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## The Las Vegas Fremont Street experience: A new tourist destination to revitalize a declining downtown

Yihong Liu

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

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THE LAS VEGAS FREMONT STREET EXPERIENCE  
— A NEW TOURIST DESTINATION TO REVITALIZE  
A DECLINING DOWNTOWN

By

Yihong Liu

Bachelor of Architecture  
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China  
July, 1993

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of

**Master of Architecture**

School of Architecture  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
May 1998

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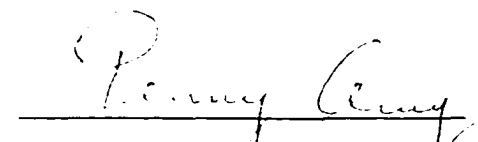
Fremont Street Experience - A New Tourist Destination

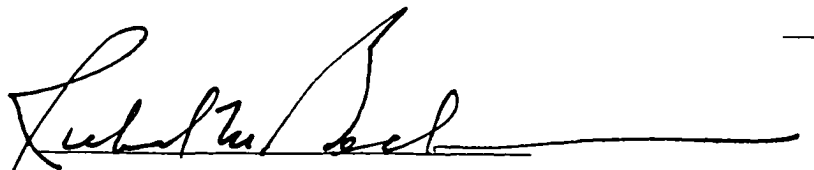
to Revitalize A Declining Downtown

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Fremont Street Experience - A New Tourist Destination to Revitalize A Declining Downtown**

by

Yihong Liu

Mr. Michael Alcorn, Examination Committee Chair  
Director of School of Architecture  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Downtown Las Vegas, the old city center, represents the history, culture, and heritage of Las Vegas. Casino Core is a district whose function as a planned casino, hotel and entertainment district in the heart of Downtown Las Vegas. With the development of Las Vegas as an international entertainment center, the old city center declined. In order to revitalize the declined downtown, the Fremont Street Experience, a project of public-private partnership between City of Las Vegas and the Fremont Street Experience Company, was implemented to try to attract tourists down to downtown area and compete with casinos along the Las Vegas Boulevard. With the addition of the Fremont Street Experience (described below), this area came together as a compact, interactive and intense pedestrian oriented casino, hotel and entertainment environment, incorporating restaurant, special gift shop and supporting entertainment uses along Fremont Street, with continuous active frontage from one end to the other. The design of the project transformed the idea of pedestrian shopping mall into an urban theater and made downtown a complete resort destination and a must-see attraction.

This paper verifies the success of the Fremont Street Experience as an tourist destination project and an initial project to revitalize the old downtown Las Vegas, and at the same time, evaluates the influence of technical show in making the attraction for the revitalization of the declined downtown.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Downtown Las Vegas, the old city center, represents the history, culture, and heritage of Las Vegas. Casino Core is a district whose function as a planned casino, hotel and entertainment district in the heart of Downtown Las Vegas. With the development of Las Vegas as an international entertainment center, the old city center declined. In order to revitalize the declined downtown, the Fremont Street Experience, a project of public-private partnership between City of Las Vegas and the Fremont Street Experience Company, was implemented to try to attract tourists down to downtown area and compete with casinos along the Las Vegas Boulevard. With the addition of the Fremont Street Experience (described below), this area came together as a compact, interactive and concentrated pedestrian oriented casino, hotel and entertainment environment, incorporating restaurant, special gift shop and supporting entertainment uses along Fremont Street, with continuous active frontage from one end to the other. (From The Trkla Redevelopment Plan)<sup>1</sup>. The design of the project transformed the idea of pedestrian shopping mall into an urban theater and made downtown a complete resort destination and a must-see attraction.

This paper verifies the success of the Fremont Street Experience as an tourist desti-

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<sup>1</sup> Trkla Redevelopment Plan. April 1995, Report No. 1, Background Analysis, Introduction, P.3.

nation project and an initial project to revitalize the old downtown Las Vegas, and at the same time, evaluates the influence of technical show in making the attraction for the revitalization of the declined downtown.

### **Introduction of Fremont Street Experience**

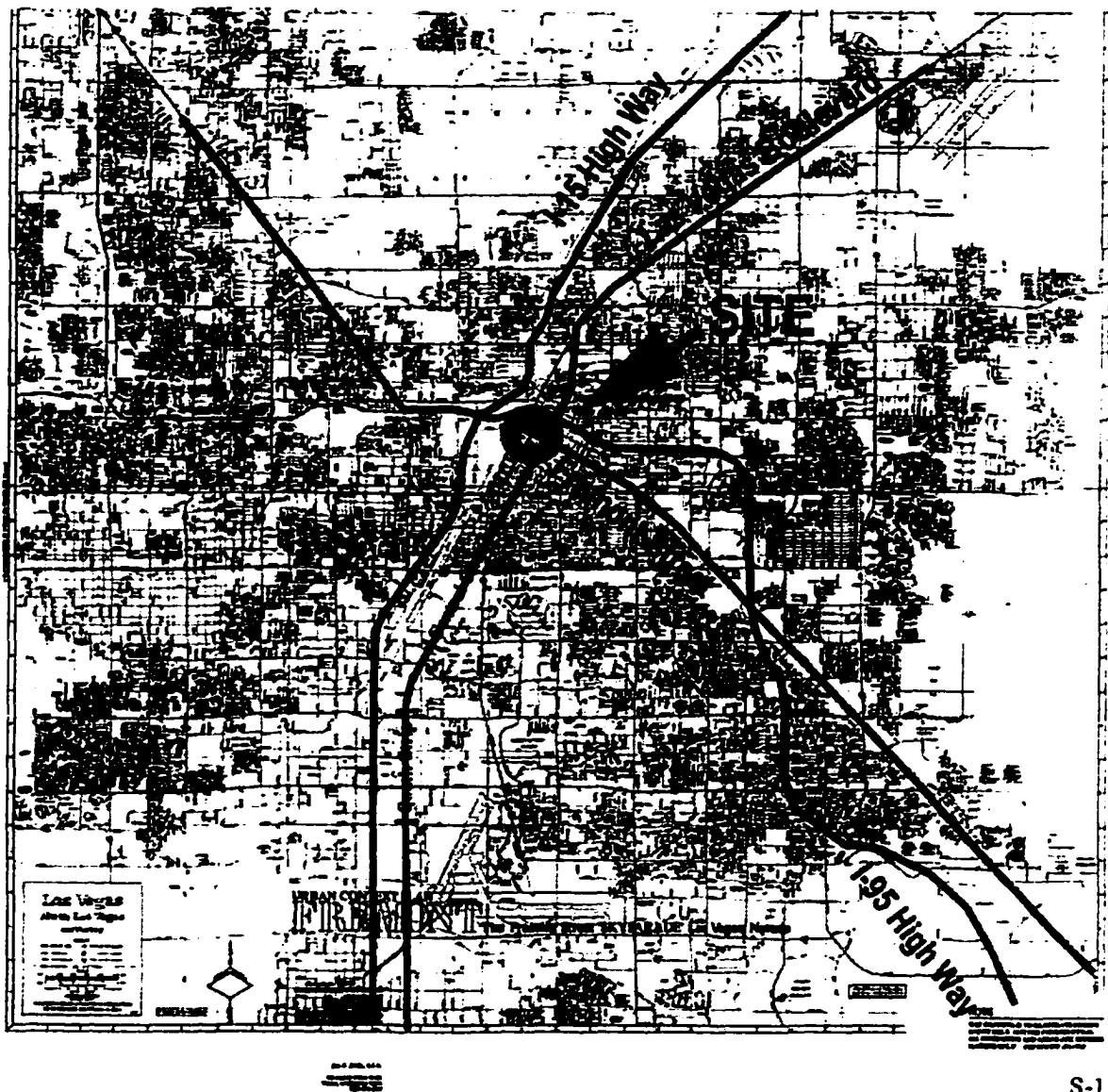
#### **Space Plan of the Fremont Street Experience**

Beginning with the very birth of the city of Las Vegas in 1905, Fremont Street has been the site of many milestones in the history of Las Vegas and gaming. After decade's development, Fremont Street changed dramatically from small roadside gambling halls into the diverse gaming resorts that now stretch along the street. Under the shadow of the development along the Las Vegas Boulevard, the old Fremont Street lost its shines.

Striving to continue evolution and to keep the street vibrant and alive, eight owners of ten downtown hotel-casinos in October 1993 united to form the Fremont Street Experience Company. The Project is a public-private partnership between the City of Las Vegas and the Fremont Street Experience Company. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority also made a substantial contribution to the project. They invested \$ 70 million into the Fremont Street Experience.

From Main Street to Las Vegas Boulevard, the street was closed to make way for this project, which enhanced the neon lights for which Fremont Street is famous, and created a place where people can enjoy the nice pedestrian environment and light and sound shows at night. The car transportation was restricted into two one way access to go through this area, and connected downtown and I-15 highway.

In the plan, five blocks from Main Street to Las Vegas Boulevard were transformed into a pedestrian environment. The street became an interactive place for people. Landscaping and patterned paving formed the serpentine paths to encourage visitors to stroll in this unique half-open space.



**Figure 1** Vincinty Map of the Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report. Volume 1.)

As visitor stroll through the pedestrian mall, their eyes are drawn to the sky where overhead spans the space frame. With a depth of five feet and curved radius of 44 feet, the space frame towers 90 feet above the four blocks of Fremont Street, and made a clear definition to the entire volume of the space<sup>2</sup>. The space frame connected the whole street to-

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<sup>2</sup>Fremont Street Experience Brochure: Fremont Street Experience Light and Sound Show, A Modern Technological Marvel, P. 1.

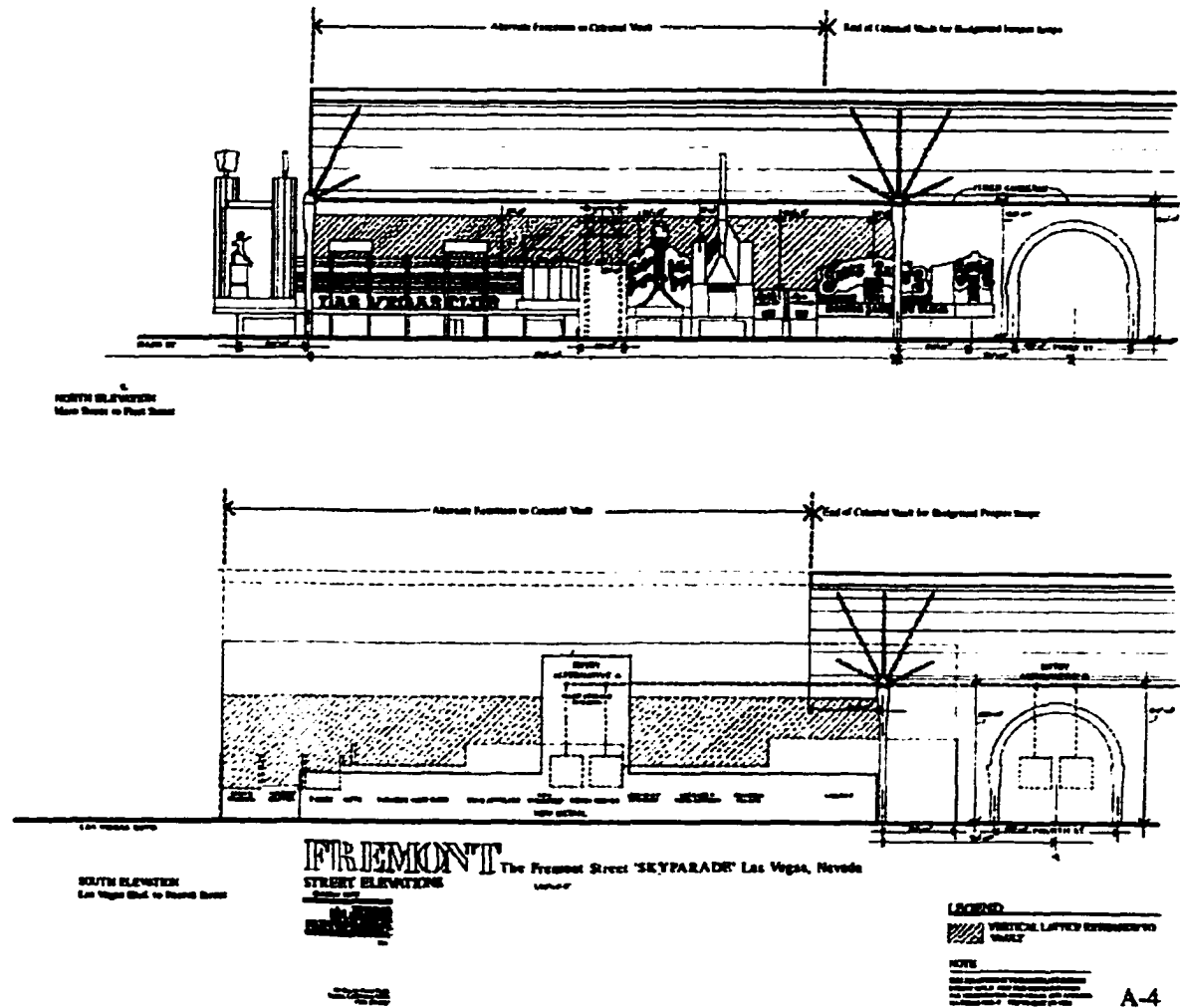




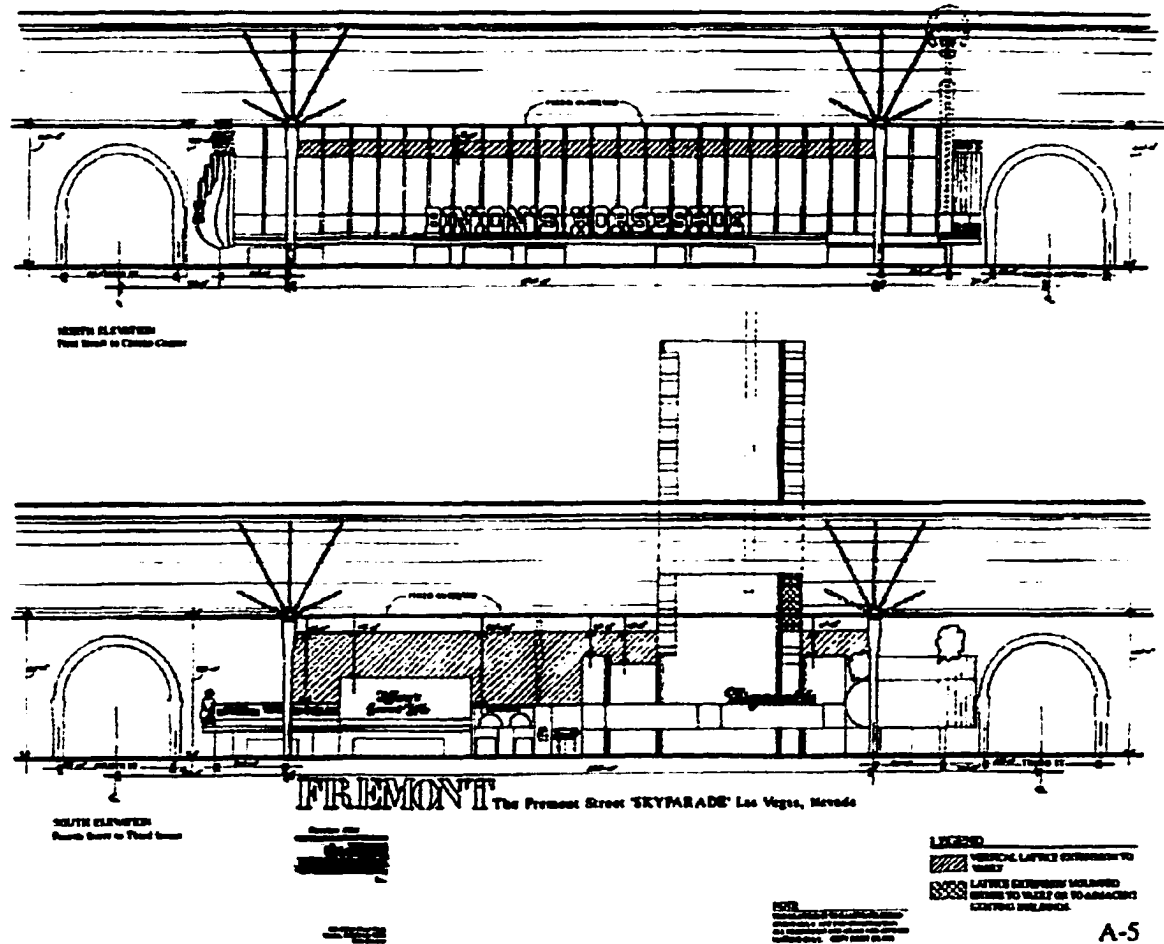
**Figure 2** Plan of Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report, Volume 1.)

gether and unified the different casinos into one major attraction in the downtown area. In addition to providing shade from the harsh Las Vegas sun, the space frame is the Fremont Street Experience's signature attraction.

