

The Herald Second Front

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The full-size paper reaching more than 12,600 homes in Halton Hills

Playground fun

According to these children, it is more fun to slide down a slide you've made yourself out of some old bleacher seats on a fort near Joseph Gibbons Public School than it is to go

down a metal slide in the playground. But to look at the faces of these kids, you'd never know it by looking.



Exciting new look for downtown Acton has merchants agog



The municipal offices on Mill Street

By **GEORGE EVASHUK**
Herald staff writer

Merchants and businessmen in downtown Acton are this week pouring over draft plans of what their Business Improvement Area (BIA) may look like starting as soon as next spring.

The plans and sketches for the BIA, encompassing about 75 establishments, were unveiled last week by the BIA board of management who are awaiting feedback from the businessmen.

The merchants are to have their suggestions, observations, and beefs, if any, back by Friday to allow a final draft plan to come before the public at the end of September.

"Without exception the people say the report is excellent," said Henry Stachura, chairman of the board of management, in an interview.

He added, however, that a few merchants, as might be expected, have some doubts as to the feasibility and practicality of the proposals. Some merchants feel that vandalism might increase and others are worried about technical aspects of the proposal, he said.

"Some of course say it will work someplace else, but it won't work in Acton," he said.

The 32 page report covers the areas of role, theme, parking, traffic, streetscaping, building improvement, special features and special projects. It notes that "there is a full complement of essential goods and services available within downtown Acton a situation which is unique even in rela-

tion to downtowns of a much larger scale.

"Also unique, and again typical of a healthy commercial centre, is the fact that the commercial vacancy rate and the vacancy rate in upper stories (78 per cent of which are residential) are both approaching zero," the report goes on to say.

It notes, too, that "the retail floor space within downtown Acton is adequate, if not somewhat excessive for the current population." It suggests that as Acton's growth in the next five years - the span of the proposal - will be limited to another 800 persons, zoning changes be made "... to limit the opportunity for commercial expansion and to consolidate commercial development onto the principal commercial streets."

The report says no rapid growth is to occur around Acton until after 1981 when a shopping plaza may develop, offering more competition. "The 'breathing space' between now and the development of a suburban facility provides downtown Acton with the opportunity for improvement that many downtowns have not enjoyed."

The reports suggest that even though the downtown has an adequate mix of goods and services to offer the community, "... if it is to attract a great portion of the local comparison shopping dollar, the retail mix should be adjusted over time to afford wider variety in selected goods.

It notes the success of small towns with themes - Stratford and Niagara-on-the-Lake with theatre, Shelburne and Carleton Place with music, festivals, Elora with crafts and Baden with cheese - and suggests that Acton adopt a leather theme and become known as "The Leather Town" with appropriate promotion and annual events.

The three major leather companies in Acton, which employ about 575 persons, expressed interest and support in the idea, the report says. A committee of the board of management is expected to investigate the possibility.

Parking has long been a problem for the merchants in downtown Acton and the report makes seven recommendations in that area, among them to increase the amount of parking, install parking metres in some lots, hire an bylaw enforcement officer jointly with Georgetown to enforce metered parking and have downtown employees park further away.

But even though the parking in downtown Acton "is perceived to be the fundamental problem", the report notes that in comparison with six other towns, "... Acton has adequate parking facilities."

As for streetscaping, the report has a number of suggestions ranging from sidewalk projections, much like what Georgetown will have in its BIA, to trees and street furniture. Neither the Halton Hills engineering department nor the Ministry of Transportation and Communication have ma-

