

The Erickson/Massey plan, commissioned by the Community Arts Council, does not purport to be a visionary solution to the Vancouver downtown core. It is the result of a very hard look at the problems and needs of the downtown which will become critical with the development of Blocks 42, 52 and 61. The solutions are practical and entirely within the range of possibility. In detail, it does not propose any single project that has not been suggested previously or considered seriously by our officials at City Hall. What might appear to be new is that we have developed the most valid proposals and updated them in concurrence with the most advanced thinking that has been given to the cores of cities.

It is to be emphasized that except for Block 61, this plan makes no specific recommendations for buildings in the downtown core, since such recommendation without an actual client would be unrealistic. It suggests, rather, systems and policies of development. It establishes a pattern or framework based on which development can proceed coherently. This plan defines the downtown core area for the purpose of this study but, rather than confining the rehabilitation of the city to this specific area alone, creates a method of treating the growth of the city in a coherent manner, whichever way it may go.

The Erickson/Massey plan is purposely a very flexible plan, with as few built-in "fixes" as possible. Thus it can be implemented in parts and phased according to available resources. The most pertinent proposals are ones which must be imminently considered and would be unwise to ignore at this critical stage of the city's development.

The fabric of the downtown is extremely fragile and is constantly subject to outside pressures. For major development to be successful, there must be a structurally sound skeleton into which projects such as the Provincial office building, the new Courthouse, Cemp Development, etc. may be incorporated. At present these projects are being proposed for available blocks in an outmoded and congested traffic system and with no clear vision of how the downtown of Vancouver might be affected.

The point of our study was to emphasize two critical aspects:

1. That the downtown, threatened to the point of extinction by its physical isolation from the suburbs, can be revived with the infusion of the Cemp-Eaton project, if Block 42 and 52 and Block 61 are tied into the existing commercial pattern - so that the effect is salutary to the whole downtown core.
 - (a) If development proceeds as in the past without some realistic objectives of the total city development in mind, the effect will be as previously, the blind destruction of existing patterns for the sake of new development and thus the creation of wastelands of parking lots and obsolete buildings marring the downtown more than in most cities of North America.

(b) Cemp-Eaton development could very well help the surrounding commercial areas instead of showing a blank face to them. We see the Cemp-Eaton project as a vital catalyst to the downtown but are anxious that it not be inward-looking and self-centred, threatening the existing shopping of Granville Street by creating its own subterranean shopping centre, divorced from the existing shopping pattern. We see this project as an opportunity for the city to set certain policies regarding traffic in the downtown and to accomplish part of this by means of the Cemp-Eaton scheme.

2. If the downtown is to survive as a shopping centre street it must compete on equal terms of convenience with the suburban shopping centres, it must provide adjacent parking, free pedestrian flow between shops without crossing traffic lanes and some degree of shelter and pleasant surroundings for the shopper.

Vancouver more than most cities has an obvious and easy pattern. The city is already contained geographically on a peninsula. It is the hub through which most traffic flows in an east/west and north/south direction. However, now it is possible to live in the city without ever going into it: by using a bypass along the north shore or along the southern stretches of the city. This is the problem of most cities - they languish from neglect.

But the downtown of Vancouver has strong drawing characteristics, principally from the uniqueness of its site, the surrounding sea, the beaches, the harbour, Stanley Park and the crossing to the mountains. Largely because of this, the West End has emerged as one of the unique residential precincts in the world. The West End population now equals that of the entire north shore and is rapidly increasing. With this immediate population living in next to the core, the core is gaining life.

At the same time we can see that now we can have access to the waterfront at any part and the waterfront is turning out to be the most valuable asset of the city. Quite naturally, the waterfront is being claimed for residences. What started in the West End is spreading to the harbour and some planners see that the waterfront - whether beachfront or harbourfront - is the most pleasant place for people to live. The stigma of warehousing and railway tracks is being overcome - what was impossible a few years ago is predicted now - the covering of the tracks with residential and commercial developments.

Thus we can foresee the shape of the city - an island peninsula edged by housing developments around the central commercial and business core. The core of a city according to some of the experts, never exceeds 200 acres and Vancouver would probably grow to about 165 acres. This is a small area - within easy walking - but an inevitable area - for from then on, satellite cores are formed. This is in the nature of the organism.

It is obvious that the movement patterns by vehicle and by foot, which determine the movement corridors of the city form the basic skeleton into which the buildings fit. The traffic patterns were the fundamental problem of our study.

If we look at this peninsular city - quite marvellous in the simplicity of its form - we see the radial spokes of the bridges that feed into it on all but the north side. It is the north side that is congested and the source of the only traffic problems to the city. We see also how foolish is the concept of a twin bridge, to increase the width of the one spoke, when what is needed, obviously, is another spoke - another way out, whether bridge or tunnel, at quite a different location to counterbalance the southern accesses to the city.

We see also how impractical it is to take all traffic across the town when its destination is not in the town itself. A ring road circumventing the town and connecting all the spokes of the access bridges is an obvious solution for providing a freeway bypass. This ring road, accommodated on the shoreline, can give direct access off it by the shortest possible routes to all parts of the downtown. Because of the physical shape of the city, the ring road allows a fast and direct route from any part of the suburbs to the North Shore.

This elimination of through traffic reduces the traffic volume in the downtown by about 30%. The spokes or access routes to the downtown automatically lead to a system of major one-way arteries feeding the city and providing fast distribution to the core area. These leave the major streets, Granville, Robson, Burrard and Georgia, to be treated specially.

Burrard and Georgia remain as two-way avenues of a special amenity kind. They are not only destination streets but city drives, giving the motorist the finest view of the city. Granville and, to a limited extent, Robson, being main retail streets, the conflict between pedestrian use and vehicular use can be solved by making them, in the core, strictly pedestrian concourses. As pedestrian use must be complimented by a public transit system, it is eminently logical to keep both Granville and Robson as the main arteries of the cross-town transit systems - but at a lower level than the pedestrian concourse. Whether diesel buses as now proposed, or Mini-Buses, as has been also suggested, the Granville-Robson underground artery would permit all the bus distribution necessary in the core. The result of this is a unique public transit depot along three blocks of Granville and one block of Robson. The depot brings all pedestrians to the very heart of the commercial core with the complete separation of traffic systems - essential to an efficiently working core.

We visualize this depot as giving basement access to the large commercial interests, and easy open access to the pedestrian shopping level above, perhaps covered with a glass parasol to give rain-proof protection to the shoppers. Such a proposal as this is much less in size than Milan's "Galleria", one of the most successful shopping centres ever built, and would provide a less costly and more pleasant shopping mall than the underground ones already proposed.

The third important separation of traffic that would ease congestion in the downtown is service traffic. This is not, at the moment, a major problem but with the Eaton's and Cemp developments, and the others that will follow, an immense amount of service traffic will be focusing on the core. These former projects already propose a service tunnel connecting the two and require street access to these, accomplished rather unsatisfactorily at the moment. However, the reconstruction of Granville and Robson Streets could just as easily accommodate a service tunnel below the bus level and be the first stage of a service loop connecting directly to the ring road in the future so that the downtown core could be serviced without major trucking entering the main streets.

Finally, with respect to surface vehicular traffic, since utility services along Georgia will have to be reorganized for the Cemp-Eaton project, a great speeding up of traffic movement along Georgia could be accomplished by taking advantage of the grade off Georgia Street to the north to put underpasses from Burrard, Hornby, Howe and Seymour under Georgia so that Georgia would be a through street from Thurlow to Richards. Similarly, if another underpass is installed on Burrard under Nelson, Burrard would be without traffic lights from Davie to Pender.

The underpass is the final stage of development for the control of crossings which begins with stop signs, then stop lights, and ends with the complete separation of traffic. These may not be necessary for some time, but are inevitable as a stage in the dealing with traffic and can be more easily accomplished in Vancouver without disturbing the present frontages of buildings because of the contours of the streets.

This latter provision also achieves the complete separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the downtown core, thus providing an uninterrupted pedestrian network. It is the pedestrian in the final run who is responsible for the success of the commercial core. His needs must be facilitated in an equivalent way to the suburban shopping centres. He must be able to walk free of vehicular traffic, shop comfortably, and park conveniently. Our development would enable a shopper to park adjacent to the shopping area, to walk if he wished, the length of the core, through pleasant plazas, parks, shopping and entertainment malls or to catch a fast shuttle bus from his parking lot to his destination. If the downtown is accepted as a major shopping centre, the present day criteria of the shopping centre must be applied to it.