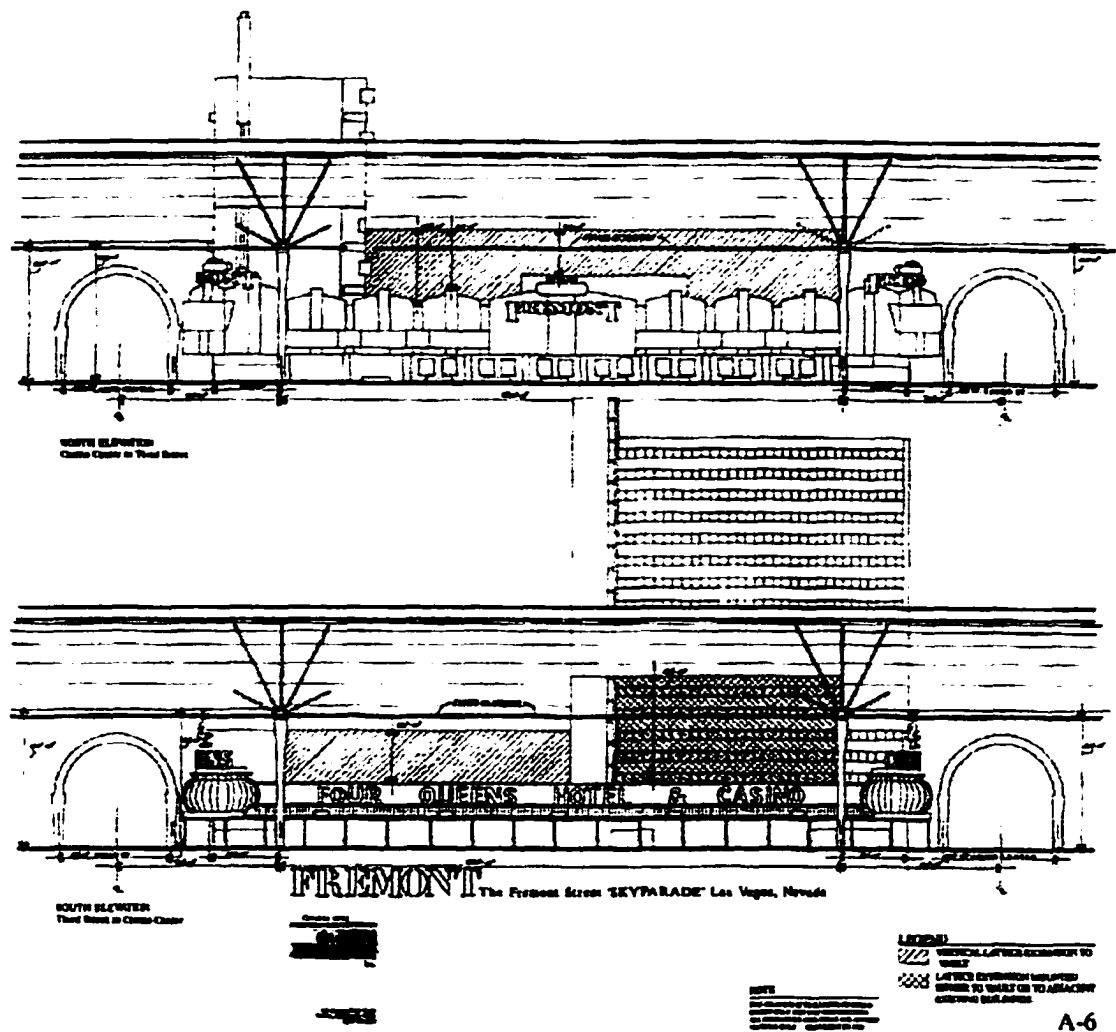
The façade along these five blocks was also improved to support the place making of Fremont Street Experience. Historic signs are protected and restored to keep the cultural continuity of the downtown Las Vegas.



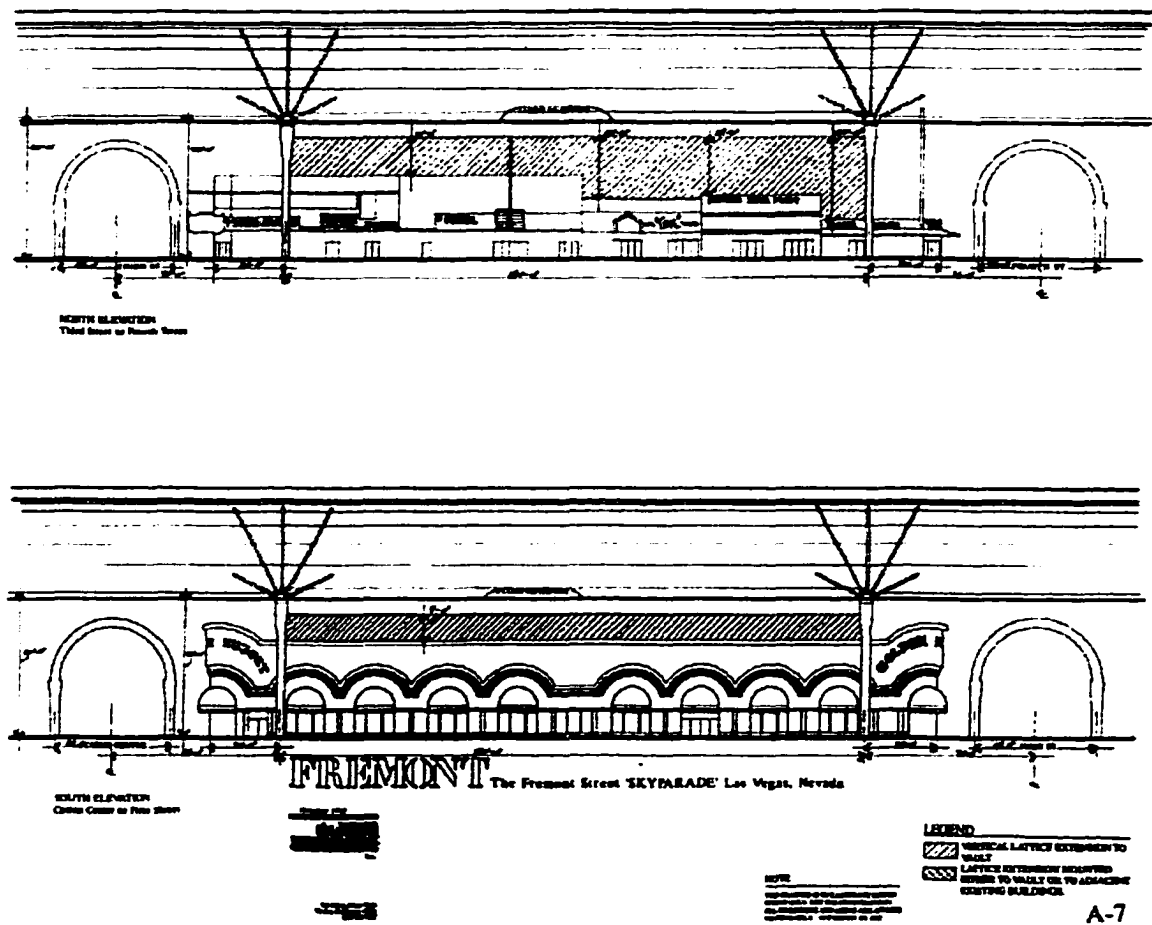
**Figure 3** The Façade Along the Fremont Street – From Main Street to First Street (From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report. Volume 1.)



**Figure 4** The Façade Along the Fremont Street – From First Street to Casino Center  
(From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report. Volume 1.)



**Figure 5** The Façade Along the Fremont Street – From Casino Center to Third Street  
(From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report. Volume 1.)



**Figure 6** The Façade Along the Fremont Street – From Third Street to Fourth Street  
(From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report. Volume 1.)

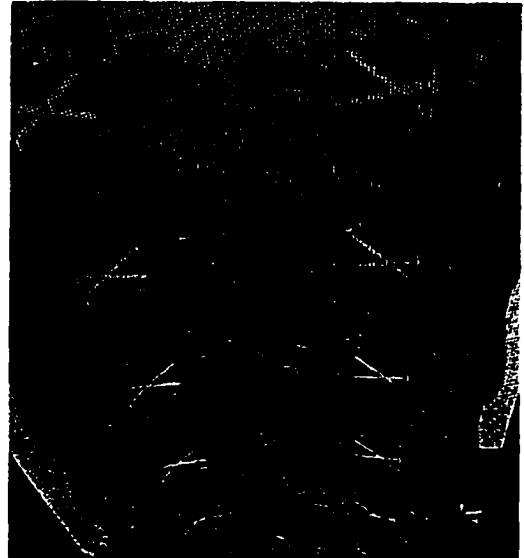
### Light and Sound Show

The light and sound show of Fremont Street Experience is the main attractive element in this project. The components forming the Fremont Street Experience light and sound show together comprise a modern technological and engineering marvel.

The space frame is filled with 2.1 million bulbs with total of 7.8 megawatts output. These lights brought downtown into life nightly in a computer-generated, multi-sensory show imposing in its magnitude. Backed by 540,000 watts of music and sound, animated images are controlled by 30 computers within the space frame while a master computer in a main control room using graphics display system as their stage.<sup>3</sup>

Each bulb is equal to a single pixel in a monitor picture tube, and like a TV pixel, each bulb contains red, blue, green and clear lamps. Combined with 8 shades of dimming, the entire display is capable of producing 65,536 colorful combination.

In addition to the millions of bulbs, within the space frame structure there are 180

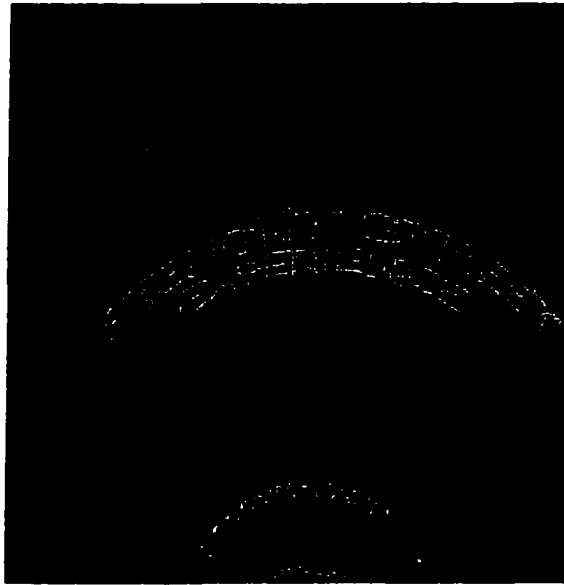


**Figure 7** The light and Sound Show (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)



**Figure 8** Light and Sound Show in Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

<sup>3</sup> "Fremont Street Experience Brochure," p. 3.



**Figure 9** The light and Sound Show in Fremont Street Experience.(From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

computer-programmed high intensity strobe light, 64 variable color lighting fixtures that can produce 300 colors, and four robotic mirrors per block that can be individually programmed to pan and tilt to reflect light during the shows.<sup>4</sup>

The Fremont Street Experience created an entirely new environment for Fremont Street. Fremont Street was transformed into a “people place”, offering a blend of urban theater with attractive light and sound shows, a variety of restaurant dining, and a blend of adult entertainment environment.

### **Overview of the Central Business District in 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

In order to get a background of the project, we need to put the project into the context of urban revitalization in American cities, and find out important issues for a urban renew project.

Before World War II, downtown was the hub of economic, social, and residential

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<sup>4</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Brochure,” p. 4.

life in the metropolitan area. The high labors condense manufacturing and commercial economies made downtown the best location for business. The major transportation was on foot or in horse-drawn vehicles, so the services and public facilities such as schools, banks, government and court were located in the central business district that in turn supported the growth of the business in downtown area.

With the arrival of the car as major transportation tool, the concentration of the residential neighborhood is no longer that important because residents had ways to move away from the central city where the most job were located. The increase of the car ownership and the continued improvement of highway systems accelerate the trend and more and more middle-income families moved out of the city for the fresh air and open space of suburbs.

Following the exodus of downtown residents, the downtown retails declined and at the same time, suburban shopping malls became new shopping centers. In addition to the significant losses in residents and retailers, manufacturers also began to move out of the city core as highways enabled them to move goods by truck instead of train and ships. Cheap available land and labor in the suburbs added to the competitive advantage of a suburban location.

The effect of this dramatic change in pattern of living and working on downtown transformed the downtown into a daytime-only environment. Beginning in the late 1940s, planning schemes, federal programs, and local incentives were devised to combat these problems. The Housing Act of 1949, an early urban renewal program promoted the clearing and sale of residential land to developer. The Community Development Block Grant program, started in 1974, gave grants to cities to implement their own revitalization strategies, but it alone was insufficient to attract new development.

Starting in 1977, the Urban Development Action Grant program introduced a new solution: public entities and private companies working together as partners. Though



this program had been terminated, it served as the forerunner of today's public/private partnerships, and continued to positively affect downtown revitalization.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the result of successful federal and local program began to show. An appreciation for historic architecture had resulted in renovation of storefront and buildings, paving the way for a later shift in architectural style toward fitting into the urban context rather than standing out. Improved transportation including mass transit and bus system, made getting to, from and around downtown area easier.

Office development spurred further downtown revitalization in the 1980s. Strong markets fostered the creation of design guidelines, bonus systems, and linkage fees to encourage and discourage targeted building types and features. The pedestrian became as important as the automobile, and requirements for active uses at ground level, streetscaping, and building to property lines surfaced. Bonus systems encouraged the development of mixed-use projects, open space, neighborhood retail services, and daycare centers.

Some problems remain in many downtowns in the revitalization process. Despite a decrease in demand for office space, land prices continue to reflect development as only high rent office space, even though the development many cities want is residential. Office development improved the investment environment in downtown, but in many cases it deadened rather than enliven downtown after dark.

Crime remains a problem in many downtowns. The highly visible homeless people have an unsettling impact on those who live and work in downtown area. Infrastructure including street, walkways, bridges are often decaying. Retailing continues to atrophy in many downtowns as it is pushed out by land assembly for new office space or for parking lots to support other commercial activity. The rubble from urban renewal still exists in some downtowns, where assembled but vacant land and boarded-up buildings disrupt the

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<sup>5</sup> "Downtown Development Handbook, Second Edition. The CBD in 20th Century." (Susanna McBee, Washington, D.C.: the Urban Land Institute, 1992), P. 4.

continuity of revitalization.

In most downtowns, these problems are being attacked rigorously. Many cities made dramatic progress in the 1980s. Some of the major tenants that moved to the suburbs in the 1970s and 1980s are now returning. In Boston, Cabot Corporation and Touche Ross, two major downtown tenants that had moved to suburban locations, have returned downtown. In other downtowns where revitalization has been implemented successfully, Portland, Oregon, for example, retail and residential development is flourishing. In fact, a ULI survey of 20 metropolitan downtowns indicates that downtown population in metropolitan cities has increased over the last 10 years.<sup>6</sup> In another encouraging sign, tenant sales, total operating receipts, total rent, total expenses, and net operating balances at super regional/regional and neighborhood-type centers in metropolitan downtowns were all higher per square foot than those for their suburban counterparts. Community centers in downtown/intown locations performed about the same as those in suburban neighborhoods.

Louis G. Redstone has suggested some important issues need to be considered in the revitalization of American cities in his book *The New Downtown*. In this book, he discussed the reason to keep people living in the downtown area and to keep the city center alive all the time. He recommended to develop particular individuality and "special image" in each city and produce interesting happening as an additional attraction for visitors and tourists as well as a source of pride for the local community. Another issue he mentioned is to link the new development to the adjoining existing structure and treat the downtown as a whole rather than just couple blocks area.

Through out the United States, in cities of all sizes, each faced with similar problems of the decline of the central business district. In a number of cities, many redevelopment project have already been implemented. In others, far-reaching plans which

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<sup>6</sup> ULI Telephone Survey, 1991.

extending for decades are being started in stages, each completed stage serving as an impetus to the next.

### **History of Fremont Street Experience and Issues to be Considered**

From the beginning of the city in 1905, Fremont Street has been the site of Central Business Districts in the history of Las Vegas and gaming. In 1931, the first gaming license was issued to the Northern Club, 15 East Fremont Street. Fremont Street was the first to have a traffic light in Las Vegas, and the Golden Nugget was the first structure designed to be a casino from the ground up.

One need only look at past picture of downtown to see that Fremont Street has changed dramatically throughout the decades, growing from small road side gambling halls into the diverse gambling resorts which now line the street.

From the modest beginnings of Las Vegas, Fremont Street initially was in the forefront of the gambling industry. It became the city's first paved street in 1925, the first street to have a traffic light and it is the site of the first Downtown high-rise — the Fremont Hotel, built in 1956. It was also the first resort hotel in the state to sport a



**Figure 10** Fremont Street in 50s. (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)



**Figure 11** Fremont Streee in 70s. (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

rooftop swimming pool and indoor parking. Located at the hub of activity on Las Vegas' famed "Glitter Gulch", the Fremont is completely surrounded by the most complete array of gambling casinos in the entire world."<sup>7</sup>

The Apache Hotel on Fremont Street in 1932 was the first Las Vegas resort to have an elevator. The Horseshoe was the first casino to install carpet. And the first gaming license was issued to a Downtown Fremont Street gambling hall.

Downtown Las Vegas already had 36 years of history by the time the El Rancho Vegas became the first hotel-casino on the Las Vegas Strip in 1941.

The success of the El Rancho Vegas triggered a small building boom in the late 1940s including construction of several hotel- casinos fronting on a two-lane highway leading into Las Vegas from Los Angeles. The stretch of road evolved into today's Las Vegas Strip.

In 1970's Downtown Las Vegas continues to be an actively developing urban center. It is one of Nevada's most prominent gambling and tourist districts. City, county, and federal agencies all maintain operations there. Many business man and professionals view it as a hub for a variety of interests. The area is in virtually a constant state of

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<sup>7</sup> "Fremont Street Experience Brochure, History of Downtown Las Vegas."

development, and real estate values throughout the area have kept pace with the constant business expansion. Land values tend to be highest around Fremont Street and Las Vegas BLVD. south, and lower elsewhere.

But with the fast developing of the hotels and casinos along the strip, the old downtown gradually lost its shines. According to the travel guide to Las Vegas in 1994, the reason of Las Vegas became a entertainment center in the world was the numerous shows and events along the strip, and the most attractive shows in Las Vegas were not in Downtown. There are many different comparison in this book, but the hotels and casinos in downtown seldom ranked to the bests lists. What does this mean? This means downtown becomes less competitive and attractive.

