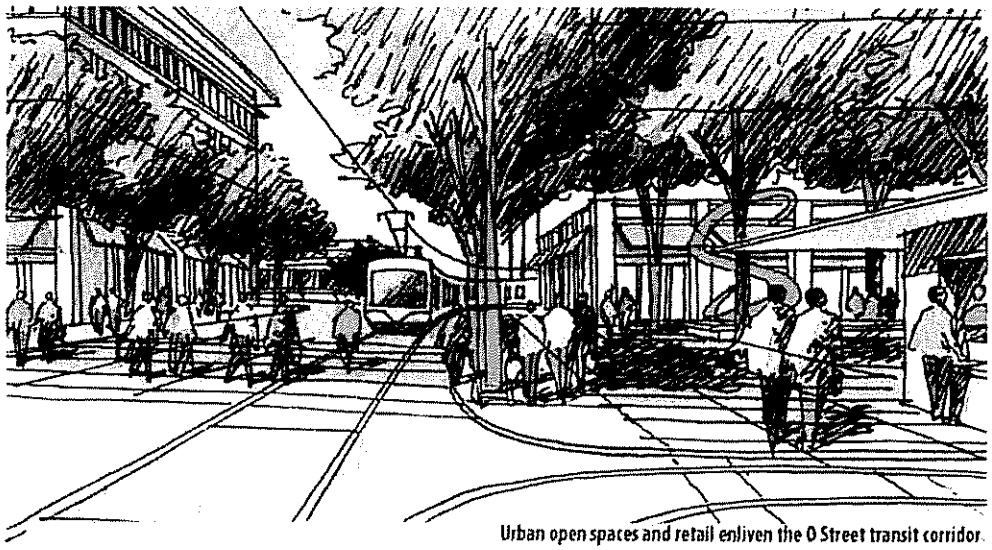
Sacramento West End Office Complex

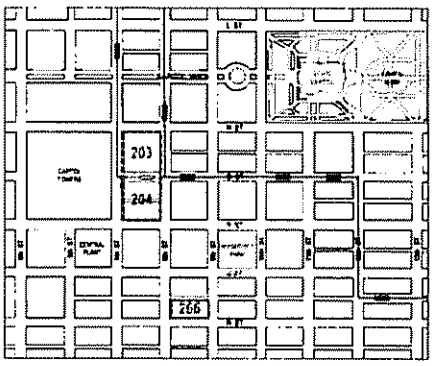
Urban Design Framework



Urban open spaces and retail enliven the O Street transit corridor.

Introduction

The West End Office Complex is a proposed State office facility in downtown Sacramento. As part of the planning and design of the project, the State undertook an urban design study involving three community workshops. The resulting *Urban Design Framework* establishes the overall building scale, orientation, and public amenities for the project. It includes several alternatives for each site, reflecting public comment, State programmatic requirements, and an overarching goal of enhancing the pedestrian experience and vitality of downtown.



Project Location

Project Authorization

Authorized by Senate Bill 809, the West End Office Complex consists of 1.4 million gross square feet of State office space and associated underground parking on Blocks 203 and 204, and a parking garage on the southern half of Block 266. The project authorization assumes that all three blocks will be cleared of existing buildings, except for the historic Heilbron House on Block 204, which will be retained and rehabilitated or relocated off-site. The project authorization does not include a residential component. However, in response to public comment, residential opportunities are considered for Blocks 204 and 266 for purposes of this planning and urban design study.

Up to 5% of the project's 1.4 million square feet could be used for retail and other ancillary uses. The State projects a total parking supply for the project of 1,340 spaces, with up to 540 spaces accommodated underground on Blocks 203 and 204 and the remainder in an above-ground structure on Block 266.

