

## Preliminary Concept Alternatives for Park Place Strategic Plan

*prepared for:*

**Park Place Community Development Corporation  
Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority**

and

**The City of Norfolk**

*prepared by:*

**UDA Architects**

## Preliminary Concept Alternatives for Park Place Strategic Plan

### A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Norfolk and the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority have been working with the Park Place Civic League and other community organizations over the past several years on physical and social programs in the community. The problems, however, continue and decline, if anything, has become more rapid.

The Park Place Community Development Corporation has been established to assist with the development of programs and initiatives designed to promote the revitalization of the Park Place community.

Its focus is both physical and social renewal.

The goal of the corporation and the City is to provide a focus for coordinating efforts in the community with strong leadership and initiative from the community.

The purpose of this planning study was to identify strategies for coordinating housing efforts with public improvements in order to have maximum positive impact.

As part of that study, various analyses were prepared and a working session with the Corporation Board identified a series of issues and goals:

1. The over-riding goal is to re-establish Park Place as a stable, mixed income, family oriented community of homeowners.

2. Employment and education programs need to be made available as part of the strategy of social renewal along with physical renewal.
3. Concentrated efforts should be made to eliminate the drug and criminal activity in the community.
4. The community should be re-established as a desirable neighborhood within the city and to be effectively linked to it.
5. Infrastructure improvements and urban beautification programs should be an integral part of the development strategy.

This report has two sections: The first identifies a series of design principles which emerged from the process and guided the development of designs. The second describes a series of alternative planning concepts for fulfilling the goal of community revitalization.

The purpose of these alternatives is to present ideas for testing and debate within the community and the City. It is hoped that the result of that testing will be a coordinated program that will effectively respond to the challenges facing Park Place.

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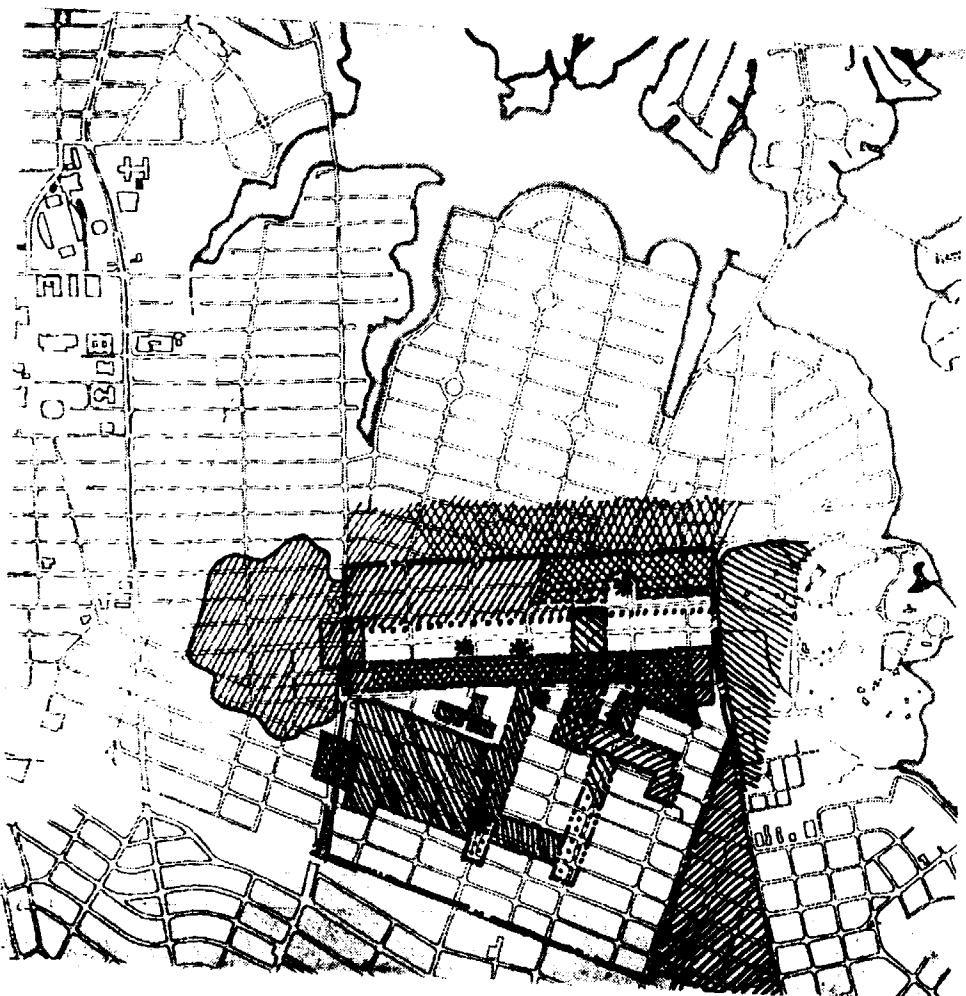


