Grand Junction, by December 1962 requests for information and/or its plans *had* come from Huntington Park, California and High Point, North Carolina.¹⁴⁸ By May 1963 dozens of cities followed suit, wondering if the Foresight model might also work for them. Acknowledging in January 1962 that the shopping park model could prove to be a major publicity bonanza for Grand Junction and western Colorado, the city council authorized the publication of 50,000 copies of a pamphlet describing Operation Foresight.¹⁴⁹ Those pamphlets would initially be available to an anticipated 400,000 visitors expected at a forthcoming sports show in Los Angeles. Copies would also be available to distribute as the "fame" of the project spread, which occurred once Look published its All-American City edition in April, 1963.¹⁵⁰ Capitalizing on that publicity, the city also produced a twenty-one minute public relations video, written and directed by Lacy, that touted

¹⁴⁶ See Plates XV and XVI.

¹⁴⁷ "Editorial" All-America City", TDS, 3 April 1963, 4.

¹⁴⁸ "North Carolina City Requests Foresight Plan", TDS, 5 December 1962, 1.

¹⁴⁹ City Council Minutes, 17 January 1962, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁵⁰ "All America Cities", Look, 23 April 1963, 94, 110.

Grand Junction Announced As An All-American City

Most of the competitors were larger, wealthier, and more dominant on the map but today Grand Junction is an All-American city.

The announcement naming Grand Junction and 10 other communities as winners of the coveted citizen action award, came today from the National Municipal League and Look Magazine, co-sponsors in the annual competition.

Other winners, chosen from a total of 70 aspirants, are San Diego, Calif.; Allentown, Pa.; Bartlesville, Okla.; Boston, Mass.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Dade County, Fla.; Grafton, W. Va.; High Point, N. C.; Knoxville, Tenn.;



\$100,000 of the required loan met the necessary terms to convert the impending shut-down into an \$800,000 expansion of the industry.

A three-way pact of co-operation between the city, Mesa County and Mesa College provided the final thrust to put Grand Junction into the winners' circle.


The pact, aimed at joint street and bridge construction, canal maintenance and the consolidation of government services, has resulted in the construction of major runways and a \$385,000 control tower for Walker Field, the construction, now underway, of a new county jail adjacent to the police building; and the formation of a single health department and regional planning commission.


Grand Junction and the 10 other

Plate XV: Celebrating All-America City Status. TDS, 28 March 1963, 1.

PROGRESS to date.....

EARNS TITLE OF
ALL-AMERICA CITY






City Of
Grand Junction
ANNUAL REPORT
For 1962

CITIZEN EFFORTS SPARE AWARD
 Accomplishments resulting from voluntary citizen efforts have won the coveted All-America City title for Grand Junction in 1962. The City's 24-block downtown rebuild project along with the sewer line individual effort, St Mary's and Pillsbury Hospital build efforts and bond proceeds investment all attested to the community's public spirit. This is the 14th year the All-America City award has been made jointly by the National Municipal League and LOOK Magazine.

**FIRST
INCORPORATED
1881**



**HOME RULE
CHARTER
1909**

Plate XVI: Celebrating All-America City Status: "Annual Report" Insert, TDS, 29 March 1963, 2.

Operation Foresight as well as the attractive appeal of the city to businesses, residents and tourists.¹⁵¹ Regardless of how city leaders across the nation learned about the city's downtown renovation, over the next few years they continued to solicit either information or plans or to actually journey to western Colorado to view the transformation first hand.¹⁵²

A Sentinel editorial on May 12th, 1963 proudly proclaimed "Our Fame Spreads". It boasted that "between ten and fifteen million people have heard about Foresight", based on reports from newspapers across the country. Ignoring the minimal cost of the pamphlets, it asserted that this publicity has occurred "without costing us a dime in special advertising. To reach an audience of this size would normally, it asserted, cost about a million dollars. It's conclusion: "[Operation Foresight] has really put Grand Junction on the map...."¹⁵³

It came as no surprise that neither downtown customers nor officials from across the nation focused much attention on the new sewer and water systems or even the off-street parking locations. What appealed to them was the Shopping Park created in Phase II of the plan. After all, the fundamental rationale for the whole project was to create a downtown that would retain old customers and attract new ones by providing a safe, easily accessible, convenient, pleasant place to shop.

Despite enthusiasm across the country in the late 1950s for a pedestrian shopping mall that excluded all vehicles, that model had not appealed to the CCDD. Not only would the cost of such a conversion be far higher but local businessmen also argued that their local

¹⁵¹ "Operation Foresight: A New Heart for Grand Junction", (Grand Junction: City of Grand Junction, 1963), V-0014, Museum of Western Colorado.

¹⁵² See "Utah Civic Leaders Study Foresight", TDS, 23 June 1966, 3 as an example of continuing interest.

¹⁵³ "Editorial", 4.

customers would not welcome the loss of parking along Main Street, even if sufficient off-street parking could immediately be secured either north or south of Main.