Although there are a lot of government offices include the court of Clark County, the City Hall, and the many banks locate in the area, the place in holiday or weekend or even everyday night became less amenities, and became a no people area where the crime happens. It became dangerous to walk out in downtown at night and even in daytime beside the Court of Clark County, a beggar will stretch out his hand and ask for changes.

Although these are not the only reasons for the declination of downtown Las Vegas, these are one the most crucial reasons for that. So how to revitalize the declined downtown is the first issue to consider in the redevelopment plan. According to the study of Kim Geary(Kim Geary, Jane P. Kowalewski, and Krank Wright, Historic Resource of Central Las Vegas, Nevada historical society, 1985), gaming and tourism are vital to downtown district.

Based on the study about the history of downtown and the development history of American downtown, the key issues to keep downtown vibrant are defined as:

1. Make downtown area active places both in daytime and night time.

2. Attract different income level families live in downtown area.
3. Preserve the historical architecture in local area to continue the identity of the central business district.
4. Private and public cooperation on the redevelopment projects.
5. Attraction making in the central business district.

### **Hypothesis of the Research**

Fremont Street Experience is the catalyst project to revitalize the declining downtown Las Vegas. This paper is to exam whether the project worked as it was planned or not. The hypothesis of the research is: The Fremont Street Experience was an effective mechanism to revitalize the declined Downtown Las Vegas. The project made a positive impact to the business of Downtown Las Vegas; turned Downtown into an attraction and competed with casinos along the Las Vegas BLVD; improved the street environment; and created an active urban space.

### **Methodology**

To try to verify this hypothesis, the following criteria are given and the performance of the project will be reflected from the performance on these criteria. The analysis is based on the following criteria:

#### **The strategy of urban revitalization.**

The strategy of urban revitalization is important for every urban renewal project. The strategy of urban revitalization is the first important issue to consider in the project. The strategy of a redevelopment project is about who initiate the project; what to develop; and how to implement the project. The cooperation of public and private groups is the principle guiding this project and the Fremont Street Experience is managed by Fremont Street Experience Company, a group of ten downtown hotels - Binion's Horse-

shoe, California, Fitzgeralds, Four Queens, Fremont, Golden Gate, Golden Nugget, Jackie Gaughan's Plaza, Las Vegas Club and Main Street Station. The method to analyse the redevelopment strategy is based on the previous researchs on other redevelopment project and compare with this project.

### **Space Organization**

The space organization of the Fremont Street Experience is another important issue for the project. Fremont Street Experience enclosed four blocks of the street and changed it into a pedestrian mall. This not only changed the urban pattern of the Casino Core area, but also changed the pedestrian and vehicular traffic in over forty blocks area. how to organize this change and decrease the negative impact of the project is the key issue for this revitalization project. To study the space organization of the project, the analysis of the urban fabric of the area is needed, and many detail aspects in design is examined by the on site observation in daytime and night time in this area.

### **Environmental Aspect**

The environmental issue of the project is important because the downtown should provide a pleasant environment for people to stay and enjoy the light and sound show. Another issue in this aspect is the hot weather in summer time and how to cool down this area. Cooperating with pavement of the pedestrian walk way, the landscape of the project is another important issue in affecting the space of the pedestrian mall.

### **Social Aspect**

The statistic of travel population to the site is important for this project. As the first revitalization project in downtown to compete with megaresorts on the Strip, Fremont Street Experience needs to attract tourists down to this area. So the population to this area will show the efficiency of the project. The Fremont Street Experi-

ence also provided a place where people can stay and see each other. This created more social contact for the pedestrians and turned this place into a town-square of City of Las Vegas.

### **Economical Aspect**

To evaluate a redevelopment project like Fremont Street Experience, the economic increase is important for the whole success of the project. As a catalyst project in downtown Las Vegas, the Fremont Street Experience is the first step toward a revitalized downtown and a strong economy in this area. After the project, there are more and more investments in this area.

### **Design**

The Fremont Street Experience is a project that integrates the modern technology into the creation of the place and the architecture is transformed into a urban theater to show the light and sound show. The building is no longer a shelter for the pedestrian, but a big TV screen to show the entertainment to the viewers. This transformation of the architecture brings a hint of the trend in adding more meanings and features in architecture to meet the people's need of everyday life.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **The Recent Downtown Redevelopment Research In Las Vegas**

It was found that past research has been conducted by academic institutions, by profession societies or foundations with specific interests in transportation engineering, such as the Commission of Transportation research with Clark County by Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas; by federal government sponsored research or by specific study conducted for state and local governments. Professional societies, such as the Institution of Transportation Engineers(ITE), The Eno Transportation Foundation, and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials(AASHTO), continually promoted research and use their activities as a forum to improve the state-of-the-art.

Studies either conducted or sponsored by the highway Administration, United State Department of Transportation, provided information relevant to pedestrians as part of the transportation system. This information relates to pedestrian safety, design, planning, and operation. In research conducted for the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Project 20-19, "Pedestrian Convenience and Safety on Suburban and Rural Highways".

The Regional Transportation Commission of Clark County (RTC) conducted a Major Investment Study (MIS) for the Resort Corridor in the Las Vegas metropolitan area. The overall goal of this effort is to identify and analyze investment needs and opportunities for

major transportation infrastructure and services that could best alleviate mobility problems in the Resort Corridor and be compatible with regional transportation needs and objectives. The first step in this MIS process, addressed in Technical Memorandum 2.1, is to identify the regional transportation corridors, as they relate to the Resort Corridor, to determine which of these regional corridors might be considered for subsequent mobility enhancement (MIS) studies and to rank the corridors for priority in that study process. The second step in this MIS process, addressed in this report, is to characterize the current and future mobility conditions within the Resort Corridor and define the purpose, need, and definition of the mobility problems to be addressed by this Major Investment Study.

Recent efforts to competitively reposition Downtown Las Vegas began in 1986 when the City engaged the consulting firm of Lavenhol and Horwath to prepare a comprehensive plan and redevelopment strategy for the Downtown area. The policies in that plan and strategy enabled the Downtown Redevelopment Agency (RDA) to react to developer proposals as they were presented.

The basic policy of this plan and strategy was to rely on developers coming forth to elicit Redevelopment Agency assistance for developer-driven projects within the area. This “reactive” approach characterized the Redevelopment Agency’s activities until 1993.

In late 1993, the City of Las Vegas, Nevada, through its Downtown Redevelopment Agency Board, decided to become more proactive in its efforts to revitalize its Downtown Redevelopment Area. This Area, which comprises 2,635 acres in the heart of the city, includes Downtown Las Vegas, from Sahara Boulevard to Bonanza Road, the commercial districts north of Downtown which are known as West Las Vegas, and the areas to the east along and between the Fremont Street and Charleston Boulevard corridors to their point of intersection.

A wide range of issues was identified by the Redevelopment Agency who was to be addressed in an updated analysis and redevelopment strategy, focusing on specific pri-

orities for future action. With these issues as a starting point, the Redevelopment Agency requested proposals from qualified consulting firms to assist the Agency in preparing the updated plan and strategy. The firm of Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen & Payne, Inc. (TPAP) of Chicago, Illinois was selected by the Redevelopment Agency to undertake this assignment.

The firm of Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen R Payne (TPAP) was engaged to update the comprehensive plan and redevelopment strategy.<sup>8</sup>

Primary results of that study include:

- Existing conditions do not contribute to significant redevelopment goals.

Downtown is the original once core, but does not have office uses typically found in most Central Business Districts. Most tenants are government offices and related uses. Many old, single-family homes have been converted to offices which house primarily attorneys and accountants. "Prestige" addresses are not Downtown, but in remote sub-market area's like the Hughes Center, Summerlin; Henderson, and the airport.

- The Downtown redevelopment efforts should strive to increase a positive "critical mass" of reverse, but complimentary uses, halting the trend of "fractionalized" office activity.

- Twelve planning areas were identified as identifiable subcomponents of the Down- town area, each with its unique characteristics, opportunities, and constraints.

- The casino core, the historic concentration of casinos lining Fremont Street and its aadjacent streets, should conserve and enhance the pedestrian character with tourist-serving uses including hotels, casinos, specialty retail, restaurants, and entertainment attractions.

- Entryway design improvements into the Downtown should be implemented

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<sup>8</sup> Trkla Redevelopment Plan. P. 5.

at key gateways and should include special lighting, signage, landscaping, and other features.

- The office core should promote the return of Downtown to the region's legal, governmental, and financial center. The offices north of Garces Avenue should reinforce the image of the major governmental, business, and financial center while the blocks south of Garces should be mixed-use office with residential and commercial uses woven into the urban fabric. Ground floor retail should be encouraged on the blocks north of Bonneville and low intensity office with high to medium density residential should dominate the urban character south of Bonneville.

- Las Vegas Boulevard should become an attractive "identity street" as it passes through the Downtown area. It should consist of distinctive lighting, landscaping, and signage with its own urban design guidelines establishing the character and restrictions of development to occur within its edges. New development along the boulevard should include commercial uses such as specialty retail, hotels, entertainment, and service commercial. The uses should be differentiated from similar types found in the casino and office core, allowing them to continue to be "auto-oriented" and of a low-rise, small-scale character.

This study built upon an extensive body of previous work already completed. Every effort was made to avoid duplication, and original data research and field studies were undertaken only where identifiable gaps were noted. Most importantly, this study was not designed to replace the 1987 Lavenhol and Horwath strategy for Downtown Las Vegas, but rather to update the strategy within the context of Las Vegas' stated goal to be "more proactive" in pursuing downtown revitalization. Thus, this study does not produce a new land-use, circulation and urban design plan, but instead an updated, "fine tuned" plan, focusing on actions and priorities for the area's revitalization.

## CHAPTER 3

### URBAN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

#### **Strategy of Fremont Street Experience**

Strategy for revitalizing downtown can be described in a number of ways. First, who initiates and implement the revitalization program is one way of describing the strategy, whether the public agencies, private business owners, or a public/private partnership. The method for accomplishing revitalization - the what of management or development - is another way of defining the strategy, and, how revitalization is completed, either by a catalytic or incremental approach is the third way of defining strategy.<sup>9</sup> Development with a catalyst usually relies on a major development to revitalize the downtown.

#### **Catalyst Project**

The strategy of Fremont Street Experience is to revitalize the downtown through single redevelopment project. Cities like San Diego, Boston, Denver and Santa Monica have provided the necessary catalyst for revitalization in their downtown areas. Las Vegas is just following the course of these cities.

Just as stated in the Trkla Redevelopment Plan: A one street downtown will never work.<sup>10</sup> All successful downtown contains three key elements:

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<sup>9</sup> This basic typology is set forth in Richard Wagner and Ted Miller, *Revitalizing Downtown*, 1976-1986 (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation in association with the Urban Institute, 1988), p. 15-19.

<sup>10</sup> *Trkla Redevelopment Plan. April 1995, Report No. 1, Background Analysis, Introduction. P. Vii.*

1. A successful theme.
2. A successful commercial core.
3. Housing for all income levels.

Fremont Street Experience is the core of the downtown area, and it is not the commercial core, but the gambling core and tourist destination to the downtown Las Vegas.

Based on the study of downtown revitalization programs, the catalyst strategy was successful only when applied to area with fairly stable economies.<sup>11</sup> In cities where the downtown was declining sharply and was located in a region of poor economic performance, the catalyst strategy failed.

According to the Trkla Redevelopment Report, the economic development of downtown is very stable. Figure 13 shows that gaming revenues consistently increased in all areas but the Downtown Las Vegas with the Downtown shows a loss between 1992/1993 and 1993/1994. From 1987 to 1994, the Annual Percent of county Gaming Revenues is

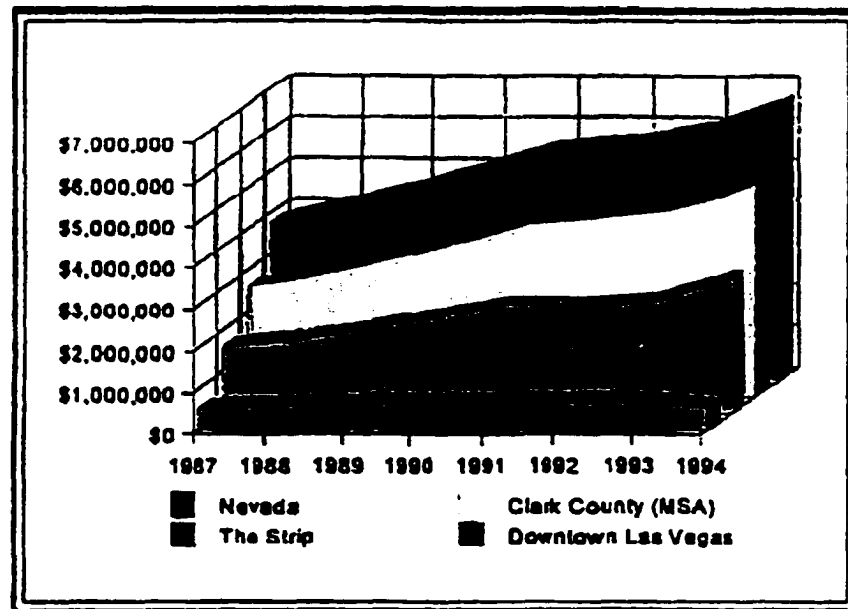
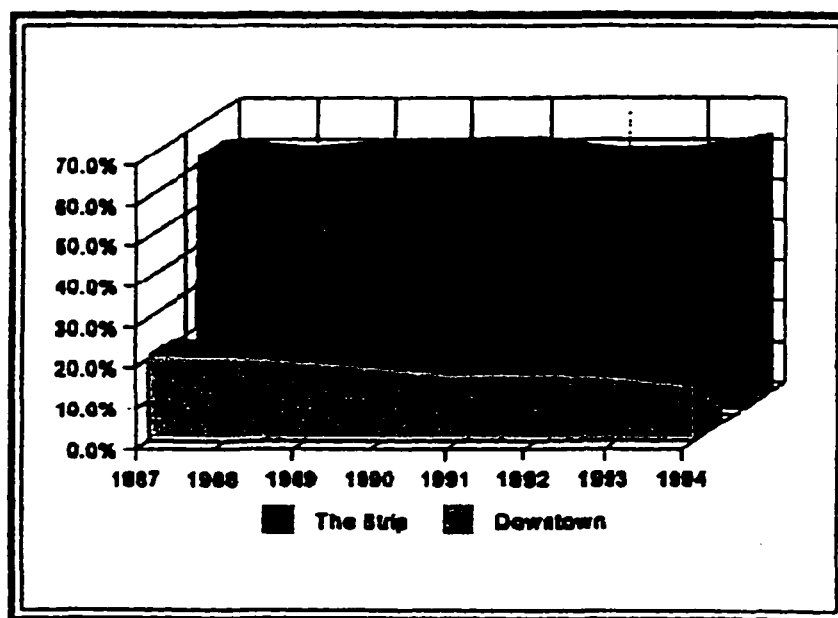


Figure 13 Share of Gaming Revenue from 1987 to 1994

<sup>11</sup> Wagner and Miller, *Revitalizing Downtown*, P. 17.



**Figure 14** Gaming revenues coming from downtown Las Vegas as a percentage of those generated in Clark County

shown as figure 14. Figure 14 also shows that gaming revenues coming from downtown Las Vegas as a percentage of those generated in Clark County have generally declined while those resulting from The Strip have fluctuated. In 1986/1987, Downtown gaming revenues were 21.7 percent of those generated in Clark County; this fell to 13.3 percent in 1993/1994. In comparison, gaming revenues from The Strip were 61.9 percent of County's share in 1986/1987, rose to 62.5 percent in 1990/1991, fell to 59.9 percent in 1991/1992, and increased to 63.5 percent in 1993/1994.

The economy in Downtown area is stable and the catalyst strategy is the way to stimulate the development in this area.

### **Public and Private Cooperation**

The cooperation of public and private groups is another principle in the Fremont Street Experience. Fremont Street Experience is a public/private partnership. The Fremont Street Experience Company owned by downtown hotels and casinos, City of Las Vegas, and Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. The City's role was primarily reactive,

because city can use tax incremental revenues to provide financial assistance to prospective developers, and use its power of eminent domain to assist in the land assembly process. This established the basis within the redevelopment area, such as Charleston Plaza, Bonneville Square, Clean Center, Levitz, the Clark County Government Complex, and the Fremont Street Experience.<sup>12</sup> These projects were guided by local economic benefit and leverage criteria to ensure a proper balance in the partnership agreement and the achievement of local job creation and economic goals. These project would not happened without the initiative assistance of the City of Las Vegas Redevelopment Agency, who is empowered to use the tool of eminent domain and the ability to issue bonds the use the proceeds there-from to carry out redevelopment objectives as set forth in a redevelopment plan.

The Agency's redevelopment philosophy was based on five key principles:

1. Diversifying the City's economic base.
2. Retaining downtown as the financial, legal and the governmental center of the Las Vegas valley.
3. Recognizing that the hotel/casino sector is economically critical to the downtown area.
4. Leveraging of the Agency's financial resources.
5. Assisting in the growth and development of west Las Vegas.<sup>13</sup>

The Fremont Street Experience is a major step in revitalizing the Casino Core, which is located in the heart of the Downtown Las Vegas. The hotel and casinos located within this area employ 17,000 workers and represent 47 percent of tax increment revenues in the Redevelopment Area. Beginning with Fremont Street Experience, the revitalization of the Casino Core offered tourist's experience not found on the Strip, and makes downtown a

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<sup>12</sup> Trkla Redevelopment Plan. April 1995, Report No. 1, Background Analysis, Introduction. P. Vii.

<sup>13</sup> Trkla Redevelopment Plan. April, 1995, Report No. 3, Redevelopment Strategy: Downtown Las Vegas Redevelopment Area., P. 2



tourist destination competing with the resorts along the Strip. Thus the Casino Core became the first building block in creating a new and exciting downtown, with a “critical massing” of a new private investment.

