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centerpoint, iowa

neighborhood
analysis

by anderson engineering company, planning and engineering consultants, des moines iowa

Urban Planning Grant:
Project No. Iowa P-59:

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Prepared by:
ANDERSON ENGINEERING COMPANY

Donald A. Anderson, President
Donovan Macfarlane, Director of Planning
Bill Warren, Assistant Director of Planning
Arlyn Grussing, Associate Planner
Larry Jertson, Assistant Planner
Steve Miller, Assistant Planner
Ruth D. Hammer, Secretary
Judith Ann Henderson, Typist
John Bennett, Reproduction

Anderson Engineering Company

MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING
CITY & COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING
1440 INGERSOLL AVENUE

LAND SURVEYS
SITE PLANNING
DES MOINES, IOWA 50309

SITE SELECTION STUDIES
SUBDIVISION DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT
PHONE 288-4823

15 September 1969

Honorable Chairman, Loren T. Jenks
Members of the Town Council &
Members of the Town Plan & Zoning Commission
Town of Center Point
Center Point, Iowa

Gentlemen:

We are pleased to submit herewith this supplement to the Comprehensive Plan entitled "Neighborhood Analysis for Center Point, Iowa".

The report surveys Center Point's environmental qualities, such as economic, social and physical characteristics; analyzes possible neighborhoods; inventories existing community facilities; measures present deficiencies and future needs and recommends programs for community action to meet the present challenge.

We gratefully acknowledge the advice and cooperation rendered by the Town Plan and Zoning Commission, Town Council and Town Administrative Staff.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDERSON ENGINEERING COMPANY

Donald A. Anderson
Donald A. Anderson, President

DAA:jah

Superase
25% COTTON

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INTRODUCTION

The Neighborhood Analysis is a difficult concept to understand without a basic definition of neighborhood. The understanding of the word "neighborhood" as used throughout this report, is an area having homogenous social, economic and physical characteristics.

The Neighborhood Analysis is a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan. Similar to the Comprehensive Plan, the objective of the Neighborhood Analysis is to give the Town a workable program which would hopefully make the community a better place to live. This study is similar to the Comprehensive Plan in that it is concerned primarily with physical elements. The Comprehensive Plan is more concerned with physical land uses and location of facilities, while the Neighborhood Study involves building conditions. However, this study is secondarily developed around existing socio-economic phenomenon and how they affect the physical conditions.

All communities have problems with deterioration, and Center Point is no exception. A Neighborhood Analysis is a tool to locate and repair deteriorating areas and an attempt to stop additional deterioration; however, this is only possible with complete public and private support.

NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS SURVEY

The survey consists of 183 total interviews based on a random sample taken during September 25th through September 27, 1968; including 171 residential and twelve (12) business interviews, or approximately fifty (50) per cent of the 1960 total population. Confidential personal opinions and information have been utilized throughout this study; therefore, this survey will not be referred to on an individual basis. The information was averaged for each block in which there was at least one or more personal interviews; therefore, the results will only be given on a block-by-block basis.

In order to maintain more uniformity of thought, the information will be divided into three (3) categories:

1. Economic
2. Social, and
3. Physical characteristics

These categories were used because each indicates general characteristics for the establishment of neighborhoods within a community.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The two basic criteria for analyzing economic data in this study were income and employment. Therefore, survey data was consolidated into these two sub-categories. Results of the economic questionnaire are as follows:

1. Number of persons contributing to the family:

| <u>Employed persons per household</u> | <u>Number of families</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 71 |
| 2 | 51 |
| 3 | 2 |
| Social Security and Welfare benefits | 47 |

2. Persons employed:

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Husbands | 118 |
| Wives | 53 |
| Retired | 45 |

3. Employment Classification:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Laborer | 112 |
| Business and self-employed.. | 21 |
| Professional | 18 |
| Housekeeper and babysitter.. | 8 |
| Secretarial | 6 |
| Management | 5 |
| Salesman | 5 |
| Retail-trade | 3 |
| Aid to dependent children.... | 3 |

4. Location of Employment:

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Cedar Rapids | 98 |
| Center Point | 80 |
| Other | 3 |

5. Approximate yearly family income:

| <u>Income</u> | <u>Number of families</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| \$3,000 or less | 45 |
| \$3,000 to \$5,000 | 9 |
| \$5,000 to \$7,000 | 38 |
| \$7,000 to \$10,000 | 31 |
| Over \$10,000 | 35 |
| No response | 13 |

A higher than average number of households have more than one family member employed. This is partially due to Center Point's proximity to Cedar Rapids and its function as a bedroom town. The results of this data were mapped on a block-by-block basis and indicated no neighborhood patterns.

Number 4 on the previous page indicated more people living in Center Point work in Cedar Rapids than actually work in Center Point. This is another fact which exemplifies Center Point's position as a semi-suburban community.