Finally, in reviewing the pattern of development in the city, we recommend that the problem of the parking structure be studied and the city introduce legislation to permit the kind of structure that we envisage. With comprehensive development on major blocks in the city, parking is best accommodated in underground layers. However, sporadic development requires above-ground parking structures which are invariably unsightly and do not encourage the best kind of rental use at street level. Our recommendation is that parking, as well as servicing, should be in the middle of a block - instead of violating the valuable commercial fringe of a block. Parking structures are seen as raised structures high enough to permit normal commercial use underneath, with office or apartment structures tied directly into these. The structures are planned to absorb within their boundaries the line-up that normally backs up onto the street. These structures, self-liquidating, should be undertaken by private enterprise, the D.P.C., etc., relieving the city of any financial responsibility.

Higher structures, such as offices, apartments or hotels could be built against the parking structure and its roof used for recreation, swimming pools, gardens, etc. as the use may dictate.

The parking structure then would become the consistent framework for development on downtown blocks not slated for comprehensive development. It would bring the pedestrian directly into his destination - and would bring a pattern to the downtown now riddled with inconsistent and unsightly parking structures.

All these above are important suggestions for development, all flexible, easily phased, and able to grow or be extended consistently with city needs.

Finally, the use pattern of the city, the development of Blocks 62 and 52 and the proposals for Block 61 suggested the possibilities of introduction of an imposing civic spine in the heart of the downtown.

Looking at the use pattern, we see the shopping corridors that we have already provided for, the pattern of office space, the residential areas and the pattern of hotels which seem to almost circle Blocks 51 and 61. If Blocks 51 and 61 become part of the same central precinct and Block 71, now owned by Eaton's, provides an extension of this for government expansion - a magnificent government and civic precinct could result.

Because of the volume of building required for new Law Courts and Provincial Government headquarters, Block 61 is itself barely sufficient. The basis of our proposal for this area is first that the existing courthouse be kept in its entirety; that either a new annex to it or a complete removal of the old annex would destroy what the building offers as the single monument of the downtown. We suggest that it become the headquarters for civic organizations such as the Tourist Bureau, Board of Trade, Community Arts Council, etc., and act as well as a much needed civic reception centre. Its location and character is ideal for civic social affairs.

The Law Courts in themselves require most of Block 61, if the desirable horizontal circulation between courts is to be maintained. They require a character suitable to their nature - of fitting dignity and solemnity and yet a part of the total composition of the precinct. With Robson grassed over, the Law Courts can be moved down so that the large court closes the view down Robson and it can be designed so that pedestrians going to any part of the Government complex can walk through the law court building without going inside, and can sense its importance and significance in the life of the city.

The Government offices and Provincial Block are purposely placed to span across Smythe so that they both act as a focal point in the city - closing the street - and as a link between Blocks 61 and 71. A suitably imposing form for the government building was chosen - four towers of crystal - so that both in height and form it would have adequate significance in the city.

Between the Government Building and the Law Court building is a fountain court; between the Law Courts and the Civic Reception building is a green common and wooded area, and in front of the Courthouse a sunken plaza surrounded by steps for the many kinds of activities that could occur and need space in the centre of the city. This sunken plaza could have a fountain in it - but no basin - sprays of water could be turned on for visual effect when the square was not in use - and it would drain directly out. But a pool anywhere in this area seems to inhibit the many uses that such an important public space could be put to.

The immediate reaction of many viewers of this scheme will be to ask where the money will come from to pay for it, and particularly the various diversions of traffic. This will be paid in the course of time by the taxes on the development that will be attracted to the downtown by the new ease of access to it. We cannot afford not to take this approach if downtown is to survive. Any argument over the validity of the downtown concept is superfluous.

We are dedicated to the survival of the downtown. It is a vital part of the North American way of life and will exist in some form or other despite all efforts for its survival by people like ourselves. The problem is in what manner will it survive? As an expanded, congested version of the chaotic situation that exists now, or in a manner such as the scheme we are now showing you, which we believe will fulfill, for the most part, the needs and aspirations of the citizens of Vancouver, when they visit the core of their city.

In conclusion, we reiterate that if long-range policies are not set with such a view of the downtown as ours in mind, development will continue on a piecemeal basis resulting in as great an expenditure eventually for corrective measures as we visualize, with far less satisfactory results. We repeat that our plan sets out a means of effectively and consistently separating types of traffic - an inevitable measure for a growing city. The Erickson/Massey plan would attract further development to the core area which would otherwise go elsewhere, or not come to Vancouver at all, and the resulting revenue to the city should offset the cost of it.




This plan is not intended as a final solution to the downtown. Its purpose is to show how the traffic and parking problem might be handled to revitalize a portion of the city - a method which can be applied to any part of the city, at any time.