Similarly, while traffic congestion downtown had clearly become a problem, city leaders and downtown merchants quickly rejected the idea of one-way streets.¹⁵⁴

These decisions, therefore, required Lacy and his fellow-CCDD members to design a shopping park that retained Main Street parking and two-way traffic while eliminating congestion and making the area shopper-friendly and safe. Local architect and CCDD member Robert Van Deusen, Gene Allen, Western Regional Planning Director, and City Manager Lacy jointly crafted the gentle S-curve design of Main Street that became the symbol for Foresight. According to Van Deusen, the original idea was Allen's, but all worked to make it a viable concept that could achieve the other goals of the downtown make-over.¹⁵⁵

Working with the gentle S-curve concept, the CCDD ultimately allowed diagonal parking on one-half of each block with a ten foot maneuvering lane behind the parked cars. That lane would allow cars to back out of parking spaces without interfering with vehicles in the two-way traffic corridor. On the opposite side of the block where parking was permitted was an open space designed to allow vehicles to discharge or pick up passengers without double-parking and therefore blocking thru-traffic. These were not for use by heavy trucks, which were to use newly renovated alley-ways for loading and unloading.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴City Council Minutes, 1 November 1961, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁵⁵Robert Van Deusen Interview, contained in KREX-TV Special: "Downtown: The Years of Foresight", 1992. Dale Hollingsworth and Pat Gormley attribute the idea to Van Deusen. See Dale Hollingsworth Interview, OH-988, Museum of Western Colorado; and Pat Gormley Interview with Richard Lael, 29 July 2008, Lael Archives.

¹⁵⁶See Plates XVII-XXXVIII.



Plate XVII: Main Street before Construction: wide, straight, unattractive. Operation Foresight, I-16.

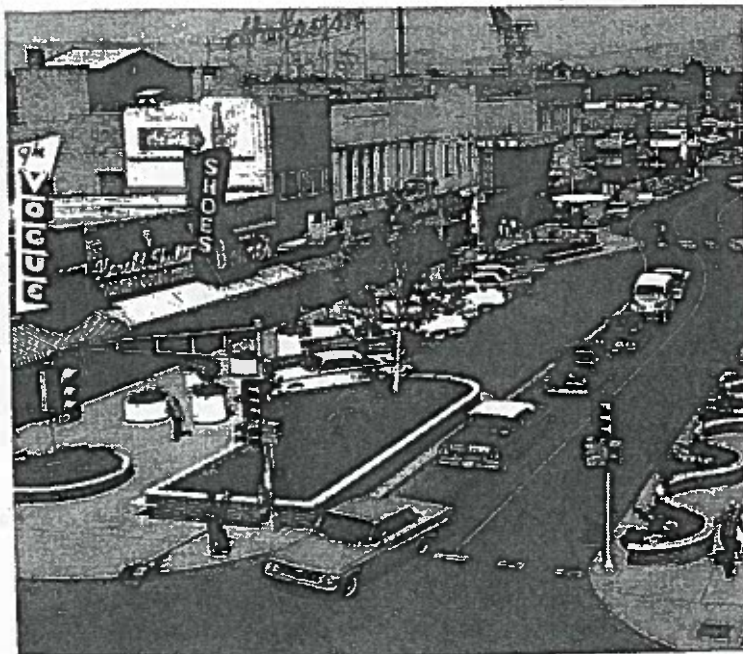


Plate XVIII: Main Street after Construction: Polk's Grand Junction City Directory (Kansas City: R.L. Polk Co., 1965), XI.



Plate XIX: Looking east along Main Street, 300 block, circa 1962. Bill Thrall photographer, Lael Archives.

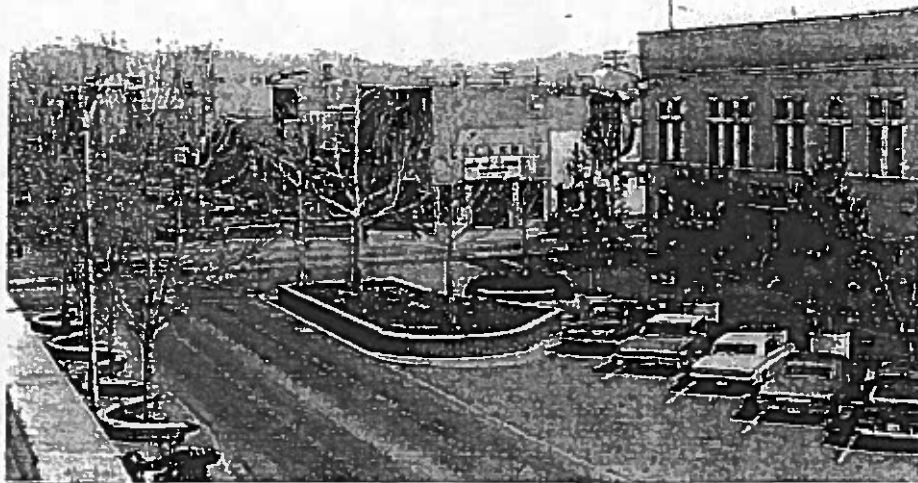


Plate XX: 4th & Main Intersection, circa 1962. Museum of Western Colorado.

Plate XXI: ...
Lael Archives



Plate XXI: Gentle Curve on Main Street, 500 block, circa 1962. Museum of Western Colorado.