Public Process

The *Urban Design Framework* is the result of a 6-month planning and urban design process in early 2005 involving three public workshops. Incorporating extensive public outreach and interactive work sessions, the three workshops explored goals, issues, and ideas; project alternatives; and refined alternatives for the three blocks. The workshops focused on building massing; public amenities, including open space and retail; and pedestrian circulation. In summary, the public embraced the following project elements:

- Active street life
- Larger open spaces oriented to the street (not internalized)
- Retail oriented to the street or open space, particularly O Street
- Towers that contribute positively to the city skyline
- Housing incorporated in some part of the project
- No surface parking

State Programmatic Requirements

In combining programmatic needs and public amenities, the State set the following requirements for Blocks 203 and 204:

- One building per block for building efficiencies, functionality, security, and cost considerations
- Larger, consolidated floor plates for program functionality
- Single secure entry per building
- East-facing open space for morning light and afternoon shade
- High visibility in the open space for greater security

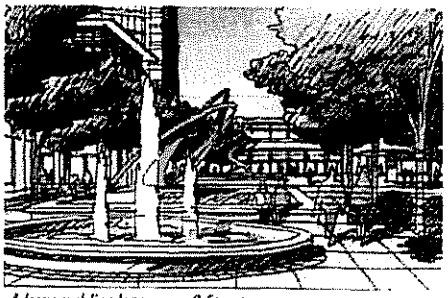
Active participation by the public influenced the urban design framework

Project Goals

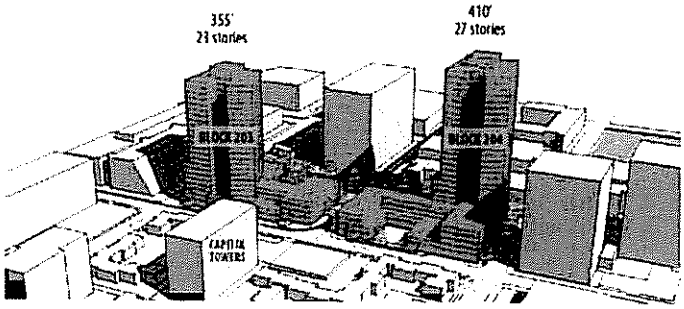
1. **Sustainability:** Develop a sustainable, energy-efficient project that balances environmental, economic, and social factors and achieves the USGBC LEED "Silver" or higher rating
2. **Healthy Environment:** Provide a comfortable and healthy work environment that maximizes natural light and affords views.
3. **Authorized Scope:** Ensure that the project achieves the authorized program scope and can be built within authorized budget
4. **Efficiency:** Create a well-functioning and efficient building configuration, providing a mix of larger and regular floor plates.
5. **Urban Character:** Create an urban environment, with buildings and ground-floor uses that address the street and frame open spaces.
6. **Pedestrian Environment:** Create a pedestrian-oriented environment by minimizing street-level wind tunnels and providing ground-floor uses, pedestrian pathways, open spaces, and connections to transit
7. **Activity:** Provide community-serving retail uses and open spaces to encourage public activity throughout the day and into the night
8. **Open Space:** Create a variety of inviting, publicly accessible open spaces, including plazas and green spaces, with places to sit and relax
9. **Sensitivity:** Ensure project massing and shadowing are sensitive to the surrounding buildings and land uses, in particular adjacent residential and historic buildings.
10. **City Skyline:** Create a project that adds to the city's skyline, providing variation in building profiles

Alternative 1 *Blocks 203 & 204*

- Framed by buildings, a large public plaza connects both sides of O Street and focuses on the transit stop and flanking retail kiosks, with a view of the Stanford Mansion
- The Heilbron House is relocated
- Towers are canted to a true north-south orientation for optimal solar exposure

