

DESIGN '79

Fortunately, in 1979 the City of Roanoke hired a famous planning group, led by architect Charles Moore. This group teamed up with a member of the current design team, Timm Jamieson, for a now famous workshop called Design '79. It resuscitated the patient; it brought the City Market back to life again. It was a phenomenal turn around for the City Market area and a huge success for downtown Roanoke. Implementing the proposals took a lot of work over several years. Today, much of the success of downtown Roanoke is the result of Design '79.

Now twenty-five years later, Jamieson is again part of a new design team. His experience informs the design process and adds historical context from the accomplishments of Design '79. There are extraordinary expectations; many people believe the City Market can be reinvented once again.

Today, the new master plan and this study address features that have worn out, not been maintained, or become outdated. The Design '79 plan has also been called the Disco Era Plan. And, it is a fact that shopping malls renovate

every five to seven years to keep up with changing trends and fashion, usually at great expense. The Roanoke City Market area, even with outdated, twenty-five year old renovations, has so much character that it still works very well in many ways in spite of the lack of upgrading. Now the task is to make the City Market area more competitive, more up-to-date and more fun.

The Design '79 master plan model shows the interesting improvements that were proposed in 1979. Everything shown in light tan represented existing buildings; the proposed buildings were shown in brown. Basic ideas from that plan focused on reinforcing the market, strengthening the axial relationship with Elmwood Park and creating an interesting linear open space.

The plan was very complex with an interesting mix of buildings, hotels and other open space improvements. The Design '79 team proposed the creation of urban housing in existing surface parking lots. In 1979, planners already had the idea of creating downtown housing.

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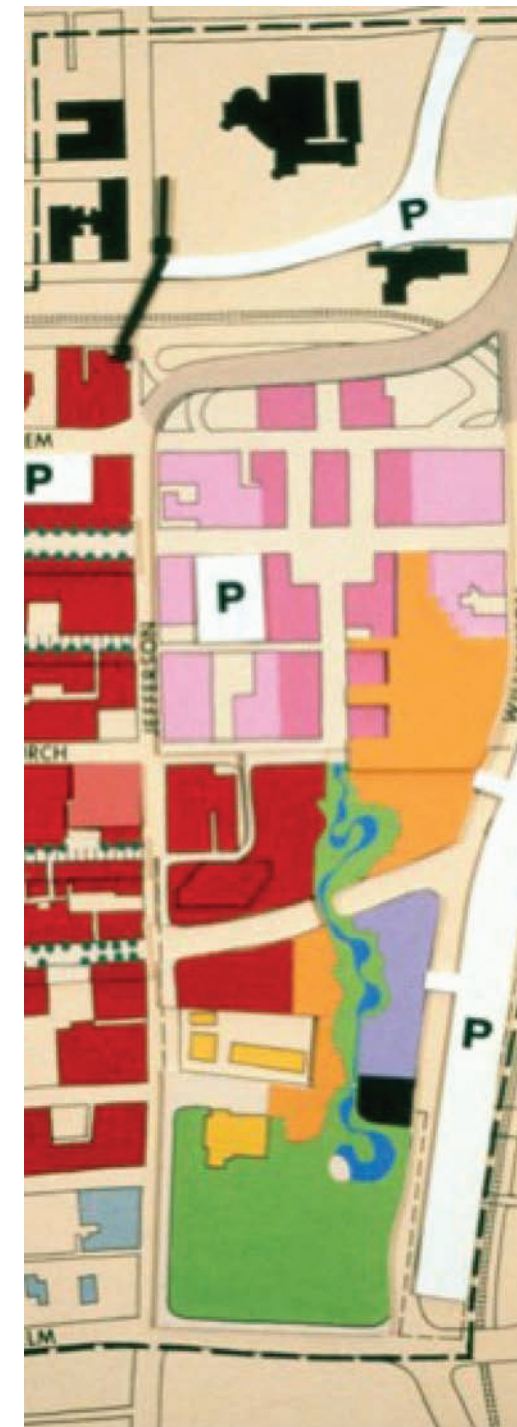
Birds eye view of Design '79 model



Model of Market Building



Plan view of model



Study area of Design 79



Aerial of study area

Charles Moore was a highly regarded visionary planner and architect; his thinking was ahead of his time. He died a few years ago, but during Design '79, Moore, Chad Floyd and others in Roanoke were thinking about the same things being studied today. Design '79 ideas are still valid; it is a matter of taking a second look at them.