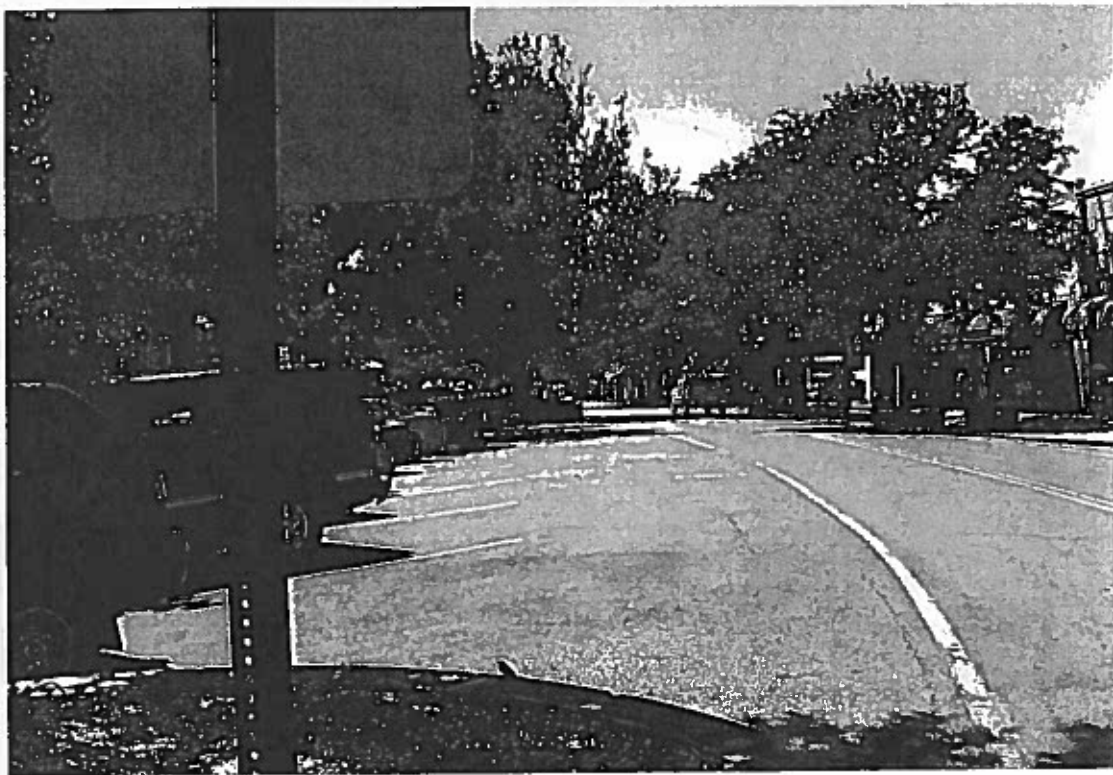


Plate XXII: Diagonal Parking with Back-Up Lane that prevents interference with thru-traffic. Looking west on Main, 600 block, 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXIII: A Concrete Umbrella Canopy, poured by city workers, is located in the front-center of the photograph. Mayor C.E. McCormick referred to them as toadstools. Museum of Western Colorado.

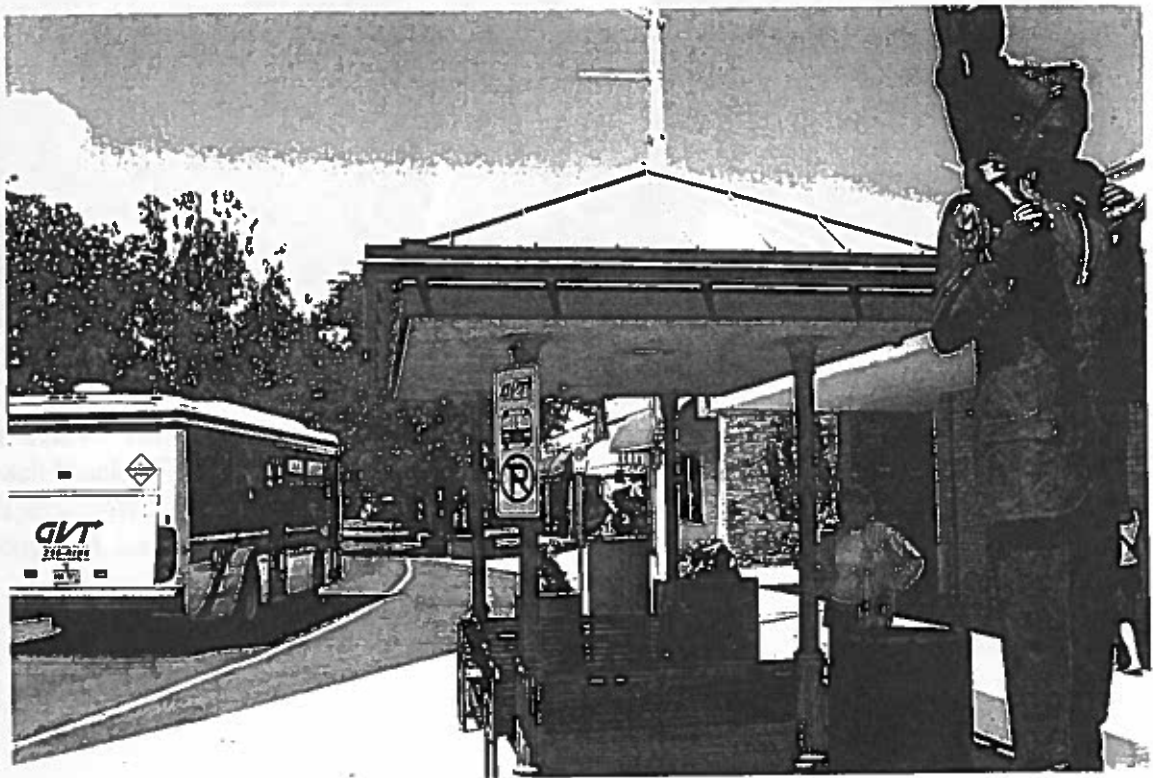


Plate XXIV: The Concrete Canopies were eventually replaced with a more traditional design. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXV: Temporary parking lanes were located opposite diagonal parking locations in each block. This allowed passengers to enter or exit a vehicle without interference with thru-traffic. Temporary parking lane near Avalon Theater, 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