### B. PARK PLACE COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Located about two miles north of downtown Norfolk, the Park Place community occupies a strategic location and is at the hub of a chain of neighborhoods forming vital links in the City's development strategy. Park Place has an abundance of affordable housing, both for renters and owners, and also contains concentrations of older commercial facilities found primarily along Colley Avenue, 35th Street, and the Granby/Monticello/Church Street corridor. The community's strategic location, its architectural character, and the dedication of its residents are some of the area's strongest assets.

The stability of the neighborhood, however, has been shaken by extreme turnover in population and by social and economic changes that have accelerated physical deterioration, intensified social problems, and hindered efforts to halt decline. After analysis of the Park Place area, including the subdivisions of Kensington, Virginia Place, Old Dominion Place, Villa Heights, and Park Place, study began to focus on the area generally bounded by 38th Street on the north, 25th Street on the south, Colley Avenue on the west, and Granby/Church Streets on the east. This area contains a number of challenges and opportunities of vital importance to the City of Norfolk.

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### C. SUMMARY OF BASIC CONCEPTS

#### 1. Eliminate the Negative and Connect The Positive

Discussion with the Park Place Community Development Corporation Board identified a zone running east west along 34th street, in which the worst conditions are located. In addition, in the same area many of the north south streets were perceived to have concentrations of undesirable activity and deteriorated structures. Furthermore, this zone of bad conditions separates the most stable parts south of 35th Street from the stable blocks north of 35th Street.

*A high priority should be to concentrate early action programs in these areas in order to eliminate the worst conditions and to connect the stable parts of the neighborhood with new, high quality development.*

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### 2. Clarify The Pattern of Streets and Open Space

The street patterns of Park Place are oriented on two different grids. The diagram indicates these in different colors and indicates an east west zone in which a number of irregular block shapes occur. This "ambiguous" zone is the same area that was identified as the site of the worst conditions. Generally, these ambiguous zones are either important focal points in cities, or the location of serious problems. We know that a clear pattern of public and private spaces and an easily understood street pattern are important elements of good neighborhood design.

*By finding a new way of bringing the different street patterns together in such a way that they create imageable public space, a new order should be created for the neighborhood.*

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### 5. Connect Park Place to the Rest of the City in a Positive Way

Although the main arterials run through or past Park Place, it is not well connected to the rest of the city. 35th street is a particular issue because it is one of the few retail areas located on an east/west street. It has languished because of changing retail patterns and because it is not exposed to the volumes of through traffic which are an important part of a retail address.

*The streets of Park Place, either the north/south arterials, or some form of east west linkage should be treated as axes of development in which the creation of public space is used to create good addresses for residential and other uses.*

### 6. Build on the Strengths and Assets of Park Place

In addition to some stable residential areas, Park Place has a remarkable collection of fine historic churches and some interesting retail and other businesses. *The plan should build on these landmarks and make them visible anchors of renewal.* The symbolic value of the churches in a comprehensive effort to re-establish community values can be very effective. It should be supported with new facilities and programs.

### 7. Strategically Locate Initiatives in Order to Get Maximum Impact for Minimum Expenditure

*New residential construction should be coordinated with public improvements, in visible locations.*

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### D. ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

The purpose of these alternative concepts is to explore possible strategies for coordinating the housing effort of the corporation and providing a physical framework for the social and employment programs under consideration.

*No definitive plan has been developed, these are a series of ideas for community consideration and debate.*

There are a series of elements which are present in all of the alternatives. These have emerged as recommended strategies irrespective of the physical configuration of the ultimate plan. These constants include:

- The area around the school and multi-service center is improved as a major public open space. There are several existing apartment buildings and other structures which should be acquired and demolished to create this public open space as a new center and focal point for the community.
- The "triangle" area bounded by Granby, Church, and 27th Streets is cleared as a redevelopment area. Its uses can include flex-office, light industrial, and commercial space. The northern part of this area, closest to the Granby-Church intersection would be a good shopping center site if the community decided to develop one.
- Housing programs, whether new construction or rehabilitation, are coordinated with public improvements to create an appropriate and marketable development. There should be a range of housing types and prices with a coordinated effort to provide affordable middle income housing.