Photo Cobbett

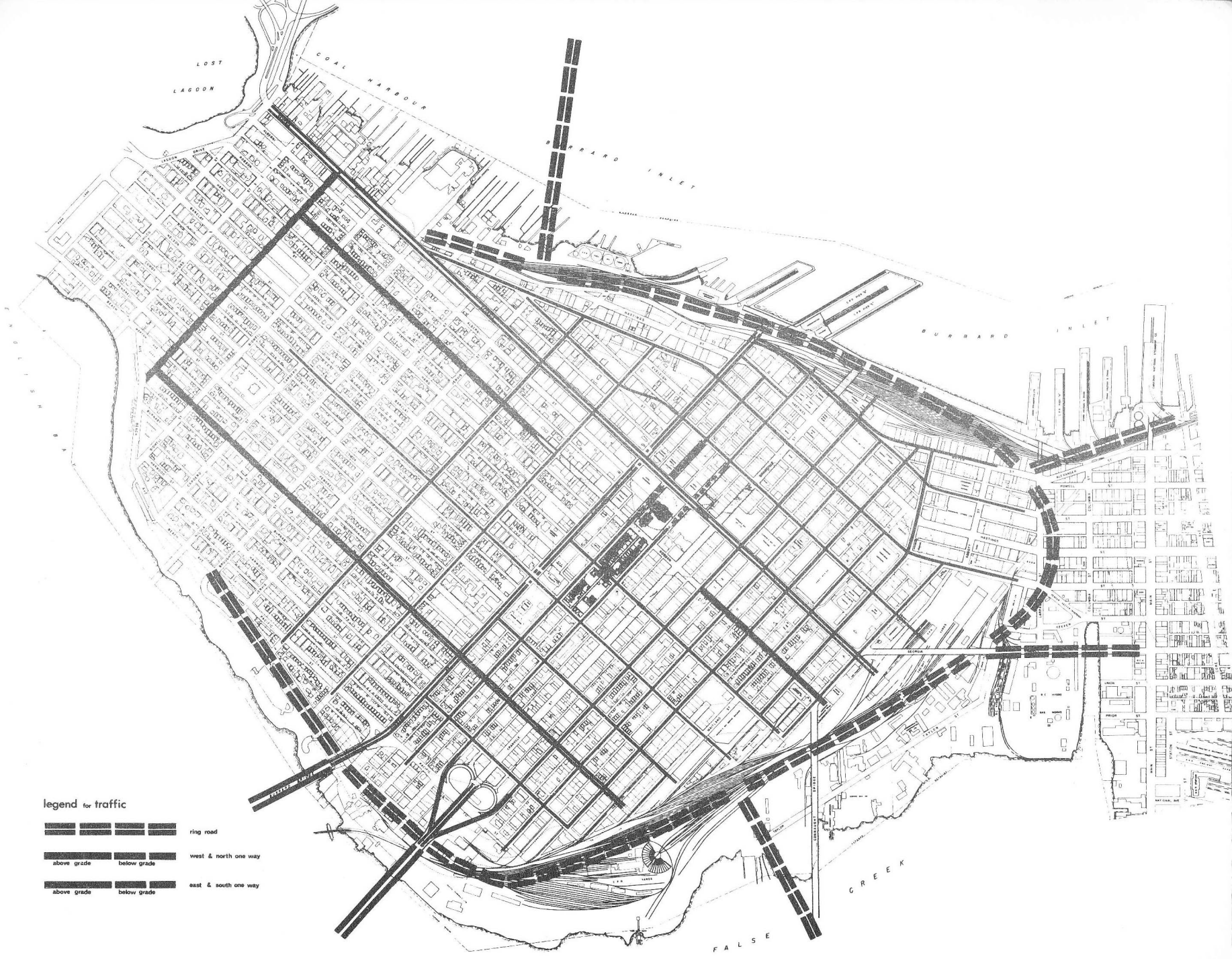
DOWNTOWN PENINSULA WITH PROPOSED RING ROAD

legend for traffic


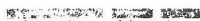




-  ring road
-  west & north one way
-  east & south one way

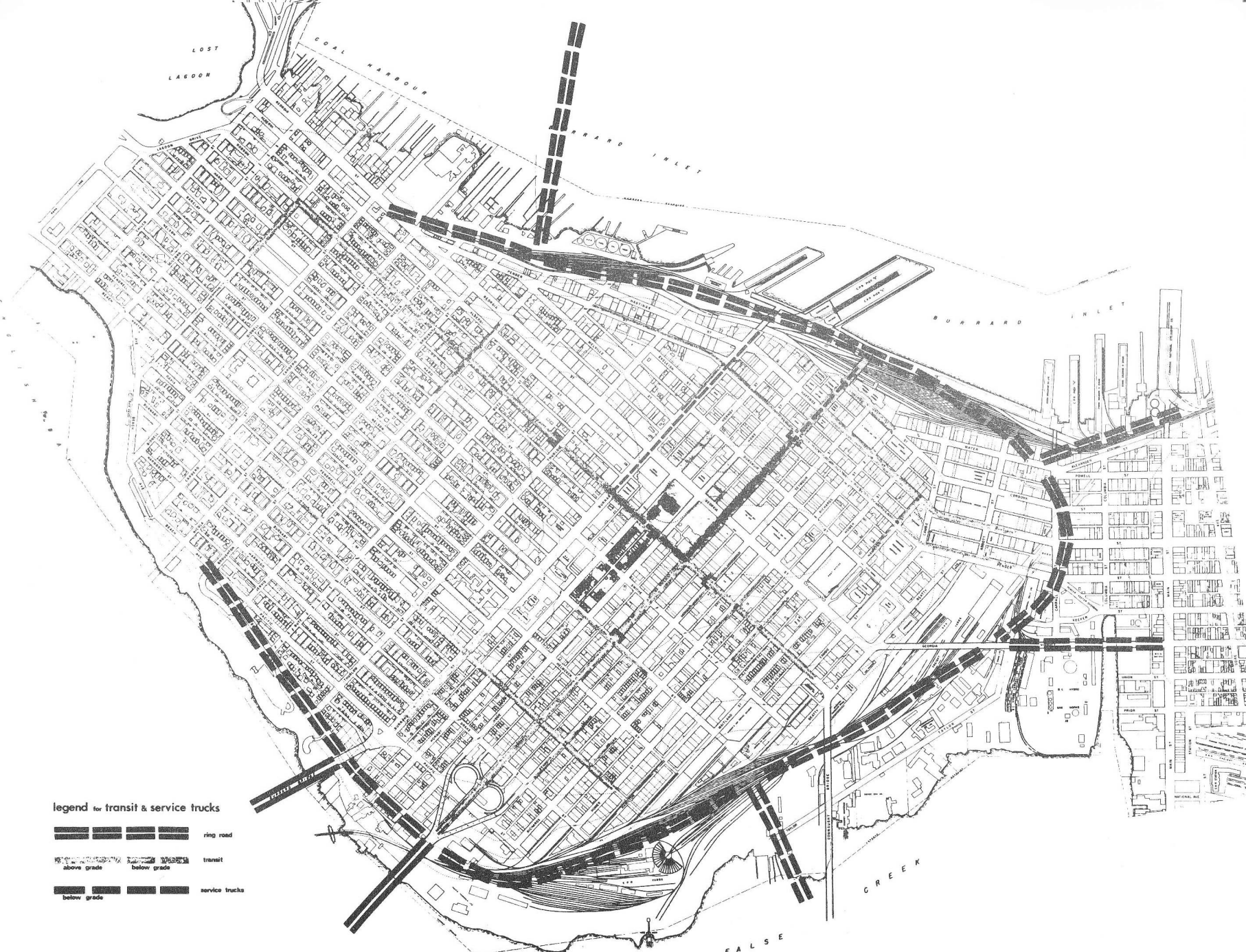
above grade below grade

above grade below grade



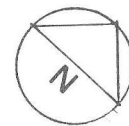
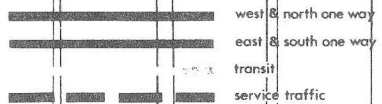
legend for transit & service trucks

	ring road
	transit
	above grade
	below grade
	service trucks
	below grade



thurlow st.

legend for all traffic



parking

parking

market

burrard bldg.

office tower

office tower

burrard st.

b.c. hydro bldg.

parking

library

office tower

hotel

church

hornby st.

assembly and gov't depts.

b.c. gov't bldg. office tower

law courts

civic reception organization

hotel

hotel

howe st.

parking

parking

parthouse hotel

eaton's

office tower

office tower

hotel

parking

granville st.

nelson st.

smithers st.

johnson st.

georgia st.

dunsmuir st.

pender st.

seymour st.

HUDSON'S BAY

thurlow st.

burrard st.

hornby st.

howe st.

granville st.

seymour st.

nelson st.

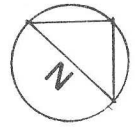
smithe st.

robson st.

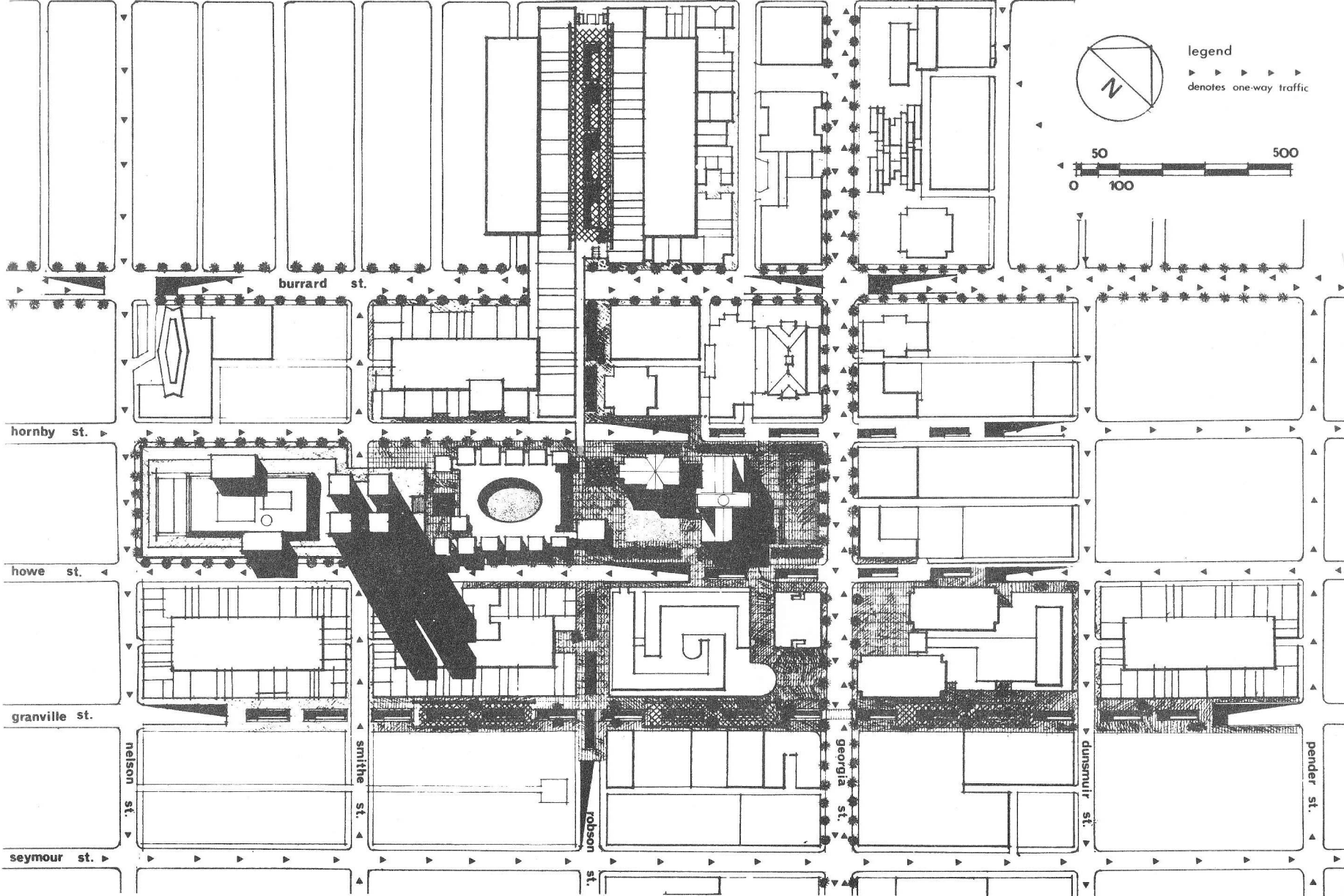
georgia st.