### **Value Creation of Downtown Las Vegas**

Another critical principle in Fremont Street Experience is to stimulate private, taxable development on a consistent and regular basis through an organized and proactive effort on the part of the redevelopment Agency. It is in the Casino Core where the Redevelopment Agency has already made a substantial investment through its financial participation in the development of Fremont Street Experience. This project not only improves the competitive position of the downtown as an adult gaming environment, it also established an entirely new and exciting character for the Casino Core, focusing on quality of design and appearance. The expansion and upgrading of existing hotel/casino operation were encouraged to add value in the Casino Core.

According to the interview with Mark Paris,<sup>14</sup> the President of the Fremont Street Experience, the revitalization brought to downtown Las Vegas by the Fremont Street Experience is the starting point for continued investment in the area’s smaller businesses, which depend on customer traffic primarily generated by the hotel-casinos in the Fremont corridor. New development would also mean an increase in jobs.

Almost every downtown property spent money on remodeling, renovations and expansions. The overall investment by the downtown properties to coincide with the Fremont Street Experience is approximately \$200 million.<sup>15</sup>

These investments in the downtown area increased the value of the place and improved the environment of the central business district, and these “value creating” projects

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<sup>14</sup>. “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”

<sup>15</sup>. “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”

will collectively comprise the vast majority of the financial basis for Las Vegas' continuing revitalization efforts for the next twenty years.

The environment for stimulating private taxable developments will be enhanced if major public building could be simultaneously developed with private building to create a critical mass of new investment and activity.<sup>16</sup> The Fremont Street Experience demonstrated this statement and showed a good effect on the revitalization of the downtown Las Vegas.

### **The New Urban Structure**

The Fremont Street Experience enclosed the four blocks of the Fremont Street, and created a must see attraction in the Casino Core. This pedestrian oriented project increased the visit population to the downtown area. This positively impacted the downtown area, but simultaneously affected the traffic pattern in a twenty-block area of downtown Las Vegas.

### **Traffic Pattern**

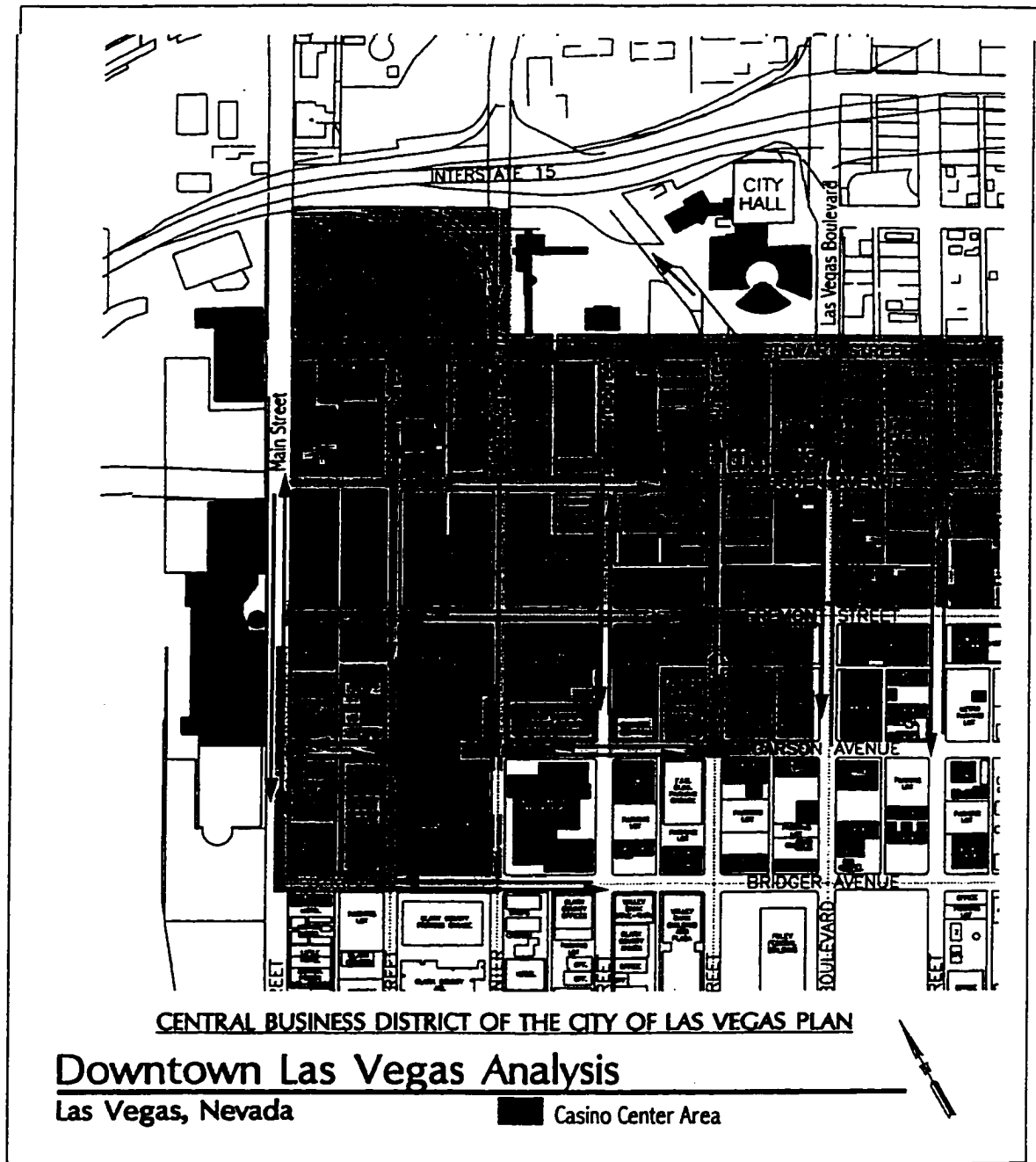
The old layout of the Fremont Street before the Fremont Street Experience is shown in figure 15 The Casino Core is defined within this area. This figure shows there were several major hotel/casinos located within the eastern half of this area, including the Golden Nugget, Fremont, Four Queens, Horseshoe, Fitzgerald's, Union Plaza, El Cortez, California and Lady Luck. Retail and commercial services were located along and near Fremont Street in the eastern portion of this area. In addition, several public and institutional uses were located to the north, including City Hall, the Post Office and the Transportation Center.

After the completion of the Fremont Street Experience, the traffic between Main Street to Las Vegas Boulevard was closed. The Emergency and maintenance vehicles and

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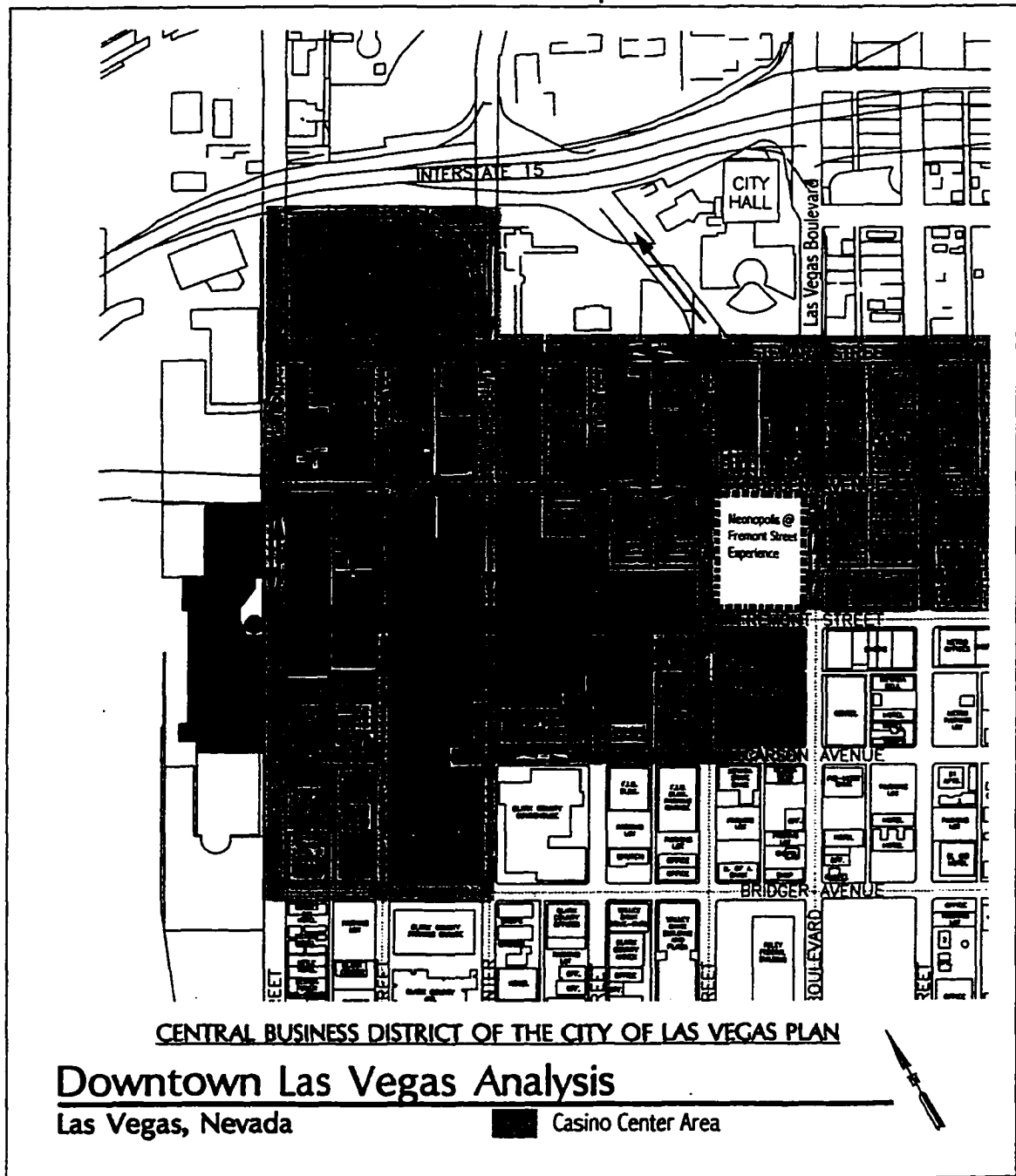
<sup>13</sup> "Trkla Redevelopment Plan, April, 1995, Report No.3, Redevelopment Strategy: Downtown Las Vegas Redevelopment Area," P. 9.

## Downtown Las Vegas Before Fremont Street Experience



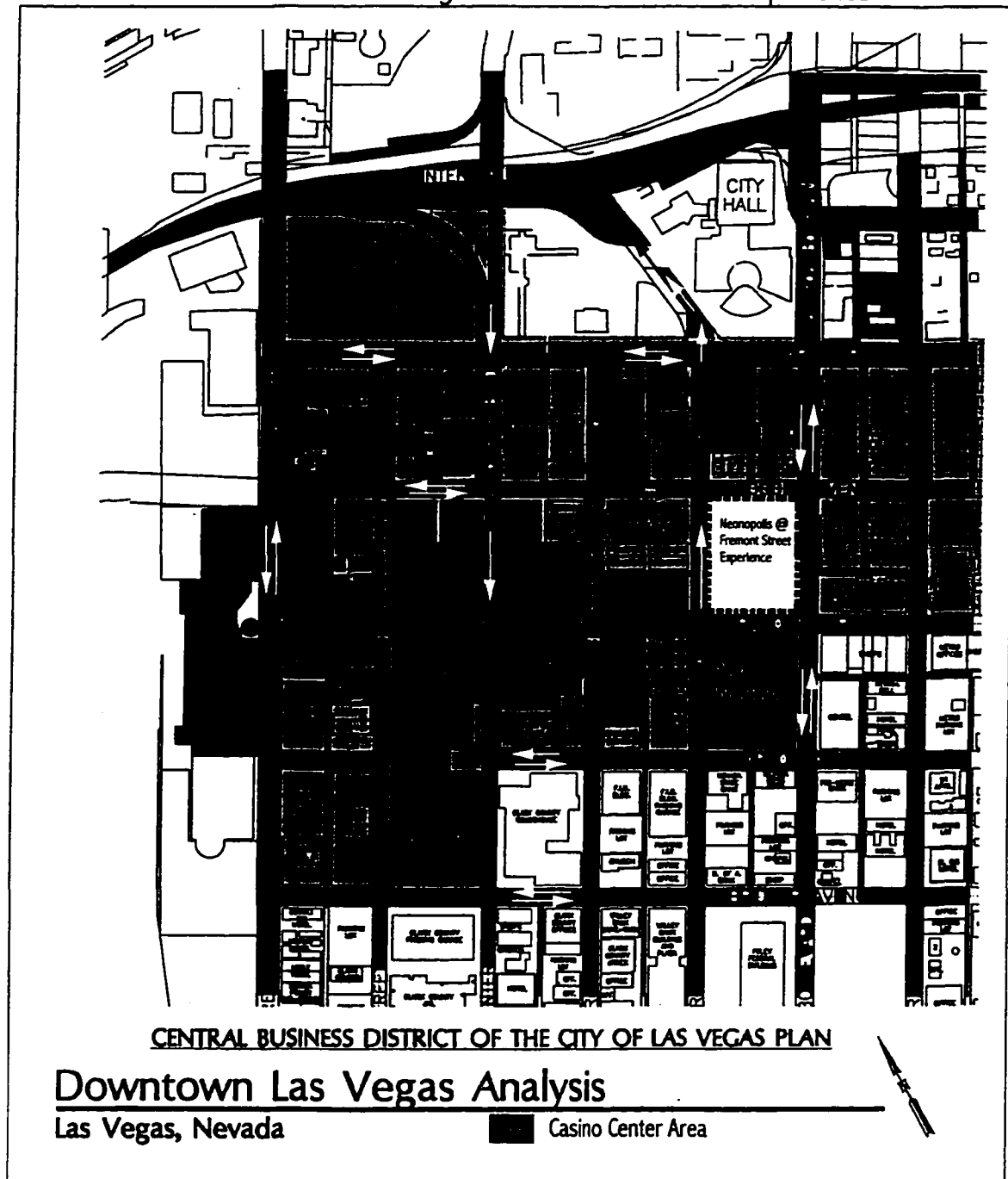
**Figure 15** The Old Downtown Las Vegas Urban Pattern.

## Urban Structure After Fremont Street Experience



**Figure 16** The New Downtown Las Vegas Urban Pattern.

# Traffic Pattern of Downtown Las Vegas After Fremont Street Experience



**Figure 17** The New Downtown Las Vegas Traffic Pattern.

deliver vehicles are allowed to access this area within the non-busy hours. This closure of the street is ideal for the pedestrian because a pedestrian orientated facility functions better without vehicular conflicts. However, as total street closure creates traffic impact on adjacent streets, the one-way system is required to make the traffic across the Fremont Street. Thus the Casino Center Boulevard was changed into one-way south-bound and 4<sup>th</sup> Street turned to one-way north-bound with vehicles being allowed to cross Fremont Street during a green phase signal with a pedestrian scramble phase. This one-way system provided connection across the Fremont Street, and more importantly, it provided direct access from the Highway system to the Fremont Street Experience. This easy and direct access made even more pedestrian down to the Fremont Street Experience mall.

### **Identity Creation**

The Fremont Street Experience not only changed the traffic pattern of the downtown Las Vegas, but also changed the casinos' relationship on the Fremont Street. Previ-



**Figure 18** The Space Frame became the main visual element on the street.

ously, the casinos along the Fremont Street were independent. They were competing with each other and did not share anything with others. But because of the competitive mega-resorts on the Strip, the market share of downtown Las Vegas went down consistently. Compared with the mega-resorts along the Las Vegas Boulevard South, the casinos on Fremont Street are much smaller in size and less interesting in appearance. They found it is difficult to compete with casinos along the Strip individually. So ten casinos in downtown



**Figure 19** Lack of identity of each casino.



**Figure 20** Fremont Street Experience  
Became the Identity of Downtown  
Area

Las Vegas finally united together to revitalize this area and to compete with casinos along the Strip. This decision got approved by Downtown Redevelopment Agency and got financial support from City of Las Vegas.

The Fremont Street Experience not only connected the Fremont Street South to turn it into a pedestrian mall, but also connected casinos and makes them a whole resort together. Under the Fremont Street Experience's canopy, people will not feel the identity of different casinos, because the Fremont Street Experience is their identity. It is the "Town Square" of City of Las Vegas, and the place to show off the image of downtown to tourists. The casinos under the canopy are no longer competing with each other, but on the contrary, they are supporting each other. The Fremont Street Experience became the lobby of casinos, and united them into one big attraction destination.

With more and more people traveling down to the Fremont Street Experience, more redevelopment projects were placed onto the drawing board. Based on the Brochure of City of Las Vegas about the Fremont Street Experience, two more block-long overhead space frame extensions will be assembled and placed above the Fremont Street. <sup>14</sup>

The construction of Fremont Street Experience also clearly defined the zoning of the area and formed a basic spatial structure in this area. The arcade form of the Fremont Street Experience will be the identity of this area and this form will influence other projects in downtown Casino Core area.

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<sup>14</sup> "Something Great is Taking Shape! Downtown Las Vegas Partnership Brochure." 1998.



## CHAPTER 4

### SPACE ORGANIZATION

#### Goals and Concepts

Urban redevelopment is a complex matter by anyone's measure. Every step is interwoven with set conditions, codes, zoning, economic feasibility, financing, and often frustrating political experience. There is a great challenge to implement new ideas and to initiate some immediate short-range phases, while always looking toward achieving long-term goal.