The five alternatives are very different in physical configuration and in the way in which the following elements are developed:

- Although 35th Street is improved in all of them, the recommended type of redevelopment or improvement varies. All schemes assume that the new Zoo entrance will help make the street more important. The variations range from improvements to the public right-of-way coordinated with building renovations, to a mixture of commercial and residential uses, to major redevelopment as either a commercial area or a residential area.
- The configuration and extent of the public open space in the center of the community varies from design to design.
- There are different targeted areas and axes of development: The first design is based on the north south streets and 35th street, the second group (3 designs) creates a new public space between Colonial Avenue and Church Street, and the final design creates a new geometry in the center of the community.

#### Alternative 1: North South Boulevards and 35th Street

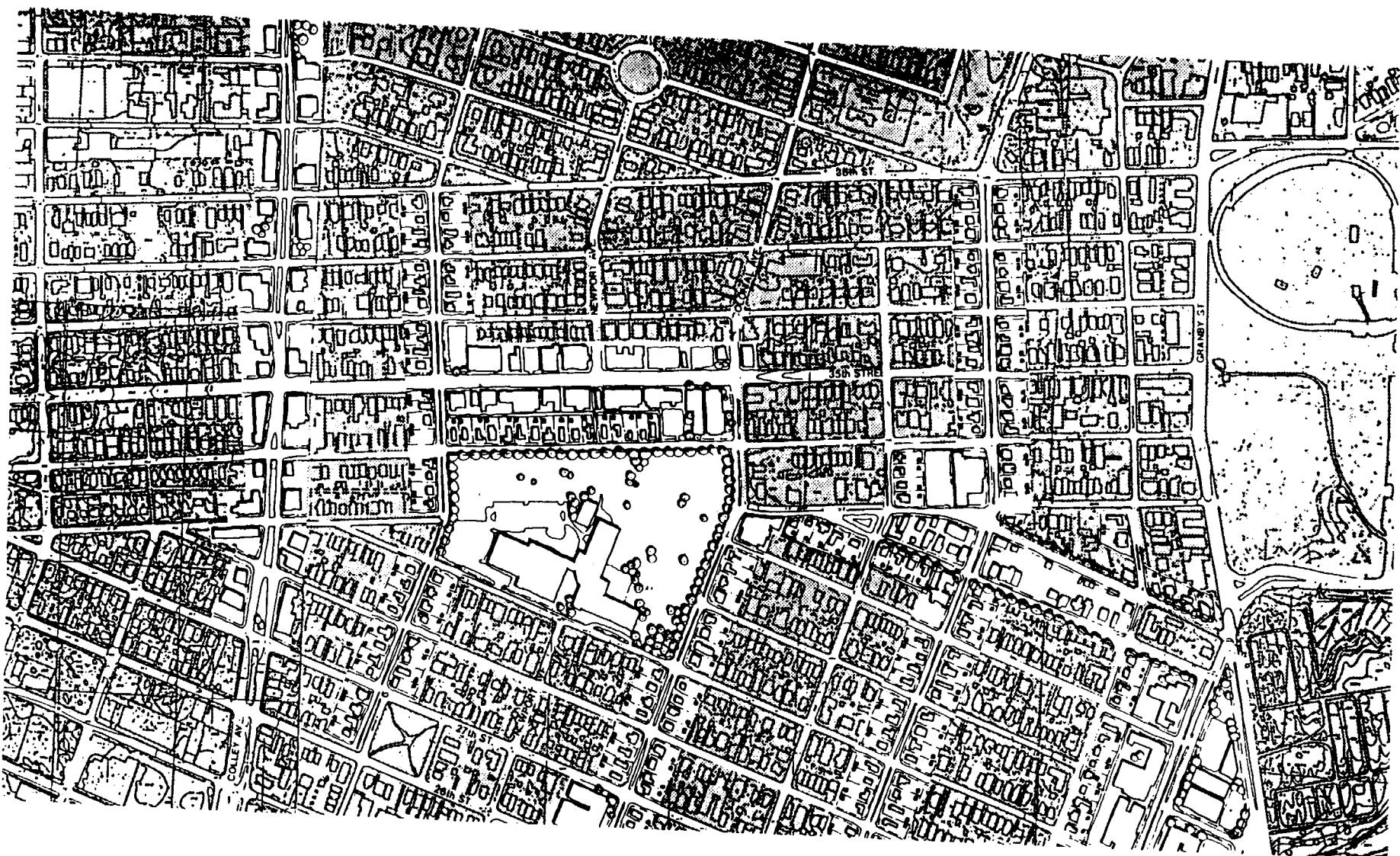
Since the North/South Streets connect to the rest of the city, they could be the basis of a strategic plan that puts the development effort in the most visible location. Each of the streets could be widened with a landscaped median to create park-like impression for Park Place. An additional 125 feet should be acquired on both sides of the widened street to create parcels for new development and in residential areas, an alley.

