Tradition and Invention: Architecture in Context

Advanced Building Design Problems
Arch. 607
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THEORY

tradition and invention
Ada Louise Huxtable states, "There is the irreparable damage that the rejection of the past has done to our cities, the uncaring and unthinking demolition and loss of our heritage, the destructively wrong scale and sabotaged relationships of the environment, the ignorance and neglect of the continuity that is urban culture."

In a complex environment the realities of context must be considered to maintain a sense of order. Designers must transcend the narrow, egotistical aim of evolving a personal idiom and consider the broader problem of relating each building to the streetscape or in some cases the townscape in which it will be seen. In doing so a sense of place so vital within the urban environment can be maintained.

There are several ways to design a new building so that it is sympathetic to its architectural context. On the one hand one may literally copy architectural elements from the surroundings. On the other hand, one may reinterpret earlier architectural forms by inventing new forms or by abstracting the original forms. The basis for this thesis is the investigation of the latter. Given the problem of designing a building in a designated historical district containing an assemblage of older significant buildings one can design a new structure that achieves a contextural fit without direct literal references to the style or elements of the existing structures.

Context/Contextualism

The designer must understand the significance of context before a contextural fit can be achieved. Context - the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light upon its meaning. Webster's definition of context, although linguistically in nature has architectural implications as well: (Eleni Constantin defines context as - Why high rise buildings in low rise areas have irrelevant
cornices on the fourth floor. However, we will restrict our dis¬
ussion to Mr. Webster's definition.) In a discussion of architectural
and language one of the central points pertains to what gives a certain
element meaning. The question arises; Is it(meaning) inherent in
the word, or "architectural element", or in the relationship to its
place in the sentence or composition? I would argue, as Webster'
indicates in the latter part of the definition, that meaning and
context are directly related. If one looks to other disciplines one
finds similar arguments. Gregory Bateson in Mind and Nature states,
"Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all. This
is true not only of human communication in words, but all mental
process of all minds, including that which tells the sea anemone how
to grow and the amoeba what he should do next."

Contextualism means that history and the environment are the
two faces of architecture, that no building stands alone. Con-
textualism is more than simply imitating or refering to what is around;
"around" meaning the pluralistic elements of architecture often con-
fused by ornamental and expressionistic values. A broader based
definition is in order. Context must be seen as not just the few
buildings that are down the street but rather the whole neighborhood
or perhaps region. Within this definition neighborhoods are seen in
terms of social identity, cultural continuity, and a sense of place.
This abstract understanding of contextualism creates the potential
for a contextural fit that is not based on simulating elements of
the neighborhood.

Literal references

There are times when literal copying of styles and/or elements
is the most appropriate design strategy. An example is Sewall Hall
on the Rice campus. To complete the original quadrangle seventy years after the original buildings were constructed this structure was wisely designed as a replica of its neighbor across the quad, the Physics Building, an appropriate gesture considering the context. A similar example is Vicenzo Scamozzi's Prouratie Nuovo, a long building that extends the Library of St. Mark's in the Piazza San Marco in Venice. Scamozzi's solution, the duplication and continuance of the Library arcade maintains the integrity and coherence of this historical urban space. However, in several cases the borrowing of an architectural element from another era has encouraged the proliferation of debased and watered down gestures. Other problems have arisen with the inclusion of past architectural modes. Many of the proponents of such gestures insist that there are no rules for the combination of elements and images. This statement presents a paradox of intent: As stated earlier architectural meaning depends upon context; a context has a structure or framework. Frameworks are put together by rules for their arrangement — like any language. The plucking of known familiar elements from one context (or from a past historical style) and placing them in another, does not guarantee that "meaning" will automatically emanate from the act. Too often fragments are installed indifferently in various contexts with no attention paid to local circumstance. Cut adrift, their meanings are further diluted.

Examples of this loss of meaning through literal barrowing can be seen all over the United States. At one time "mom and pop" owned businesses helped to enhance a regional architecture. At present the cult for nostalgia has begun to broaden into the franchise operations that proliferate the American landscape. Owners of these
Abstract references

It is not surprising then, that a number of architects have little confidence in regional experiments in architectural design. For their part they have expressed a different way of architecturally dealing with a given context. They eschew overt references to a given style or architectural element and instead rely on the reinterpretation and abstraction of earlier architectural forms as a way of respecting the context. The degree to which the original forms are abstracted obviously affects their recognizability and thus their inherent meaning and relationship to the context. This has been the problem associated with many of these designs.