The ultimate goal to which the Fremont Street Experience aspires is to create an environment conducive to a lively, satisfying day / night variety of "people activities", create an entirely new image for Downtown. The concept of "image" is a most powerful influence in the way people perceive things, and is a crucial concept in shaping Downtown's experience. Just as the architect of the project John Jerde stated in the Design Statement:

"Cities evolve with varying intensities and tempos. Partially developed at edges and densely inhabited at centers, they parallel an "atom" with its nucleus core and electron perimeter. The nucleus is the point of "heat," the outer shell is the path of frenzy.

Within the 'atom' that is Las Vegas; Casino Center/Fremont Street is the place of intense "heat" as represented by activity and light. To this, a new "charge" can be brought, a stimulation which advances the state of the casino 'art'. "



**Figure 22.** Proposed Light Show Image for Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study, Final Report, Volume 1.)

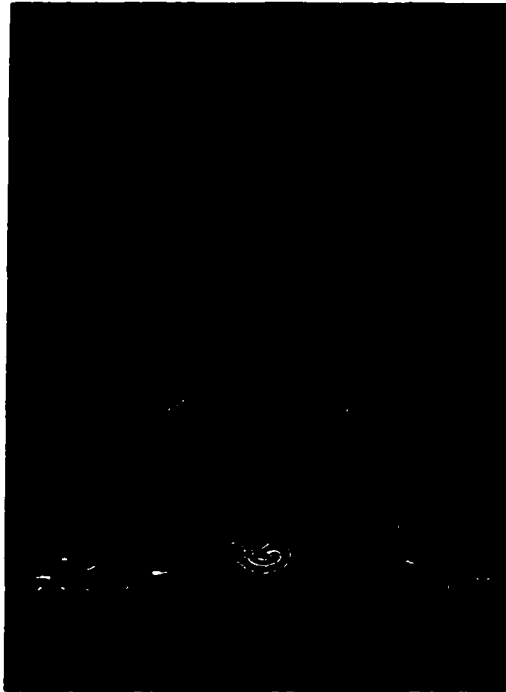
The agglomerate of the Fremont gaming venues, when unified within a central idea, can become a Premiere Urban Spectacular. Each casino continues to function with its own identity but enlarges its presence by being connected to the “foyer” created by the Fremont Street Experience. Just as a building is organized having a place of arrival and adjunct chambers, so this place that is Casino Center has an arriving place (the foyer) and chambers (the casinos).<sup>18</sup>

This idea is a philosophical abstraction which serves as a starting point for place making. Based on the existing condition of the Fremont Street which is famous on neon light, the existing archeology of width and length of the street, the facades along the street, and the neon light are the presence of the project. The potential of the project is the enhancement of the existing archeology with new layers of archeology in the forms of a Celestial Vault, new illumination and music, and the Light Show.

The Space Frame is the unifying form which will make Fremont Street an Experience. Its impressive scale, rivaling grand concourses in length, and cathedrals in height, establishes a sky canopy against which will be played multiple light effects

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<sup>18</sup> Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report, Volume 1, The Sky Vault, The Jerde Partnership, Inc., October 1992.



**Figure 23** Proposed Light Show  
Image for Fremont Street Experience  
(From Fremont Street Experience  
Implementation Study, Final Report,  
Volume 1.)

ever varying in movement, color, and intensity.

In the statement of the designer, the “place” within the steel space frame became the scene for a presentation of urban theater. The Vault as a proscenium receives the performers, sets lighting, and sound. “All of these are embodied in the floats of the Sky Parade - dancing, floating, acting, singing forms of light and reflection suspended above the viewer - approaching from afar to pass overhead and disappear in the distance.”<sup>19</sup>

The Vault also has more passive aspects. The interior scrim provides subtle shading to the street below. Gentle breezes activate multitudinous reflectors to move shimmering ripples across the “sky.” And background audio supplements the casino sounds.

“The Celestial Vault will reinforce Fremont Street as the nucleus of Las Vegas.

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<sup>19</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Implementation Study Final Report, Volume 1, The Sky Vault, The Jerde Partnership, Inc., October 1992.” P. 2.

The intensity of the place will be its future. The "jewelry" of parade, light and sound will dress the Experience in a unique fashion, one that will set the trend for the twenty-first century."<sup>20</sup>

The statement of the project is an artistic discription for the project, which mainly focuses on the image making of the Downtown Las Vegas, which means that image will attract tourists and local residents to the downtown area. But as a revitalization project which is a long-term project growing with the development of the city, the image should be considered only the first step in the continuous upgrading process required to keep up with the rapid social change of our times. Jerde did not mention any further plan about this project, and this concept, however, will not be enough to reach the ultimate goal of the project.

To achieve the ultimate goal, the elements of the plan must include the following: the extension of facilities to attract people in the after business hours; the diversification of new jobs and an increase of employment opportunities; the provision for residential unit for various income groups; the building of a balanced mix of new office, shopping, and recreational facilities; the provision for multilevel parking structure for private and public development; the preservation and restoration of buildings of historical heritage, thereby adding character to the city and creating interest for visitors; and provision of protected pedestrian walkways linking the major shopping, office, and municipal buildings.

Accord to the configuration of the downtown Las Vegas, there are many casinos, cultural facilities, government buildings, offices, commercial, and residents. Fremont

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<sup>20</sup> "Report" P. 2.

Street Experience is surrounded by these buildings and became a center for the Downtown Las Vegas.

### **Pedestrian Mall and Plazas**

Based on the goal of the Fremont Street Experience, which including attraction making and keeping downtown active during day time and night time, the solution to the project turned to the creation of pedestrian mall type environment for tourists to have a good place enjoying the electrical light and sound shows at night. This solution is gotten directly from 60s shopping mall to revitalize the declining downtown in many American cities.

In 60's, the renovation and expansion were becoming an increasingly important focus of activities. The mall concept is so attractive that it may be too readily to be adopted as a supposed cure-all for downtown ills.

Changes in attitude toward city life over the past twenty-five years have supported considerable design, planning, and management activity in transforming urban street into more safe, secure, and comfortable places. New forms of urban streets have emerged, including "pedestrianized" street, auto-restricted zones, malls, traffic-managed neighborhood streets and, more recently, "privatized" indoor commercial street.

"Pedestrianization" is the strongest and most influential of the street redesign movements that have changed the public environment of many cities. Inspired by successful efforts in Europe, American planners set out to revitalize declining downtown by closing or restricting main streets to traffic and constructing elaborate and expensive pedestrian malls.

The Fremont Street Experience, with its basic form and its style of presence, is

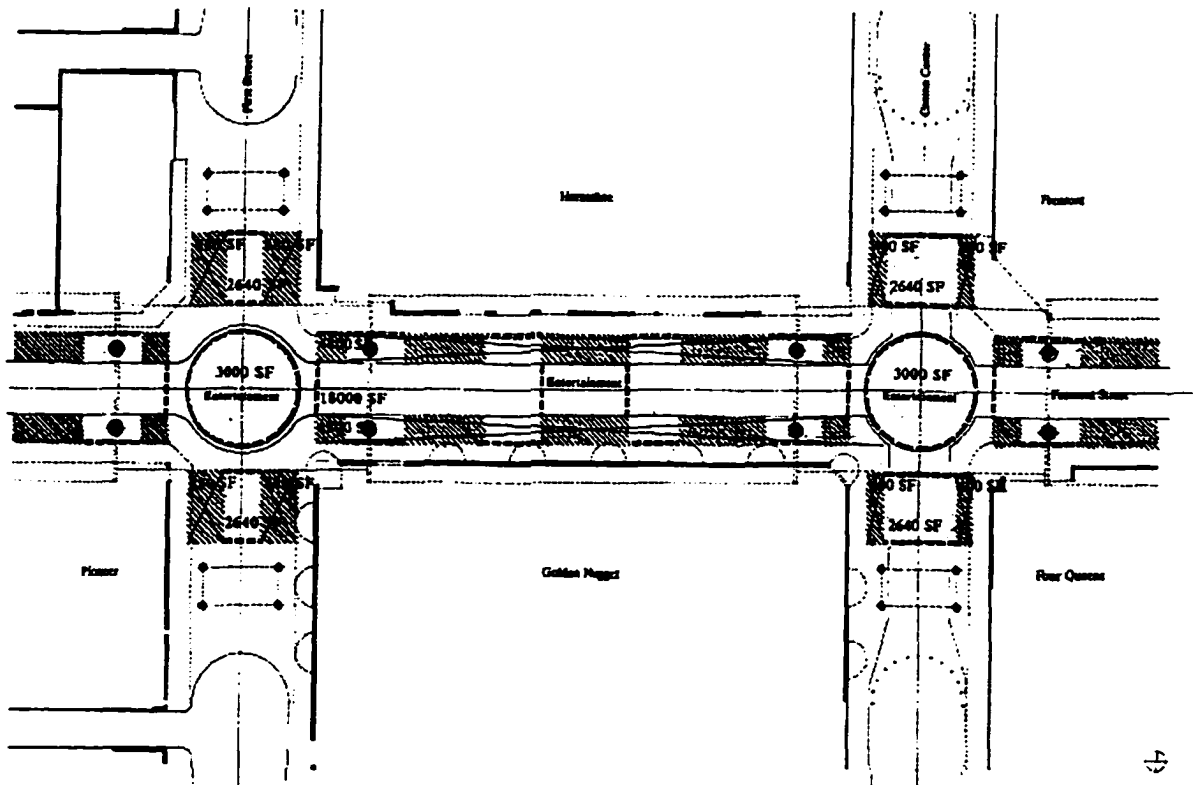
directly gotten from the 60's shopping malls to meet the goal of the project. The huge public space, elegant pavements, plants, shows, and also lots of stores beside the "street", all these elements work together as a whole building. Street here becomes a concept of space, just as it appeared in the Fashion Show Mall and Ceases Palace Forum Shop, provided an enclosed urban environment of the place. The main difference between these shopping malls and Fremont Street Experience, is the function of this place — tourism and gambling.

Enclosed by the eight downtown hotels and casinos, the street also works as a lineal urban plaza where many events and activities happening all the time. The development of the plaza, for the purpose of providing public places of assembly for entertainment, celebrations of national and civic importance, relaxation, and leisure, becomes very important in the total framework of image creation of the Fremont Street Experience.

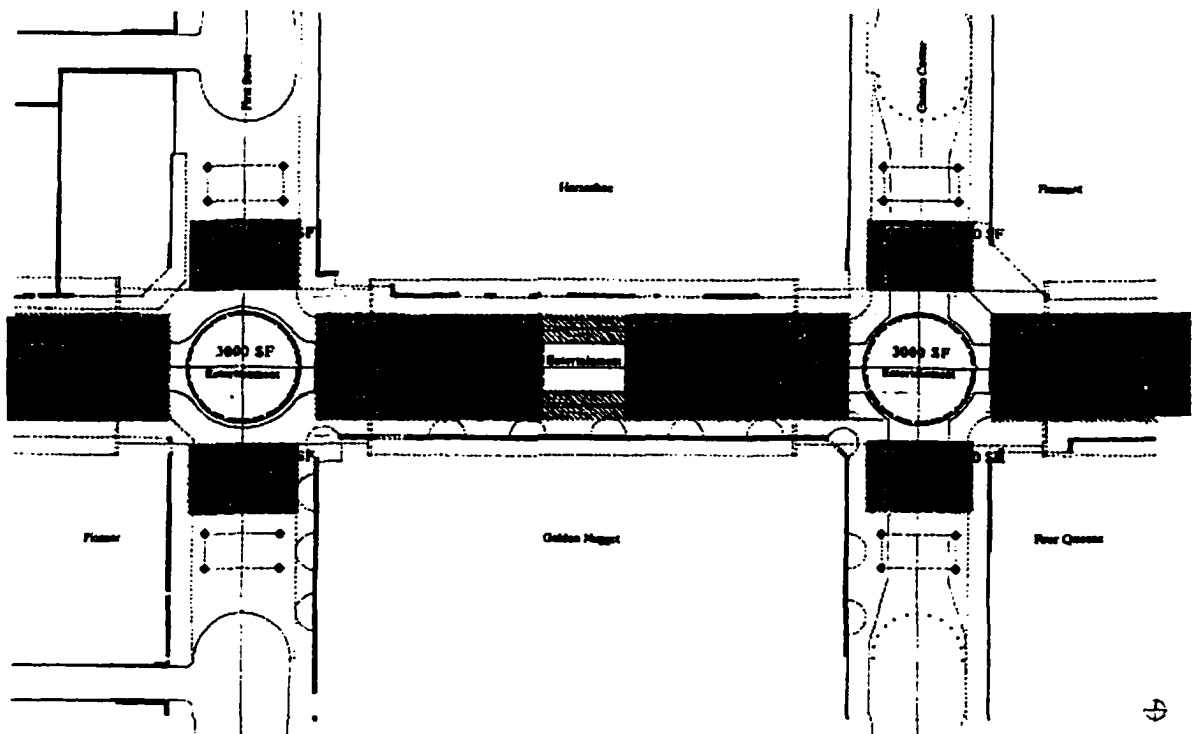
The concept of the plaza is integrated with the master plan of downtown area. The "urban theater" indicates the basic function of the plaza in Fremont Street — the accumulation of people. People come to the downtown from all over the world and this make downtown became a complex, colorful, active, and accessible plaza.

### **Space for Pedestrian.**

Fremont Street Experience is a pedestrian orientated mall. The project enclosed the four blocks of Fremont Street to provide a comfortable pedestrian place. This increased the walking surface to accommodate the flow of people using it, and turned the street into a showroom of urban theater. Before the Fremont Street Experience, the pedestrian space is limited by the vehicular traffic, on road parking space and casinos. Figure 24 shows the pedestrian surface before the Fremont Street Experience. The



**Figure24** The Pedestrian Space Before the Fremont Street Street Experience. Shaded areas are the pedestrian space without the Fremont Street Experience. (Author's Drawing.)



**Figure25** The Pedestrian Surface After the Fremont Street Street Experience (Author's Drawing )

pedestrian space is limited along the Fremont Street and do not have enough walking space for pedestrians.

Figure 25 shows the pedestrian space after the Fremont Street Experience. The drawing shows that not only the street transformed into people's space, the intersection also turned into entertainment nodes where the activities happened.

The street provided sufficient space when the light and sound shows began and a large number of people were attracted to downtown area. This not only increased the population in the casinos, but also encountered more shopping trips to the retail market.



**Figure26** The Pedestrian in the Fremont Street Street Experience (Author's photo)



**Figure 27** The Booth in the Fremont Street Street Experience (Author's photo)



### **Social and Recreational Space**

Fremont Street Experience created a pedestrian environment. This is a place that is suitable for social and recreational use such as events like parade, New Year Ceremony, and holiday celebration. The interface of the individual building with public pedestrian area is important because people like to stand under the shelter of the building while looking at other people walking in the pedestrian mall. This phenomenon is even more obvious in the situation of Fremont Street Experience, where no shelter is provided except under the cover of buildings along the Fremont Street.

The observation of people's activities shows that the interface between inside and outside of the building is the most active space in the Fremont Street Experience. One reason is that most services and gambling entertainment are located inside the casinos, and people need to get into the building. Another reason is that when people stay in the casinos for a long time, they will go to the outside to breath fresh air, relax their mind, and have a rest, because casinos are too exciting to be good places for people to rest. The third reason is that most services or retail booths are not located in the middle of the pedestrian mall. They all located more or less close to a building. These booths attracted people and provided good places for people to stay. The fourth reason is that when people are waiting or walking, they tend to stay under the shelter or keep close to the building. This is because they can feel safer this way than walking in the middle of the street.

These interface spaces are not merely places for circulation and movement; they are also primary setting for social contact and recreation. These interface spaces are places people wait for friends, have brief conversation, and get feel of the Downtown Las Vegas. The interface spaces also provide opportunities for pedestrain to window



**Figure 28** The Parking Structure in Fremont  
Street Experience (Author's photo)

shop the casinos.

It is these informal, and often spontaneous, social activities which give pleasure and substance to urban life to both residents and visitors.

### **Pedestrian / Vehicular Relationship**

One of the most far-reaching decisions affecting the quality of the pedestrian environment is concerned with the relationship between pedestrian and vehicles. The question is whether they should be segregated or combined side-by side on the same level. The main arguments for segregation have to do with safety, in that contact between the two is reduced; comfort, in that a separate pedestrian system can be climate controlled, and spacious, in that one level can be given to vehicles while another to pedestrian.

However, there are several problems associated with introducing the segregated system into an existing built-up area. Because the system must be comprehensive in order to function, it requires a massive restructuring of existing and conventional urban patterns in terms of street usage, open space, building organization, and development

procedures.

The pedestrian and vehicular traffic are placed on the same level in Fremont Street Experience. The pedestrian path continued the pavement across the vehicular traffic. This pattern provided a continuity of the mall and identified the space of the pedestrian environment.

Fremont Street Experience closed four blocks of vehicular traffic and turned it into a pedestrian space. This changed the pattern of the traffic around downtown area. A one-way couplet is implemented with Casino Center became a one-way southbound link from U.S. I-15, and Fourth Street a northbound link to I-15. All vehicular traffic is closed except emergency and maintenance vehicles.

The 1500 space parking structure is provided to accommodate the increased patron visitation. The parking Structure located on the “First Western” site (between Fourth Street and Las Vegas Boulevard, north of Carson Street).

### Continuous Network



**Figure 29** Public Space Enclosed by Space Frame and Casinos along the Fremont Street  
(From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

An important attribute of a good pedestrian system is its continuity: continuity in the alignment and surface of the sidewalks, without meaningless or hazardous break and obstructions; continuity in the boundary walls of buildings and other elements which define the edge of the pedestrian area; and continuity in the network of paths so that there are meaningful choices in the selection of the a route.