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The median for Colley Avenue is extended to 34th Street and a new one is proposed from 41st Street to 38th Street. Existing uses make it difficult to extend it continuously. The redevelopment in this area should be either employment or commercial uses. The property across from the Park could be considered for the location of a retail complex, perhaps with community ownership and participation.

In this concept, 35th Street remains an issue. If it is to be revived as a commercial area, or re-enforced as a mixed use area, it needs to be better connected with Hampton on the west. In addition, the current plans for the relocation of the entrance to the zoo could be helpful in reinforcing its importance as a street. Its wide right-of-way makes it possible to create a landscaped median, or develop approaches to parking without acquiring property on both sides. The vacant and or deteriorated properties could be improved or redeveloped, depending on the interest of the neighborhood and the property owners.

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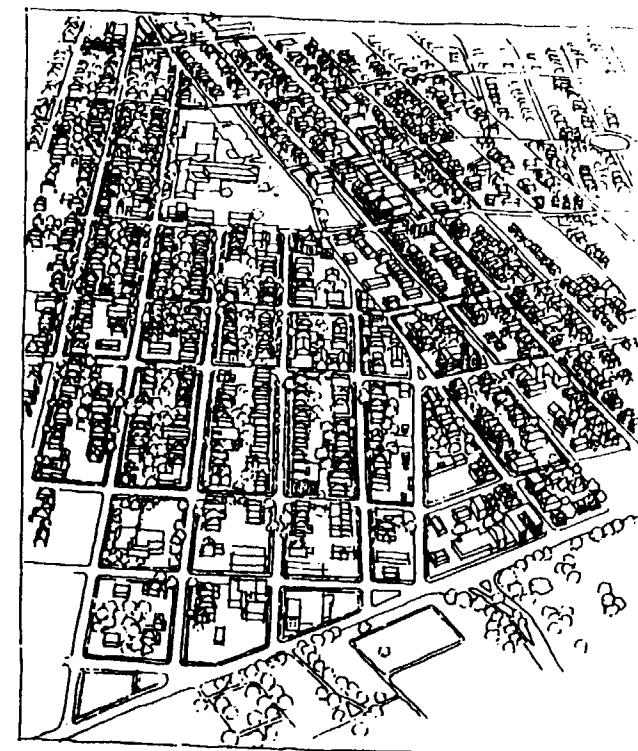
**Concept One: North South Axes along Boulevards**

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### 2. Church Gardens

The worst conditions occur at the point where the two grid patterns of streets intersect. This happens in an ambiguous way across a number of blocks. By revising the street pattern, it is possible to provide a more regular intersection and create a major new public space linking Church Street with Colonial. It would make visible four of the most beautiful churches in Park Place, sending a clear signal about community values. It would put the center of Park Place on the map of the City and create a new address for the community. Within this basic pattern there are several variations.