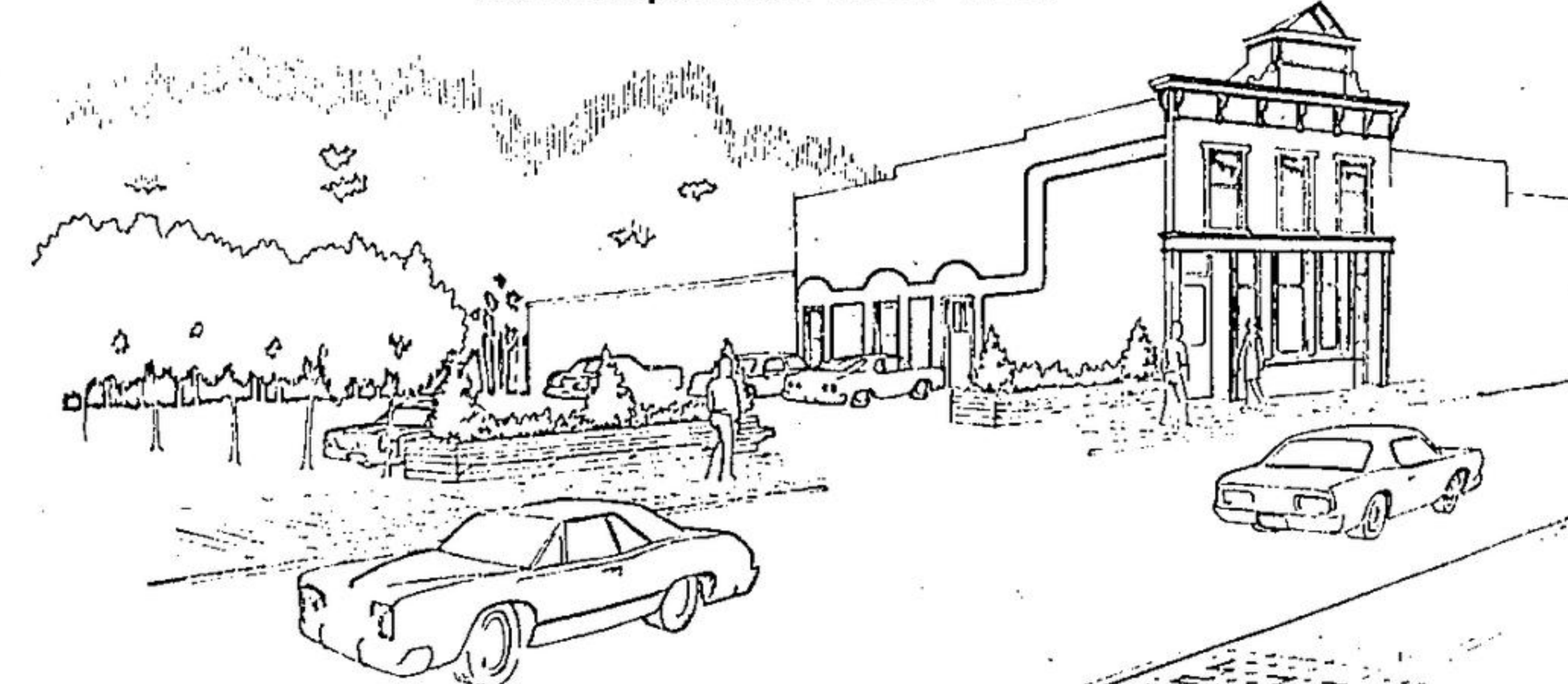
nor objections to sidewalk projections, the report says.

The report recommends that the board of management undertake a building improvement program to restore buildings where possible, coordinate upper and lower stories, coordinate facades along the length of Mill Street, add color and prohibit overhanging signs. A canopy extending along the street would unify it and provide a degree of climate control.

The report recognizes that Acton's Town Hall is a prominent feature of the downtown and that a group is working to restore the structure. It suggests that the structure be used as a community centre, a meeting facility for local groups, including the BIA and Downtown Business Association, or as an information centre operated by the Chamber of Commerce.

Vibrant town centres were once typified by a farmers market, the report notes. In 1972 a farmers market was operated on Willow Street between Main Street and Church Street by youths with an Opportunity for Youth Grant with a high degree of acceptance, the report says and suggests that the Acton merchants organize one.

Implementing the proposals of the plan, modified though they may be, has a five year time limit, Mr. Stachura told The Herald and has a ceiling price of \$100,000. "There is very little negative comment as to cost," he reported of the merchant's initial reactions.



