

# Gateway Centre – Minneapolis, Minnesota

Department of Architecture – Thesis Project – 1978  
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

This is a synopsis of my Thesis  
prepared in 2013

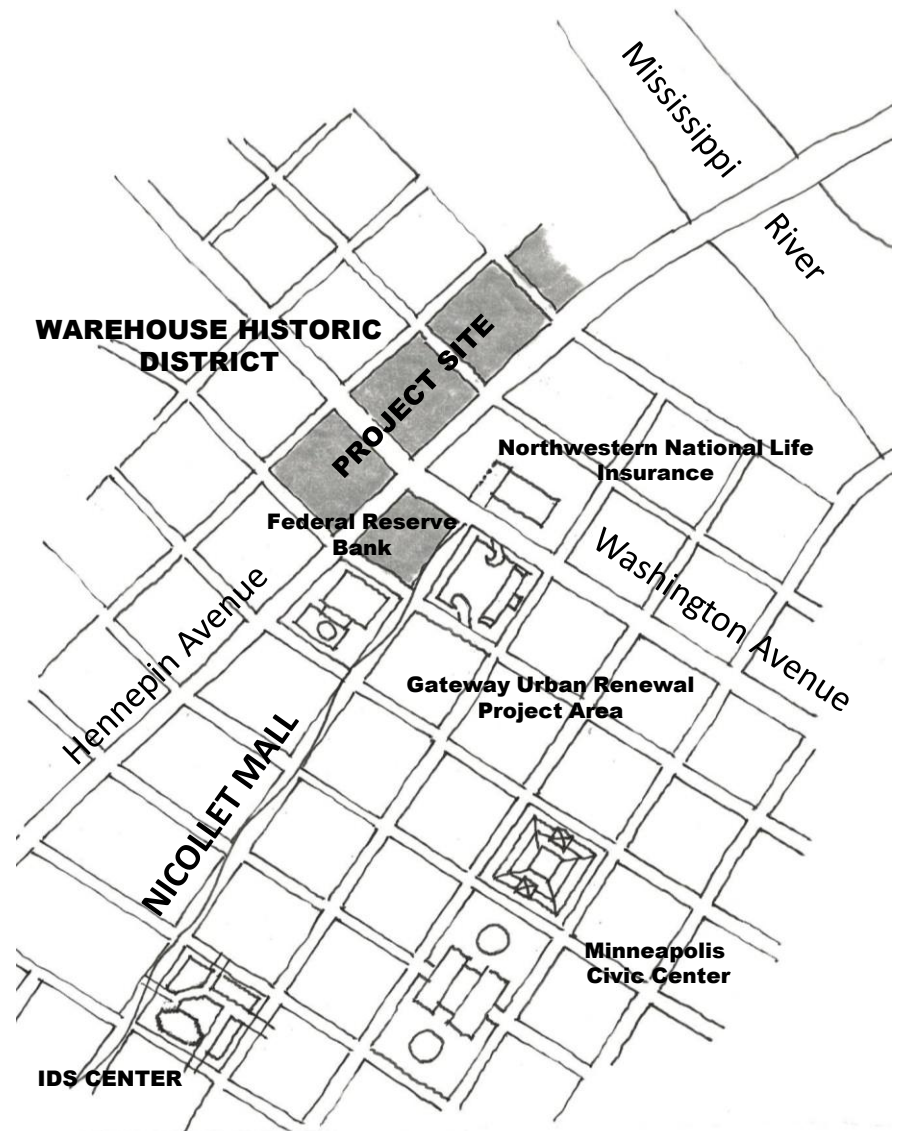
Gordon A. Olschlager  
Professor: Les Richardson

Gateway Center is a major redevelopment project located at the north end of the Nicollet Mall in Downtown Minneapolis. The project is intended to make the north end of the Mall an active vibrant urban place. The program combines a variety of uses including office, retail, a hotel and convention center to make it a major city destination.

The Nicollet Mall was built as a transit hub to help bring back this once vibrant urban street which was in decline because of outward migration to new suburbs connected to the city by the interstate highway system.

Urban Development in the 1960's cleared much of the existing urban fabric in the Gateway District. Several iconic new buildings had been completed but much of the district consists of surface parking lots. The Federal Reserve Bank is one of the most important new buildings in the country. Architect Gunnar Birkerts created a significant new public space by suspending the office tower over a bold sloping public plaza. The Northwestern National Life Insurance Company by architect Minoru Yamasaki anchors the Nicollet Mall with a classically inspired portico.

The Mississippi River is located several blocks from the north end of the Mall but the riverfront lacks connection to the Nicollet Mall. A national register historic district had been established to the west of the mall with impressive heavy timber framed industrial buildings primed for adaptive reuse.



**URBAN CONTEXT PLAN**

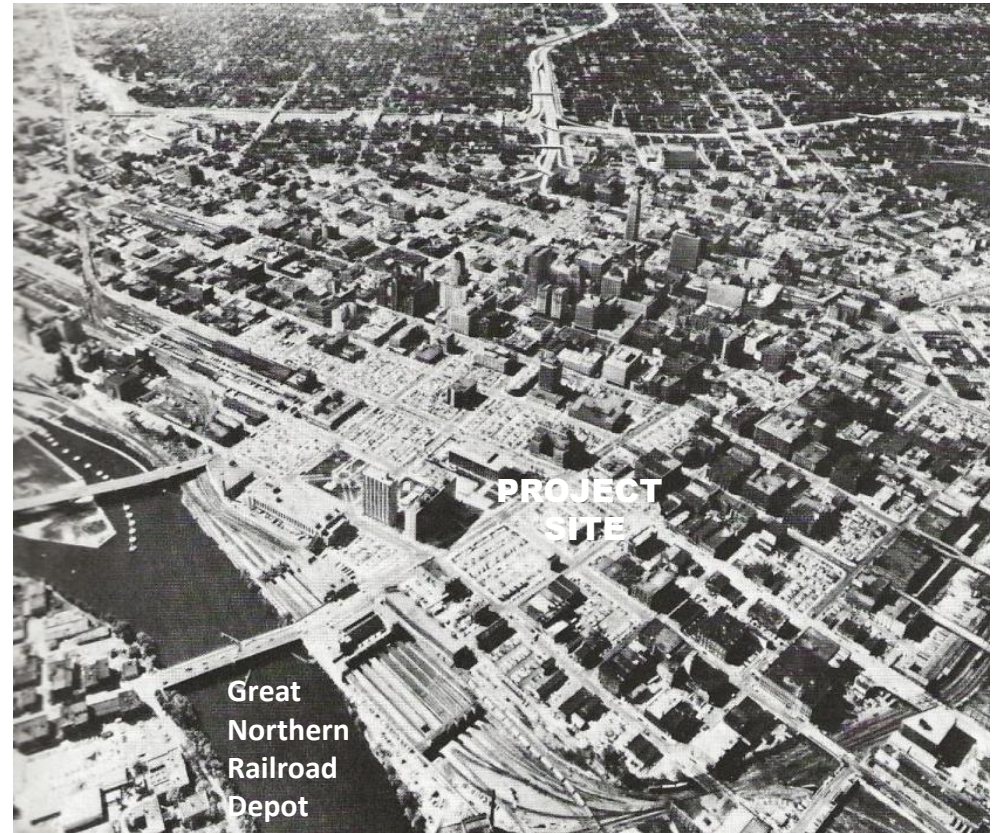
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URBAN CONTEXT