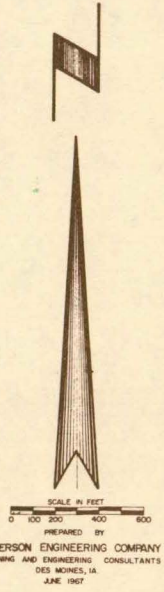
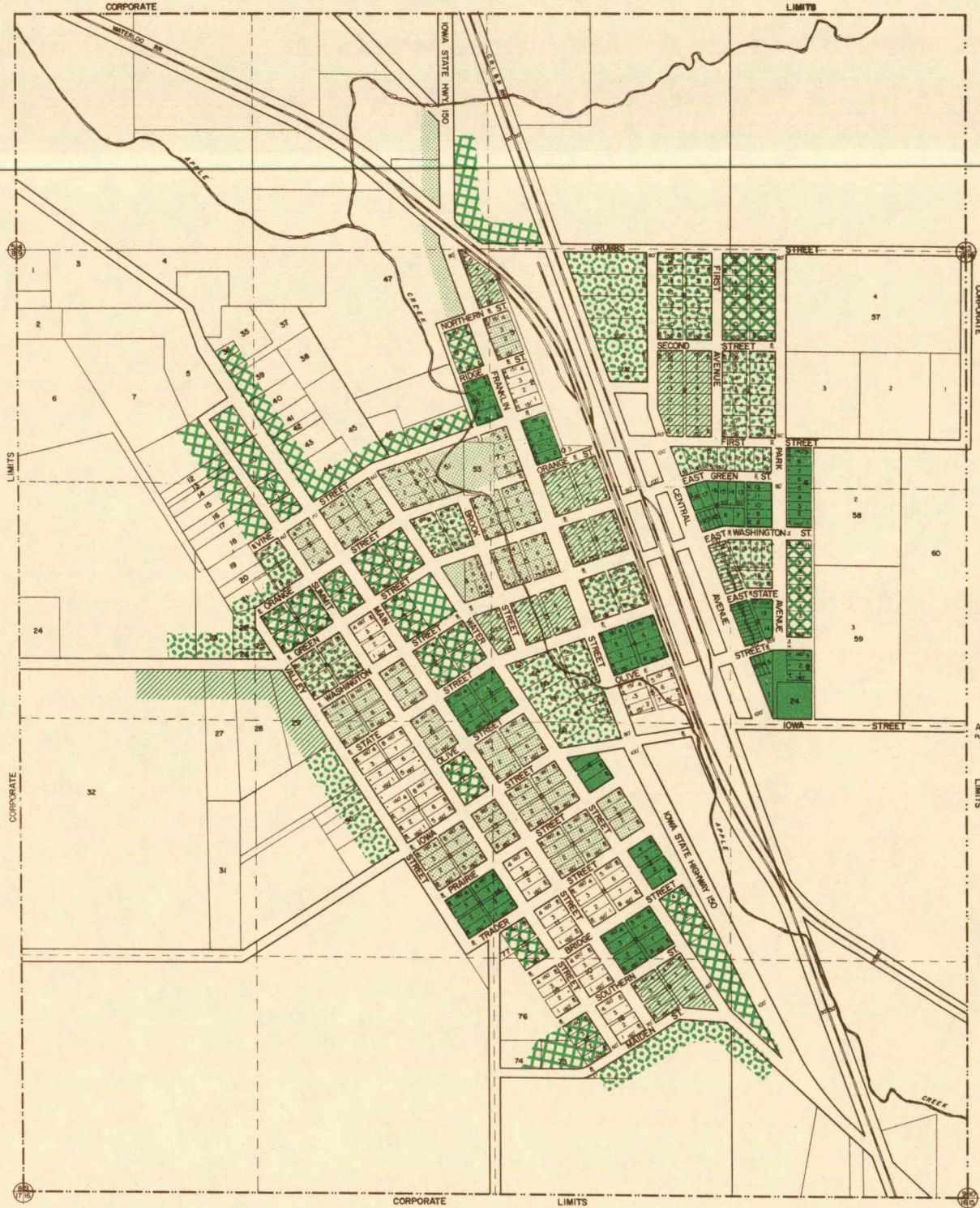
Family income is the most important economic factor in establishment of neighborhoods. This is due to our class system where higher income and lower income families tend to associate with their peers. It was anticipated that a block-by-block map of this information would tend to illustrate approximate neighborhoods. However, Map 1 shows no particular concentration of an income group in any one area of the town. With the varied incomes scattered homogeneously throughout the community, no neighborhood pattern is evident by using economic characteristics.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

In today's dynamic society, emphasis on social phenomenon is constantly increasing. It can be assumed that Center Point will follow this trend with social characteristics playing a more important role in the future development of specific neighborhoods. Due to the large scope of specific social characteristics, this category will be synthesized into two groupings:



1. Population characteristics, and
2. Public opinion.

TOWN OF CENTER POINT LINN COUNTY, IOWA



FAMILY INCOME

Legend

-  Under \$3,000
-  \$3,000 - \$4,500
-  \$4,500 - \$6,000
-  \$6,000 - \$8,000
-  Over \$8,000

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tion 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Individuals and families of similar characteristics have a tendency to socially associate with one another. Following this premise, the number of persons per household was mapped on a block-by-block basis. This map is included in this report as Map 2. The study of age distribution was also delineated; however, it was similar to Map 2 and was considered superfluous and not included in this report. The figure below illustrates the data received from the interviews and was used as a base to the information on Map 2.

