RIVER BEND CENTER
A MULTI-USE FACILITY FOR SOUTH BEND, INDIANA
ARCHITECTURAL THESIS 1978-79
BRENT MARTIN
Downtown multi-use centers are becoming a viable alternative for the mid-size community. The bringing together of various functions under one project can create a community node that becomes a people gatherer and activity center, but it contains acute problems of varying political interests, scale and relationship to existing urban fabric, and attraction of potential users. The concept of multi-use megastructures is not a new idea, but their use in a mid-size community such as South Bend (pop. approximately 100,000) is a relatively recent development.

Because of their size (a minimum mass of about 500,000 sq. ft. is needed) compatibility of form and modulation of scale to the surrounding environs is a critical issue. Inward facing schemes are most typically used because the assemble of functions around a central core or atrium is a sound economic and functional solution, although the potential exists for them to become "shopping mall type". Despite such inherent problems the multi-use facility is a complex and dynamic urban renewal alternative.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

RBC  RIVER BEND CENTER
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River Bend Center is a multi-functional facility for South Bend, Indiana, including: a convention hotel, corporate headquarters for First Bank and Trust Co. of South Bend, leasable retail and office space, public atrium and parking garage. The project is located between LaSalle Street on the north, Main Street on the west, Monroe Street on the south, and the St. Joseph River on the east. The Century Center complex is located directly to the southeast and was a major design influence. As was access to the St. Joseph River which is directly east of the site.
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INTRODUCTION
River Bend Center is an urban renewal attempt aimed at revitalizing downtown South Bend. The complex will increase the attractiveness and accessibility of the recently completed century center, increase potential retail traffic for the planned community mall directly south of the site and increase the number of downtown parking spaces for both shoppers and civic/convention center users.

The overall project consists of two office functions, a retail area, a public "atrium" area, a hotel, and a parking garage. The "atrium" area serves as the circulation core of the complex with other functions having a strong relationship to it. The hotel contains 170 rooms and includes meeting facilities, restaurants, cocktail lounge, and support space. The retail space serves the hotel as convenience shops and also as a northern terminus for the proposed urban mall. The bank and rental space form a major "block" on the site's west side. The parking garage will hold 600 cars.
plate number 1

Scheme number 1 is a relatively formal solution. The retail shopping occurs along the vertical side of the large triangular form. The bank and parking lot comprise the lower portion of the split square, with the hotel rooms and restaurant on top.

Prof. Fisher perferred this form to any of the others, although he thought the triangular form was more suitable to the hotel function. He also expressed concern about the visual appearance of the parking structure.
plate number 1

Scheme number 2, the solution I chose to develop, is the result of responding to the surrounding environs and intra-complex function. The hotel is the 45° element with a restaurant atop. The bank and parking garage are to the west and north respectively. This forms a triangular atrium space off of which the various functions operate.

Prof. Koester liked the scaled down south east side of the complex and wondered if the other elements could begin to pick that up.
plate number 1

Scheme number 3 was not intended as a serious proposal. It was an exercise in stacking functions on top of each other to get an impression of the scale of the project.
This preliminary design development is an elaboration of scheme number two. One of the major obstacles at this point was making the complex read as an integrated whole rather than an assemblage of parts. The cut-away section of the hotel rooms (see fig. 1&2) is the beginning of the form the project would eventually take and the solution I found to complex unity.
SERVICE FLOOR

SCALE: 1" = 30'
Figure number 2   View from East
The key to creating the final design was relocating the elevators as the focus of the entrance. The elevators then became an affective terminus and allowed the hotel form to take its stepped shape. The project then read as a solid block to the north and west, with the south and east becoming highly articulated as a response to the civic center to the southeast.
AXONOMETRIC
Figure number 5  Main Entrance
This segment is intended to show, by example, a typical process I may go through to arrive at a finite statement. I felt it was relatively futile to reproduce the mountains of tracing paper I had saved throughout the year (even if I could piece it together). Sufficient to show this one example of structural analysis to indicate a thought process.
Evaluation is always a difficult process. Bias is virtually unavoidable. With respect to my thesis year my design effort has been somewhat sporadic. I believe the program submitted was adequate, although some graphic way of illustrating the spaces as two or three dimensional objects would have helped me grasp the complexity of the problem earlier in the design. During the schematic phase I had a very difficult time developing more than one strategy. This seems to be a reoccurring problem I have with design. Although I feel the scheme I developed is a viable one, and particularly strong with respect to function, alternative ideas would have, in all probability, enriched it. Structural alternatives would have been especially helpful. The 52 foot square grid I developed for the parking garage and office building is not very efficient or flexible. I think the fact that clear span parking needs a span of 50+ feet exerted undue influence over the rest of the project.

I feel that I'm relatively strong in visualizing the detailing consequences of design decisions; but I tend to become too worried about detailing in conceptual organizing. I have a tendency to get hung up on detailing problems early in the design process which forces me to consider too much at one time, resulting in less time devoted to conceptual alternatives.

The process of developing the concept has been my most creative period. ( winter quarter ) The elements within the complex became a more integrated whole as I gained control of the project. Moving the elevations to their final position was a key decision in determining the final, stepping down, form of the project. The fire stairway through the stepped down wing of the hotel is a relatively interesting solution, although I'm not entirely convinced of its economic feasibility and ability to meet fire codes.