## Urban Renewal Program

In the 1950's the city of Minneapolis took advantage of federal funding created to remove "blight" from aging urban centers. The city cleared most of 16 city blocks in its Gateway District to allow for new development. The Guaranty Loan Building below is one example of outstanding historic structures that unfortunately fell to the wrecking ball in the name of urban renewal.



## Gateway District

Great Northern Railroad  
Depot Demolition





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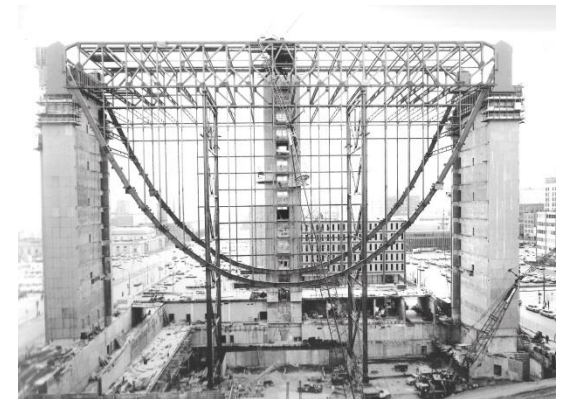
URBAN CONTEXT



Nicollet Mall, 1958 – 62  
Lawrence Halprin and  
Associates, Architects

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 1968 – 72  
Gunnar Birkerts and Associates Architects

Northwestern National Life Insurance Building, 1963  
Minoru Yamasaki and Associates, Architects



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URBAN CONTEXT



## Minneapolis Warehouse District

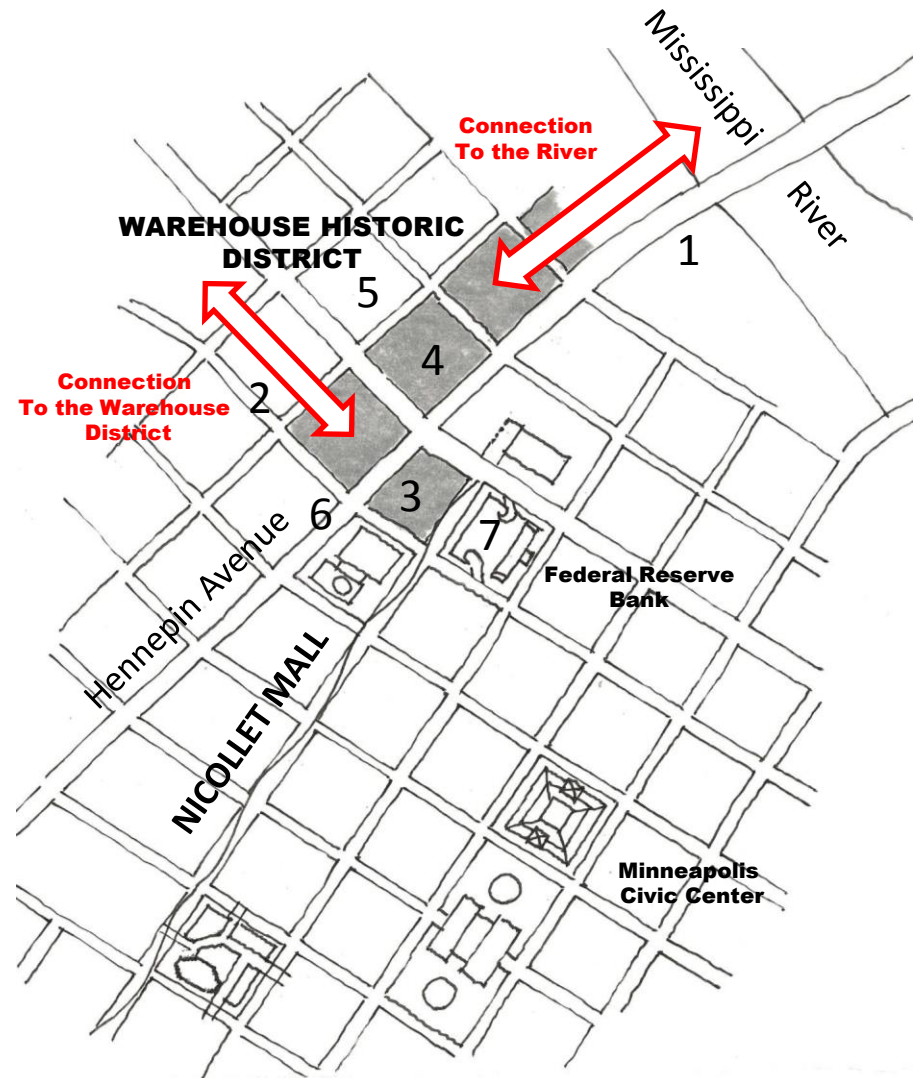
In 1966 the federal government enacted the National Historic Preservation Act to counter the effect that urban renewal was having on our nation's important historic resources. The Warehouse District is a 30 block area located immediately west of downtown Minneapolis and south of the Mississippi River and contains approximately 140 contributing structures to the district. The oldest buildings date from the 1880's and contain popular styles of the period including Italianate, Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, Classical Revival and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century commercial structures. The buildings average from 5 – 7 stories in height.