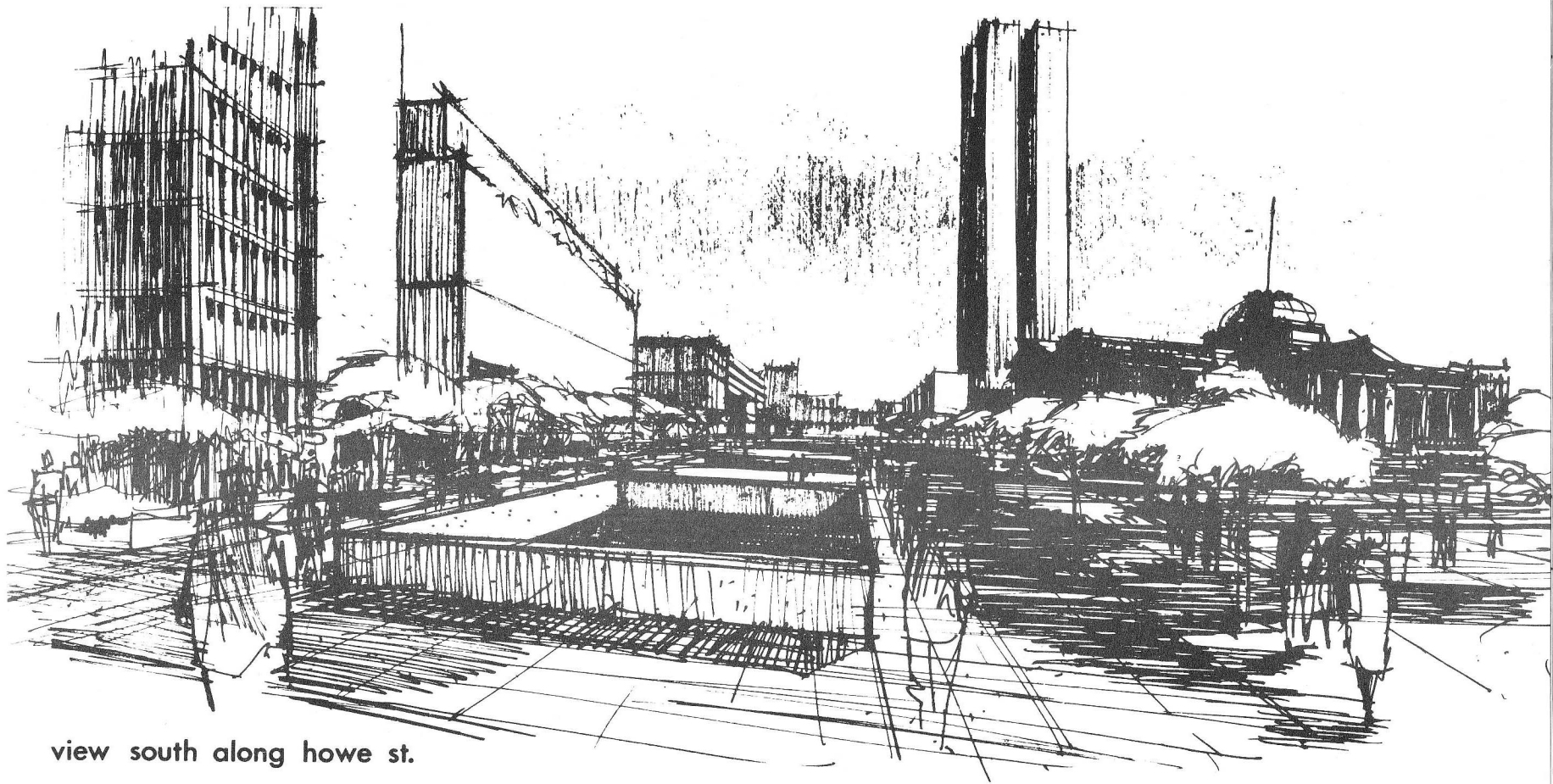
dunsmuir st.

pender st.

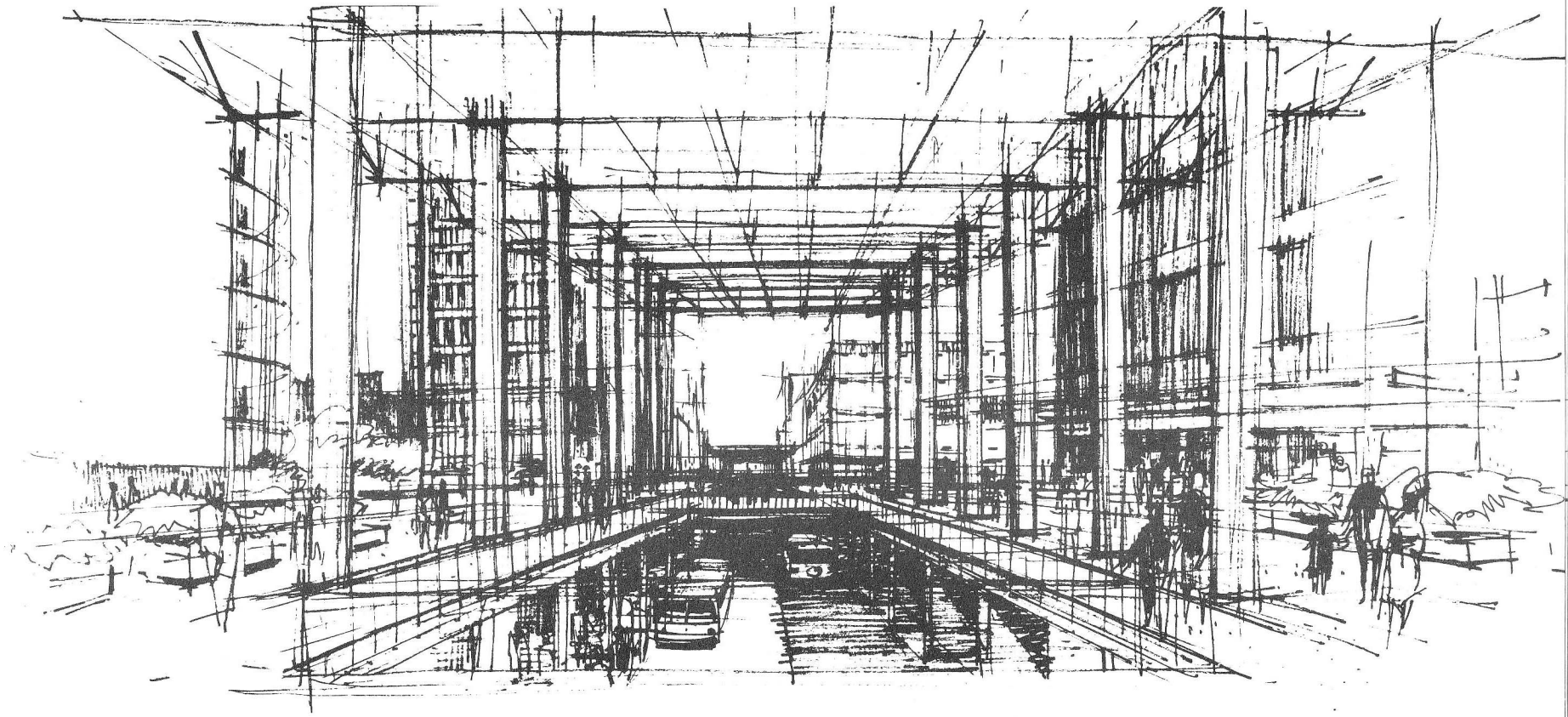


legend
▶▶▶▶▶
denotes one-way traffic

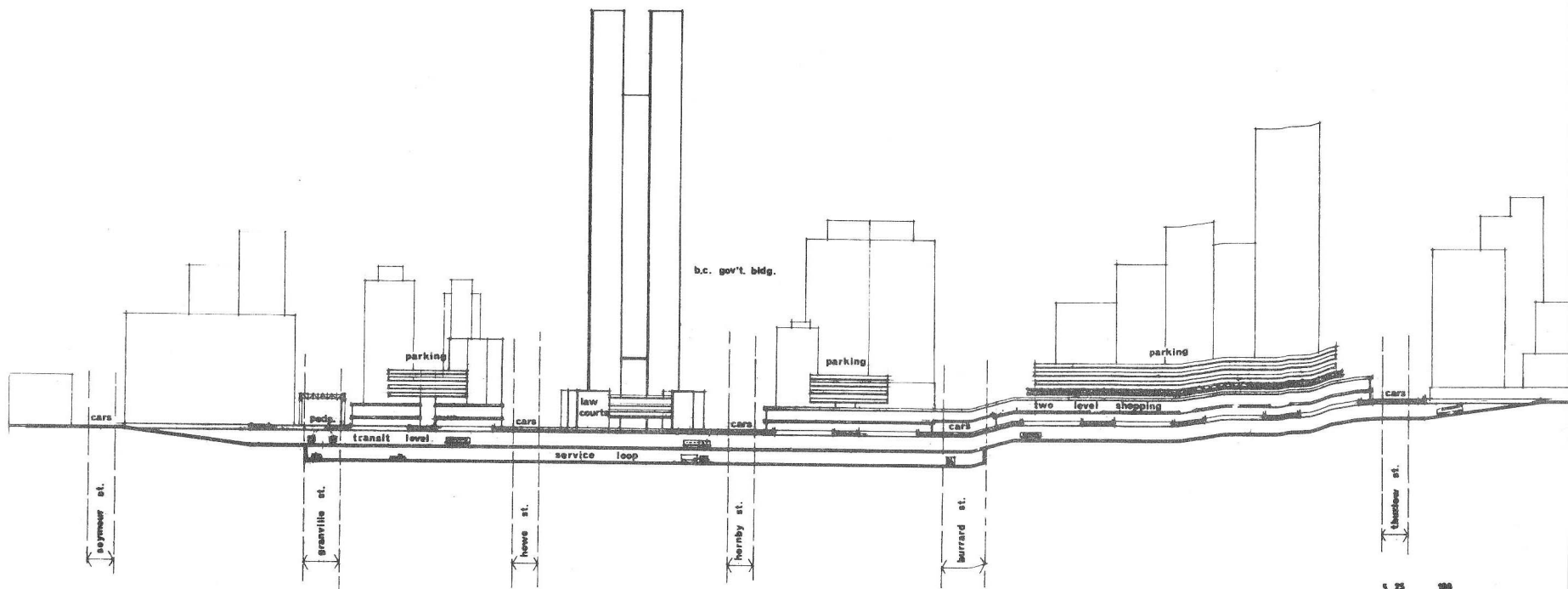




view south along howe st.