1. Total number of persons in household:

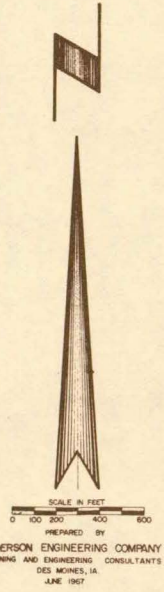
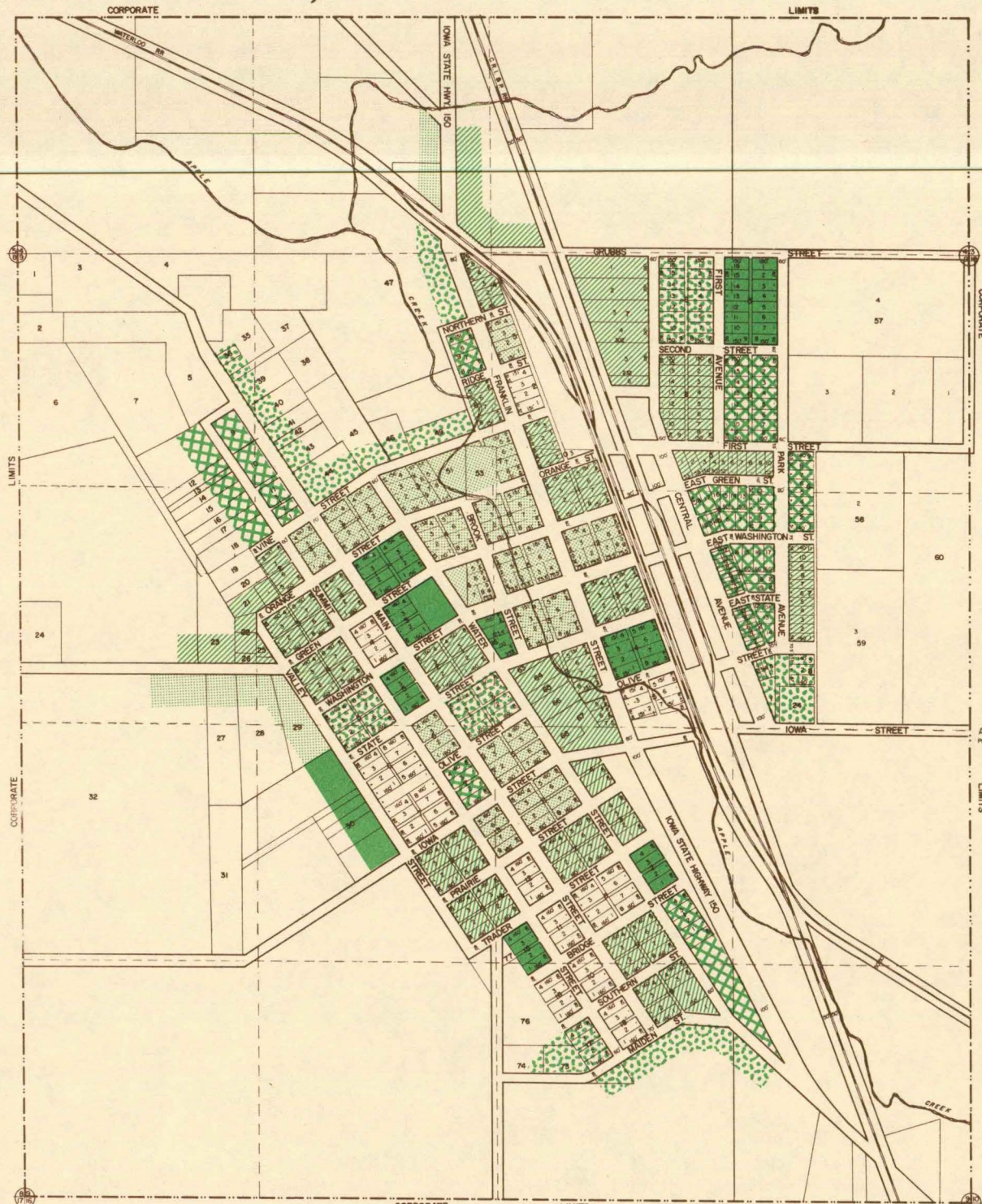
| | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | ..... | 29 |
| 2 | ..... | 41 |
| 3 | ..... | 37 |
| 4 | ..... | 30 |
| 5 | ..... | 18 |
| 6 | ..... | 10 |
| 7 | ..... | 2 |
| 8 | ..... | 2 |
| 9 | ..... | 2 |
| | | <hr/> |
| TOTAL | ..... | 171 |
| Average person/household | | 3.2 |

2. Age of persons:

| | | |
|-------|-------|----|
| 0-5 | ..... | 75 |
| 5-9 | ..... | 57 |
| 10-14 | ..... | 50 |
| 15-19 | ..... | 35 |
| 20-29 | | 84 |
| 30-39 | | 68 |
| 40-49 | | 43 |
| 50-59 | | 35 |
| 60-64 | | 25 |
| 64+ | | 69 |

TOWN OF CENTER POINT






LINN COUNTY, IOWA



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JUNE 1967

PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD

Legend

-  1.6 - 2.3
-  2.4 - 3.1
-  3.2 - 3.9
-  4.0 - 4.7
-  4.8 and over

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Map 2 shows the person per household of those families interviewed and at a glance it appears to give no indication of any neighborhoods. This can indicate, however, the possibility of the whole Town being just one neighborhood. In the comparison of Map 1 with Map 2, there is very little similarity which indicates the entire community is a diversified entity.

PUBLIC OPINION

When a common opinion is felt by a body of individuals living in a certain area, this could be called a neighborhood. Therefore, when the survey was taken, several opinion questions were asked and the results are as follows:

1. Number of years living in the community:

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Under 1 year | 8 |
| 1 to 3 years | 35 |
| 4 to 7 years | 21 |
| 8 to 15 years | 20 |
| 15 and over | 87 |

2. Would you support low-rent housing in your community:

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Yes | 106 |
| No | 43 |
| No reply | 22 |

3. Reasons for not supporting low-rent housing in the community:

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Detrimental to community . | 7 |
| Don't believe in it..... | 5 |
| No need | 18 |
| Increase taxes | 8 |
| No response | 9 |

4. Would you live in low-rent housing if it is available:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Yes | 69 |
| No | 95 |
| No reply | 7 |

5. Reasons against low-rent housing:

| | |
|--|----|
| Own home or would rather have home . . . | 70 |
| No need | 19 |
| Not unless they have to | 3 |
| Good for old people | 3 |
| Many reasons | 3 |

6. Do you feel you live in a separate neighborhood:

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Yes | 35 |
| No | 130 |
| No reply | 6 |

7. Do you feel the community has different neighborhoods:

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Yes | 33 |
| No | 128 |
| No reply | 10 |

8. Do these neighborhoods have different social levels or distinctions:

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Yes | 33 |
| No | 128 |
| No reply | 10 |

9. Do you consider the neighborhood as:

| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>No Reply</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| a.] Socially divided into classes | 25 | 137 | 9 |
| b.] Income divided into income levels | 19 | 143 | 9 |
| c.] Divided into religious groups | 27 | 135 | 9 |
| d.] Divided by National origin | 3 | 159 | 9 |
| e.] Divided by local origin | 17 | 145 | 9 |

The question of how long the individual has lived in Center Point is to determine the reliability of the sources. With 50.8% of individuals living in the community over fifteen years, a definite idea of the long-term problems is visualized. However, it is necessary to have opinions from persons living in the community a short time to reflect problems of more recent nature not realized by the more established citizenry. Therefore, the source seems very reliable and illustrates a good random sample was obtained.