Approach to the downtown core

Two day symposium on downtown cores slated for Nov. 1, 2

A two-day symposium on the problems and potential of downtown cores in medium and smaller cities will be held in Toronto, November 1 and 2, Housing Minister John Rhodes has announced.

The symposium, called "New Directions: A symposium on Downtown Cores," will be held at Toronto's Royal York Hotel.

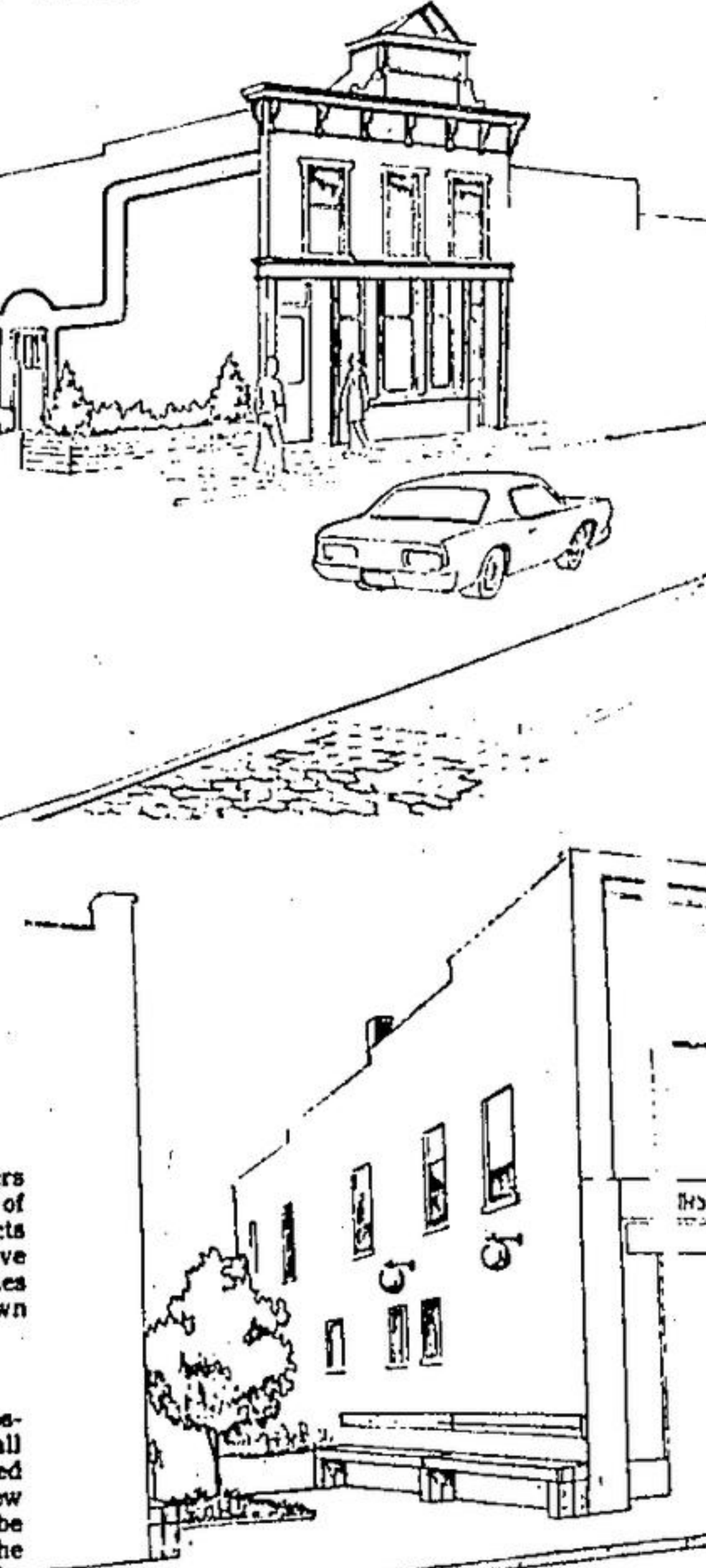
Details of the program are now being finalized with the assistance of a steering committee consisting of municipal and professional associations.