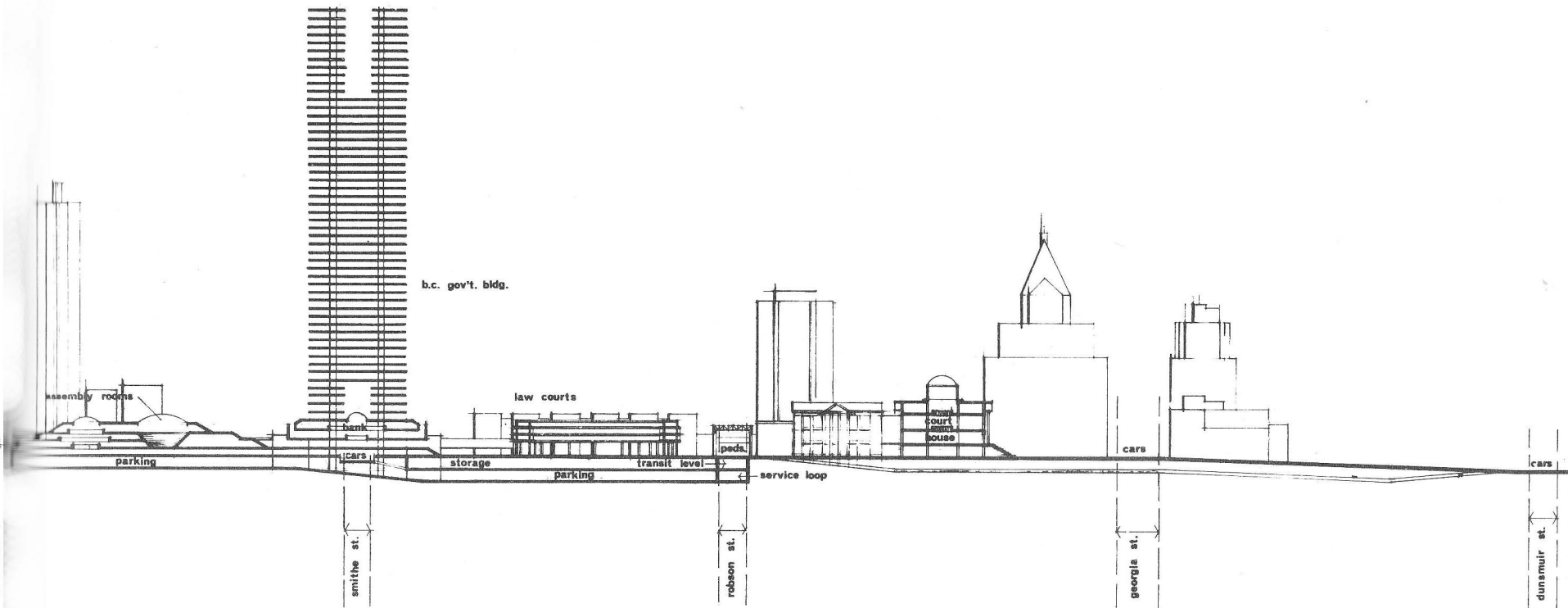


view north along granville st.



section through robson st.