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## URBAN DESIGN GOALS

1. Connect the heart of the city to the Mississippi River.
2. Connect the Nicollet Mall to the Warehouse District.
3. Activate the north end of the Nicollet Mall with a major office and retail center.
4. Create a new convention center along Hennepin Avenue to connect the Nicollet Mall with the Mississippi River.
5. Step new development down from Hennepin Avenue to be in scale with the adjacent Warehouse Historic District.
6. Frame the view to the Mississippi with new development along Hennepin Avenue.
7. Maintain views of the iconic Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank and its unique suspension bridge design.
8. Rebuild a neighborhood devastated by misguided urban renewal plans as a vibrant urban place.

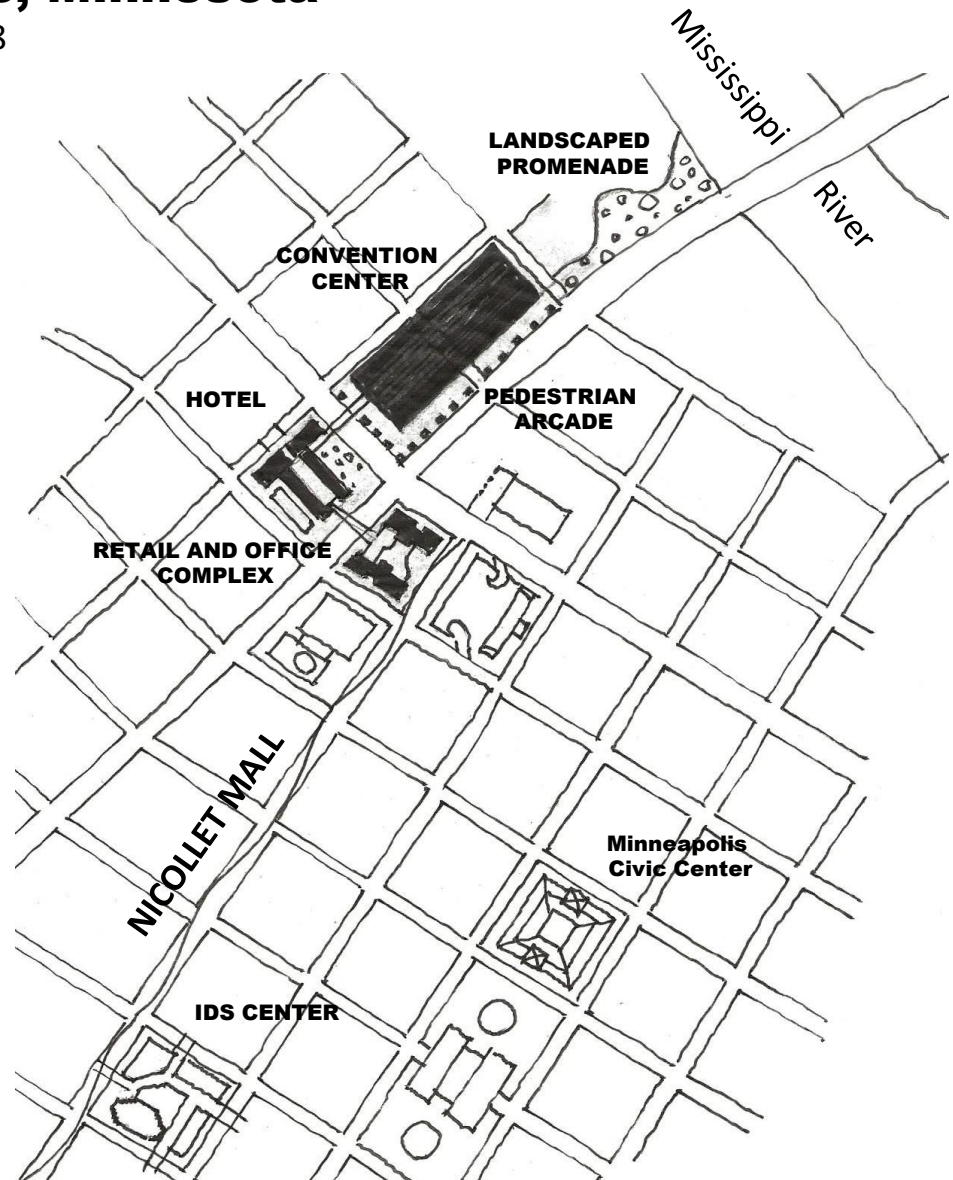
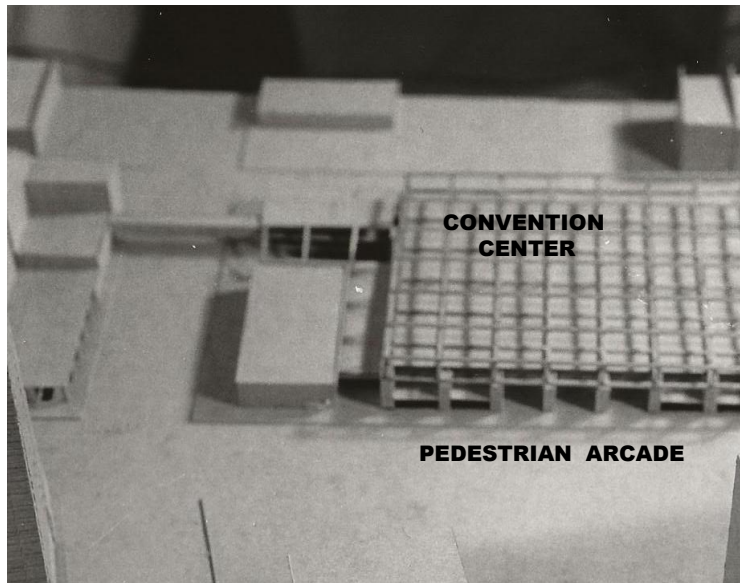
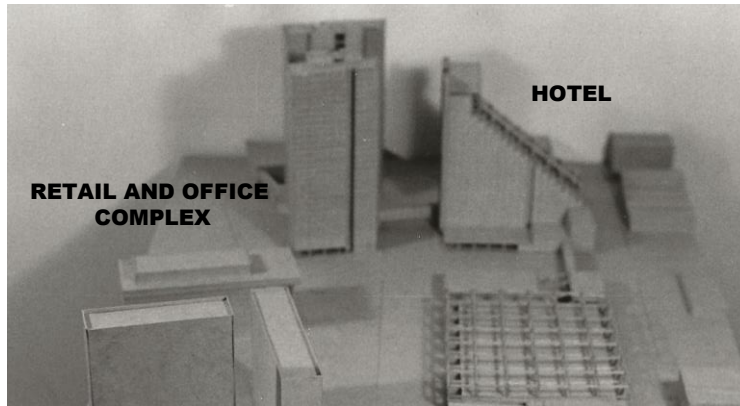