The questions pertaining to the support of low-rent housing were basically affirmative. Of the persons interviewed, 62 per cent were in favor of this type of housing, while approximately 25 per cent were opposed. However, 40.4 per cent of the persons interviewed would consider living in such housing while 55.5 per cent would not. This large percentage of persons willing to move into low-rent housing suggests a present need for such facilities. A large percentage of those persons not willing to move into low-rent housing are home owners.

Only 20.5 per cent of the interviewed felt they lived in a separate neighborhood, while 76 per cent responded they do not live in a separate neighborhood. Questions 7, 8, and 9 on the preceding page indicates a high percentage of approximately 70 per cent of the interviewed persons feel that separate neighborhoods do not exist in Center Point.

Analysis of these opinion questions indicated people living in all sections of Center Point feel neighborhoods do not exist. Therefore, the conclusion of the social characteristics indicates the whole Town of Center Point is one neighborhood, which is the same conclusion found in analyzing the economic characteristics.

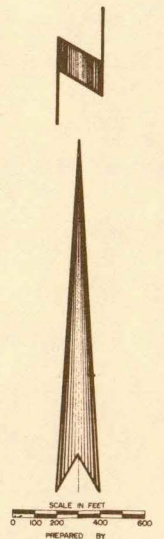
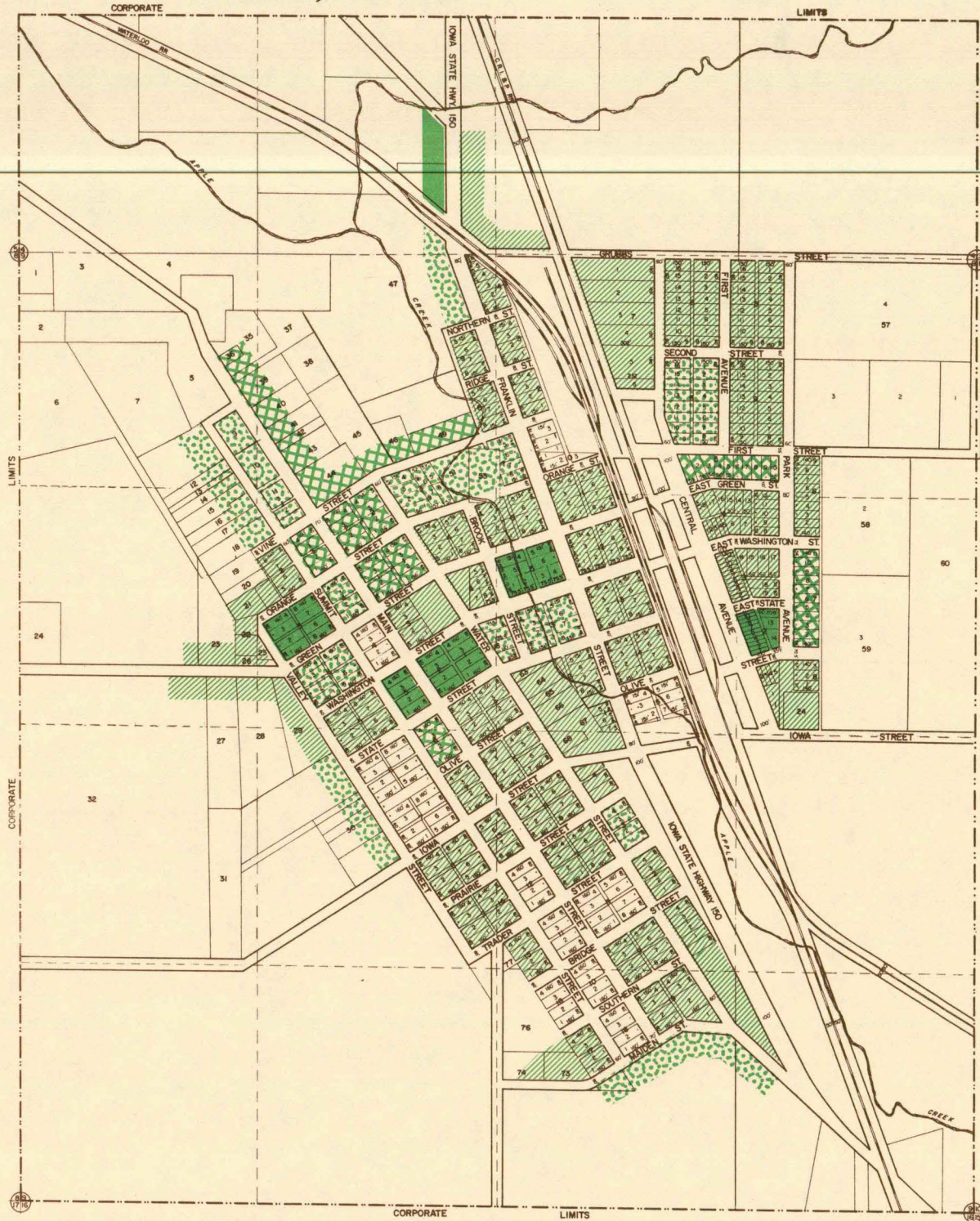
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Physical characteristics used in determining neighborhoods are the relief of the topography, water courses, condition of buildings, age of buildings, public and private community facilities, etc. Within Center Point the only natural geographic feature that would tend to indicate possible neighborhoods would be Apple Creek. However, the social and economic factors are generally similar on either side of the Creek. Therefore, the creek does not divide the Town into separate neighborhoods.