At the macro scale, there are reciprocal advantages to good pedestrian linkages between adjacent areas. The boundaries between city district should not become barriers to easy movement. This is particular important in downtown Las Vegas. Just as Mayor Jan Jones said: "I think if you are going to continue downtown redevelopment, you have to make people feel comfortable on more than one street, otherwise you are never going to get there."<sup>21</sup>

Fremont Street Experience is the first major redevelopment project in downtown Las Vegas. It formed a lineal space alone the Fremont Street, but did not expand to other adjacent area. Downtown casinos and city officials hope to soon expand Fremont Street Experience beyond Fremont Street.

According to the article *Mushrooming Mall* in Las Vegas Review Journal, the Las Vegas City Council took a first step on November 10, 1997 toward an enlarged Experience that would bring lights, palm trees, park benches and pedestrian walkway to First and Third streets, between Fremont Street and Ogden Avenue. The gigantic steel canopy along Fremont Street that gives visitors a nightly light show would not be expanded north. The expansion would bring the pedestrian mall near the Lady Luck and California hotels, which initially balked at offers to be part of the project, made up of 10 downtown casinos. The expansion is expected to cost \$1.2 million to \$1.3 mil-

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<sup>21</sup> "Mushrooming Mall, Las Vegas Review Journal, Tuesday, November 11, 1997"(Mike Zapler).

<sup>22</sup> "Mushrooming Mall."

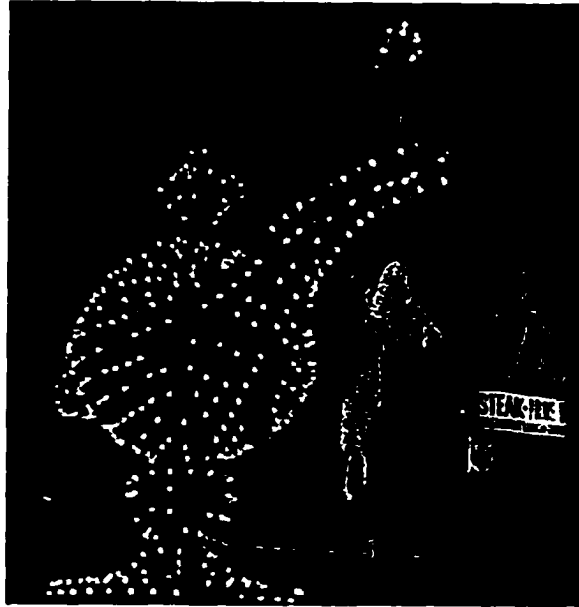


**Figure 30** “Urban Theater”, The Space Frame As A Screen Shows Light and Sound in Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

lion, of which the City’s Downtown Redevelopment Agency would pay no more than \$600,000. The Lady Luck and California hotels will help pay for the expansion and maintenance of the mall.<sup>22</sup>

### **Introverted Spaces**

The Fremont Street Experience is composed by casinos, gift shops, fast food restaurants, and convenience stores. These buildings interact with passing pedestrians. The circulation system serves a building by providing access, it is also the focus for the presentation of a building’s identity, image and location. Reciprocally, buildings serve the circulation system by providing the support of interactive uses. These uses require a high level of public contact and have a symbiotic relationship with the access system, which is the pedestrian route along the Fremont Street.



**Figure31** Restored Neon Signs in Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Web Site)

In Fremont Street Experience, casinos responded to and reinforced this condition by adopting an outward, street oriented organization. In this situation, the street acted as a connecting spine of circulation between buildings and received its character and validity from the buildings.

### **Historic Continuity**

The historic continuity of the redevelopment of downtown Las Vegas is respected in the design of Fremont Street Experience. It is a policy of city's Downtown Redevelopment Agency to retain buildings with historic and design merit. These buildings not only embellish the pedestrian environment because of their design value and the quality of their materials, they also provided a link to the past, which is fundamental need of the human condition. They refer to continuity, to the heritage of the Downtown Las Vegas.

The historic signs and façade continued the historic link from Fremont Street Experience to the historic Fremont Street. The historic neon signs were restored and re-lit. The picture above shows that the historical sign and building are restored to keep the heritage of the Western culture. The first sign, the “Hacienda Horse & Rideer” was restored at the intersection of Las Vegas Boulevard and Fremont Street, greeting guests as they travel downtown Las Vegas

### **Spatial Enclosure**

Building façades should act together as a spatial enclosure to public space. Fremont Street Experience is designed as a town square of downtown Las Vegas and enclosed by the steel mesh of the canopy. The nature and quality of urban public life is profoundly affected by a city’s place – the places between buildings. The Fremont Street Experience is this kind of place. Just as Jon Jerde stated in the statement of the project: Just as a building is organized having a place of arrival and adjunct chambers, so this place that is Casino Center has an arriving place (the foyer) and chambers (the casinos).<sup>23</sup>

The canopy of the Fremont Street Experience is not only a shelter, which provide the definition of the public space, but also a huge screen where the shows and presentation happened. The spatial concept of “urban Theater” shows the basic character of the downtown Las Vegas and blows up shows and presentations into an urban scale. The enclosed space functioned as a show room and a public spaces where people can see each other and communicate with each other. This is not only a place for people to enjoy the shows, but also a place to let people remember the place and find out the culture of the American West and Las Vegas.

### **The Zone of Contact**



**Figure 32** The Projection of Signs and Recess of Entrance Invited Pedestrians from the Street (Author's photo)

Buildings not only give shape and provide supporting uses to public space, they also provide much of immediate and tactile environment which confronts the pedestrian at the ground level. In a good pedestrian environment the areas of buildings which are in this immediate “zone of contact” support, inform, and expand the pedestrian experience.

The zone of contact required special design attention. A building, by the way it designed, takes on characteristics analogous to human personality. It can be “friendly” or “unfriendly”. Its design can give clues and invitation to the passerby – a place to approach at ease and a place to feel at home. There are three basic factors involved in establishing a sense of approachability and rapport between inside and outside of the building. They are permeability, accessibility, and embellishment.

“Permeability” refers to the opportunity to perceive and understand the interior activities of a building from the outside. It is concerned with availability of information about occupation and operation of the building. It can be achieved literally through





**Figure 33** Widely Opened Casino Entrance Shows the Characteristics of the Casino. (Author's photo)



**Figure 34** The Permeable Space in Fremont Street Experience (Author's photo)

windows and glazed walls, but it can also be provided by “messages” presented through signs, displays, light, color, smells and sounds.

“Accessibility” refers to the sense of inviting approachability as well as the potentials for uninhibited movement between outside and inside. It is conditioned by

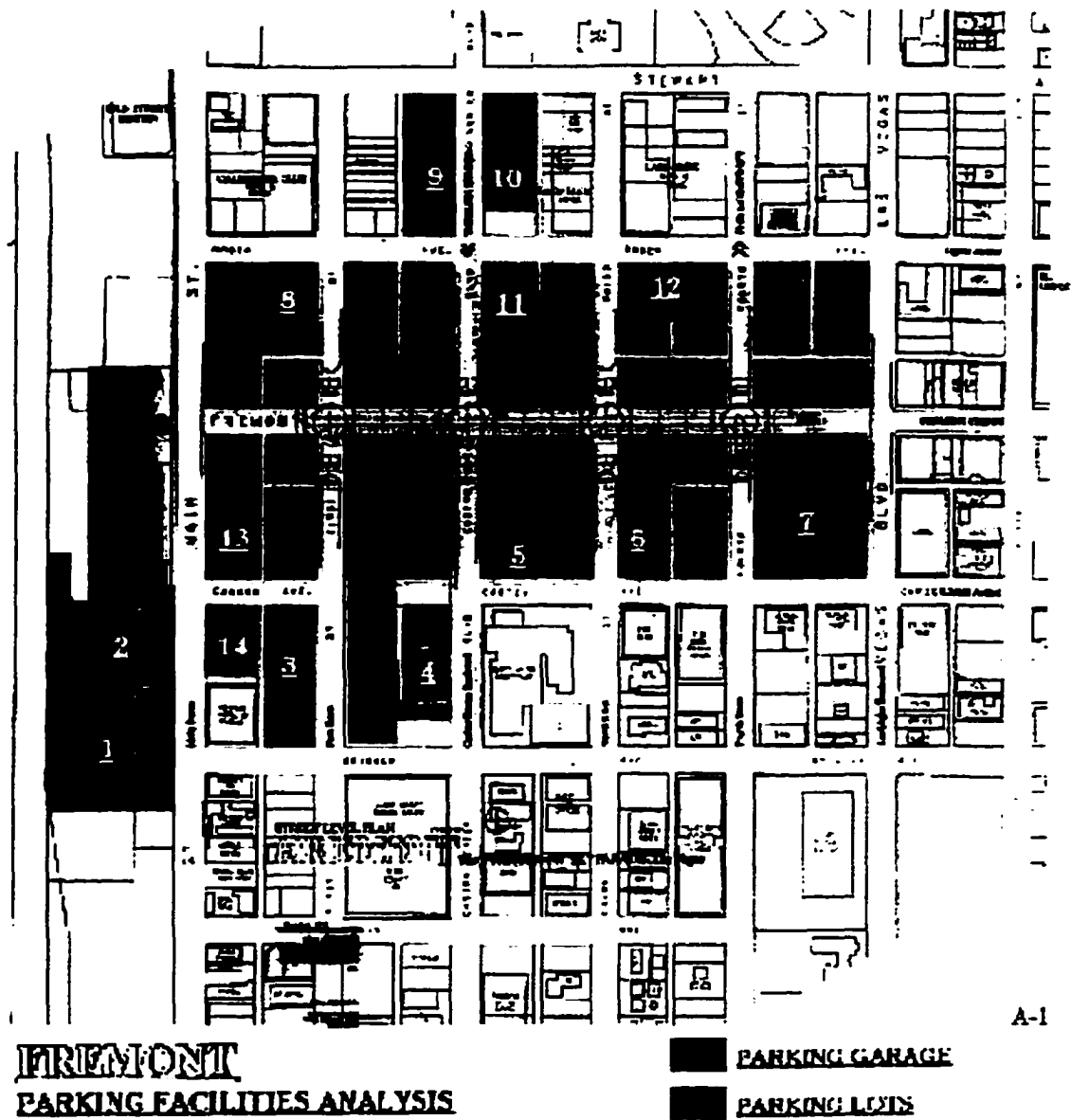
such factors as the visibility, scale and opacity of entrances, the continuity of floor levels inside and out, the projection or recession of doors, and the provision of intermediate or transitional spaces such as that below a canopy or within a colonnade.

At the most detailed and tactile scale, a sense of inviting approach may be influenced by the selection of construction materials and fittings: a coarsely textured concrete wall may repel while a finely moulded sandstone plinth can invite. It is related to finishes, materials, and ornamentation which is aimed at arousing the observer's interest and establishing human scale and immediacy.

In the case of Fremont Street Experience, where casinos and gift shops are the primary uses, the commercial value of displaying goods, introducing entry, and providing easy access is normally well understood and accommodated. The results are a mutual reinforcement of viability of the casinos and the vitality of the pedestrian areas. Because of the spatial organization of the Fremont Street Experience, the contact between pedestrians and adjacent building use is highly increased and enhanced by the wide opening of the first floor to the public access.

### **Parking facilities**

Sufficient parking facilities provided by public or private owner of casinos is important for accessibility of the visitors. Based on the research of existing parking facilities of downtown Las Vegas, a new 1500 space parking garage is built for the parking of tourists. Most of the parking structures are located outside Fremont Street experience and connected to the vehicular traffic system around Fremont Street.



## THE FREMONT STREET EXPERIENCE

**Figure 35** Parking Facilities of the Casino Center District (Drawing by Author)

## CHAPTER 5

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT

#### Climate Control

The Fremont Street Experience is located in Las Vegas where the high temperature in the summer becomes a preventive factor for people's outdoor activities. Especially in the Downtown area, the center of the city gets even higher temperature than the suburban area



**Figure 36** Misting system implemented in Fremont Street Experience (Author's Drawing)

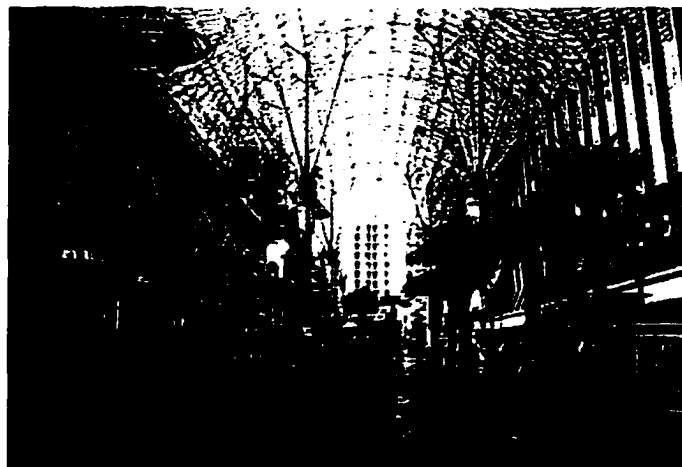
because of the accumulation of the office buildings and casinos. So the climate control is a crucial point that affects the comfort level of the visitors to the Fremont Street Experience.

To increase the comfort level and decrease the climate impact on the Fremont Street Experience, the misting and heating systems were installed to cover both side of the street for total of 800 linear feet. The radiant heating system was installed in the same location as the misting system. The misting systems that have been developed and installed over the last few years have evolved into effective systems that have been extremely useful in providing comfort outdoor activities, especially in the south area. While the gas heating system provided desirable effects during the cooler month in wintertime.

### **Landscape in Fremont Street Experience**

#### **Trees in Fremont Street Experience**

The landscape design in Fremont Street Experience is another crucial issue relating to the comfort level of tourists. In most of American cities, street landscape plays a valueable role in downtown area. The function of trees in Fremont Street Experience is aesthetic – they are pleasing to the eye; soften the hard surface of the built environment.



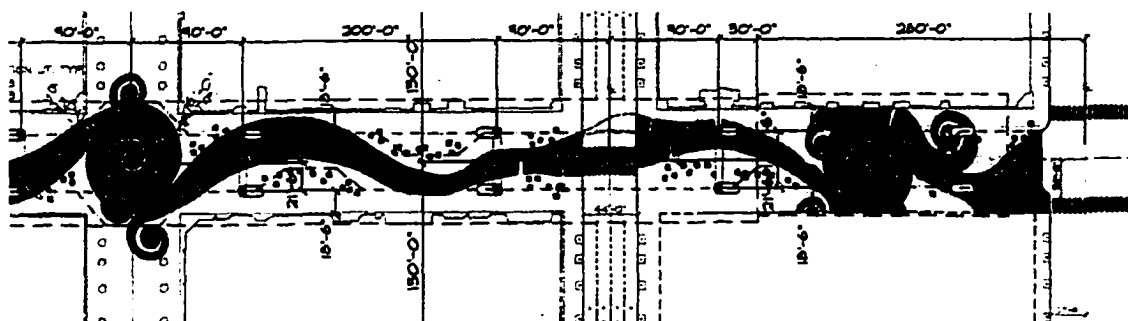
**Figure 37** The landscape in Fremont Street Experience. (Author's photo)



**Figure 38** The trees are planted along the pedestrian pattern of Fremont Street Experience.  
(Author's photo)

Trees planted in Fremont Street Experience are palm trees because palm trees create a tropical/ resort appearance. They are used more for their appearance than for shading from the sun and buffet from the wind. They are evergreen with green foliage at the top of the tree. But more importantly, trees provide a sense of safety for pedestrians, not only as a overhead canopy, but also a mediator of the effects of traffic. Trees are signs for the pedestrian environment and improve the air quality of the area.

In Fremont Street Experience, palm trees are planted along the curved path of pedestrian walkway. This curve created depth for the space and space altered along with the changing location of the palm trees. This layout increases the interest for pedestrian to



**Figure 39** The Trees Location in Fremont Street Experience. (Trees are planted along the curved pavement of the Fremont Street Experience.) (Author's drawing)

explore the space and make the street an active place for pedestrians. The function of these palm trees is the same as columns: they divide the space and add another layer to the plaza.

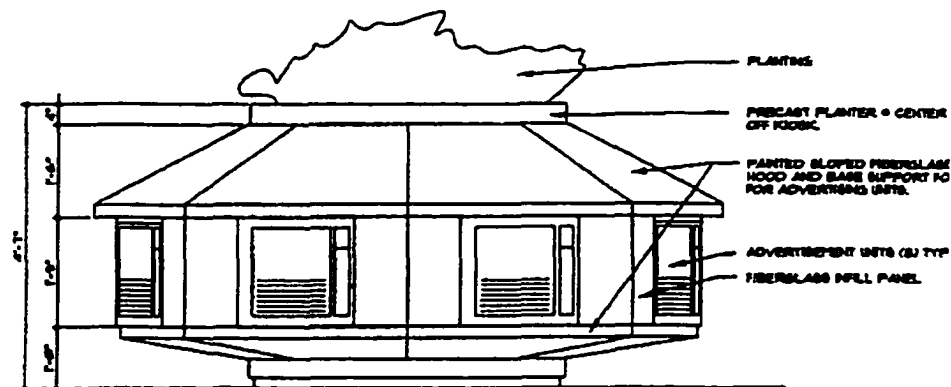
Vertically, palm trees also provide natural looking to the canopy because palm trees hide part of the steel canopy and become the middle scene between people and the space frame. The height of the palm trees also provide a scale for the pedestrians and this makes people comfortable while walking in the street.

### Planters

Planter is an important landscape element in design. The planter is most located at the location where different spaces need to be divided. People like to sit near a planter because the planter provides the relatively natural feeling and better environment.

Figure 40 shows the planter in Fremont Street Experience. The location of these planters are based on the space layout of the pedestrian mall, and incorporated into the overall theme of the project.