**URBAN CONTEXT PLAN**



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**Figure Ground Plan**

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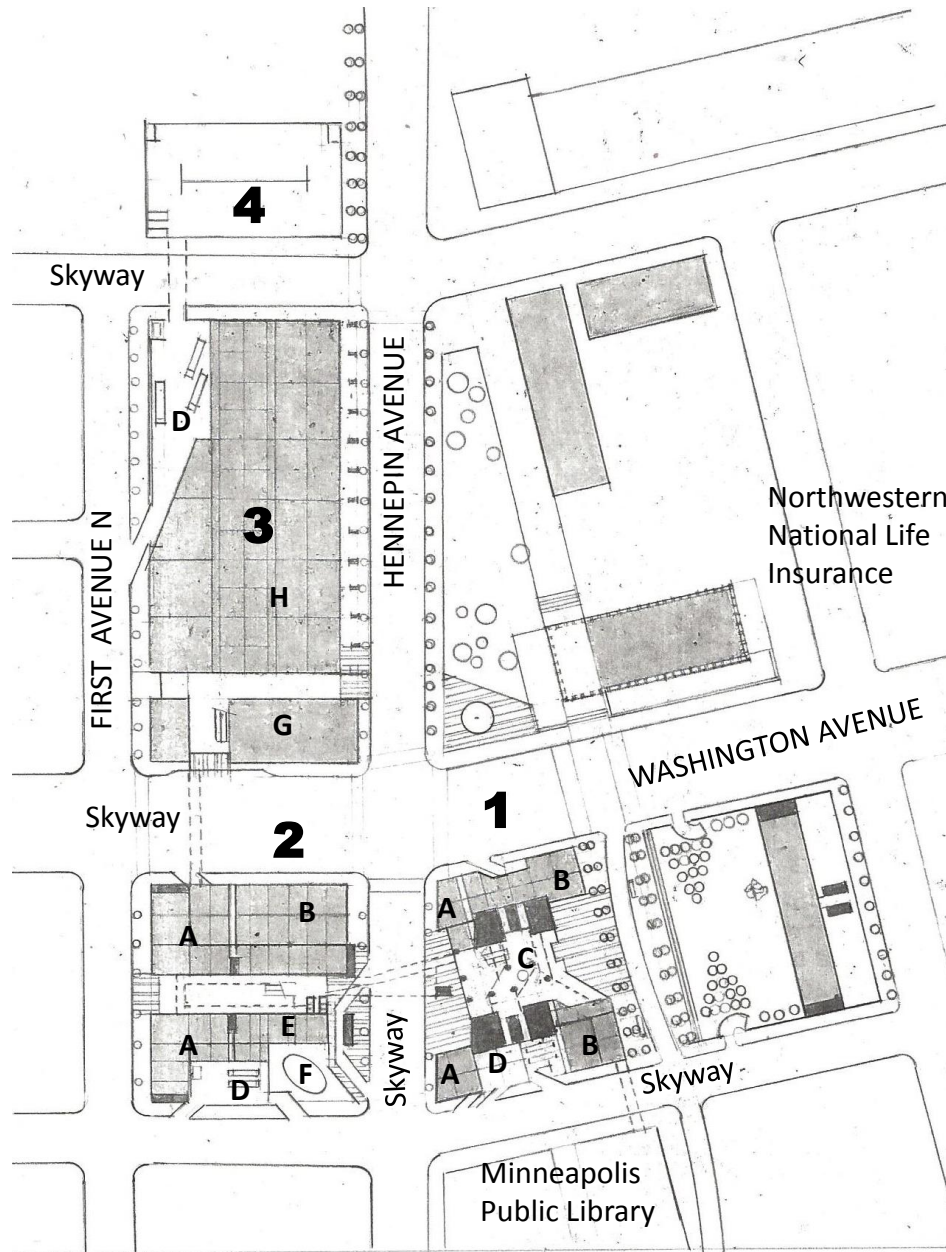
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1. OFFICE/RETAIL BLOCK
2. HOTEL/RETAIL BLOCK
3. CONVENTION CENTER
4. PARKING GARAGE