The building conditions within Center Point vary from excellent condition to delapidation. These characteristics are illustrated on Map 3. It is apparent from this map that no definite neighborhood pattern exists. However, the Northwestern area of Town tends to have more housing in need of repair; therefore, Map 4, AGE OF HOUSING, was included. In comparing Maps 3 and 4, the newer housing generally is in better condition and the older housing is generally in need of more repair. Map 4 also indicates there is no neighborhood. Therefore, it is summarized that Center Point does not have separate neighborhoods, but the whole Town is one single neighborhood.

The overall condition of housing throughout the community is good. Partial reason for this is that home ownership is very high in Center Point. When families own their home they tend to take pride in possession and keep the dwelling in good repair.

TOWN OF CENTER POINT LINN COUNTY, IOWA



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JUNE 1967

CONDITION OF HOUSING

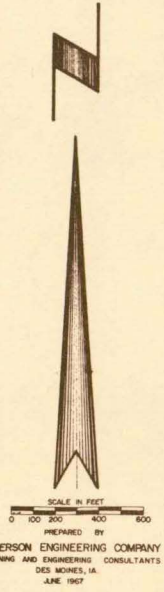
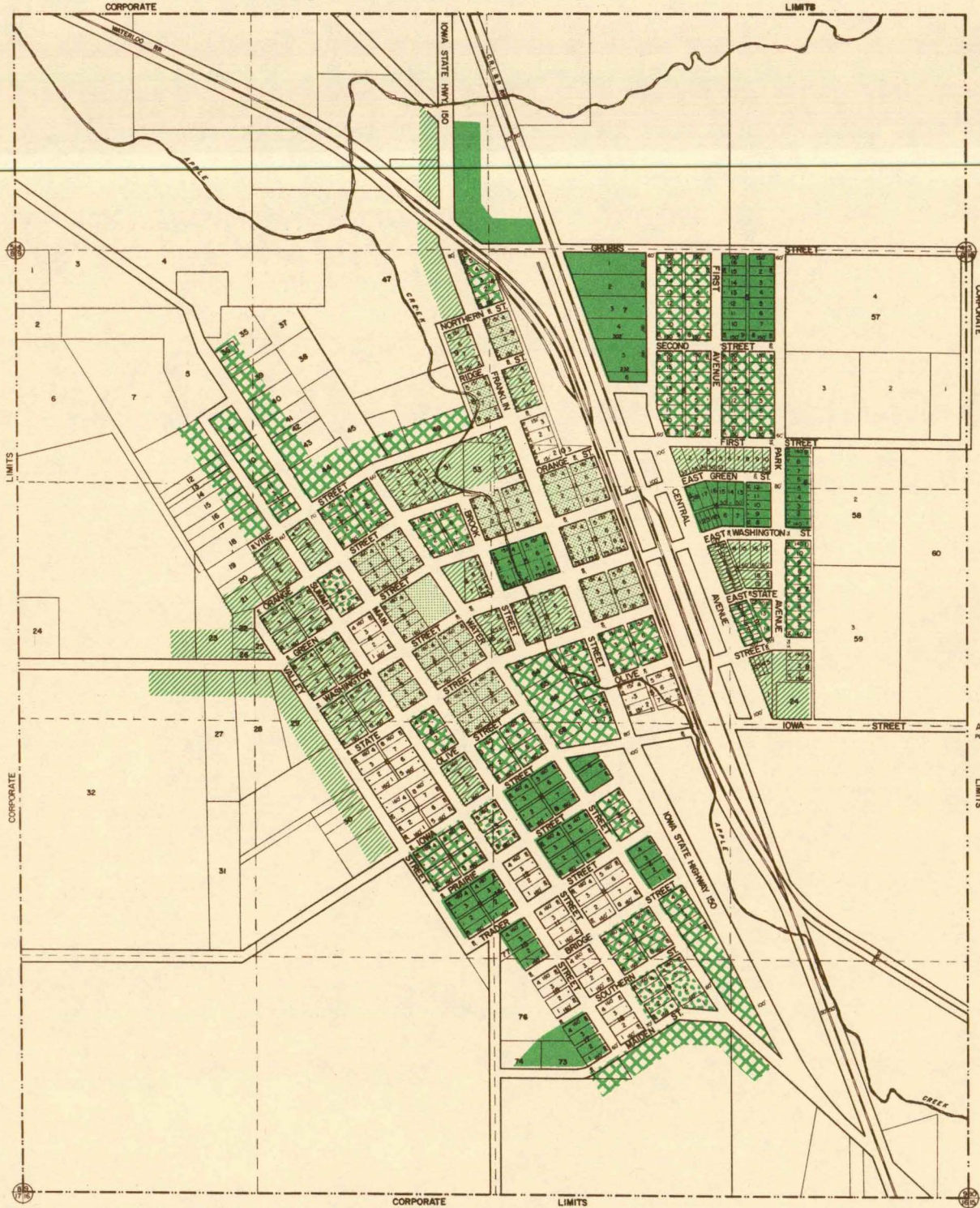
Legend

-  Excellent
-  Good
-  Fair
-  Need Repair

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TOWN OF CENTER POINT LINN COUNTY, IOWA



AGE OF DWELLING UNIT

Legend

-  Before 1920
-  1920 - 1930
-  1930 - 1940
-  1940 - 1950
-  After 1950

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The following tabulations are derived from the residential interviews and were used as the source of information for Maps 3 and 4:

Number who own or rent present dwelling:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Own | 142 |
| Rent | 26 |
| Other | 3 |

Type home constructed:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Frame | 163 |
| Brick | 2 |
| Other | 1 block; 5 trailers |

Age of structure constructed in:

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Before 1900 | 49 |
| 1900-1920 | 33 |
| 1920-1930 | 7 |
| 1930-1940 | 6 |
| 1940-1950 | 10 |
| 1950-1960 | 26 |
| 1960-present | 40 |

Does dwelling have:

| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Bathroom | 170 | 1 |
| Cold water | 171 | 0 |
| Hot water | 165 | 6 |
| Modern heater | 148 | 23 |
| Air conditioning | 47 | 124 |
| Television | 165 | 6 |
| Garage | 125 | 46 |

Does house appear in good condition:

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 141 |
| No | 30 |

Are grounds in good condition:

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 148 |
| No | 23 |

How does house compare to adjacent structures?