Moore proposed the Center In The Square Parking Garage; it has been built. The Century Station Parking Garage on Church Street has also been built. A huge surface parking area was not completed. The plan shows the many improvements that were completed as well as some of the proposals that were not implemented.

Moore's master plan was very simple, yet it was a very strong urban diagram showing fundamental, well-grounded ideas.

The photographs show what the City Market area looked like in 1978 or 1979 before the canopies were built along First Street. The very plain, blank facades along the second block of Market Street between Church Street and Kirk Alley are clearly visible. A conceptual rendering illustrates the idea of bringing the streetcar into the City Market area. It also shows the extension of the canopy to provide the farmers more defined space. Along Market Street, the first photos show the canopies when they were new. It appears that the City Market area was working quite well. It is known that some forty-eight to fifty different Design '79 ideas were implemented in about three years. It was an extraordinary achievement.

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Market Street, ca. 1970s



Rendering of Market Street from Design 79



Market Street, ca. 1980s



Market Street seen from Market Square, ca. 1980s

Design '79 produced a myriad of ideas. They included a master plan for Festival in the Park; all the plans for the new series of music events; Century Park, the pocket park across the street from the Fire House; and the Center In The Square Building with its variety of functions. The Center In The Square Parking Garage is now called Market Square Parking Garage and houses the national retailer, Orvis. It is apparent that ground floor retail works well along Campbell Avenue. This would be an uninviting place if it were a dark, blank empty storefront.

The Century Station Parking Garage is the second building the design team studied as part of the design scope. It was actually designed to hold three or four more floors of some alternative use for the additional floors. In the late 1980's, planners imagined that condominium housing would be the most appropriate use. Also, the ground floor has space reserved for retail, but it is poorly oriented. This parking garage can become more pedestrian friendly along the ground floor if the corner is reorganized.

City Market Square

City Market Square has always been the site of the Farmers' Market. Farmers sale fresh regional produce in this celebrated urban space. It is also a place where people come to eat on special occasions; it is sort of an open air food court at designated times.

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Elmwood Park



Outdoor concert, Elmwood Park



Center in the Square Building



Center in the Square, atrium



Center in the Square Parking Garage



Century Station Parking Garage



Centennial Plaza



Festival in the Park

CITY MARKET ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

The City Market Building has also been a continuous indoor market for many years. It suffered a decline in the late 1960's. In 1979, the idea was to emulate the festival market places like those in Baltimore and Miami, and to some degree, the fashionable food courts in shopping malls. It has worked quite well for many years. The questions for the design team today are simple. Can the City Market Building be better? Can it relate to its context within the City Market area?

As for celebrations, many events in the Market Square are quite spectacular throughout the holiday seasons. The City Market area is a remarkable and successful place, but it is in need of a rebirth to give it new life. Then the success of the City Market will spill over into other areas of downtown Roanoke like Jefferson Street.

Planning Today

In a way, the design team is looking at the City Market area in much the same way John Nolen looked at Roanoke many years ago. Nolen's vision recognized downtown Roanoke not only as the heart and soul of the Roanoke Valley, but also as a vibrant downtown neighborhood that was walkable, compact, diverse and active. Such a community draws people to live here, work here, and play here. The design also provides opportunities for many visitors from all over the country to have a great experience. Some layers to this plan were studied independently; some are interrelated.



Market Street retail



Center in the Square Parking Garage, Orvis store



Market Building, existing interior