## Program Uses

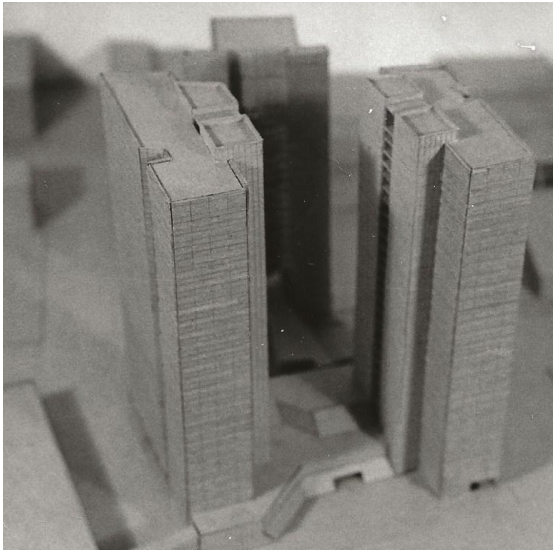
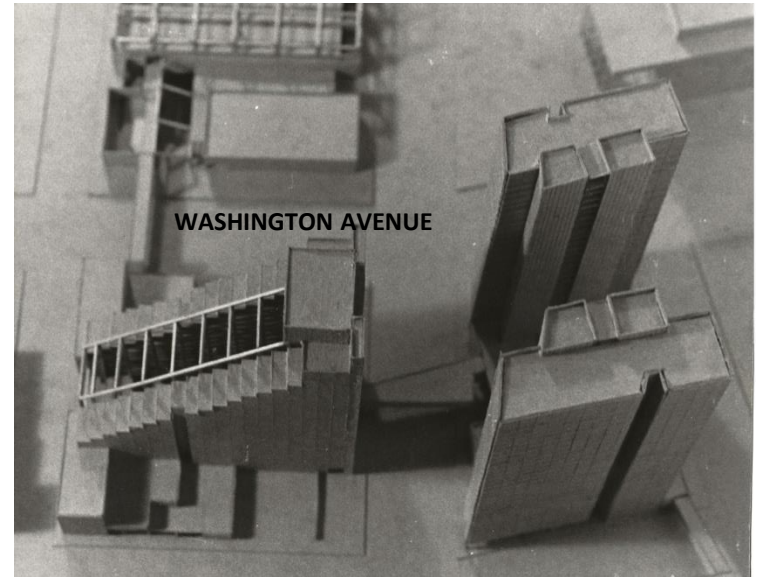
- A. Retail
- B. Restaurant
- C. Office Tower Lobby
- D. Service/Loading dock
- E. Hotel Drop Off/Lobby
- F. Pocket Park
- G. Auditorium
- H. Meeting Rooms

**LEVEL 1 PLAN**



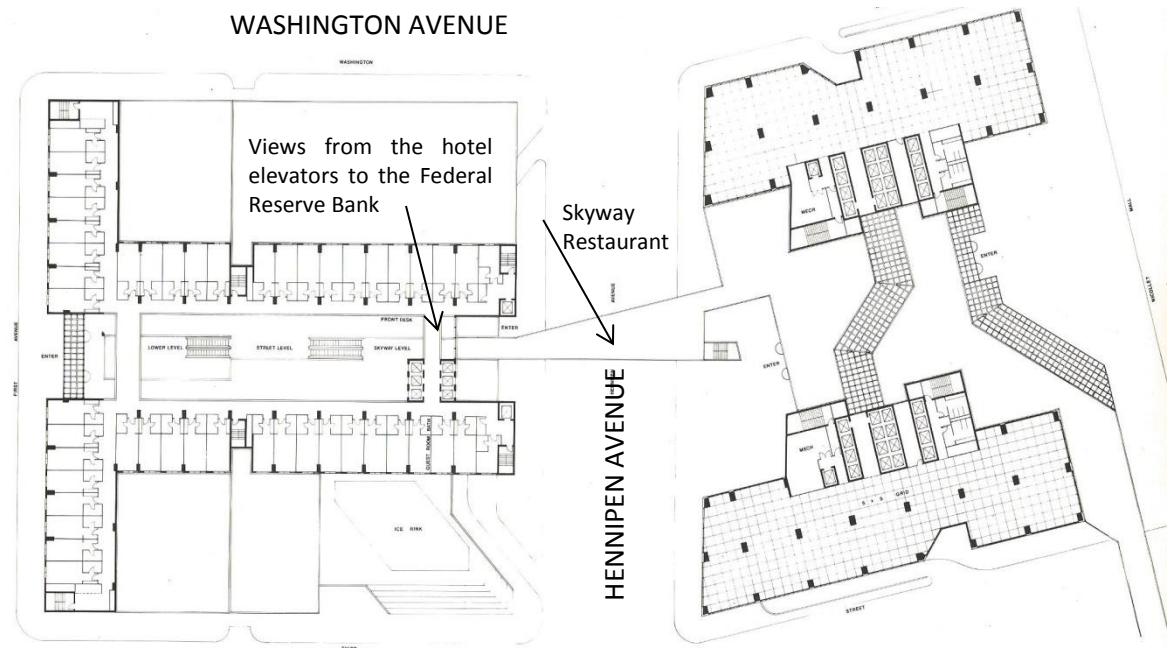
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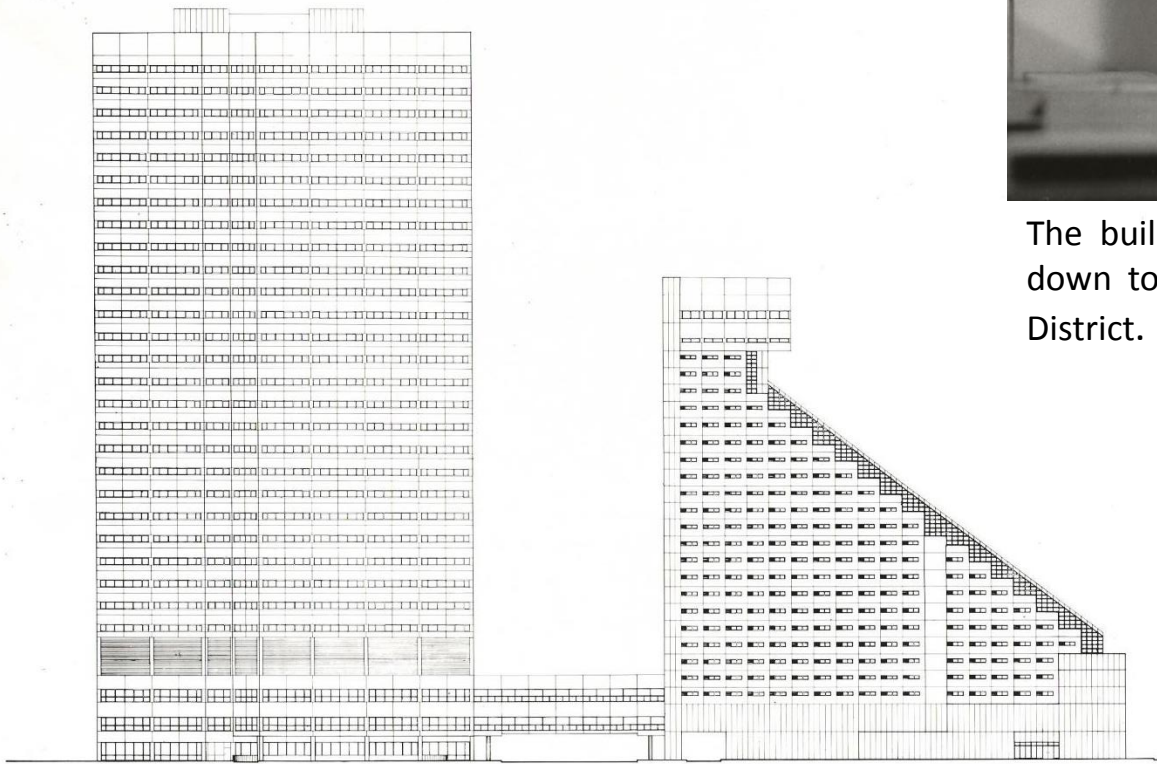
NICOLLET MALL