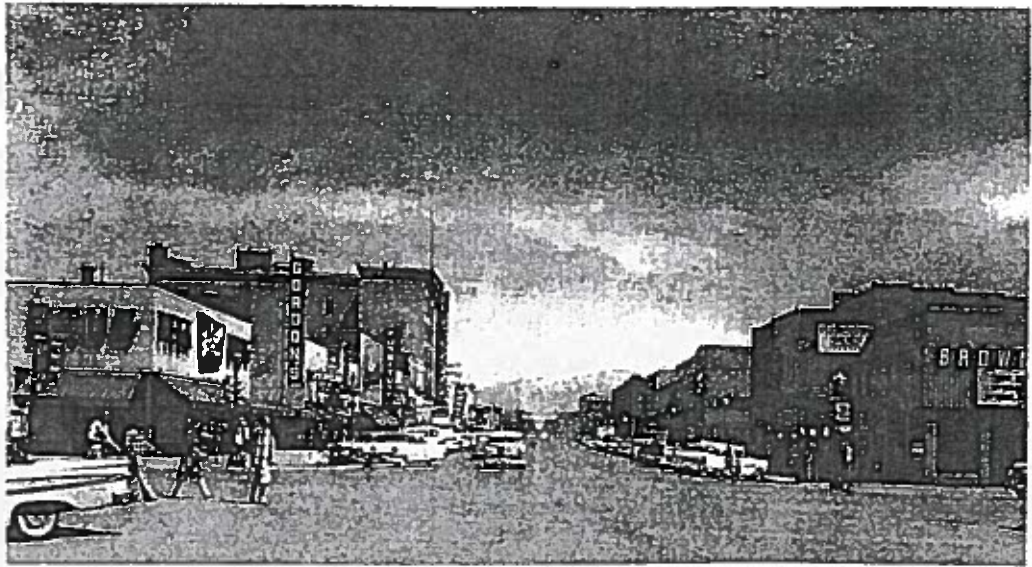


Plate XXVI: 4th & Main Crosswalk before construction. Operation Foresight, I-13.

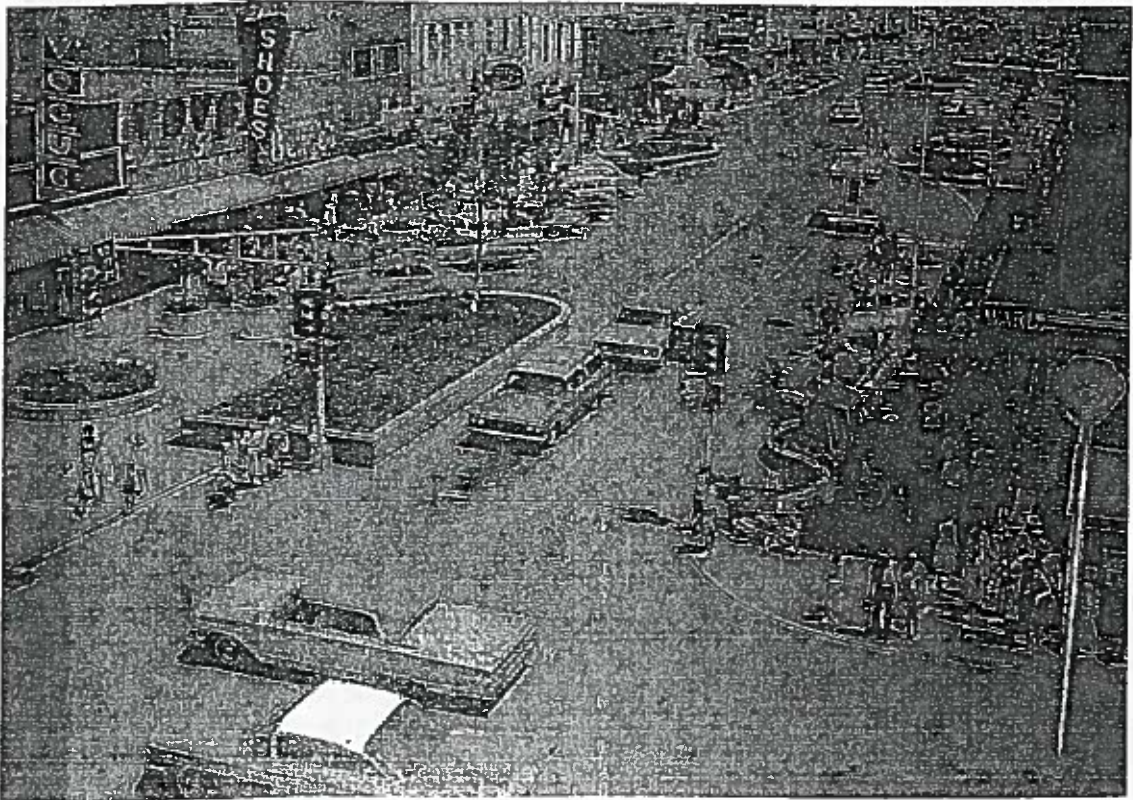


Plate XXVII: 5th & Main Crosswalk after construction. The new design reduced the distance a pedestrian traveled to cross the street, allowing for speedy passage and minimum interference with traffic flow. Museum of Western Colorado.