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Better | 30 |
| Equal | 106 |
| Poorer | 35 |

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The public, semi-public and private community facilities within Center Point would tend to have a pronounced effect on specific neighborhoods. These facilities are illustrated on Map 5.

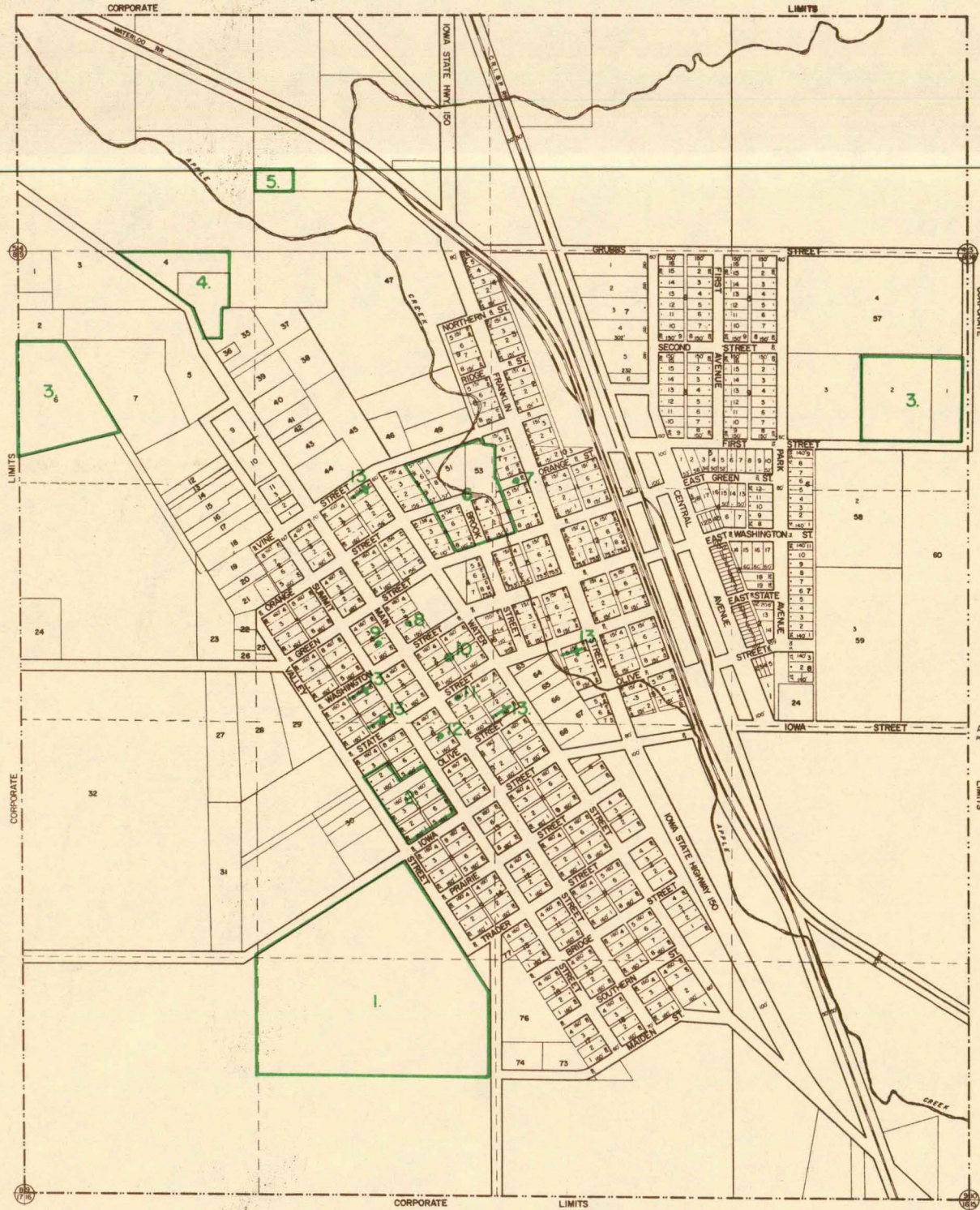
The largest and most highly used community facility is the school and athletic field. In many neighborhood studies, the elementary school is considered the focal point of the whole neighborhoods. Therefore, considering this concept, all of Center Point along with the surrounding rural area, would constitute one single neighborhood. However, there would be distinct social and economic differences between the rural population and the local citizenry. Thus, the Town of Center Point would make up one neighborhood excluding the rural areas adjacent to the present corporate limits.

Neighborhood parks are also used as a criterion for neighborhoods; however, with only one existing park, the Town is presently not divided neighborhood park areas. In the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood park areas have been suggested; however, it is still too early in the development stage to have established separate neighborhoods. Eventually, neighborhoods could develop, but at this time, it would only be conjecture and not established fact.

Other semi-public and private facilities are primarily located near the Central Business District. From the questionnaire utilized in this study, no affirmative response was received when citizens were asked if organizations such as churches, local groups, etc. divided the community into neighborhoods.