This notion of the abstraction of form has been taken to its extremes by the architect Aldo Rossi. He proposes an architecture stripped to its essential forms, to archetypal elements that are so basic they are standard to almost any culture. This purism-of-type approach has led to confusion and controversy among architects and critics alike. Rossi's architecture has been influenced by the early 20th century surrealist, Giorgio de Ché rico. The architectural forms in De Cherico's paintings are, like Rossi's, the most simple geometric forms; the cylinder, sphere, and cone. De Cherico's art is haunting and foreboding with dark shadows that give the illusion of deep space. However, when these forms move from the canvas to the reality of the built environment the reading becomes somewhat different.
The raw forms of Rossi's architecture have been compared to the Fascist architecture of 1930's Italy. Although he denies it, these comparisons are inevitable. For example, Rossi sees his housing block at Gallaratese as recalling Lombardy farmhouses from the memories of his childhood. However, within the context the forms of this housing are most like those of the stripped down classical forms connected with the totalitarian forms of the "Fascist Architecture". The meanings that Rossi assumes are simply in the buildings themselves are in fact changed by the context. There are other problems associated with the abstraction and simplification of building forms in trying to relate new buildings to an existing context:

-East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; I. M. Pei, Assocs., 1978

This is an example of a strict Modernist trying to relate his building to an existing Neo-classical context. The East Wing is devoid of any historical references. Its geometries and massing are like no other building on the Mall. The abstraction of form that is created serves only to make this building an outsized piece of sculpture that calls attention to itself in a setting where other, vastly more important monuments are made to compete with it.

-Addition to the Claghorn House, Princeton, New Jersey; Michael Graves, 1974

The original clapboard house was built in the 1870's. It is a classic builders house of that era with casual details, small Doric porch, and gabled front. Graves addition is best described as a cubist collage. The abstract forms that the architect employs are meant to refer to a classical Greek architecture from which certain parts of the original house are derived. A half pediment form is put over
two parts of the addition in reference to the Greek precedent. The relationship between these fragments is virtually impossible to see. The meaning is thus obscured and visual continuity is not clear.

— These exemples were not successful attempts in sympathetically relating to the context. However, there are examples which are visually responsive to their context without making direct literal references to elements or styles of the surroundings.

-Goldman Salatsch House, Vienna; Adolf Loos, 1911.

The Goldman Salatsch Building caused quite a stir when it was completed in 1911. Its lack of ornament in this historic area of Vienna was astonishing but the architect's understanding of contextualism was perhaps even more astonishing. Loos recognized the importance of visually continuing the character of the street but he also recognized the intellectual importance of the abstract qualities of the lack of ornament inherent in modern detailing. Loos chose to relate his building indirectly by recalling the simpler building tradition and massing of medieval Vienna. Loos's building works because of his abstract use of massing and familiar elements from historical and traditional architecture. It maintains the same horizontal divisions as the adjoining buildings and has a top, a simple cornice, and mansard roof. The natural veining of the green marble on the lower floors where building meets ground alludes to the more elaborate base conditions of its neighbors.

-New Housing, Zwolle, Holland; Aldo van Eyck, 1977.

This group of modern flats is well integrated into the traditional streetscape. The group faces the town on three sides and also forms an interior garden court. The houses are built out of traditional brick; their facades are traditionally proportioned and they meet the
sky with a cut pediment form. Windows are arranged asymmetrically, and retain the traditional bearing wall character. There is no decoration or ornament but rather a referential use of materials, 'plan and massing.

Townhouse, Park Avenue, New York City; Robert A.M. Stern, 1975.

In this project Stern has analyzed the context and has found recurring themes which he has thoughtfully used as connecting threads. The surrounding buildings have the traditional three part division of base, middle and top. They also have moldings, pilasters and string courses that are, loosely speaking, classical. The townhouse picks up on these themes to make visual connections. Its mid section has "Psuedo-pilasters" on either side that rest on a cushioned base, the horizontal band about three feet above the top of the doors. These pilasters support as abstractly defined entablature which is actually the entire upper floor. The whole composition is symmetrical.

These buildings are speaking a language that is shared by their neighbors yet is somehow different. Through the inventiveness of their designers they communicate a deeper meaning than could have been communicated by the rote copying of details. A contextural fit has been achieved by the abstraction and simplification of familiar building forms from traditional and indigenous architecture. These buildings seem dated in the best sense, as though they had been there for some time, yet belonging to our time as well.
Library of St. Mark's, Venice; Jacopo Sansovino (1536–53).