Plate XXVIII: 6th & Main Crosswalk, shaded by mature trees. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

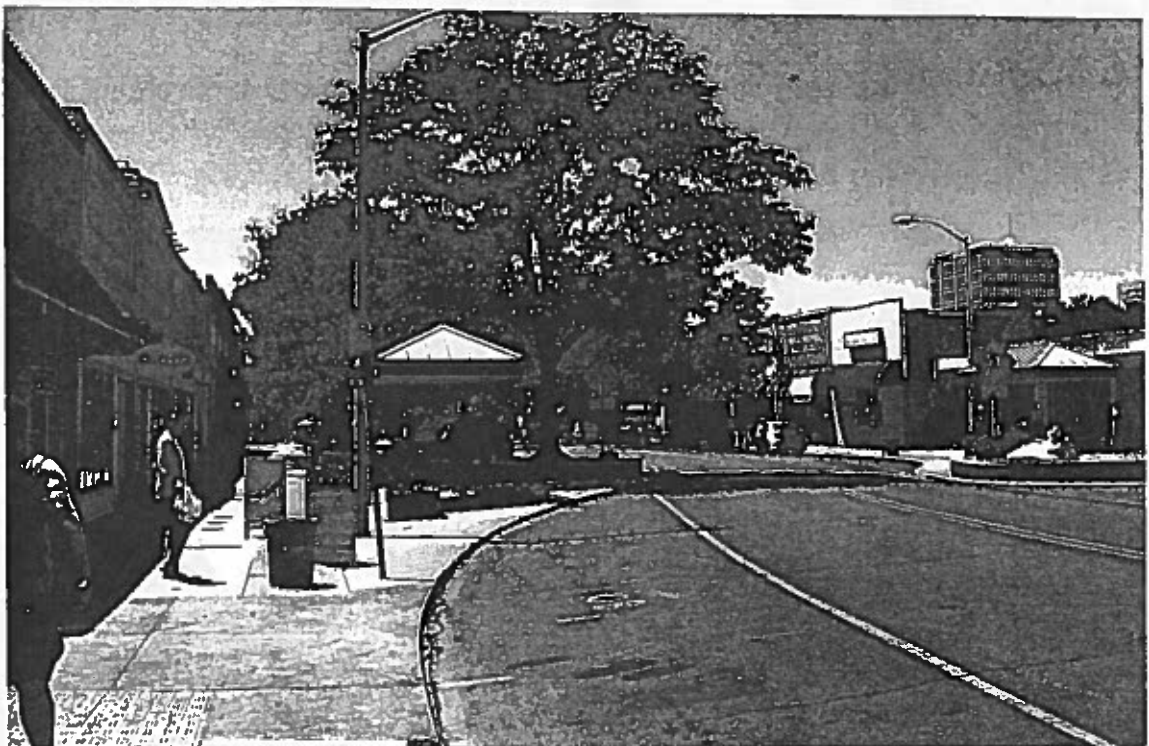


Plate XXIX: Pedestrian Crossing, mid-block in the 600 block. 2009. Notice that, as with end-of-block crosswalks, the pedestrian only crosses the two lanes designated for traffic, allowing for speedy passage and minimum interference with traffic flow. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXX: S-curved walls that encouraged pedestrians to sit and chat while discouraging them from jaywalking. Near 6th & Main. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

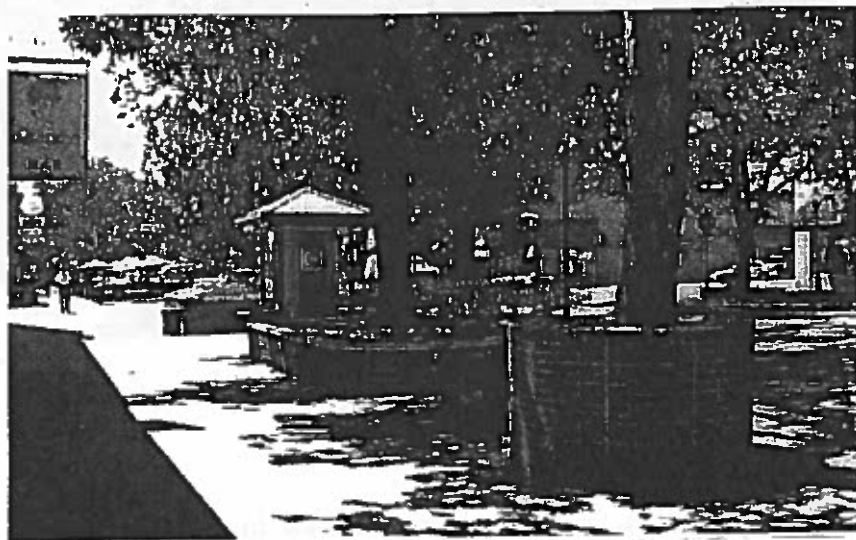


Plate XXXI: Planters in the 600 block of Main. Originally the planters were designed for flowers and trees. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