### Surface Paving



**Figure 40** Planters on Fremont Street Experience. (Author's drawing)





## CHAPTER 6

### SOCIAL ASPECT

The Fremont Street Experience is the “Town Square” of Downtown Las Vegas. This is not only because of the important redevelopment status in this area, but also because of the place which can gather people and bring pleasure and substance to urban life to both citizens and visitors. It is a pedestrian mall representing the image of Downtown Las Vegas, and more importantly, it is an urban theater showing its historic heritage and modern Western culture to the visitors.

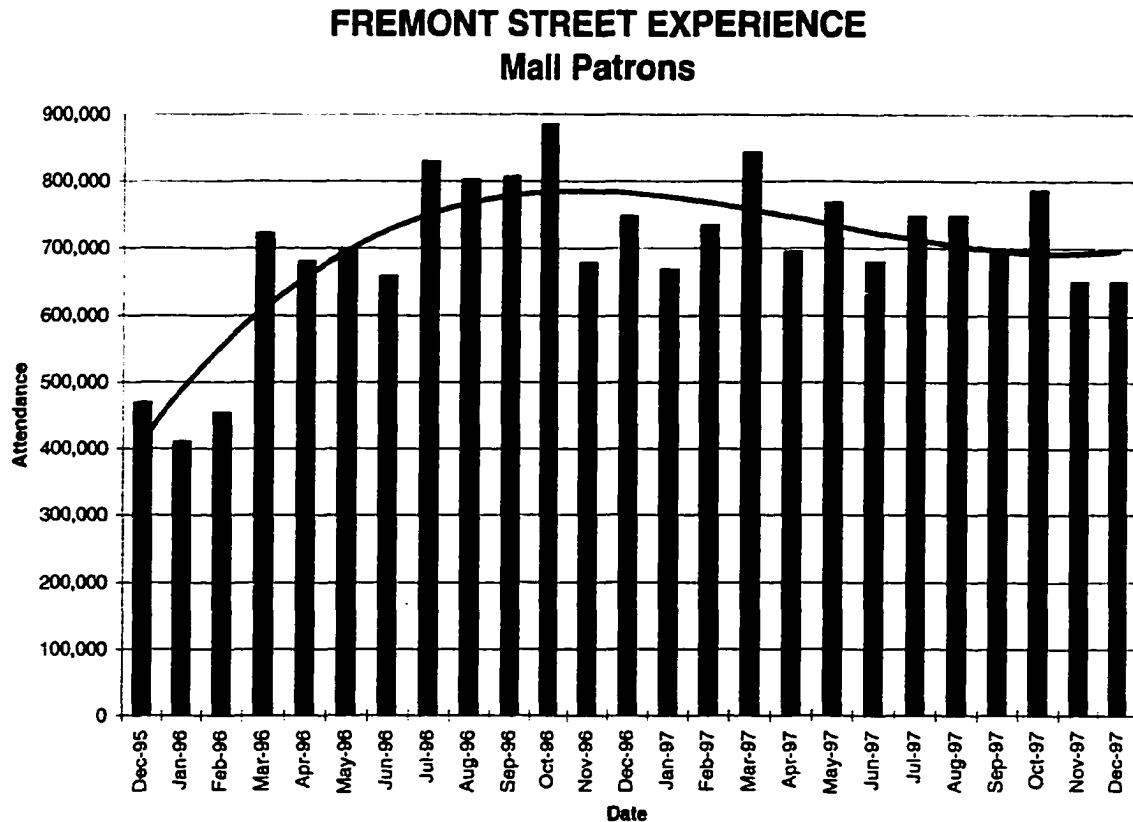
From a social standpoint, revitalization brought about by the Fremont Street Experience is extremely critical to the community. Just as Mark Paris, the president of Fremont Street Experience Company, indicated in the Fremont Street Experience Brochure: “Cities which have successfully completed the bricks and mortar of redevelopment gain the economic resources to effectively deal with vital social concerns, Downtown revitalization brought about by the Fremont Street Experience is in the best interest of all of us who are concerned about the economic and social growth of Las Vegas.”<sup>23</sup>

#### **On Site Population**

The statistic of pedestrian count is important to the evaluation of the success of the project. Based on the telephone interview with Kim Daskas, publicity spokeswoman for

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<sup>23</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”



**Figure 42** Pedestrian statistic in Fremont Street Experience from December 95 to December 97 (This statistic is from Fremont Street Experience Company.)

Fremont Street Experience, the average daily visitor count is about 25,000. The foot traffic even doubled or tripled for the special event weekends on Fremont Street, which were Mardi Gras in April, Cinco de Mayo in May and Fabulous '50s in July, Mexican Independence in September, Oktoberfest in October and the Downtown Hoedown in December in 1997. The research of the company indicates that 80% of Fremont Street visitors are from out of town.

Figure 42 shows the mall patrons of Fremont Street Experience. In this chart, the wide column shows the pedestrian number for each month while the curved line shows the trend of the population in the pedestrian mall. The beginning time of the statistic is December 1995, which shows nearly 500,000 visitors down to this area in the first month of the Fremont Street Experience. After that the number dropped a little bit for two months until March 1996, the number jumped to more than 700,000 patrons within this month.

The attendance of mall patrons continuously increased and in October 1996 it reached the highest attendance in the pedestrian mall which is nearly 900,000 pedestrians in this month. After this peak of pedestrian, the population stayed up and down with the average of 700,000 per month except March and October 1997, which were the Spring Break and Thanksgiving holiday, the travel season for Americans in the year. The population of these two months are 850,000 and 780,000.

The statistic of the on site population in Fremont Street Experience shows that the project effectively attracted people down to downtown Las Vegas since the December 1995. The large amount of tourists increased the gaming revenue of the downtown area, and at the same time increased the job opportunities in this area.

## CHAPTER 7

### ECONOMIC ASPECT

The Fremont Street Experience, a redevelopment project that has transformed downtown Las Vegas into a tourist destination and must-see attraction that will benefit all of Southern Nevada.

The preservation of downtown is essential to the economic health of the City of Las Vegas. More than \$70 million in taxes — including \$6.4 million in room tax revenues collected during fiscal year 1994-95— are affected by the prosperity of hotels and casinos along Fremont Street.

Downtown Las Vegas represents a \$1.5 billion investment, 14,000 hotel rooms, 500,000 square feet of casino space and 41 restaurants. Over the past few years, however, the area has seen a steady decrease in gross gaming revenues and a gradual decline in its infrastructure. The opening in late 1993 of three major mega-resorts drained gaming revenues from downtown to the Las Vegas Strip, and dramatically lowered downtown's percentage share of hotel rooms in Las Vegas.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, by drawing a majority of the estimated 30 million people who will visit Las Vegas in 1995, the Strip has experienced a phenomenal economic and building boom. Analysts say the new mega-resorts generate about 50 percent of all gaming revenues for

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<sup>24</sup> "Trkla Redevelopment Plan. April 1995, Report No. 1, Background Analysis, Introduction. P. Vii."

Southern Nevada.

The Fremont Street Experience won't be the panacea that cures all ills of downtown Las Vegas. However, the resulting increase in business to the area created by the project's must-see attraction—the Light and Sound Show with its 2.1 million lights and booming, symphonic sound—will be the revitalization catalyst needed by the area to preserve the existing 22,000 jobs in the downtown core.

“The development of the Fremont Street Experience as a ‘must-see attraction’ clearly allows downtown Las Vegas to position itself comparably with the new developments along the Las Vegas Strip,” said Mark Paris, president of the Fremont Street Experience Company. “The Fremont Street Experience will allow the downtown properties to expand their customer base and allow the market to elevate itself to a higher level.”<sup>22</sup>

Paris said the revitalization brought to downtown Las Vegas by the Fremont Street Experience will be the starting point for continued investment in the area's smaller businesses, which depend on customer traffic primarily generated by the hotel-casinos in the Fremont corridor. New development would also mean an increase in jobs.

According to the material from Fremont Street Experience, downtown has contributed \$13 million in funds to the redevelopment agency. The prosperity of downtown's hotel-casinos will mean the preservation of future redevelopment funds to revitalize all of downtown.<sup>26</sup>

With the completion of the Fremont Street Experience, more tourists were attracted to downtown and the Fremont Street Experience became a must see destination for the tourists. Because of the influx of the visitors, downtown hotels have begun an unprecedented round of expansions and improvements.

In early September 1996, Binion's Horseshoe won Las Vegas City Council approval

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<sup>25</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”

<sup>26</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”

for a \$70 million, 36-story tower that added 660 new rooms to the hotel's 373 rooms. Approval of the plans follows the recent completion of pedestrian walkways linking the Horseshoe's three parking garages. The hotel also has opened a new baccarat pit and high-limit blackjack area at a cost of \$250,000.

The Las Vegas Club broke ground on a new 15-story tower which nearly doubled the hotel's room inventory from 224 to 409. The \$30 million expansion added 185 oversize rooms with sitting areas, five deluxe Jacuzzi suites, three new restaurants, a sports bar, gift shops, an additional 18,000-square feet of casino space, and meeting and convention space for 400 people. The parking structure was remodeled and the hotel lobby- registration area was moved into the new lower level. The entire project was completed in September 1996.

Meanwhile, Fitzgerald's started a three-phase expansion that culminated with a 650-room tower, new restaurants, an enlarged casino and an upgraded facade on Fremont Street.

The Four Queens has completed a \$5 million facelift and is planning more improvements, and Sam Boyd's Fremont opened a new race and sports book and remodeled its exterior facade. In addition, Boyd Gaming Corp. reopened the vacant Main Street Station, with a new parking structure south of the hotel.

In December 1995, Sam Boyd's California completed a major expansion, adding 146 rooms to its existing 650 rooms. In August 1995, the Golden Nugget completed renovations to all its suites and finished upgrades to rooms in its north tower in January 1996. A decorative treatment also was installed on walkways fronting the Golden Nugget on Fremont and First streets and Casino Center Boulevard.

Jackie Gaughan's Plaza added a 1950's style diner called the "Plaza Diner," and finished a \$200,000 renovation on the former Center Stage restaurant, the only downtown restaurant offering a full view of the Fremont Street Experience space frame.

In addition, the Plaza completed \$3.5 million in room upgrades in December 1994,

installed new carpet throughout the hotel at a cost of \$8.5 million, modernized its elevators and renovated the casino, and improved the exterior facade.

Meanwhile, the El Cortez renovated all 200 of its tower rooms and upgraded the hotel's 107 original rooms, and added more casino space and laid new carpet throughout the property in October 1996.

The Golden Gate, founded in 1906 and the oldest hotel in Las Vegas, has completed a series of room and casino facelifts that have resulted in a turn-of-the-century, old San Francisco atmosphere. In spring 1996, the Golden Gate refurbished the hotel's exterior with window awnings and planter boxes, and a hedge on the roof that is visible from street level. Also, preliminary plans are on the drawing board for 30 new rooms that will be added to the current inventory of 106 rooms.

"Almost every downtown property is spending money on remodeling, renovations and expansions," Paris said. "Overall, approximately \$200 million is currently being invested by the downtown properties to coincide with the opening of the Fremont Street Experience. Another positive aspect of the project is the anticipated reopening of the vacant Main Street Station by Boyd Gaming Corporation."<sup>27</sup>

Other downtown Las Vegas projects include the 350,000-square-foot Clark County Administration complex, a new federal courthouse planned on the former site of the proposed Minami Tower, and plans unveiled by Polyphase Corp. of Texas for \$300 million domed stadium with a capacity of nearly 80,000 on the former Union Pacific Railroad property west of downtown.

Also, the Fremont Street Experience can be linked to more than \$20 million in road improvements, including new underpasses at Ogden Avenue and Bonneville Avenue that attach the former Union Pacific land with the rest of downtown. Downtown businesses such as law offices and accounting firms, which exist independently of the hotel-casinos, will

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<sup>27</sup> "Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998"

also benefit from a revitalized area.

The Fremont Street Experience is being designed as a major competitor for the Las Vegas tourist dollar by making downtown Las Vegas a destination within itself. The project's ultimate goal is to increase occupancy, room inventory and diversify the customer base in the downtown Las Vegas hotel- casinos.

From an economic standpoint, revitalization brought about by the Fremont Street Experience is extremely critical to the community. A downtown Las Vegas in the midst of economic problems affects the Las Vegas Strip and surrounding communities, such as West Las Vegas.

"Cities which have successfully completed the bricks and mortar of redevelopment gain the economic resources to effectively deal with vital social concerns," Paris said. "Downtown revitalization brought about by the Fremont Street Experience is in the best interest of

### Downtown Gaming Revenue Comparison: 1990-1997

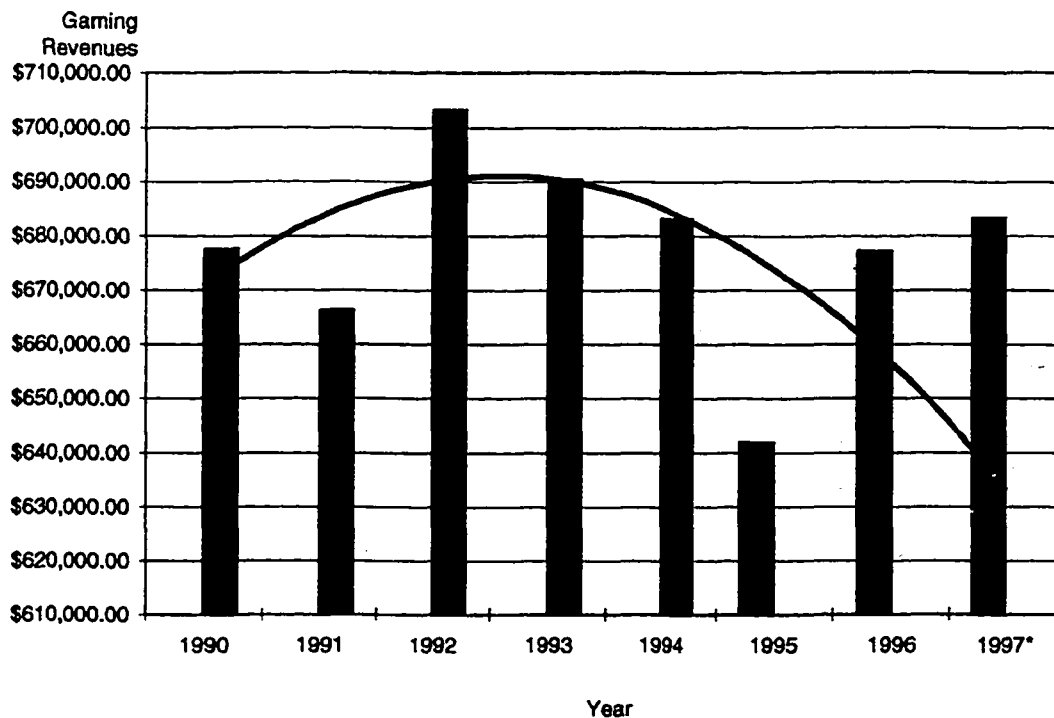


Figure 43 Downtown Gaming Revenue Comparison. 1990 - 1997. (The curved line indicate the gaming revenue if the Fremont Street Experience was not built.)



all of us who are concerned about the economic and social growth of Las Vegas.”<sup>28</sup>

Downtown Las Vegas is following a course which has proven successful in other cities across the country. Through a single redevelopment project, cities like San Diego, Boston, Denver and Santa Monica have provided the necessary catalyst for revitalization in their downtown areas.

Fremont Street Experience successfully attracted people down to downtown Las Vegas and at the same time increased the gaming revenue of casinos.

Figure 43 shows that the gaming revenue statistic from 1990 to 1997. In the chart, the gaming revenue in 1992 reached the highest point which is about \$704,000.00. But in 1995, when the mega-resorts opened in the Strip, the gaming revenue of the downtown Las Vegas went down deeply to about \$642,000.00. After the Fremont Street Experience, which brought light and sound shows to the downtown area, the gaming revenue jumped back to about \$678,000.00 in 1996 and \$4,000.00 higher in 1997.

This chart shows that Fremont Street Experience effectively brought people back to downtown Las Vegas and keep this area vibrant.

Based on the article in *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on August 23, 1997, the downtown casino revenues were expected to jump 30 percent in that weekend because of the event of Tropical Fling Weekend Thing, which was hosted by Fremont Street Experience.

Nearly 100,000 visitors came for the event and the Four Queen casino gaming numbers went up by 30 percent. In May 1997, Clark County reported winnings of \$537.5 million for May, which is an 11.6 percent increase from May 1996.<sup>29</sup>

In November 1997, the Las Vegas City Council took a first step toward an enlarged Experience that would bring light, palm trees park benches and pedestrian walkway to the

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<sup>28</sup> “Fremont Street Experience Brochure. Jan 1998”

<sup>29</sup> “*Fremont Street Goes tropical.*” *Las Vegas Review Journal/Sun.* August 23, 1997.

First and Third streets, between Fremont Street and Ogden Avenue. The steel space frame along Fremont Street that gives visitors a nightly light and sound show would not be extended north.<sup>30</sup>

Following the expansion of the Fremont Street Experience, another entertainment and retail project which is even bigger than the Fremont Street Experience was proposed in January, 1998. This \$99 million project will be a four-story complex, which will feature an open air plaza surrounded by retail stores, restaurants, and 24-screen movie theater.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> " *Mushrooming Mall.*" Las Vegas Review-Journal/Sun. 11 November 1997.

<sup>31</sup> " *Neonopolis Well-received by Council.*" Las Vegas Review-Journal/Sun. January 13, 1998.