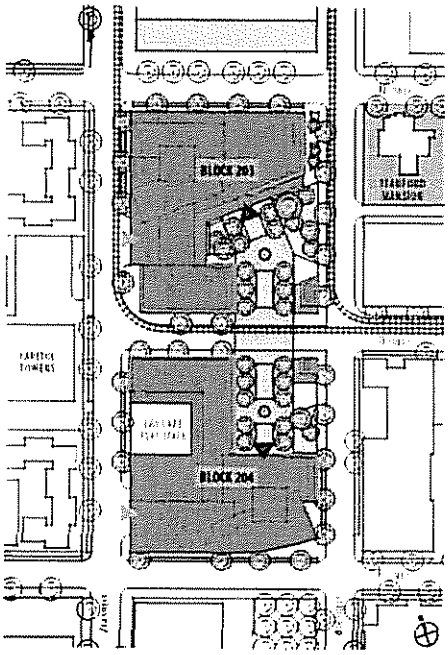


A large public plaza spans O Street

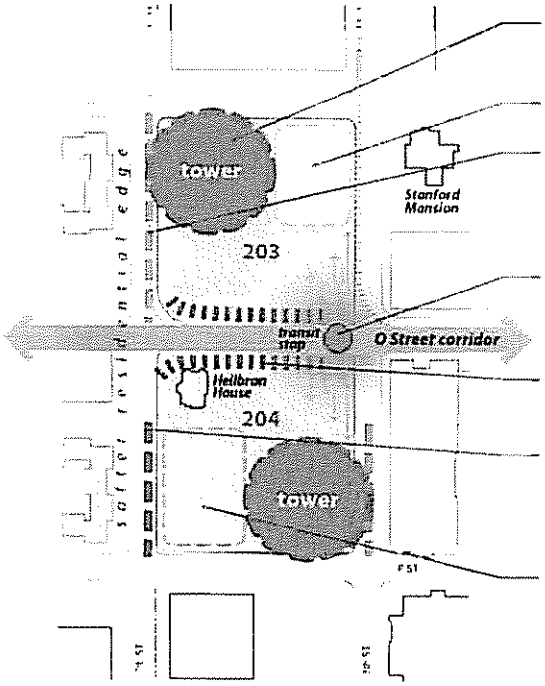


View looking northeast

Ground-Floor Retail
Main Building Entry
Vehicular/Service Access



Urban Design Framework



Tower Locations are outside the 250' height limit and respond to context scale and shadow studies

Respect for the Scale of the Stanford Mansion

Acceptable Locations for Service and Parking Access are along streets with lower traffic volumes, but may conflict with light rail and/or the tower locations

Project Focal Point along O Street at the transit stop is the prime orientation for building entrances, open space, and retail

Prime Street Frontage for retail and pedestrian activity is along O Street

Best Location for Service and Parking Access is along the street with lower traffic volumes and does not interfere with the light rail line

Best Location for Day Care provides easy pick-up and drop-off, more sunlight, a residential edge condition, and no interference with the light rail line

Existing Conditions

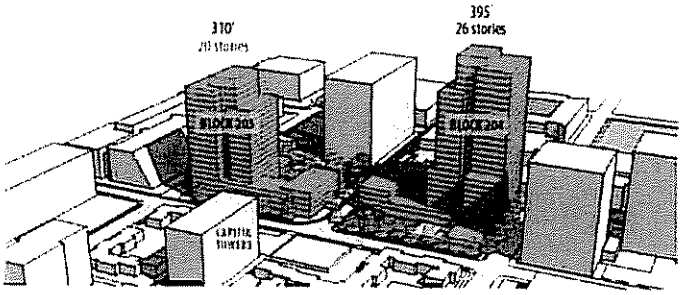
Blocks 203 and 204 are in a "transition zone" at the edge of the State office district, with larger-scaled office and commercial buildings to the north, east, and south and a lower-scaled residential complex (Capitol Towers) to the west. Site characteristics include the O Street pedestrian and transit corridor between the blocks, the historic Heilbron House on the northwest corner of Block 204, and the historic Stanford Mansion across 8th Street from the northeast corner of Block 203

View of

Alternative 2 *Blocks 203 & 204*

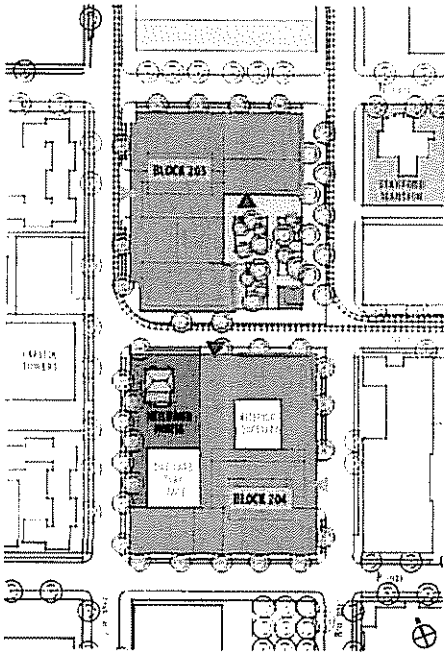
- A lightly-planted public plaza on Block 203 features a retail kiosk at the O Street transit stop
- The Heilbron House is retained and surrounded by low-rise buildings
- O Street is well defined by lower-rise buildings and the Heilbron House

The public plaza offers outdoor seating and retail.