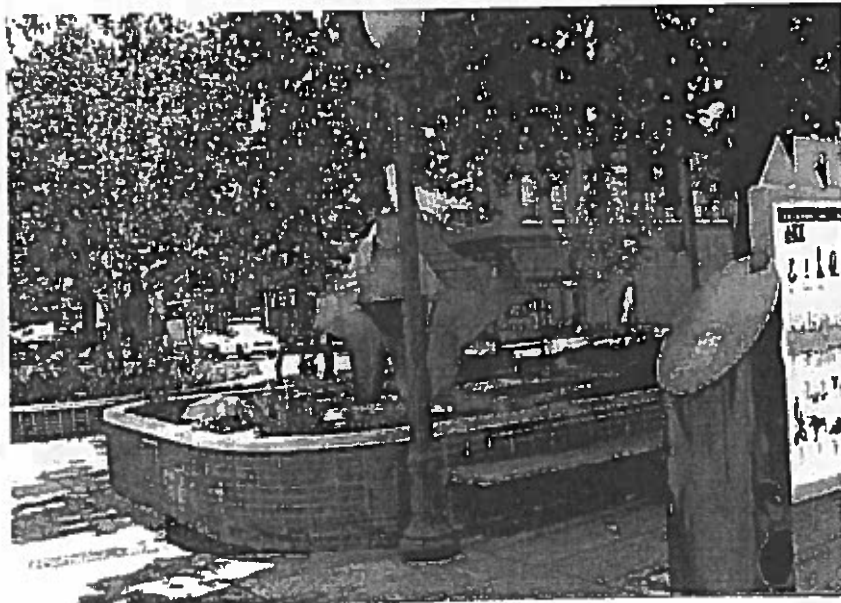


Plate XXXII: Eventually some of the planters became home to sculpture. This piece of sculpture, "Mesas, Monoliths & Monuments" is on the northwest corner of 5th & Main. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXXIII: By creating wide sidewalks, Foresight planners allowed the easy movement of pedestrians. Main Street, looking toward 5th. 2009. Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXXIV: The wide sidewalks also allowed for the later introduction of fountains and fountain sculpture. This “Sip ‘n’ Splash” sculpture is on the northeast corner of 5th & Main. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

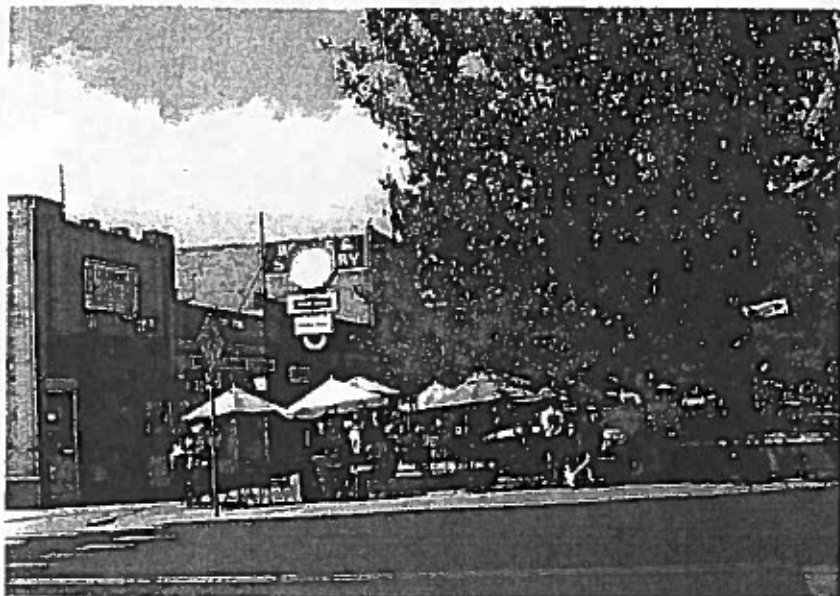


Plate XXXV: The wide sidewalks also allowed Grand Junction restaurants to establish outside seating. These tables surround another sculpture fountain on the southwest corner of 6th and Main. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

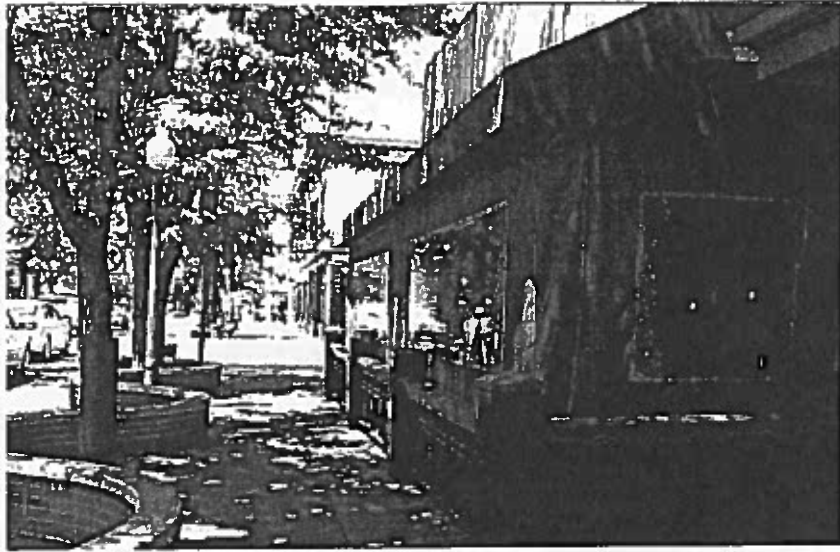


Plate XXXVI: This sidewalk restaurant annex is at 4th & Main. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXXVII: Downtown renovation included refurbishing alleyways as well as Main Street. This is the 600 block alley, looking west. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XXXVIII: The original plan called for a number of arcades that connected Main Street with off-street parking. This is The Daily Sentinel arcade in the 600 block. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