Procuratie Nuovo, St. Mark's Square, Venice; Vicenzo Scamozzi (begun 1584).
Plate 5 (top), Plate 6 (bottom)
East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.;
I. M. Pei (1978).

Plate 7

Plate 8
Goldman Salatsch House (center), Vienna; Adolf Loos (1911).

Plate 9

Plate 10

Zwolle, view into loggia which acts as an intermediate space between living room, garden, and top floor.
Townhouse, Park Avenue, New York City; Robert Stern (1975).

Detail, Townhouse, Park Avenue, New York City.

Plate 11
THE SITE
context
Preface

The setting for this thesis problem is a historic district near downtown San Antonio, Texas. This district has been designated as St. Paul Square after one of its architectural landmarks.

San Antonio is a city with a rich history, both culturally and architecturally. It is the city most closely associated with the history of Texas and perhaps the whole Southwest. There are seven historic districts in San Antonio. The architectural styles within these districts is varied - from Victorian to Spanish Colonial to Romanesque - each distinctly different, yet somehow all share a common bond. The styles are not quite pure, not quite right. The reason for this is clear. Their old roots were different but their new roots are the same. The regional traditions, the place of their new heritage is shared. Thus, what is in this place, at this point in time, the context, is a synthesis of old and new.

For lack of a more convenient term this sharing of characteristics has been labeled a style. In designing for a contextual fit in a given place with a rich history one does not begin with a "style", one ends with a "style". A local architect who is recognized for his regional designs expresses a similar belief, "You don't begin with a style you end with style. It is the inevitable result of the successful coming together of form, materials, scale, and color in response to a particular setting and function. When you talk about Regionalism in terms of style, you inevitably get into an eighth-generation regurgitation of somebody's myth, and it has nothing to do with the original basis for why things were that way to begin with".

I chose San Antonio and the St. Paul Square area as a site because I believe this context will stimulate the investigation of the abstract qualities of contextualism, regionalism, and design.
A brief history of the city

San Antonio was founded as a mission in 1718 and was at that time Mexico's farthest north defensible location. It soon became a triple purpose city: ecclesiastical mission, military presideo, and civil pueblo. The publo(town) was laid out with its accompanying plaza as specified by the Law of the Indies, a way of town planning used by the Spanish in the early colonization of the America's. Two other important plazas were incorporated into the developing city: Plaza de Armas, where the City Hall stands today and the plaza in front of the Alamo. From 1718 to 1781 four other missions were established. These missions set a precedent for a vernacular architecture that is recognizable throughout the Southwest. Michael McCullar writes in "Texas Architect”, "Much closer to New Spain's cultural heart than the missions of New Mexico or California, the missions of San Antonio exhibited a rich artistic sophistication. Delicately carved Baroque facades and Moorish towers and domes reflected the important old world craftsmanship of expert sculptors and artisans."

After the War of 1812 there was a large influx of immigrants from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. From its early days San Antonio has been a place of convergence - of cultures, nationalities, races and religions. These Europeans brought to San Antonio their various building traditions that can still be seen in several historic districts. After Texas Independence the remains of the Alamo were threatened with total destruction. The actions of several interested citizens finally won the fight to preserve the landmark. This began a tradition of preservation that is still a strong movement today.

San Antonio's acceptance of progress at its own pace, the local stimulus of a variety of cultures, the city's isolated position on the edge of the frontier all had some influence on the development of
its architecture and architects. Although there are older sections of the city which clearly were built in identifiable styles - the city as a whole is remarkably free from excesses of fadism. The work of two local architects has had the greatest influence on the architectural character of the city. Robert Hugman, designer of the River Walk and O'Neil Ford, the "Father" of San Antonio architecture. These two men introduced a new concern for local architecture and their solutions introduced a new idiom: local, natural materials used unobtrusively to create a sense of harmony with the landscape - the beginnings of an architectural regionalism in San Antonio, in a style so simple its artfulness has sometimes been overlooked, but so appropriate it has been imitated ever sense.

Background information

Saint Paul Square is a development project of the San Antonio Development Agency under a Community Development Block Grant Program. An urban renewal plan for the project was prepared by SADA from 1975 to 1976. Although the project encompasses several blocks, the initial activity is concentrated in the First Year Activity Area along East Commerce Street. The project calls for a rehabilitation of the old structures for a neighborhood of mixed commercial, cultural and residential use.