View looking northeast

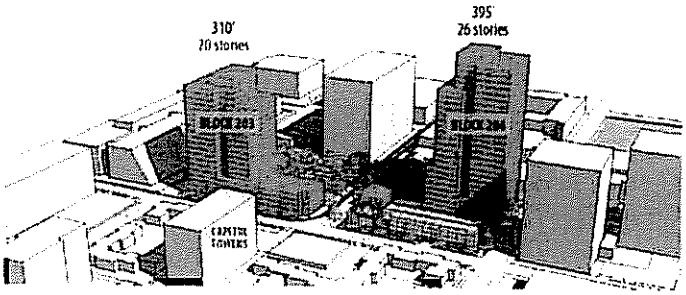
— Ground-Floor Retail
▶ Main Building Entry
» Vehicular/Service Access



Alternative 3 *Blocks 203 & 204*

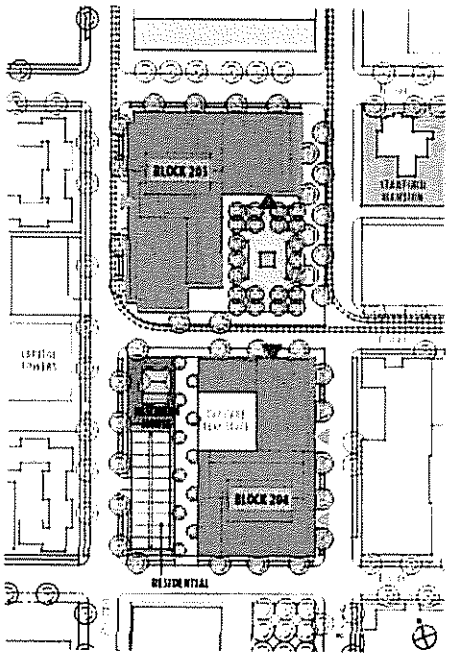
- Framed by buildings, a public plaza on Block 203 visually links the retained Heilbron House with the Stanford Mansion
- Housing is incorporated on 7th Street, adjacent to the Heilbron House and existing residential uses, and buffered from the new office complex by a pedestrian way

Heilbron House and Stanford Mansion are visually connected.



View looking northeast

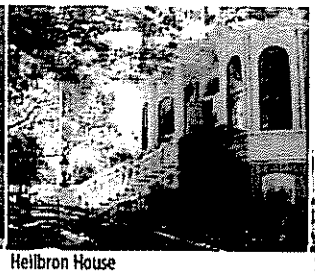
— Ground-Floor Retail
▶ Main Building Entry
» Vehicular/Service Access