## CHAPTER 8

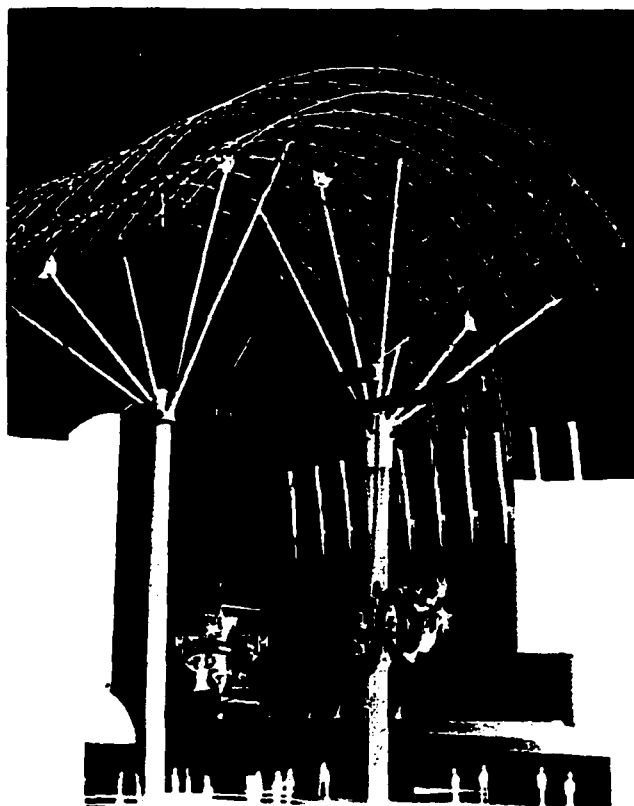
### DESIGN

#### **Something New**

The Fremont Street Experience is a project that integrate the high-technology and multimedia into the architectural design. The multimedia becomes the main concern in creating the attraction of Fremont Street Experience, and it is also the key element in creating the experience. Computer becomes the technology to create light and sound show, and shows the powerful potential of the information era.

With the development of scientific technology, people's life has changed tremendously. The internet connects all the world together and make the earth a small world. People use all kinds of media to convey their meaning, to share the information with others and to communicate each other. The fast development of internet shows that people are eager to communicate and love to be interactive with others. Just like in the Fremont Street Experience, the space frame is not only a shelter of the space, but also an urban theater, where the light and sound shows happening all the time. The shows in Fremont Street Experience became an attraction to the tourists, also became a window to present the history of Las Vegas and the Western culture heritage.

In this project, the building was transferred into a media of presentation. The light and sound shows are attractive, while architecture is not. Here, architecture becomes a carrier of shows and information. The architecture provide the place and environment for the information, and shows the information to the viewer. The building is transformed into a huge



**Figure 44** Model of the Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

television whose attraction is from the shows on the screen, not from the TV itself. This gives us a new question: Can buildings become the carriers of multi-media in the modern society? Sure they have a lot of potential to do that.

First, buildings are the most popular things in the world which have so much relationship with people. Whenever people stay in the building they almost have no choice to select what they want to see or not, because the building is the environment. People are surrounded by them. Why don't we let building be interactive with people and provide some information they need? Just as Fremont Street Experience, the space frame can not only shows the light and sound shows, but also can shows the news, weather, and even internet. It is also possible to let pedestrians interactive with the screen and also with other tourists.

On the other hand, this era is a new era of communication. People use their computers,

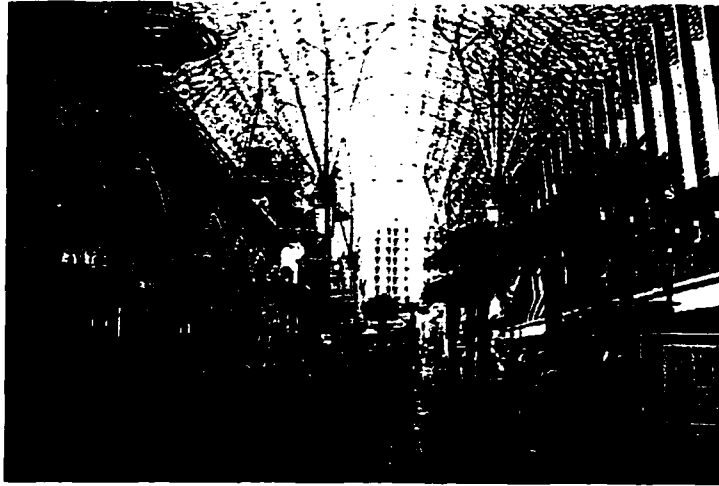
televisions, telephones... to get the communication with others, and to get the information they want. So why don't we connect the buildings with multi-media and give them a new meaning other than just a shelter for people? The Fremont Street is a good beginning to do this. But it has much more potential in the information that it can convey.

Building can not only be a building, but also can be a media and convey some meaning to the user and viewer.

In some aspects, buildings are kinds of industrial product for the living of human being. Compared with other industrial products, especially the computer, the representative of advanced technology, buildings provide too little features and not expressive enough. There is already a trend appeared in computer industry: integrate the multimedia into computer and computer is the center for people's everyday life. People can use computer to make telephone calls, send faxes, watch the television, and even control the electricity in their house. Everything can be computerized. People are so familiar with computer because they using it all the time no matter at work or at home. So why don't we make architecture computerized and make our buildings more interactive the users? This is not only for the shows in the Fremont Street Experience, but also for people's everyday life.

### **Different Experience During Day and Night**

Not only Fremont Street Experience, but some other buildings, have a much different scene during the day time and night. This character gives a lot of possibility to create some interesting experience. The variety of the appearance of the building gives people a kind of feeling which is between reality and unreality. Its reality lies upon the function of the building, and its unreality is from the tremendous change under the sun light and under the artificial lights. This aspect was emphasized by Fremont Street Experience. In the daytime, the main element for people to see is the space frame, the truly functionalized and structuralized object hanging over the street. But at night, the focus switches to the inner edge of this structure: the screen. With the change of the light and



**Figure 45** Daytime Scene in the Fremont Street Experience (Author's photo)



**Figure 46** Daytime Scene in the Fremont Street Experience (Author's photo)



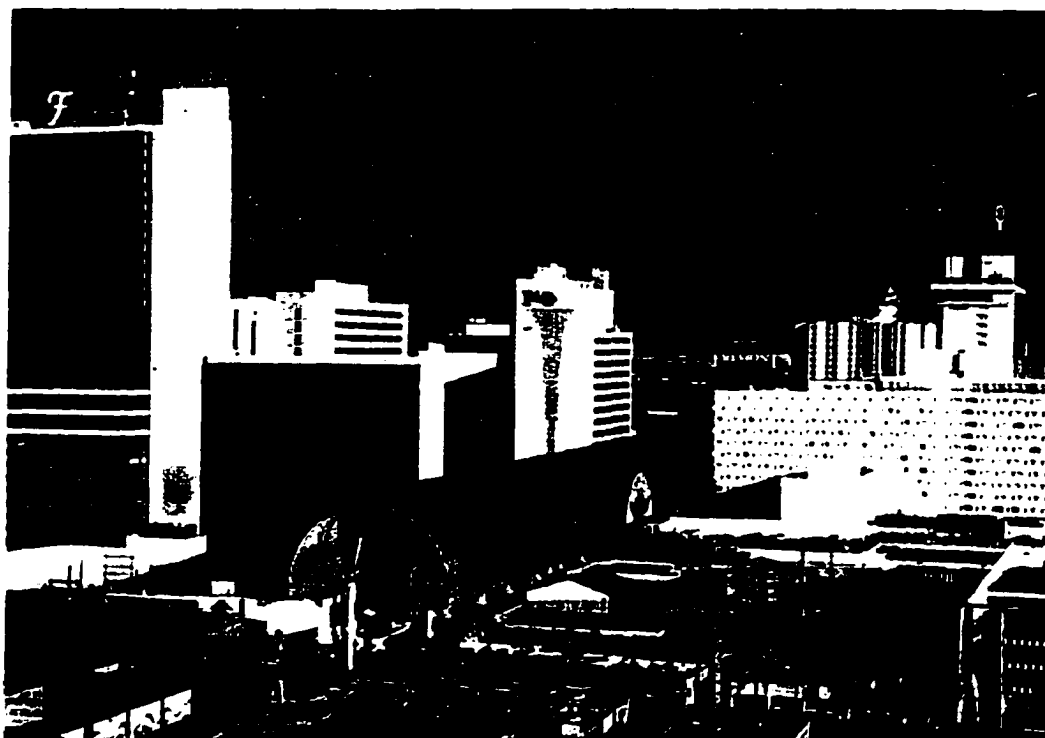
**Figure 47** Night time scene in the Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

sound shows, different scenes appeared and this make a change of perceptions and feelings about this place. Maybe this is the character of Las Vegas, something between real and unreal. The architecture was transferred into a urban theater, and people and shows become the main part of everyday experience.

There are a lot of potential for this real and unreal architecture. Maybe architect could use this to create something new.

### **Pedestrian Character**

Las Vegas is a car-oriented city. The big sign is just prepared for people to come from highway in a car. But we are lack of humanized street. It is true a lot of people walk on Strip, but the pedestrian space on the Strip is not big enough for pedestrians. Downtown Las Vegas Downtown Las Vegas has a good potential in this aspect. Because there is not a place can hold so many people for an event like Downtown in Las Vegas. That is



**Figure 48** Bird View: Day time scene of the Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)

why some important events such as the New Year are held here. The pedestrian mall provides the good environment for people wandering around the street, and also provide a nice enclosed space for the memorial events. The pedestrian oriented environment let people not to worry about the vehicular traffic and appreciate the old Las Vegas downtown casinos, and the light and sound shows.



**Figure 49 Bird View:** Night time Scene of the Fremont Street Experience (From Fremont Street Experience Brochure)



## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### **Conclusion**

Fremont Street Experience followed the path of successful downtown redevelopment experiences in other American cities, and turned downtown Las Vegas into an active urban space. This project established the identity of the downtown Las Vegas and created the image for the central business district. The Fremont Street Experience is the first project the City of Las Vegas, Fremont Street Experience Limited Liability Company and Downtown Las Vegas Partnership made the commitment to revitalize downtown Las Vegas as the center of commerce.

The ultimate goal to which the Fremont Street Experience aspires is to create an environment conducive to a lively, satisfying day / night variety of “people activities”, create an entirely new image for Downtown. To achieve this goal, the space frame was created to make the identity of this area. Under the space frame of Fremont Street Experience, the Fremont Street was transformed into a “urban theater” and the “Town Square” of City of Las Vegas. Because of the Fremont Street Experience, more and more tourists were attracted to this area and more investments were implemented in Downtown Las Vegas.

The strategy of Fremont Street Experience is successful in the cooperation of public government and private developments. City of Las Vegas, with the leadership

and support of their officials and staff, provided financial resources, authority not available to other nongovernmental entities, political influence, and leadership in the revitalization. The casino owners supported the city in providing fund for the project and management of the place.

This project not only effectively united downtown casinos together to create a must-see attraction for the tourists, but also increased the value of downtown Las Vegas, and stimulated more investments in this area to improve the overall economic environment of downtown Las Vegas. As a catalyst project, Fremont Street Experience made the first step toward an active downtown and set up a base form for further development in this area.

From the project of Fremont Street Experience, we can see a good example in redeveloping a declining downtown. This project not only created a new pedestrian urban space, but also brought economic benefit to this area.

In the design aspect of the project, Fremont Street Experience successfully created the identity of the downtown Las Vegas. Since it is completely differentiated from neighboring blocks, the Fremont Street Experience became a point of orientation of downtown Las Vegas. The strong architectural form made this area distinctively impressive to the tourists.

The space is well organized and efficiently connected to the casinos along the Fremont Street. The landscape was designed in a serpentine manner that stretched along the curved path of the pedestrian walkway, and separated the lineal pedestrian mall into different smaller spaces.

The retail booths are located on the curved walkway and combined with street furniture. These retail booths provided services for the pedestrian, and at the same time, provided places where people can have a rest and communicate with other people.

In the social aspect of the project, the Fremont Street Experience improved the environmental quality of this area, enhanced Western cultural of Downtown Las Vegas,

attracted more tourists to this area, and became an identity of downtown Las Vegas. This is not only a place where people can enjoy the light and sound shows at night, but also a place where people can sit and talk with other people in the daytime.

In the economic aspect of the project, more tourists brought more active space in Downtown Las Vegas and more benefits to this area. Increased investments were implemented in this area and the overall economic environment was improved. More job opportunities were created because of the expansion of casinos and new projects corresponding to the Fremont Street Experience. The project successfully boosted the downtown economy and made a good beginning of the redevelopment in Downtown Las Vegas.

The Fremont Street Experience is a redevelopment project creating the place by integrating the modern multimedia technology into architectural design. Although this project did not push this aspect to its limit, it is a good experiment to inspire others.

Architects are always searching for the new solutions in creating the space, communicating with users, and illustrating the social and cultural meanings in their projects. This kind of exploration gives architecture a new life in developing forward to catch up with the fast changes of our time.

From the history of modern architecture, the technology that integrated into architecture is limited in the construction field. The new construction method and new materials brought the revolution of modern architecture. Today, with the revolution of communication technology, especially the Internet, the world entered into a new information era in which the communication technology will affect all the aspect of people's everyday life. The concept of media has been transferred and everything could be a kind of media in design. In this sense, architecture itself is a media in conveying the meaning, communicating with people, and illustrating the information. The connection of the new technology and architecture will be the new revolution in architectural design.

Fremont Street Experience has given us a hint of information era, so why don't we go beyond and get some freedom in design? The new technology provides us more opportunities to create more expressive space. We can increase the quality of space and make the space a multi-function one; this is about features and programs in architectural design. From the rules of modern architecture, different function and features require different space, and produce different form of architecture. So what is the form produced by the multimedia technology? This is a question for our architects to answer in the 21st century.

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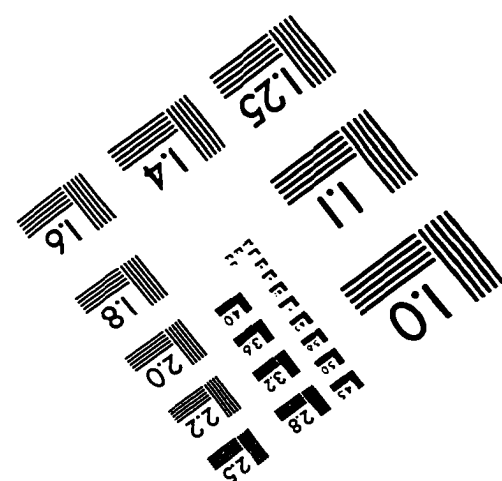
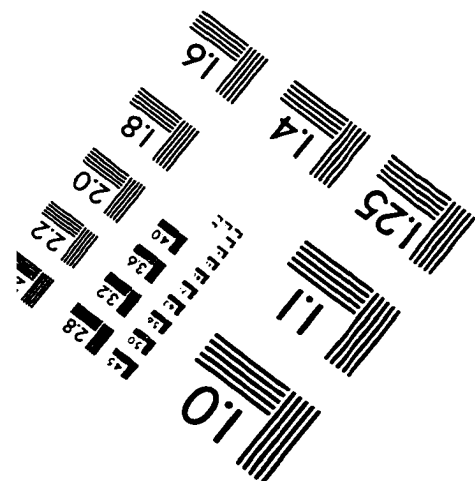
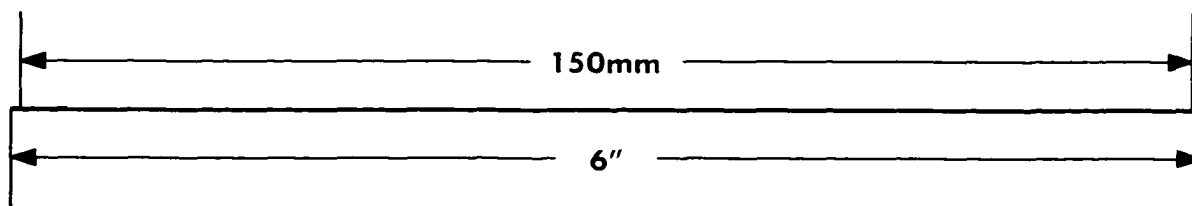
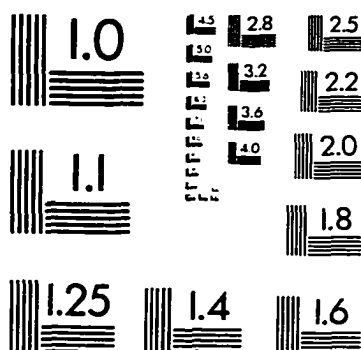
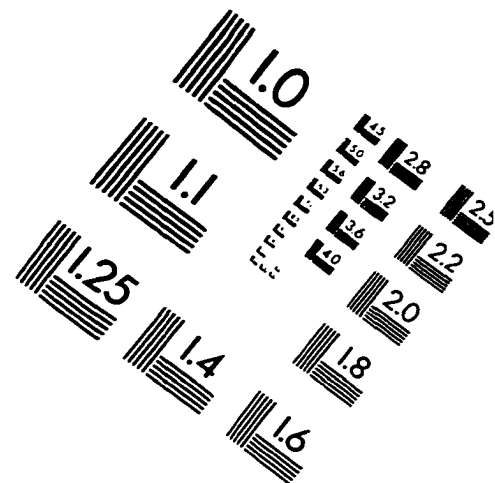
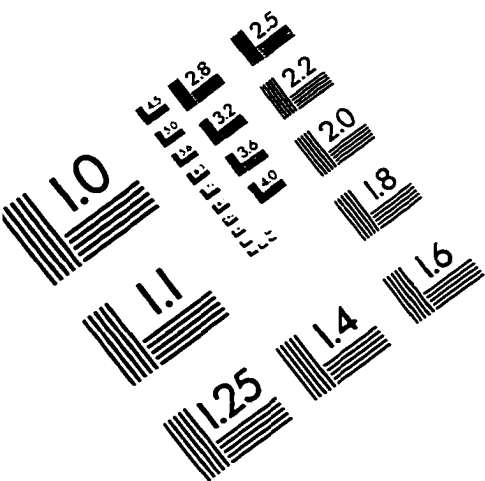
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