LEVEL 2 PLAN

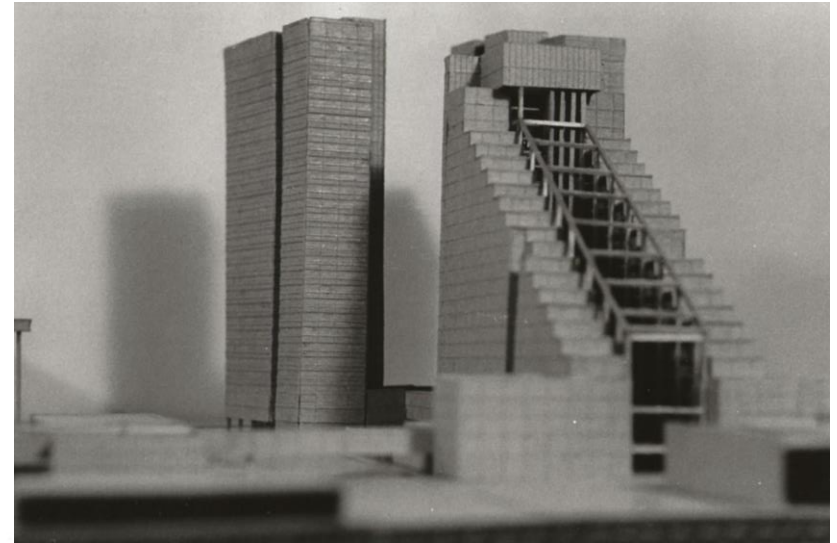


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Washington Avenue Elevation

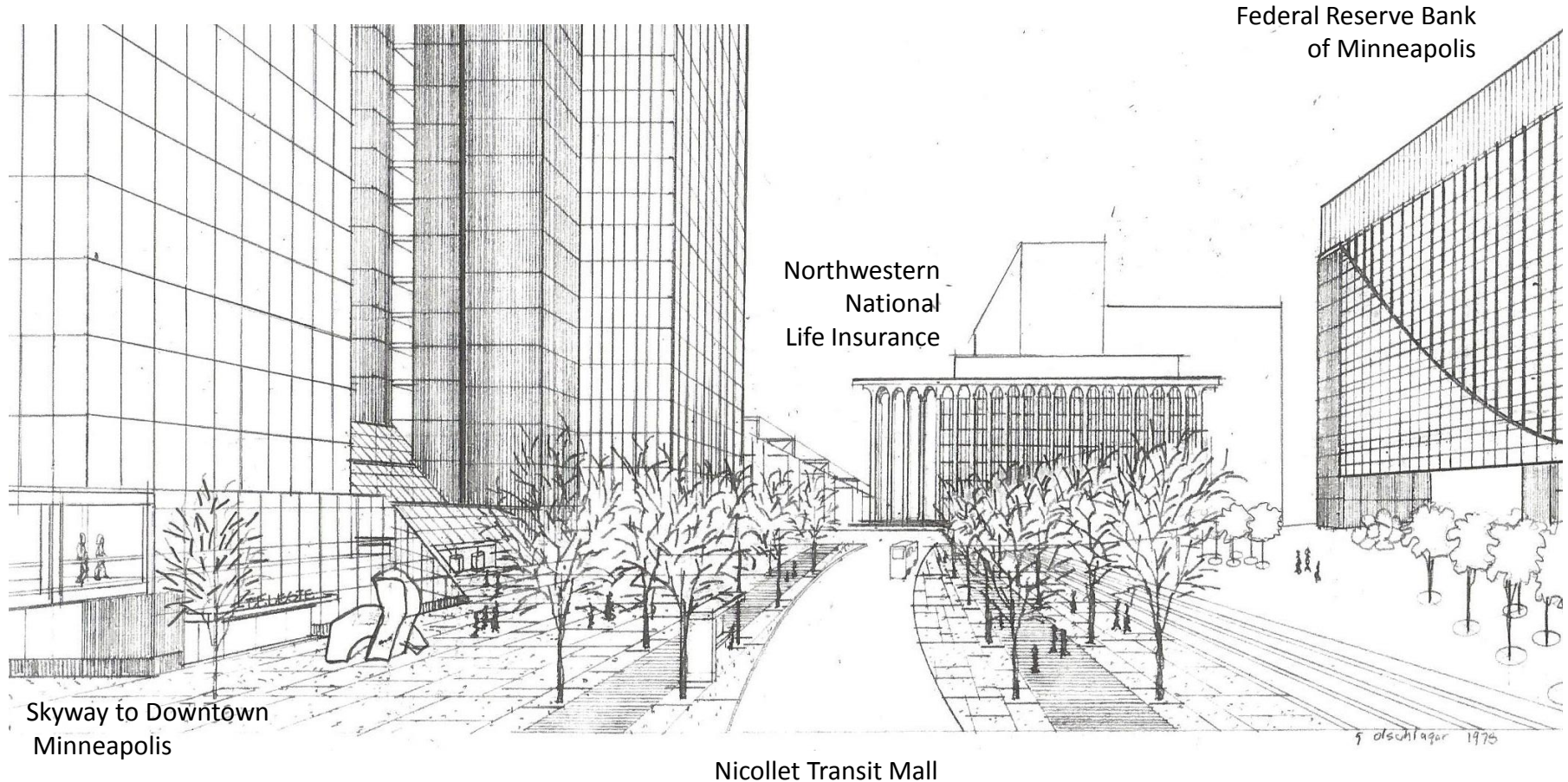


The building height from Hennepin Avenue steps down to be in scale with the Warehouse Historic District.