At present most of the proposed plan for the First Year Activity Area has been realized. All of the structures along E. Commerce have been rehabilitated and most are occupied by various professional concerns or commercial establishments. Outdoor activity plazas, landscaping, multi-level pedestrian circulation walkways, and street lights are all improvements that have been constructed.
A brief history of the Saint Paul area

The background of St. Paul Square is one of varied associations closely linked to the development of San Antonio as a whole. Beginning with the earliest periods of settlement, the area was a part of the original farmlands of the Mission San Antonio de Valero, which later became famous as the Alamo.

East Commerce Street, which roughly bisects the area from east to west is a part of a roadway originally laid out by the Spanish in 1805. This street has served from the beginning as a major entranceway bringing travelers from all points east into the City and generating activity, business, and prosperity.

By 1880 the area was already rapidly assuming the character of a hearty, growing district with all the elements of an emerging middle class urban neighborhood of its day. Even though the area was predominantly white, it attracted people of all races and backgrounds. In 1902, the Southern Pacific Passenger Depot was constructed at E. Commerce and Walnut Streets to service the heavily traveled Sunset Line. The opening of the station greatly increased commercial activities of all kinds and generated an intense period of physical development. During this time most of the existing structures along E. Commerce were built. At this same time the black community in the area began to grow and gain importance. This community attracted famous black entertainers to the various night spots in the area.

World War II and the Korean War brought the area to its peak of prosperity with intense passenger and freight traffic. The 1950's however, was a time of change - increased use of the automobile and decreasing railway passenger services shifted transportation patterns. Suburban areas attracted business and residents to other sections of the city. The decline of the St. Paul district had
begun. In the 1960's integration successes affected the quality of entertainment in the district because other sections of the city became popular for black entertainers. Hemisfair Plaza had a negative effect on the already marginal commercial and retail businesses. Until 1975 the area was in a depressed and dilapidated state.

Since the beginning of the SADA renewal project there has been a rebirth of business and professional interest in the St. Paul area. A summary of recent activities is included in the appendix of this report.

Architectural character

From an historical perspective, the architecture of the area is a visual chronicle of an important, unique period in the development of San Antonio and St. Paul Square itself. Most of the existing structures which are significant in architectural terms are concentrated within the First Year Activity Area, especially along East Commerce Street. In general, most of the buildings are not pure examples of any single style. Almost all combine detailing from various styles and are representative of the eclectic commercial architecture favored around the turn of the century.17

The primary architectural significance of the area comes through the association of its buildings to one another and the overall statement they make as a grouping. These buildings are closely related in terms of scale, materials, window openings, and detailing, and the total effect of the blockscape they create is established by the repetition of these elements. The floor plans of these buildings are characteristic of commercial architecture then in vogue with store-fronts at the street level and apartments or rooming houses located on the upper floors. Heights do not exceed three stories, and many
buildings have balconies or two story porches.

There are two buildings that should be considered on an individual basis because of architectural merit and historic value. These two structures are the Southern Pacific Station and the St. Paul Methodist Church.

The Southern Pacific Station was constructed in 1902 and at that time the building was said to be the best recent adaption of the mission style of architecture to modern requirements. The architecture of the depot and its attached freight areas is an excellent example of San Antonio's unique Mission style as it was expressed at the turn of the century. Because of its historic importance it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places; it is the only structure in the St. Paul area so designated.

The St. Paul Methodist Church on N. Center Street also exhibits individual importance. Constructed in the Gothic Revival style circa 1870-1880, the building was once a major center of the Black community in the area. Rather than being a pure example of Gothic Revival architecture, the detailing and overall design of the structure is an interesting example of a regional interpretation of a major style.

Site description

The specific site for this problem is the block south of the section of St. Paul Square designated as the First Year Activity Area. This block is bounded on the north by Heiman Street, on the south by a parking area, on the east by Hoefgen Avenue, and on the west by I.H. 37.

There are four existing buildings on the site. The two buildings located on Heiman Street at the northwest corner of the site are
currently used as commercial establishments. The building on the corner of Heiman and Hoefgen is the former Hotel Charles and is currently unoccupied and in very poor condition. The small, three story brick building located on Hoefgen near the center of the site is in fair condition and could probably be rehabilitated for a number of suitable uses.

This block has remained undeveloped for lack of funds from SADA. It is currently used as secondary parking (the section adjacent to Heiman is covered with caliche) by the businesses located on E. Commerce.
Site Plan
LEGEN

- COMMERCIAL USE
- INDUSTRIAL USE
- RESIDENTIAL

Existing circulation

Adjacent land use
House in Dignowity Park, by Judy Coons.