View of Blocks 203 and 204 looking to the north

Capitol Towers residences on 7th Street

View down the O Street corridor looking east



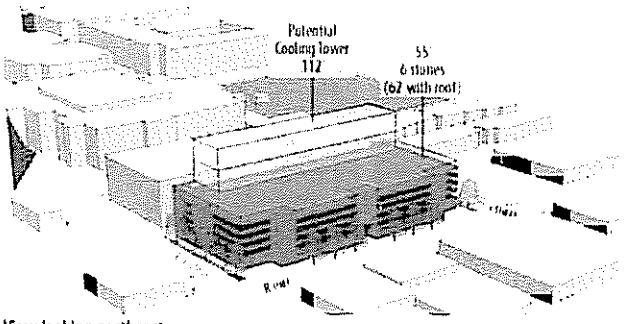
Heilbron House

Stanford Mansion

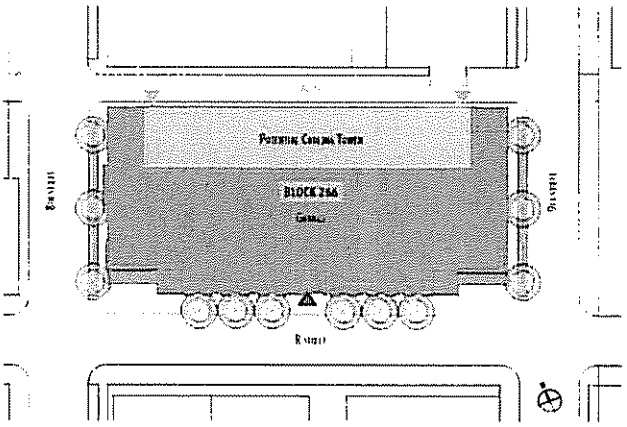
Alternative P1 Block 266

- Retail uses are incorporated into the ground floor of the 6-level structure on R Street
- Cooling towers could potentially be placed atop the structure, requiring a roof above the top parking level

Ground-floor retail and glass stairways punctuate the structure.



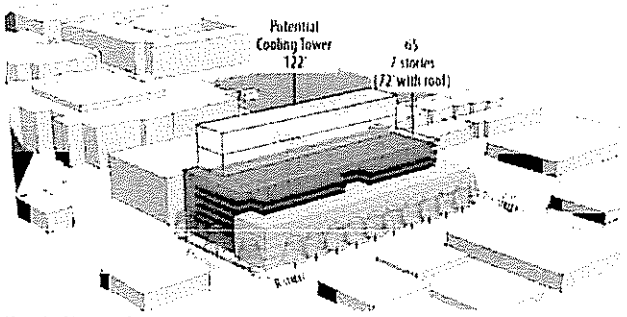
View looking northeast



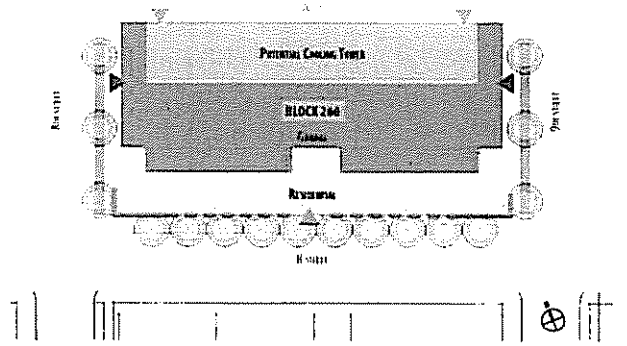
Alternative P2 Block 266

- Residential development and potential ground-floor retail uses line R Street
- A narrower parking facility footprint and increased parking program for the residential uses result in a higher profile (7 levels)

Housing and ground floor retail uses line R Street.

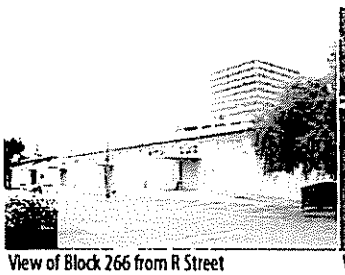


View looking northeast

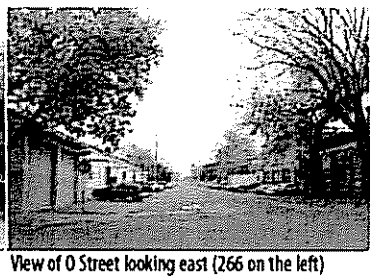


Existing Conditions

Block 266 is located in the R Street corridor of low-rise warehouse and commercial buildings. The area has an industrial feel, with entries and garage doors fronting the street and discontinuous sidewalks. City plans envision a transformation of the district into a new transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood.