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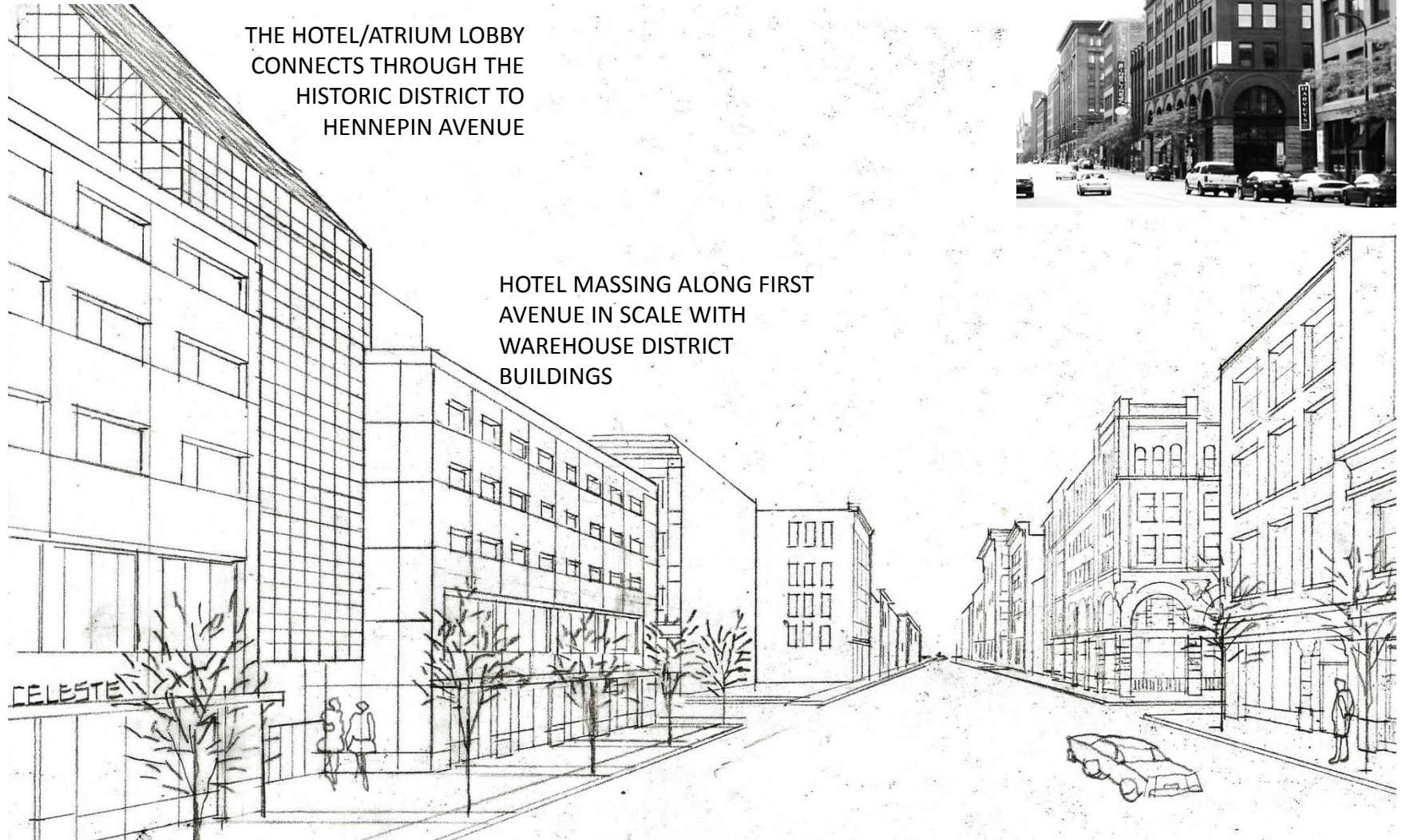
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**Nicollet Mall Sketch**

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**Warehouse District Sketch**