Main Plaza and San Fernando Cathedral, by Larry Paul Fuller.

River Walk, by Sinclair Black.

Norton/Polk/Mathis House at 401 King William.

Plate 13
Plate 15, Boundaries of SADA Project
Plate 16, Master Plan for First Year Activity Area
THE PROBLEM
architecture
Problem statement

The design of a neighborhood community center to serve the residents of the St. Paul area. This building will provide a place for concerned members of the community to meet to exchange ideas and propose solutions to community problems. It will also provide spaces for recreation, the arts, and learning. The major spaces will include a gym/multi-purpose space, library, arts and crafts studios, exhibit space, community meeting room, clinic, and offices for community affairs.

The neighborhood

The surrounding neighborhood is predominately blue collar, low to moderate income, with a racial mixture of Black and Mexican American. There are, however, a small number of young professionals moving into the area due to the reasonable prices of the older houses and location near the CBD.
### Area square footages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gym/multi-purpose</td>
<td>5000 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studios for arts and crafts</td>
<td>3500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program area - flexible space for changing uses over time</td>
<td>3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse's station</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam rooms - 4@</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor's office</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapy - 2@</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director's office</td>
<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant director</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer office</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service offices - 3@</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar - 2@</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kitchen/dine</td>
<td>3000</td>
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<td>Day care</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanical/electrical</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Organizational strategies
THE SOLUTION
The setting for this design problem is a historic district near downtown San Antonio, Texas. This district has been designated as St. Paul Square after one of its architectural landmarks, the St. Paul Methodist Church built in 1875. The problem is to design a community center on a site across from the Southern Pacific Railroad Station of 1902.

San Antonio is a city with a rich architectural and cultural heritage, and St. Paul Square is an area with a variety of historically significant and architecturally different buildings. These facts have prompted a general investigation of the properties of contextualism, regionalism, and design, and a specific investigation of the reinterpretation and the abstraction of earlier architectural forms. Given the problem of designing a building in an area containing an assemblage of older significant buildings, it is the thesis proposition that one can design a new structure that achieves a contextual fit without direct literal references to the style or specific vocabulary of the existing structures.

During the design process, the primary objective was to determine which architectural features could be incorporated into the community center which would both insure a sympathetic relationship with its neighbors and serve a specific functional purpose. The organization of the building around a courtyard is appropriate not only because it is generic to the way of building in San Antonio that has evolved since the establishment of the earliest missions but also because it provides a central gathering space for community activities. The courtyard is the focus for a recurrent theme throughout the complex of the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces. The two-level circulation system that rings the courtyard is reminiscent of the balconies that surround the commercial buildings on East Commerce. The front (east) elevation reinforces the connection to both the train station and the neighborhood in general. Its massing is low and horizontal with an arcade that provides a covered walk along the street to the clinic. The visitors center is located at the corner of the site directly across from the train station. Its plan and section are both derivations of those of the railroad station.

The conditions described above are intended to insure a contextual fit without literal references to surrounding buildings. The designer believes that recognizability and meaning have been maintained even though the original forms have been abstracted or reinterpreted.
APPENDIX
SAINT PAUL SQUARE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

August, 1975
A committee made up of businessmen and citizens was formed to discuss the possibilities of the area along E. Commerce Street becoming an urban redevelopment project and what the committee could do to influence businesses to return to the area.

January, 1976
Much work and many meetings occurred in developing an Urban Renewal Plan.

City Council approved the Urban Renewal Plan.

Ordinance passed by City Council establishing the Saint Paul Square Advisory Board.

February, 1976
A contract was awarded to have appraisals made of the properties in the target area.

March, 1976
An engineering firm, Curtis Neal and Associates, was contracted for the project for $28,000.

Acquisition of properties and relocation of tenants began.

June, 1976
The Joint Venture architects, Haywood, Jordan, McCowan, Inc. and Ford, Powell and Carson, Inc., were contracted for $79,407.13 to develop a design for the site and to develop design standards. This work was to be done in two phases by the Joint Venture.

August, 1976
The project Administrator was hired to coordinate the development of Saint Paul Square, to find developers and business tenants, and act as liaison between the SPS and SADA Boards.

November, 1976
The architect's Phase I Report was published and distributed.
March, 1977
The Joint Venture architects began the design work on the three buildings in the project that were Agency rehabs.

April, 1977
A graphics consultant, Dan Withers, was contracted for $6,000.
The SPS Advisory Board held a public presentation of the SPS project.