View of Block 266 from R Street



View of O Street looking east (266 on the left)

For More Information

www.westsideprojects.com

Acknowledgements

Sasaki Associates, Inc. *Urban Design & Planning*
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The Hoyt Company *Public Outreach*

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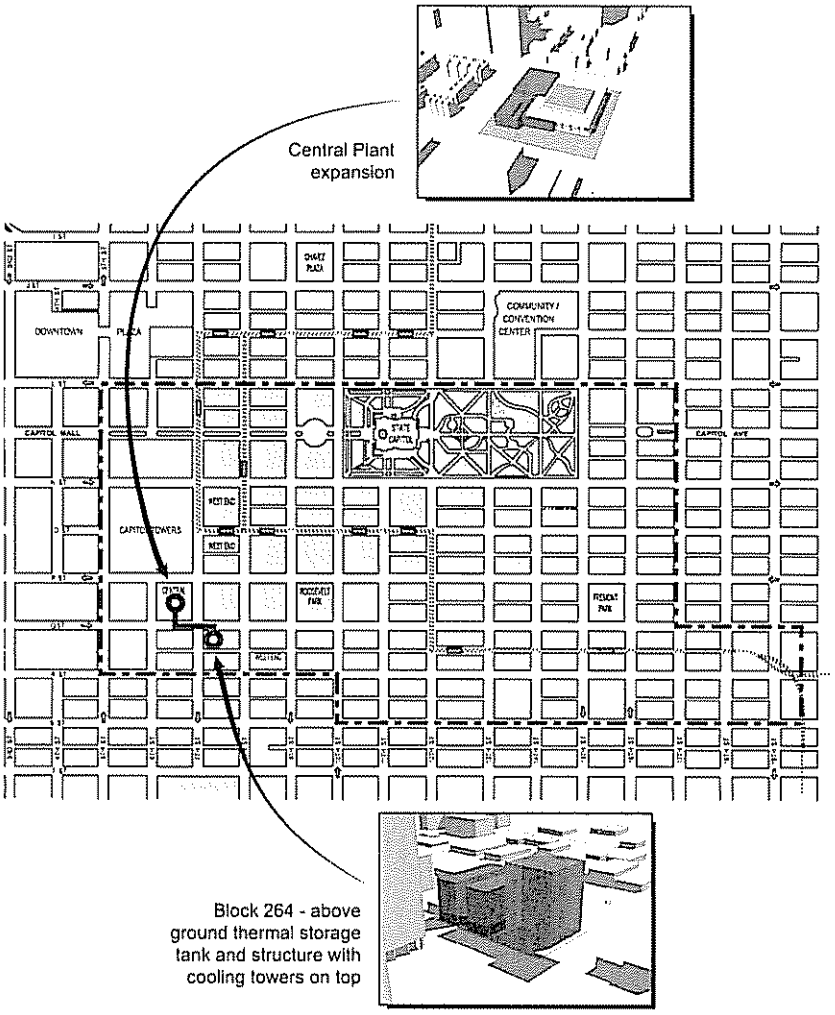
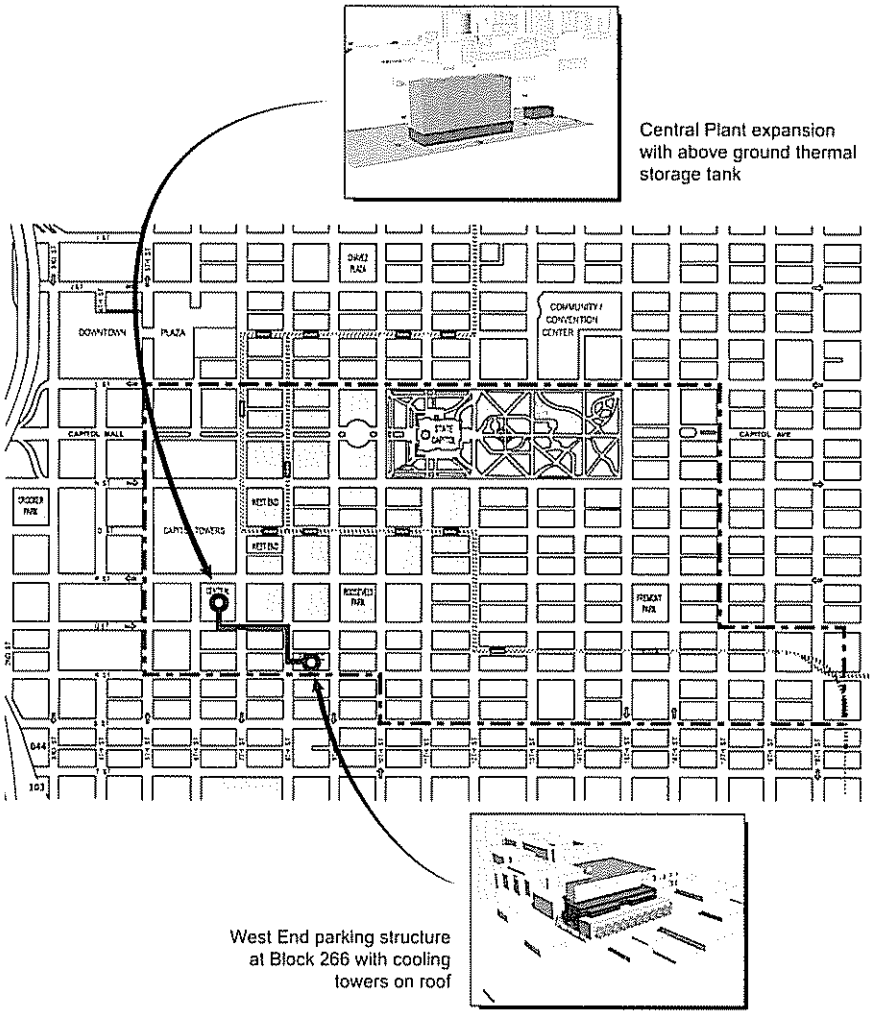
August 2005