TOWN OF CENTER POINT

LINN COUNTY, IOWA



SCALE IN FEET
0 100 200 300 400 500 600

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. School Playground | 7. Fire Station |
| 2. School | 8. Masonic Lodge |
| 3. Proposed Park | 9. Post Office |
| 4. Cemetery | 10. Water Tower |
| 5. Sewage Treatment Plant | 11. Nursing Home |
| 6. City Park | 12. American Legion |
| | 13. Church |

CHARACTERISTICS OF BLIGHT

The Neighborhood Analysis, a survey of structural and environmental quality, provides the necessary information for identifying renewal areas. This type of land study serves to locate what is felt to be deterioration or the existence of deficiencies in the quality of structures and their immediate environment. Even though Center Point is not considered an urban area, blight still exists in an elemental form

Blight may be present in four basic forms. Each of these forms, economic, social, physical or aesthetic, and integrated forms have very complex cases and effects.

These basic forms of blight may constitute either simple or complex blight, depending upon the degree of deficiency and the relationship with other community aspects. Simple blight includes such physical characteristics as structural deterioration, presence of trash or rubbish in yards, sanitation facility deficiencies, adverse environmental qualities such as dust, noise, odor, etc., missing community facilities, and adequate public improvements. Complex blight includes the above symptoms of simple blight plus various deficiencies in the community (urban) framework such as incompatible land uses, poor design of facilities and unhealthy environmental conditions.

URBAN RENEWAL

The attack taken against blight rests upon the conditions in the town and the extent of the problem. The various forms of blight, once studied, designate the general approach and public action required.

A community must direct its attack at the desired areas; therefore, a preliminary result of the analysis is the delineation of the "treatment areas".

A blighted area will be classified into one of three types of treatment areas.

~~These broad categories are the redevelopment area, rehabilitation area~~
and the conservation area. The redevelopment area, the first type, is an area in which urban blight has progressed to such a degree that nothing short of clearance is advisable. Such an area would include both simple and complex forms of blight. The rehabilitation area would include only simple forms of blight. It is considered that various rehabilitation measures will be sufficient to restore the area to standard condition. The third type of treatment area, the conservation area, is actually a "control" area in which the facilities are near standard condition and it is felt that measures should be taken mainly to guard against future deterioration. This area is characterized primarily by existing conditions conducive to blight.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS

A complete and firmly founded understanding of the complex aspects of cause and effect relations has not yet been attained. Federally supported research programs of today are geared to all facets of blight to aid in indentifying the actual problems and proper corrective measures.

An understanding of the direct and indirect causes of blight is desired for formulating a Community Action Program that will curb the growth and development of blight.

Every community has its own unique setting of social, economic and physical characteristics which mold it into its present land use neighborhood, and growth patterns. Therefore, the physical and social elements, particularly those involved in the formation and growth of the deteriorating districts, are different for each community.

The economic and social forces in Center Point which have historically provided the impetus for growth, mainly the railroads and Center Point's close proximity to Cedar Rapids, must also be considered as primary underlying causes of blight. The Town of Center Point has historically served as a rural service center, but is growing into a suburban-residential center. This growth in population has brought forth new demands for growth and improvement of the local economy and various public amenities.

The automobile has influenced life in Center Point more than in many other Iowa towns of similar size. The fact that over half of the employed persons living in Center Point work in Cedar Rapids illustrates the local dependence upon the automobile.

Although Center Point's location is advantageous in many respects, it also has developed problems for the town. For, there is a substantial business loss resulting to the local community. As local businesses suffer so does the tax base and the financial support for public improvement programs. The population projections for Center Point, however, indicate a favorable local business outlook. The resulting economies of scale should begin to attract business to Center Point somewhat as they have attracted enterprise to other growing suburbs.

The provision of public facilities among other thing, illustrates the spirit, leadership and desire for improvement within the local citizenry.

The aesthetic environment indirectly effects the social patterns and, indeed, the entire living patterns of the local residents. The absense of adequate facilities such as off-street parking and curb and gutter directly contributes to any existing appearance of blight.

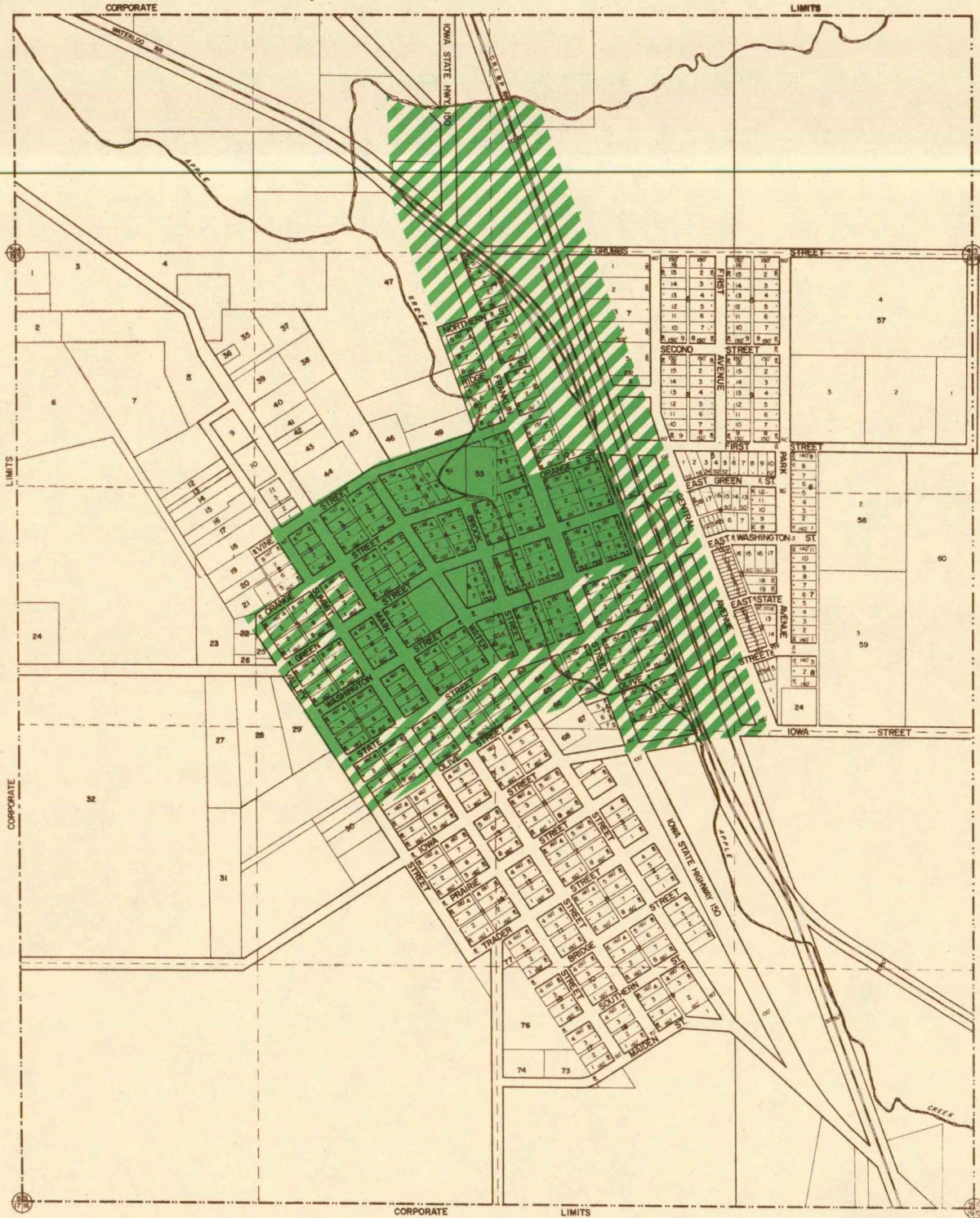
Many of the physical causes of blight are inherent to the Town of Center Point. Such is the case of topography. The local terrain has directed development within Center Point ever since the first building was constructed and the original settlers chose their building site. The drainage area adjacent to Apple Creek is located within those areas designated for treatment on Map 6.