May, 1977
A contract was awarded and pre-demolition work began in the project.

August, 1977
Lease agreements were signed by four tenants who occupied the spaces in the Agency rehab located at 1157 thru 1163 E. Commerce until the reheded building was purchased by a developer.

September, 1977
A meeting was held with the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber formed a sub-committee to investigate what it (the Chamber) could do to help the SPS project.

November, 1977
City Council approved B-4 zoning for the SPS target area.
The SPS Design Review Committee was formed which consists of two members from the SPS Advisory Board, two from the SADA Board of Commissions, and three professionals.
The reuse appraisals of the buildings were received.
The Joint Venture architect's Phase II report was published and distributed.

January, 1978
Construction began on the building to be rehabilitated by the Agency located at 1157 thru 1163 E. Commerce St. The contract was awarded to the construction firm, Scott and Jennison, Inc. for $196,226.51.

February, 1978
A ground breaking ceremony was held at the project.
February, 1978
A street extension ceremony was held for Hoefgen Avenue with Mrs. Joan Mondale, wife of Vice-President Mondale, as featured guest.

April, 1978
Replatting of the project was approved.
Contract with City Public Service Board was awarded to take gas and electrical utilities underground in North Block.

May, 1978
Demolition contracts awarded in the amount of $37,294.10 to take down all the old porches attached to the buildings and the remainder of the add-on buildings.

June, 1978
SPS Advisory Board held workshop for prospective developers. The workshop explained and answered all questions regarding becoming a developer in SPS.
Contract to do drainage work and construction of the Hoefgen Avenue extension awarded to Heath and DuBose, Inc., for $248,786.19.

July, 1978
SPS Project office opened in project area and a secretary was hired.
Contract awarded to Stoddard Construction Co., in the amount of $394,772 for construction of the two building which support the pedestrian bridge.

August, 1978
City Council approved the SPS application for "H" (Historical designation.
CPSB given a proceed order for taking gas and electrical utilities underground in the South block.

February, 1979
North block site work contract awarded to J.R. Ramon and Sons in the amount of $161,242.
Declaration of Restrictive Covenants for SPS Owners Association recorded with Bexar County.
April, 1979
American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Award of Merit for Redevelopment Plans and Report.

May, 1979
First Round selection of Redevelopers for Private Sector involvement in rehabilitation of individual buildings.

June, 1979
First meeting of the SPS Owners Association Board of Directors (SADA Board Members) and Adoption of By-Laws.

North block site work begins.

July and August, 1979
New architects, Kinnison and Associates, O'Neill and Perez Associates and Joe Stubblefield Associates awarded contracts totaling $64,300 for north and south site work (replaced original Joint Venture).

Second Round selections of Redevelopers for Private Sector involvement in rehabilitation of individual buildings.

September, 1979
Ordinance #51289 granting a license for pedestrian bridge crossing E. Commerce Street.

Architects start design work for south block site work and completion of north block.

October, 1979
Completion of building stabilization and corridor work. (Start of upper-level walkway system in buildings anchoring pedestrian bridge over E. Commerce Street.)

Lighting for north block. Plaza and parking complete and in use.

Start of first Private Redevelopment in SPS at 1154 E. Commerce St.; Dr. Houston Wade's office, Pharmacy, and Soda Fountain.

Reappraisals completed for Agency's involvement in building improvements.

November, 1979
Submission of request for 6th Year C.D. funding to replace amounts borrowed for rehabilitation loans.
Lighting for north side of E. Commerce St. completed and in use.
Brick paving along north side of E. Commerce St. completed and sidewalk in use.

December, 1979
North block plaza completed and in use.
Third Round of bids for resale of St. Paul Square Chapel.
Construction started for pedestrian bridge.
Engineering design completed for additional street work; i.e. realignment of Chestnut St., extension of Heiman St., closing of Sycamore, and resurfacing of Center St., Commerce St., and S. Hoefgen St.
Other private rehabilitation work under construction.

January, 1980
Connection of back porches in south block on an individual basis; i.e. incrementally as each building is rehabilitated.
Completion of pedestrian bridge.
Fourth Round of bids for resale of four improved buildings.

April, 1980
Completion of south block site design work.
Start of north block open space development; i.e. completion of north block sitework contract awarded to Roy McGinnis, Inc., in the amount of $150,388.

June, 1980
Start of south block site work contract awarded to Scott and Jennison, Inc., in the amount of $564,981.