Spring quarter was an especially disillusioning time. I realize there is a certain amount of bias because graduation is so near, but I believe the assignments handed out were much too rigid. A more individualistic approach would have been more successful. There is very little to evaluate about my design process since spring quarter was essentially a
drafting exercise. The concept of using the cords of trusses spanning the atrium as supplies and returns for the H.V.A.C. system is an interesting, although not novel, solution. It was extremely difficult to motivate myself spring quarter, partially because of impending graduation and partially because of my negative response to the assignments.
I believe the thesis year can be a valuable experience, but it is not responsive to the students individual projects. It baffles me that a large scale project is required to have relatively the same time frame as a small scale project. In this respect it seems more appropriate to establish the requirements with respect to the project.

Although there is the danger of becoming "burnt out" of a building type and guest critic scheduling would be more difficult, critiques of projects according to building types may provide a more meaningful evaluation because the critic and thesis student are able to draw comparisons and parallels between similar projects much more easily when they are grouped together, as opposed to having them spread across jury week.

As much as you emphasized a strong start it still seems as though the advantages can be highlighted to an even greater degree. I understand only too well the consequences of a slow start. The building I have is a good project, but had I gotten off to a quicker start I could have "turned the project over" one more time and it would have been dynamite.

I did not utilize my guest critic very much and I am probably to blame for the most part, although increased emphasis of the role of the guest critic at the outset of the project would be helpful.

These observations, especially my first two, would, I believe, make the thesis sequence a more enriching experience.
The proposed project involves the development of a 133,559 sq. ft. site bordered by East Colfax Avenue on the north, St. Joseph Street on the east, N. Michigan Avenue on the west, and Washington Street on the south.

The overall project will consist of two office "buildings", a retail area, a public "atrium" area with ice skating rink, a parking garage, and a hotel.

The site is directly across St. Joseph Street from Century Center, a 14 million dollar convention and cultural center.

Public Space "Atrium"
This area will serve as the circulation core of the complex and will contain approximately 30,000 sq.ft. Public areas of the bank, retail shops, and the hotel lobby will have a strong relationship to it.

Retail Space
The complex will contain about 30,000 sq.ft. of rentable retail space containing convenience shops such as newsstand, drug store, coffee shop; and specialty shops such as cards, florist, jewelers, etc.

Bank and Offices
Total bank and office space will be approximately 130,000 sq.ft.

with 90,000-100,000 sq.ft. occupied by First Bank and Trust with the remaining available as rental space.

Hotel
The hotel will contain about 250 guest rooms with a total area of 177,000 sq.ft. including support space. It will have meeting facilities, a 5,000 sq.ft. ballroom, restaurant and cocktail lounge, and health club.

Parking
The parking structure will contain 800 cars in approximately 240,000 sq.ft.

Space Synopsis
| Public Space | 30,000 sq.ft. |
| Retail Space | 30,000 sq.ft. |
| Bank & Office | 130,000 sq.ft. |
| Hotel | 177,000 sq.ft. |
| Parking | 240,000 sq.ft. |
| Total | 607,000 sq.ft. |
The General Project Goal is:
To support and enhance the continuing physical, fiscal, and economic revitilization of the Central Business District as a multi-use regional center.

Project Objectives are:
1. Create service and commercial job opportunities for the unemployed and under-employed central city residents.
2. Construct facilities which will support the development of a CBD convention industry
3. Increase the number of CBD employees to aid in the retention and support of existing retail enterprises.
4. Increase the number of potential retail customers within CBD via convention traffic.
5. Create a more positive community attitude about the future and direction of CBD revitilization.
6. Make more efficient and effective use of CBD land through the use of an above and underground parking facility, thereby freeing up existing temporary surface parking for development.
7. Create a catalyst for the development of adjacent, vacant and/or underutilized land.
8. Fill a void in existing land use pattern and create a link between the north and south activity centers within the CBD.
LAND:
First Bank and Trust Company will own the land (and air) rights upon which its bank/office building will be built.

The private hotel investment group will own the land (and air) rights upon which its hotel will be built.

The city will own the remaining land upon which the retail shops, parking facility, and public area will be built. A private investor group will lease air rights for construction of the retail shops above city owned land.

Any parking facility or public space built under a private structure will be leased by the city from the private participant.

STRUCTURES:
The bank/office building will be owned by the First Bank and Trust Company of South Bend.

The hotel will be owned by a private investment group.

The retail shops will be owned by a private investment group.

The remaining public space, including the parking facility, "atrium", and pedestrian walkways will be owned by the City of South Bend.
ACCESS TO SITE
Access from north:
Access to the site from the north (Interstate 80/90, Notre Dame, Niles, Michigan, and northern suburbs) would be along U.S. 31; right on Lasalle Avenue (westbound) for one block; left on Jefferson Boulevard (eastbound) for one block; and left on St. Joseph Street (northbound) two blocks. This circuitous route is required by the one-way streets in the downtown area. It would be rather confusing to first time visitors and would require extensive directional signing throughout the route.

Access from south:
Access to the site from the south (major industrial areas and residential areas) is excellent along U.S. 31, which passes directly in front of the site.

Access from West:
Access to the proposed project from the west (airport, industrial areas, residential areas) would be by two routes. From the northwest (airport) U.S. 20 would carry traffic to Main Street, with the same routing the followed as from the north. Again, excellent directional signing would be required. From the west, traffic could travel along Western Avenue (Highway 2) and turn left on St. Joseph Street to the site.

Access from East:
From the east (Mishawaka, Elkhart) traffic would be routed along Lincolnway East (U.S. 33) into downtown onto East Monroe Street. It would then turn right (north) onto St. Joseph Street to the site.

VISIBILITY OF SITE
Visibility of the site is poor from the north, since traffic must be routed around several blocks to reach the site. While the development plans call for a semi-high-rise structure which would be visible from certain vantage points traffic along U.S. 31 traveling southbound would not have a good view. From the south, the site is visible for several hundred yards along St. Joseph Street. From the east the site would be a prominent feature of the skyline.