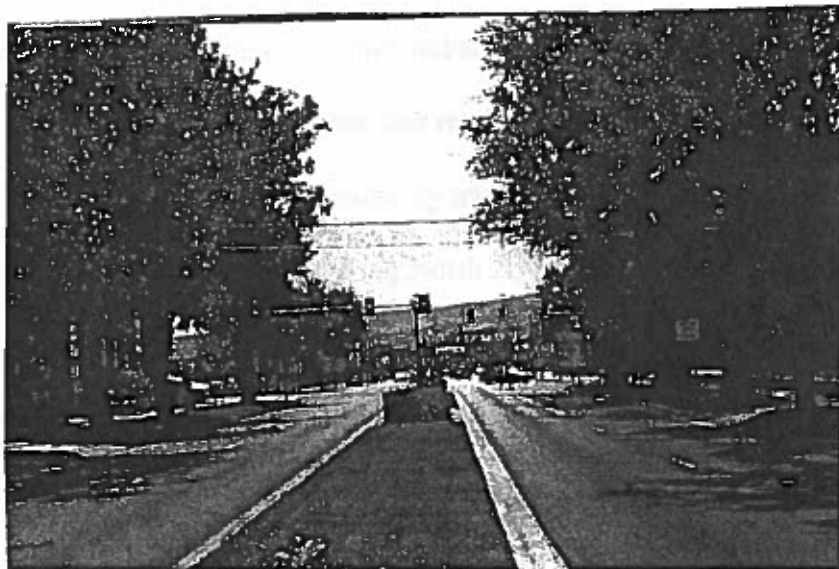


Plate XXXIX: Grand Junction extended the Operation Foresight concept in the first decade of the twenty-first century to include 7th Street. This is a view of 7th Street approaching the newly rebuilt section south of Grand. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

As downtown had become more congested with shoppers and vehicles in the 1950s, the number of accidents had increased. To address that problem, Foresight called for new traffic/pedestrian crossing signals at each downtown intersection. Rejecting a Barton recommendation, the CCDD adopted the scramble-crossing concept. All vehicular traffic would be stopped at each intersection, thereby allowing pedestrians to cross in any direction at the same time. To discourage shoppers jaywalking, the Citizen's Committee added mid-block pedestrian crossings. To reduce the time necessary to cross Main Street, whether at regular intersections or in mid-block, it stipulated that the cross-over points be only twenty-two feet wide, half the width of pre-Foresight crossings. To discourage jaywalkers, it also authorized the addition of raised planters and S-curved masonry benches throughout downtown. Finally, the addition of mature Sycamores, hundreds of flowers, drinking fountains and public telephones would make the entire area aesthetically pleasing and customer friendly.

Placing their confidence in the shopping park idea proved to be wise. Not only did it generate considerable interest outside the county and state, but local customers welcomed the transformation. The city manager reported that retail sales jumped by \$4,000,000 in 1963.¹⁵⁷ Critical to that success was the decision by merchants, especially national chain stores, not to abandon downtown for malls along North Avenue or US 6-50, a major concern of the Chamber of Commerce as early as 1955. Sears, J.C. Penny, Woolworth, Montgomery Ward, Zales and Kress & Company remained downtown for over a decade. However, by 1985, Montgomery Ward, Woolworth, and Kress & Company had

¹⁵⁷ "Operation Foresight: A New Heart for Grand Junction", V-0014, Museum of Western Colorado.

disappeared from the city altogether while the other national franchises had shifted west of town along US 6-50 to Mesa Mall, which officially opened in 1979.

And what about the threat of the Teller Arms Shopping Center on North Avenue, which had scared merchants and city officials by 1959? In June of that year it appeared that the Teller Arms was on the fast track when the city council annexed the 160 acre tract and approved the developer's zoning request and proposed plat of the land. On December 30, 1959, developer Dale Luke enthusiastically informed the Planning Commission that within the next week all demolition of preexisting structures on the tract would be complete and that the entire complex should be under construction by March 1st 1960.¹⁵⁸

What happened next isn't clear. The thirteen store Teller Arms complex, including its anchor supermarket, Safeway, did not open until three years later, in 1964. Joe Lacy's son, Dan, years later asserted that his father had worked out a "backroom agreement" with Teller Arms owner/developer Loyd Files to postpone construction until the downtown renovation had been completed.¹⁵⁹ If Lacy's son is accurate, why might Files reach such an understanding? Perhaps he simply wanted to see downtown prosper since he had extensive business interests in the area. Or perhaps he realized he might need additional city assistance as the Teller Arms complex moved from vision to reality. Since no written records exist indicating such a deal existed, what motivated Files is speculation. However, city records do reveal that when Luke and Files requested that the city rezone portions of the complex, that it pay one-third of the cost of constructing a bridge over Indian Wash and that it close a portion of the Mesa County ditch running

¹⁵⁸ Planning Commission Minutes, 30 December 1959, GJ ISYS Archives.

¹⁵⁹ Laurena Mayne Davis, 125 People—125 Years: Grand Junction's Story (Grand Junction: Museum of Western Colorado, 2007), 95.

through the property, the city readily agreed.¹⁶⁰ Whatever the reasons, the Teller Arms Shopping Center did not provide an alternative to downtown until a year after Foresight had been completed. And even then, it never threatened the heart of the city's commercial dominance.