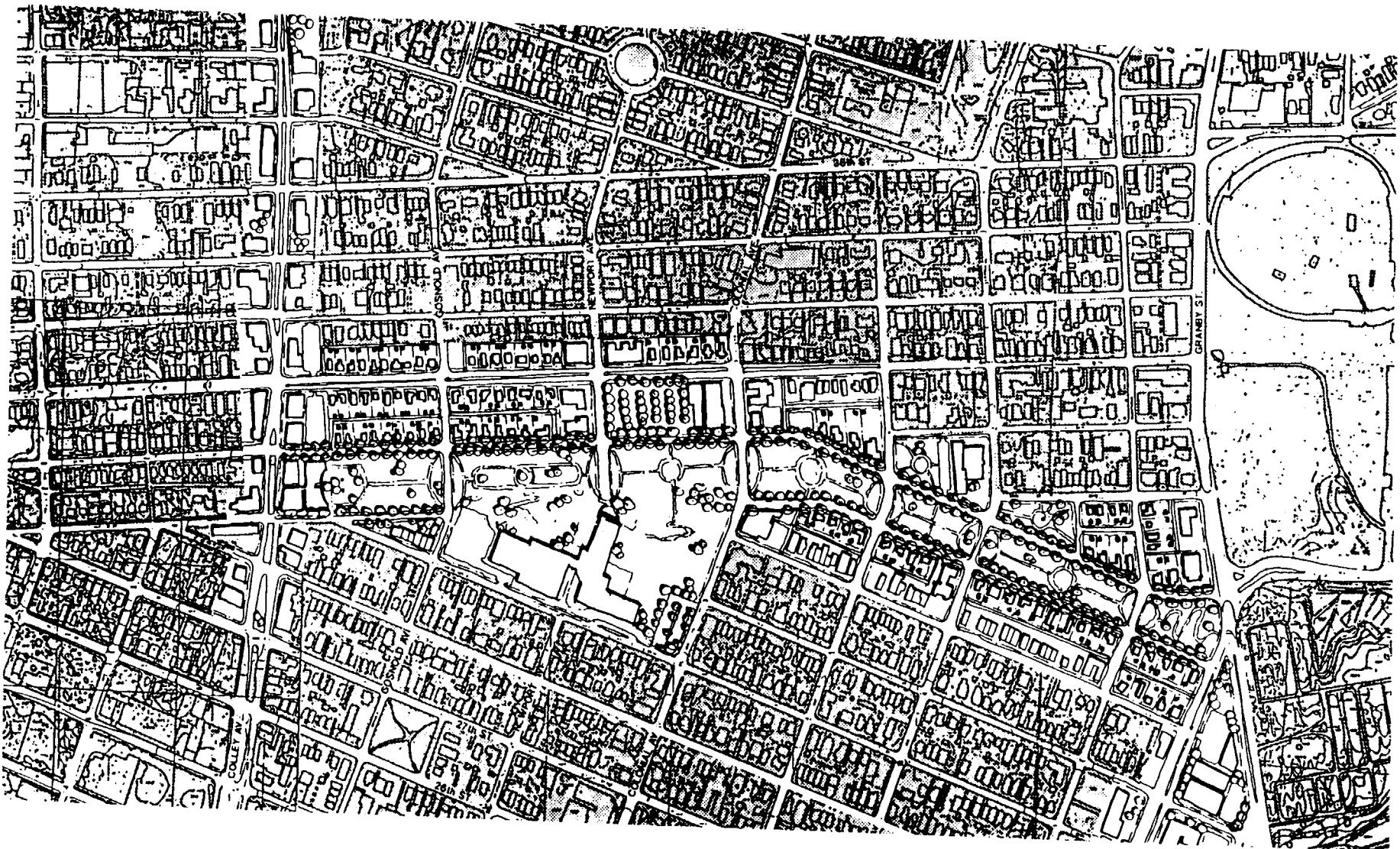
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### a. Church Gardens with Minimum Redevelopment

The central thrust of this design is Church Gardens itself. The school playground is expanded, but the blocks west of Newport are redeveloped as additional new single family housing. 35th Street is changed only on the south side of the block between Newport and Colonial.

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### b. Church Gardens with Linear Park

Church Gardens is extended across the play ground all the way to the back of properties fronting on Colley. There is some redevelopment of the commercial area.

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### c. New Commercial Place

Church Gardens extends into a redeveloped 35th Street retail center in which parking is provided for both new and existing structures.

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### 3. Park Place Arch

A more extensive approach is to clear much of the area between the school and 36th street in the blocks between Colonial and Gosnold. The new pattern of streets preserves churches and major structures. It dramatically changes the character of Park Place and creates a new residential focus.

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All of these concepts were prepared to test potential strategies for coordinating housing programs with other physical and social redevelopment. Our hope is that they will become the subject of discussion in the community as part of the process of developing a preferred strategy.