Section through government complex & law courts



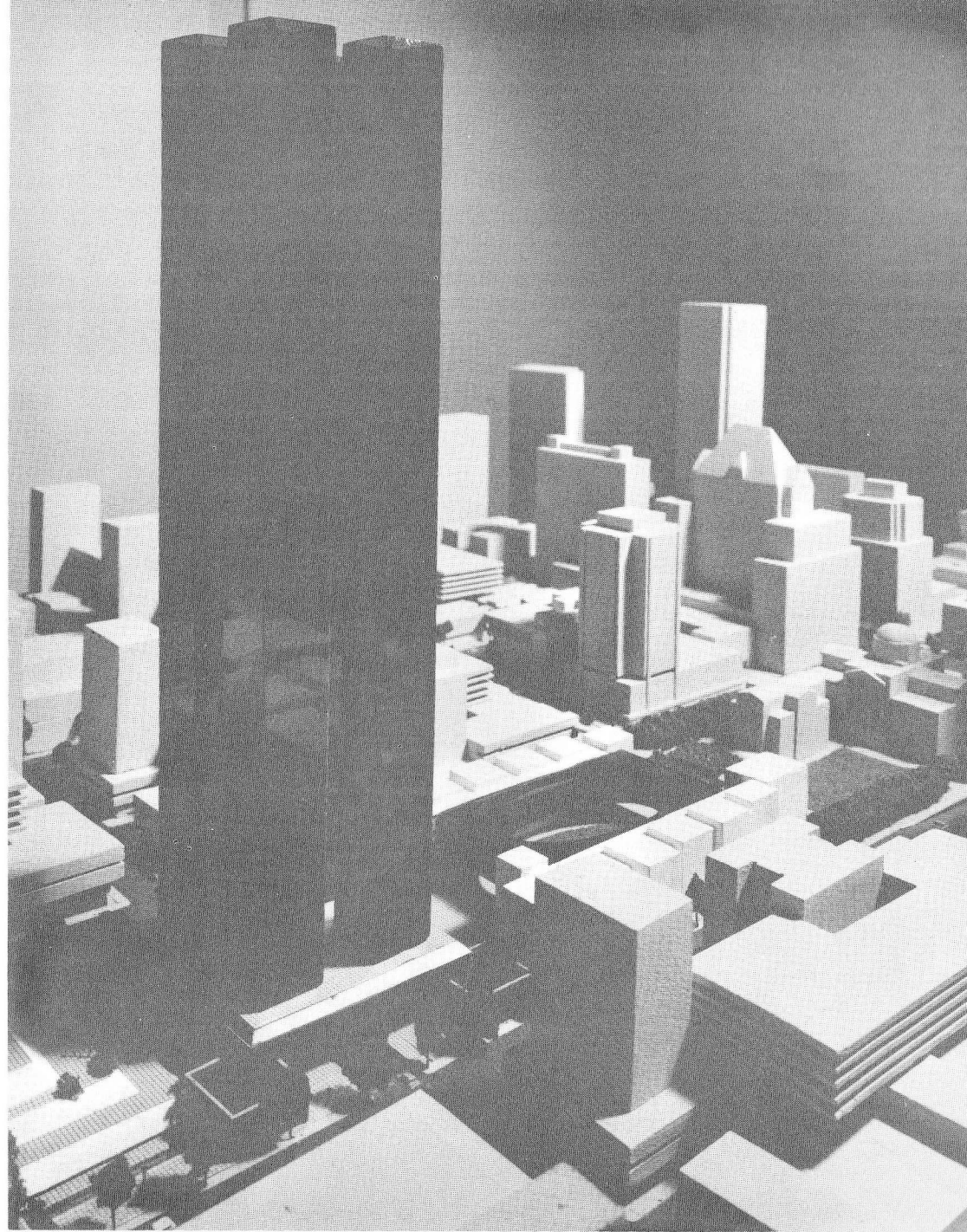


Photo Cobbett

BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT BUILDING

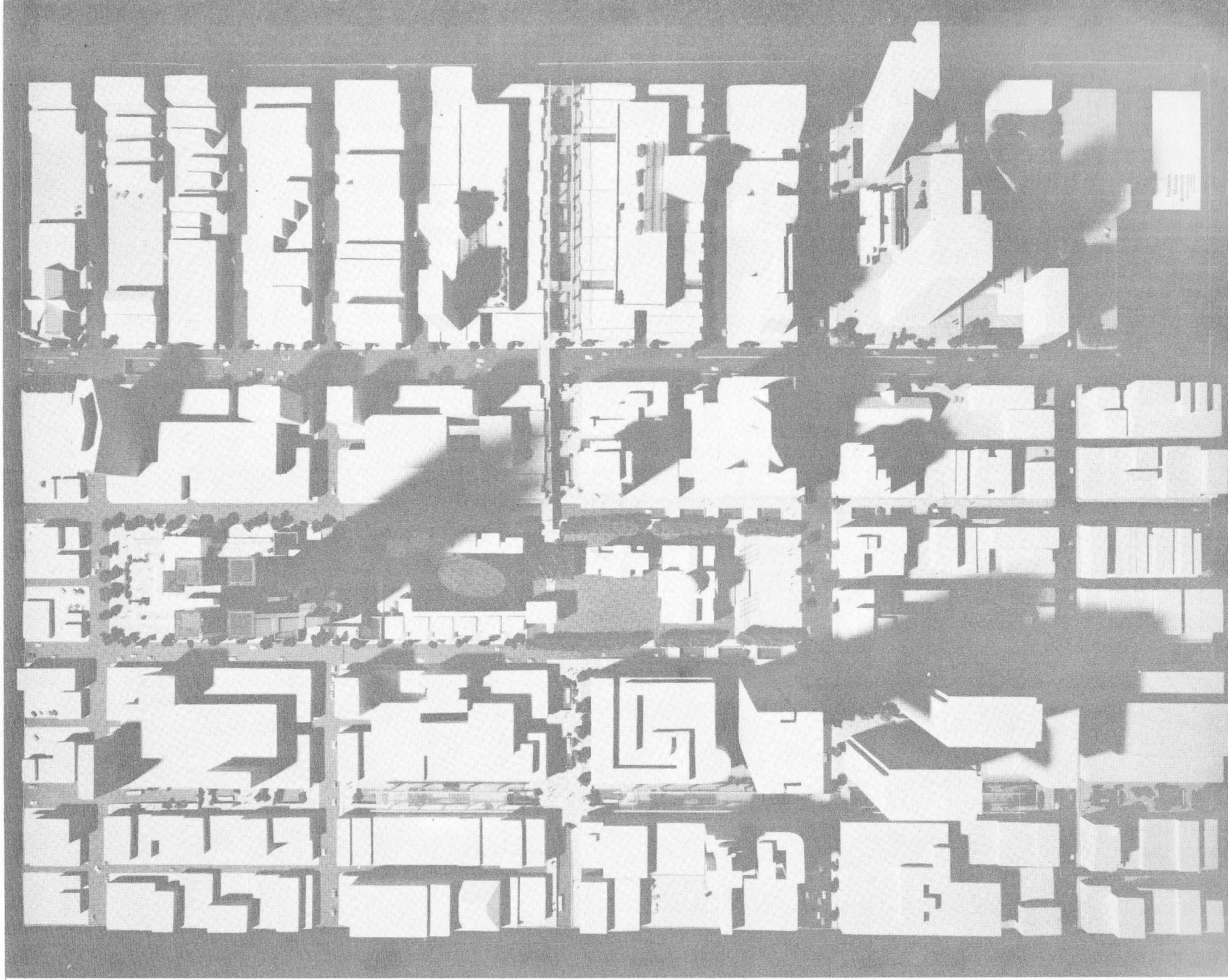


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AERIAL VIEW OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