When debating the adoption of Operation Foresight, city and business leaders warned that a one-time renovation, no matter how innovative or effective, would not be sufficient to maintain downtown's commercial strength in the face of the future growth of suburban communities and shopping centers. But, according to City Council President C.E. McCormick, when Joe Lacy left in 1966 to become the Executive Director of Best Western Motel Association in Phoenix, Arizona, "everyone kind of petered out after that."¹⁶¹ While subsequent events indicate that that observation was overly pessimistic, attempts throughout the 1970s and early 1980s to further transform downtown to insure its attractiveness and economic competitiveness did meet considerable resistance and never achieved the goals initially envisioned by their authors and supporters.¹⁶²

Loss of major businesses to Mesa Mall and to other locations in the 1980s prompted the transformation of downtown to more boutique-type businesses and restaurants.¹⁶³ Throughout this period, however, it remained the banking center of the region. Despite the shift in types of businesses downtown, the shopping park concept that underlay

¹⁶⁰ See Council Minutes of 17 February 1960, 7 February 1962, 27 February 1963, 18 March 1964; Planning Commission Minutes of 29 November 1961, 12 August 1964; and Lacy Memo to Grand Valley Irrigation Company and Teller Arms Inc, et al, 31 January 1964, GJ ISYS Archives. The 1964 Lacy memo recaps events since March 1963 relating to the request by Teller Arms to close the Mesa County Irrigation Ditch which ran across its property.

¹⁶¹ Charles "Ed" McCormick Interview, OH-775, no date, Museum of Western Colorado.

¹⁶² Preliminary Financial Study: Downtown '70s (Grand Junction: Van Deusen Associates, 20 August 1971); Downtown Development Committee, Expanded Shopping and Parking for Downtown Grand Junction: A Plan for Action (Grand Junction: Downtown Development Inc., November 1976); Downtown Development Strategy/Grand Junction, (n.c: Johnson, Johnson & Roy Inc., 1981).

¹⁶³ KREX-TV Special: "Thirty Years Since All-American City and Foresight", 1992, V-0005, Museum of Western Colorado.

Operation Foresight remained very popular and continued to provide an easily accessible, safe and attractive shopping destination.

Between 2006 and 2010, the City Council and the Downtown Development Authority reaffirmed the wisdom of their government and business predecessors in 1961. Significantly influenced by Operation Foresight, both in its conception and completion, they transformed 7th Street between Grand and Ute, Main from 1st to 3rd and from 7th to 8th, and Colorado from 7th to 2nd.¹⁶⁴ In addition, remaining true to the original Foresight plans, they restored, as needed, the Main Street shopping park from 2nd to 7th.¹⁶⁵ Despite such recent successes, long term challenges to a vibrant downtown Grand Junction will continue. If the past is any indication, current and future government and business leaders will emerge who will echo Preston Walker's words in 1963—"What's next?"

¹⁶⁴ See Plates XXXIX-XLIV.

¹⁶⁵ Resolution No. 15-06: A Joint Resolution of the City Council and the Downtown Development Authority Concerning 7th Street Construction and the Funding of Other Downtown Improvements, 1 March 2006, GJ ISYS Archives; "Parking Break", TDS, 5 July 2009, 1, 5a; and "Council OK's Design for Main Street Renovation", TDS, 4 August 2009, 1, 8a.



Plate XL: This is a post-construction view of 7th Street from Grand. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XLI: Grand Junction also extended the Operation Foresight concept in the first decade of the twenty-first century to include Colorado Avenue. This is a view of Colorado looking east from 3rd Street. There are slight curves in this design, following the original concept adopted in 1962 on Main Street. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XLII: Another view of the curves on Colorado. This is a view of Colorado looking west from 7th Street. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.



Plate XLIII: The narrower width of Colorado Avenue prevented the adoption of the back-out corridor concept that still exists in the Main Street shopping park. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.

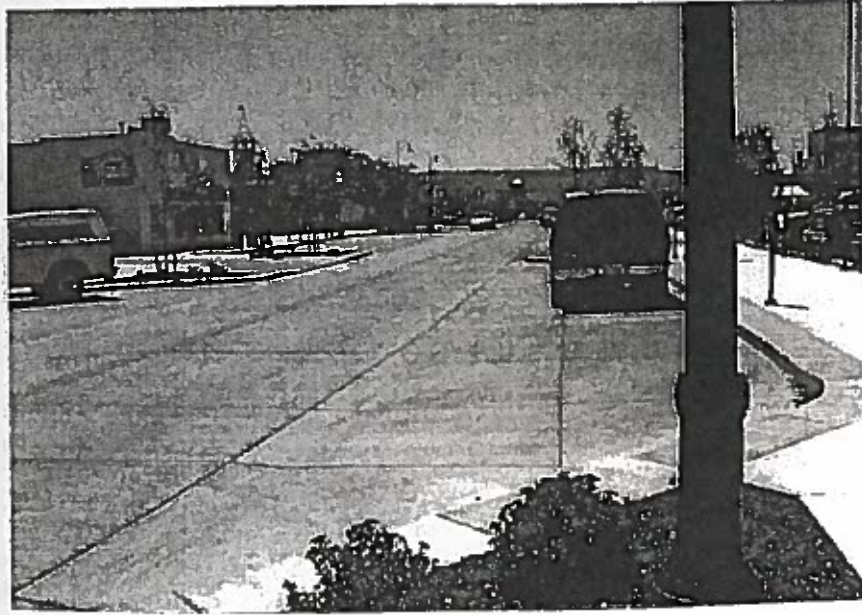


Plate XLIV: The narrower width of Colorado also meant that the temporary parking corridor concept that still exists in the Main Street shopping park was not desirable. Instead parallel parking exists on the opposite side of the street from diagonal parking. 2009. Richard Lael photograph, Lael Archives.