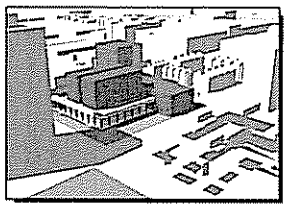
ALTERNATIVE 1

State of California Department of General Services EDAW Inc. Capital Engineering Consultants Inc.

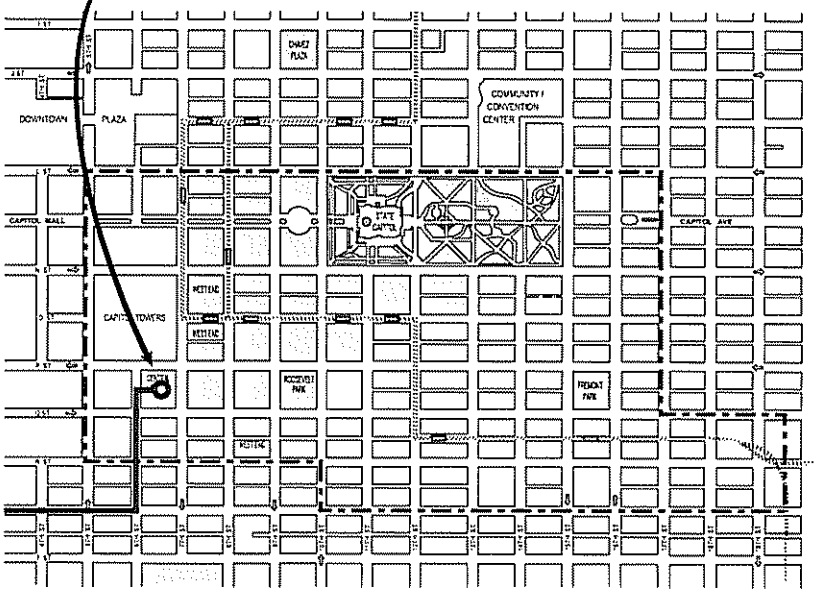


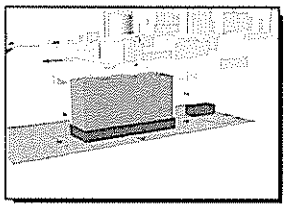
ALTERNATIVE 2

Planning Group



Central Plant expansion with above ground thermal storage tank and cooling towers





Ranney Well Site - with at-grade cooling towers

ALTERNATIVE 3