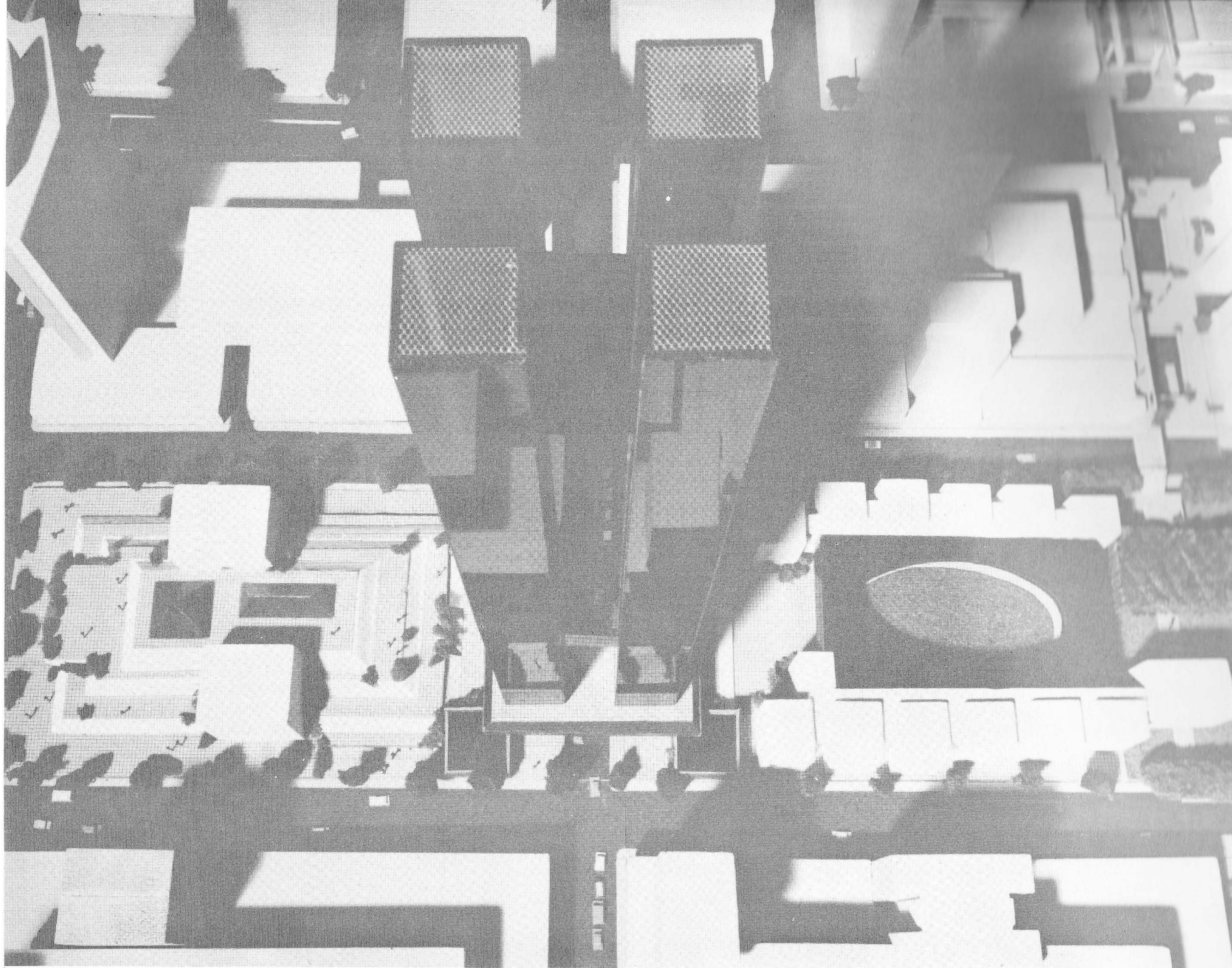


Photo Cobbett

BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT COMPLEX AND COURT HOUSE

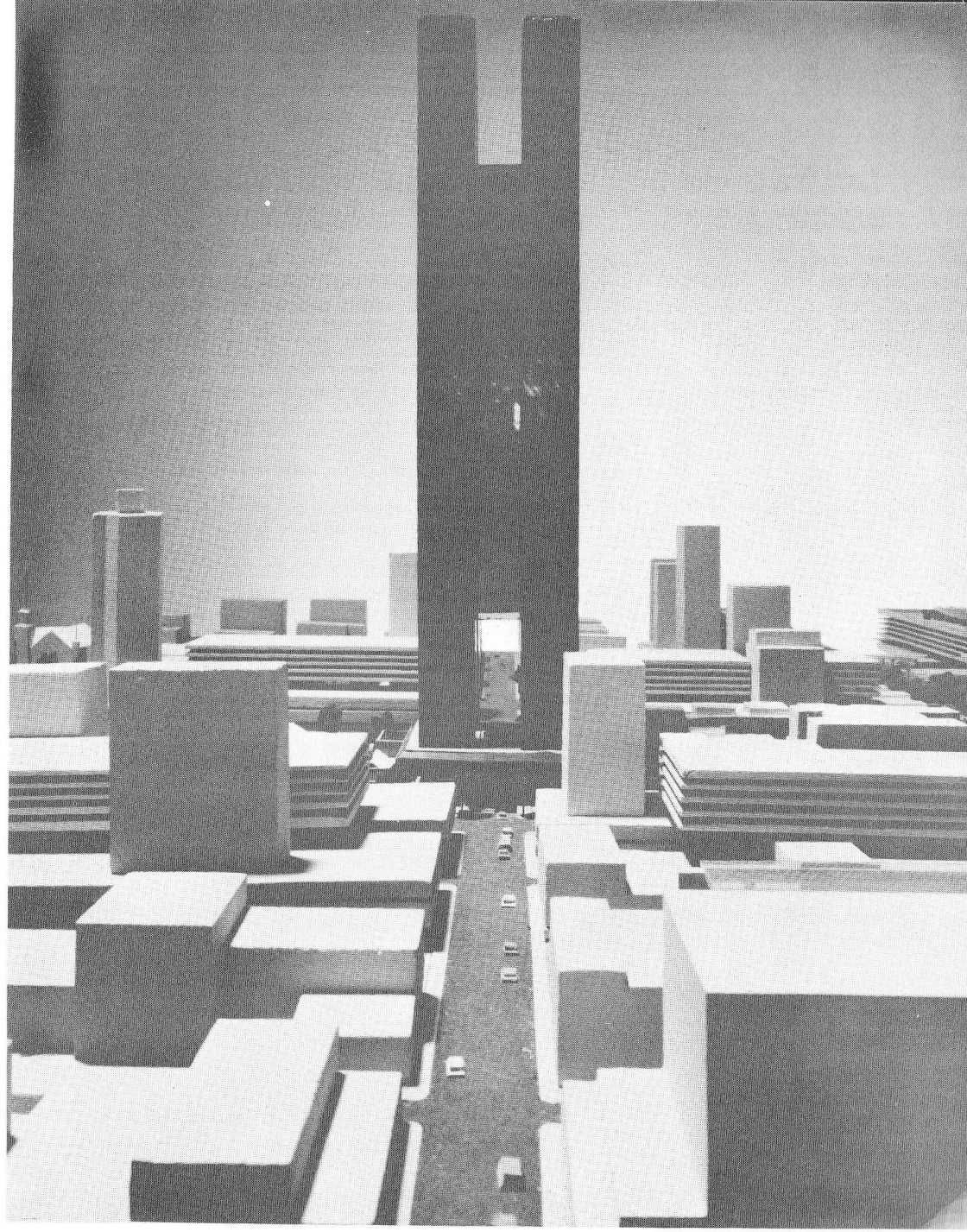


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V I E W W E S T A L O N G S M I T H E S T R E E T

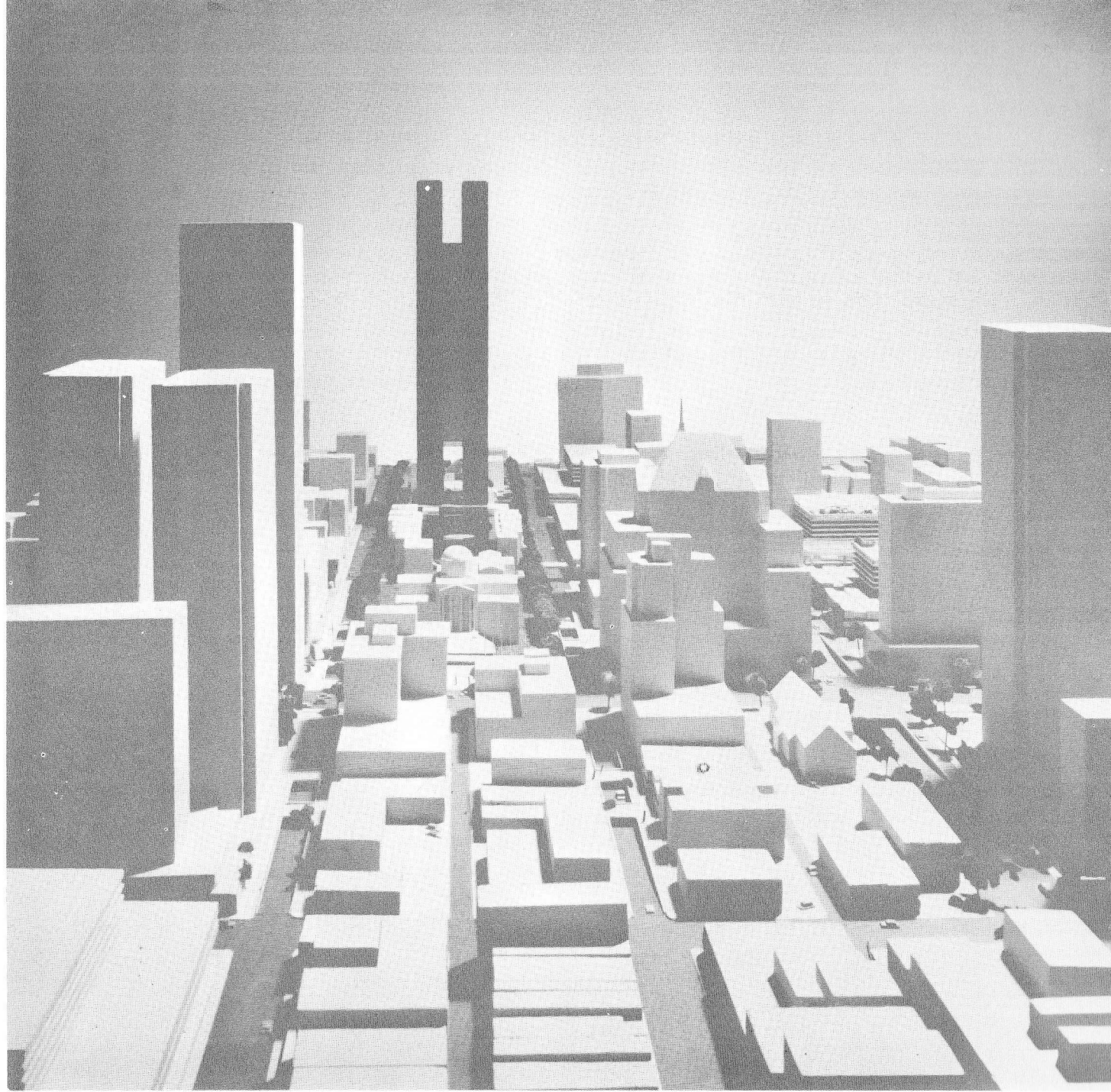


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VIEW SOUTH TO CIVIC CENTRE

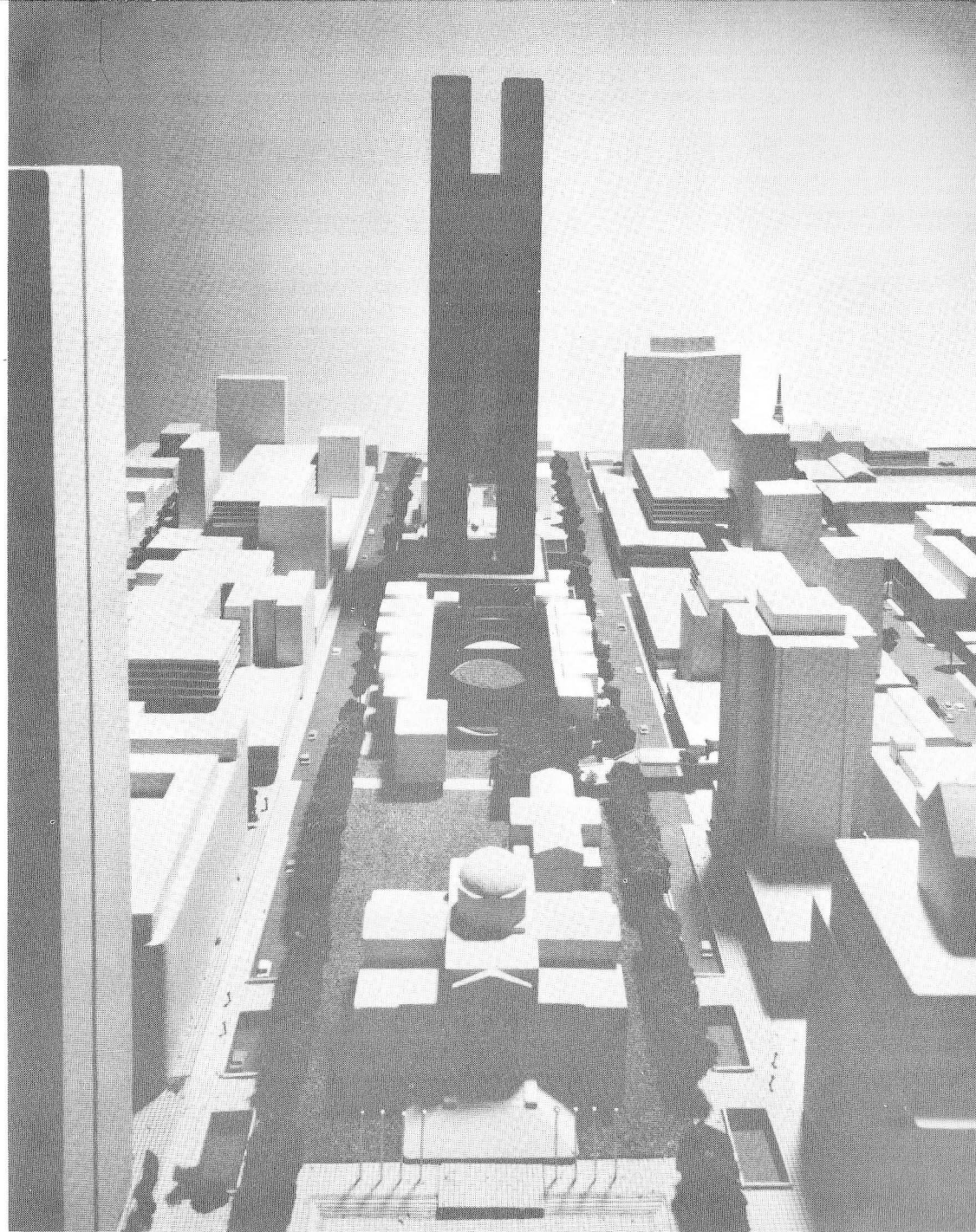


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VIEW SOUTH TO BLOCKS 51 AND 61