First Avenue North

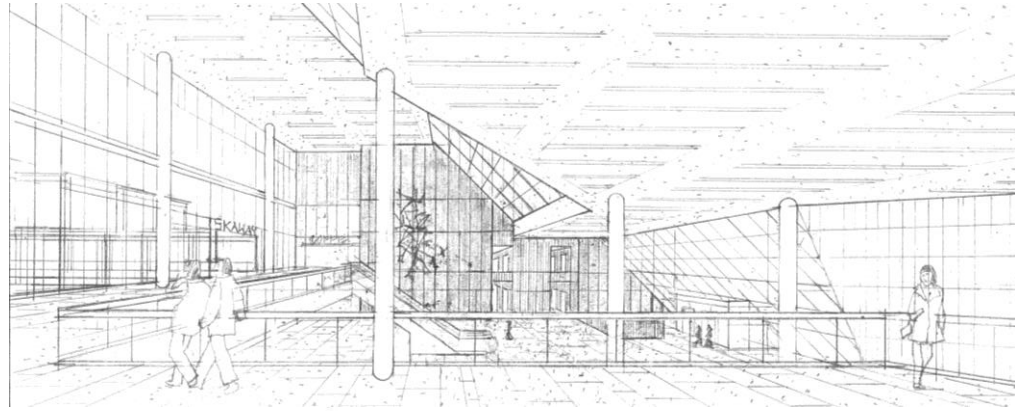


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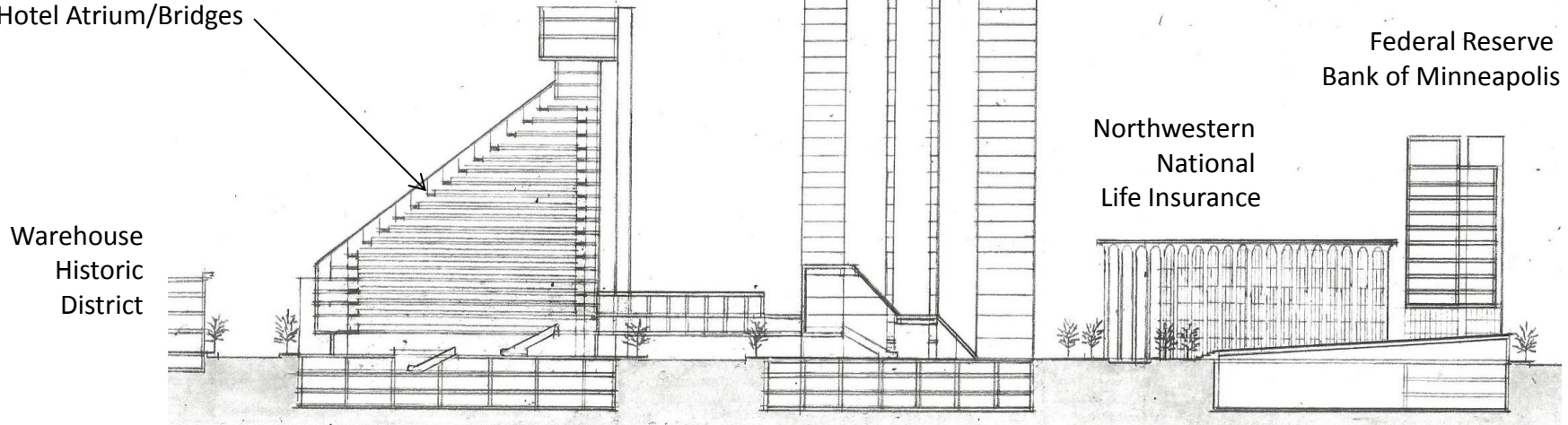
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Hotel Atrium/Bridges



Office Atrium/Lobby



Warehouse  
Historic  
District

Hotel/Retail

Office/Retail

Northwestern  
National  
Life Insurance

Federal Reserve  
Bank of Minneapolis

Site Cross Section

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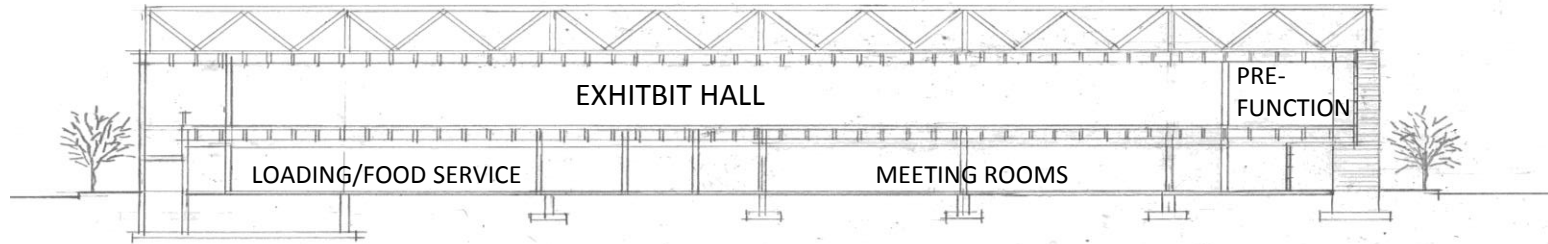


**Hennepin Avenue**

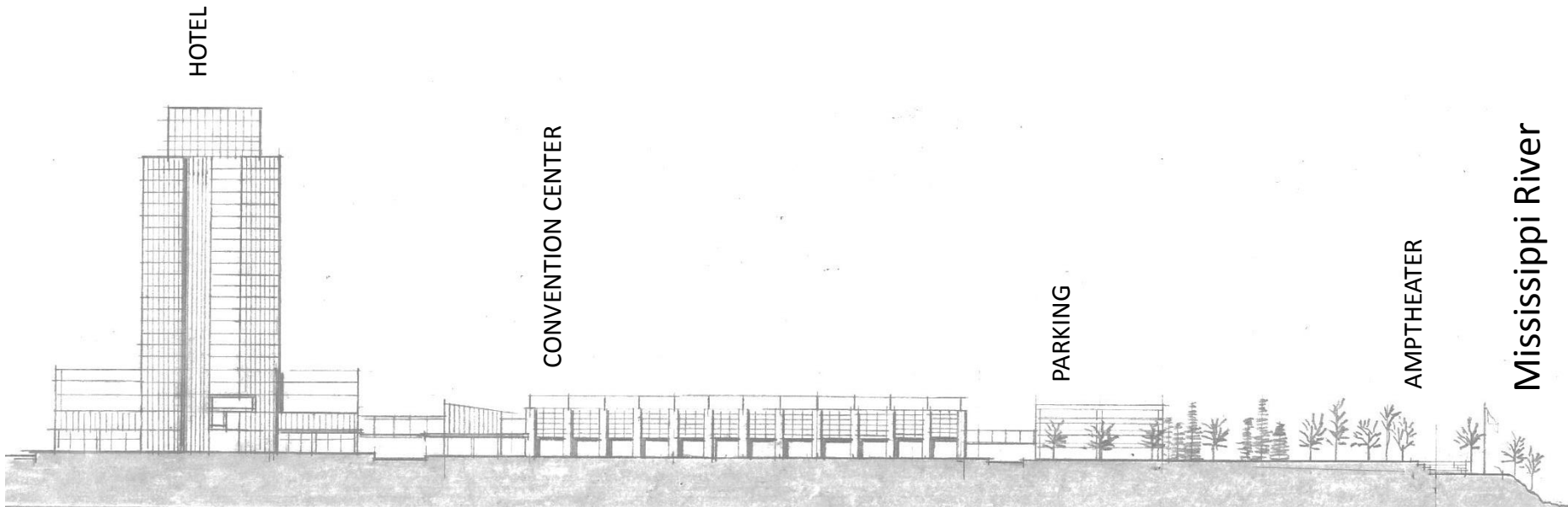


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**Convention Center Cross Section**



**Hotel/Convention Center – Hennepin Avenue Elevation**