They include: The University of Western Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Canadian Association of Housing and Renewal Officials, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, the Organization of Small Urban Municipalities, the Ontario Association of Planners and the Provincial-Municipal Liaison Committee. Rhodes said that the number of participating agencies reflects the extent of interest and concern about downtown cores in the non-metropolitan centres in Ontario.

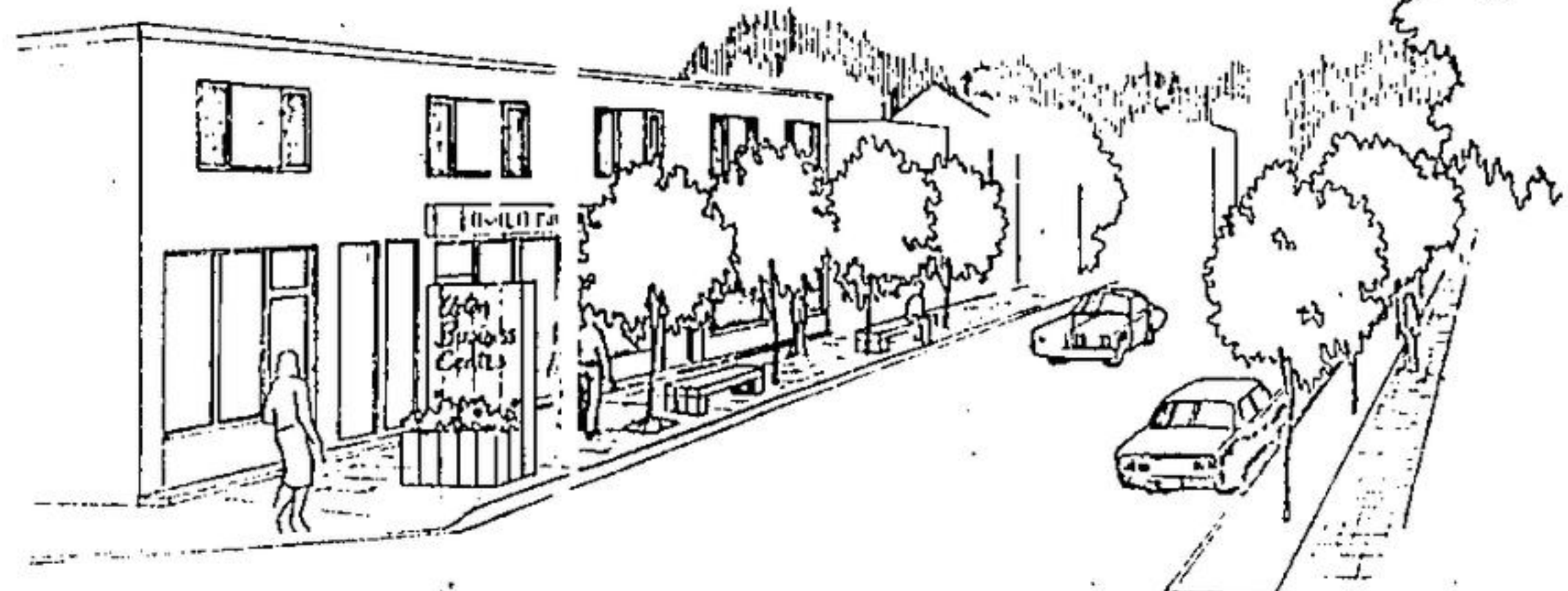
"It is our intention to provide the public, businessmen, and

municipal officials and leaders with a broad spectrum of useful information on subjects ranging from administrative issues, to potential facilities and services in downtown areas," he said.

Information on the symposium will be forwarded to all municipalities and interested parties within the next few weeks. Registration will be open to the public and the program will emphasize the needs and concerns of the municipalities, retailers and developers.



A quiet corner



A pleasant place to shop or stroll