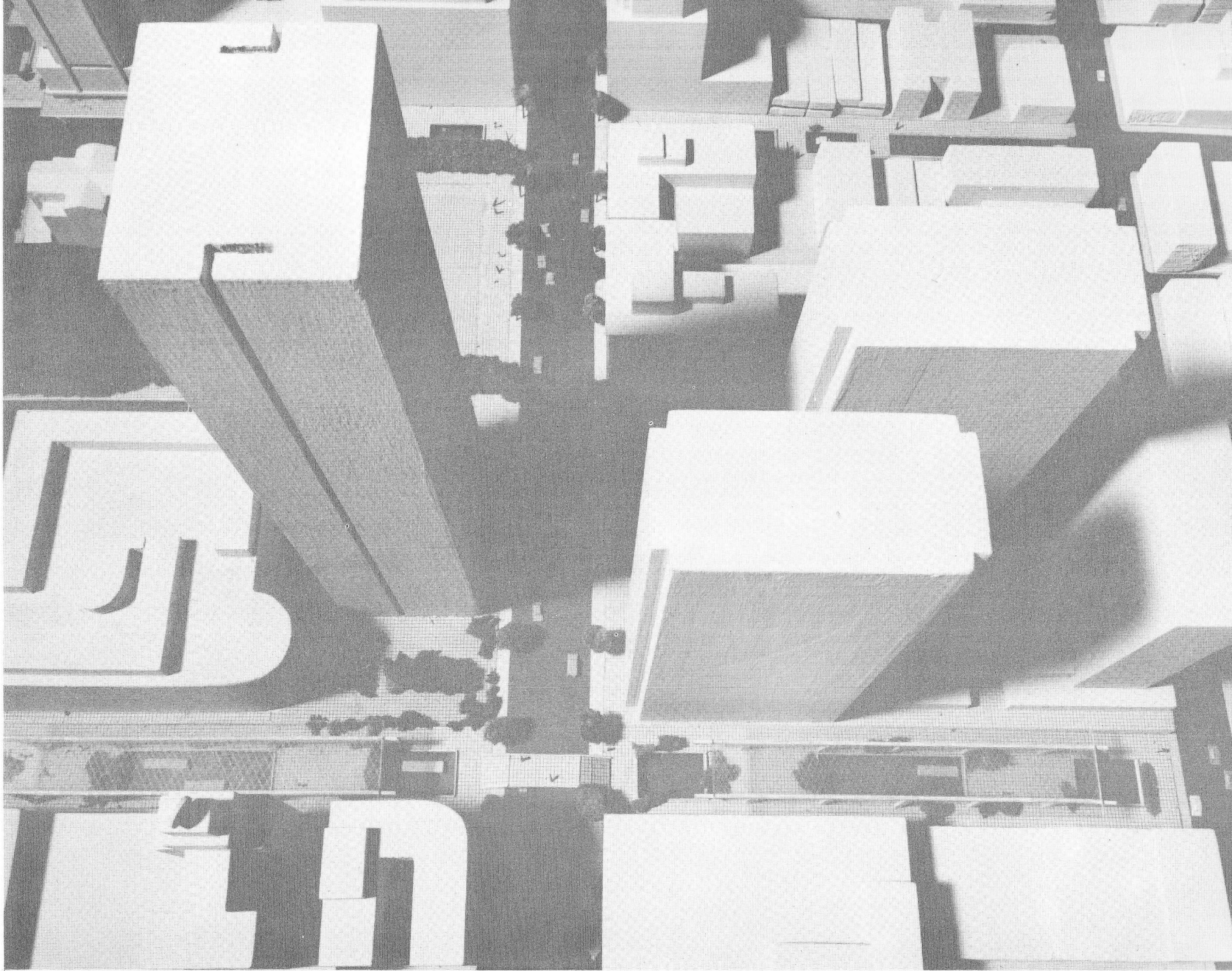
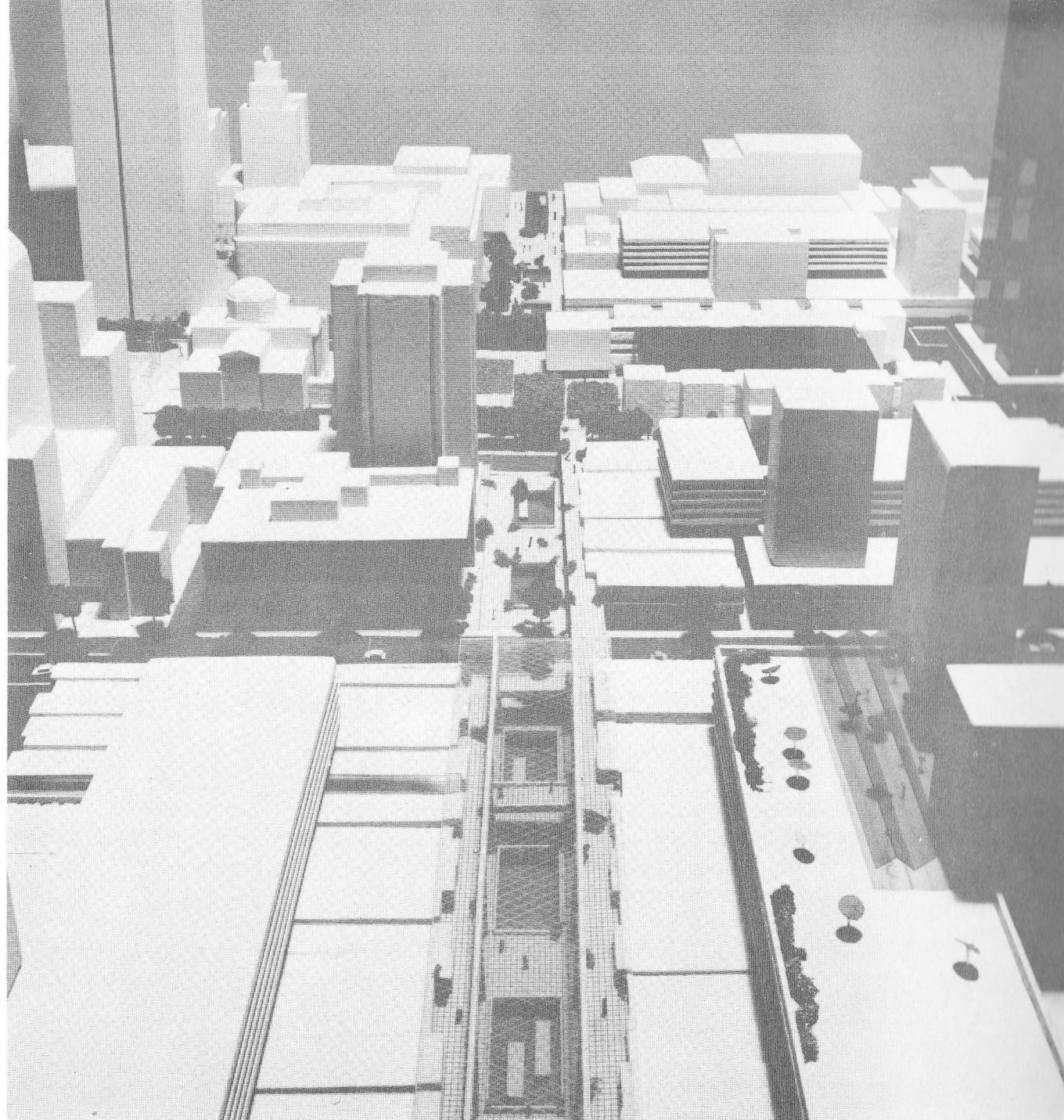


Photo Cobbett

AERIAL VIEW OF GRANVILLE STREET SHOPPING ARCADES



Photo

AERIAL VIEW OF ROBSON STREET SHOPPING ARCADES