TREATMENT AREAS

Numerous terms used in this discussion, such as blight, urban renewal, treatment areas, redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation, have various connotations which may generate unwarranted concern among Center Point residents. It is hoped that they will be understood in the proper perspective, for these terms project differing meanings in use from one community to another.

The neighborhood survey has indicated no justifiable delineation of Center Point into more than one "neighborhood". The survey did, however, indicate areas within the Town which projected various symtoms of blight. Map 6, on the following page, illustrates the areas toward which programs of community action should be directed. Three types of treatment areas have been previously discussed, therefore, we shall not again define them in detail.



TOWN OF CENTER POINT LINN COUNTY, IOWA



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TREATMENT AREAS

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- Legend**
-  Conservation Area
 -  Rehabilitation Area

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As illustrated on Map 6, two types of treatment areas have been established for Center Point. The rehabilitation area covers the general central section of Center Point. Blighted conditions in this area are present in simple forms only and the overall degree of blight has progressed only to the point of requiring various rehabilitation measures. Such measures would include provision of community facilities, spot condemnation of buildings, enforced building repairs and a community campaign for voluntary painting and clean-up projects.

This rehabilitation area includes many of Center Point's public structures, the Central Business District and the Wakema Park. A local business survey was conducted within this area. A partial listing of the findings follows:

1. Approximately two-thirds of the businesses operate within rented structures.
2. Half of the structures were listed as being in poor condition.
3. Two-thirds of the buildings were constructed around 1900.
4. Most businesses are supplied with a bathroom, cold and hot water and modern heating facilities.
5. Nearly one-half of the business establishments provide air conditioning.
6. A minimum number of off-street parking places are provided.
7. Most businessmen support low-rent housing.

The conservation area, or "Control" area, borders the rehabilitation area and includes property adjacent the railroad facilities. This area was found to contain limited characteristics of blight. The area should be protected from any further decline in building condition through local campaigns and strict enforcement of the existing codes and ordinances.

GUIDES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

The neighborhood analysis is a means of determining the location and extent of blight in a community. It is to be used as a guide for community action, along with Center Point's Comprehensive Plan and various ordinances. A neighborhood analysis should not be initially studied and then shelved, never to be used again, but should continue to portray the physical conditions of the Town. This requires a constant process of review.

Programs initiated within the treatment areas should follow the Comprehensive Plan of Center Point and hold the well-being of the Town foremost.

The community must have the interest and support of its civic leaders for project initiation. Equally important is acquiring the support of the entire local citizenry. Success depends upon the establishment of a working partnership between government (all levels involved) and private parties. Satisfactory execution of the project will involve private entrepreneurs and developers. It is important that private capital be attracted to local community projects. The land writedown was provided as an incentive to developers as a type of compensation for the financial risk involved. Local developers should be attracted to the project through various incentives if a future "renewal" program in Center Point includes land redevelopment.

The following is a list of recommendations, general and specific, for guidance of community improvement programs:

1. Low rent housing projects should be approached from two directions. First, efforts may be directed toward increasing the number of adequate housing units available. Secondly,

efforts should be made to improve the occupants' ability to pay for better housing.

2. Efforts of the community should be comprehensive and not oriented solely towards specific projects.

3. Local government officials should initiate citizen committees within the areas of concern. Such neighborhood conservation groups are essential factors in creating interest and a coordinated desire for improvement.

4. Local or regional businesses, banks, interested citizens, etc., could be approached to lend money for neighborhood or Central Business District improvement projects.

5. An attempt should be made to provide additional improvements in Wakema Park, the Linx County facility within the designated rehabilitation area.

6. A Capital Improvements Program listing the public improvements proposed for construction during the next five years, by priorities, should be prepared. Special attention should be given to blighted areas when assigning these priorities.

7. The Comprehensive Plan and the Neighborhood Analysis should be used as guides for establishing improvement programs and their priorities.

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