

Public Notice

Vol. 7 No. 11 [Revised] April 81



RH
WL
61249
v.7:1

City to Build \$250,000 Death Trap

by David Stipp

The City of Lawrence, which produced, directed and staged the wreck of the Anderson Building at 600 Mass last December, may be setting the stage for a followup series of wrecks at the same site, according to three University of Kansas professors. Despite the professors' warnings, the city has accepted a bid to build the controversial parking lot as designed.

Following a "must do" order that had the City Engineer's staff burning the midnight oil, the City Manager announced that the plan for the parking lot was complete, and would be ready for a bid date to be set at the March 10 City Commission meeting -- just in time for the city primary election. That morning, John Morris, assistant professor of architecture and urban design, examined the city's plan.

When discussion of the bid date began that Tuesday night, Morris objected to construction of the lot on two general principles. First, that the location was unsuitable because it lacked easy access to either lower Mass or City Hall. Second, that the entire project was economically unfeasible. He pointed out that if all 28 spaces were occupied for nine hours a day, six days a week for 52 weeks, it would still take nearly 32 years for income to match the \$250,000 price tag.

The City Commission pooh-poohed his objections as old hash already settled. When Morris began to attack the plan on the issue of the danger inherent in the specific design, the city staff offered to display its diagram of the parking lot for all to see -- and did so.

There was a moment of confused silence as all those who were



Abandoned cars clot lot at 600 Mass. Owners afraid to leave.

seeing the design for the first time tried to comprehend what was before their eyes. Commissioner Robert Schumm ended the pause by asking, "Where's the exit?" (Ah-Hah!)

The exit, it was explained, was in exactly the same place as the entrance, sharing the common driveway. How then, Morris asked, were vehicles supposed to exit onto Sixth Street without causing a traffic jam or colliding with vehicles trying to enter the lot?

Simple, the staff explained after a little deliberation. This was an "English style" traffic pattern. Vehicles would enter and exit the lot in the left-hand lanes, thus avoiding any crossing of paths.

Even so, nearly everyone agreed the design could use a little refinement; and the commission asked Morris if he would be willing to donate his services in helping the city staff iron out the wrinkles. After some haggling and posturing,

the four city fathers made it clear that they would have a parking lot at that location, regardless, but that Morris was welcome to help make it less dangerous, if he wanted to.

Morris agreed to do what he could. The next afternoon, he and Gaylord Richardson, associate professor of architecture and urban design, met with city planners to discuss the design. The results of this meeting were not to be known until the next Tuesday, March 17.

In the meantime, Public Notice sought the professional opinion of Tom Mulinazzi, who teaches traffic design and safety in the School of Civil Engineering. After examining the design and the site, Mulinazzi admitted it wasn't a very good spot for a parking lot.

However, he said there were several alterations that could be made to the design to reduce the risk factor. The three main ones being: 1. Widen the overall

driveway. 2. Reduce drastically the angle at which vehicles exiting the lot were forced to enter the flow of traffic on Sixth Street. 3. Construct a substantial traffic barrier to protect vehicles exiting the lot from vehicles entering the lot uphill from them.

Next Tuesday morning, March 17, Public Notice called on the City Engineering Department and asked to be shown the changes made in the plan. The City Engineer, Leonard Hoover, pointed out the new location of the handicapped parking spaces, the wider driveway, and the new, six-inch high traffic separator -- complete with a three-foot high "keep right" sign.

Keep right? What happened to the "English style" entrance/exit plan? After a short, but confusing conversation, Hoover was quite plain and emphatic: No plan he had ever seen or worked on regarding the 600 Mass parking lot contained any notion of an "English style" driveway!

The implication of Hoover's remark is clear. Either the City Engineer had slipped a cog or, one week before, the City Manager and the four City Commissioners had been willing and eager to approve a dangerous design without anybody in the room knowing what the real picture was!

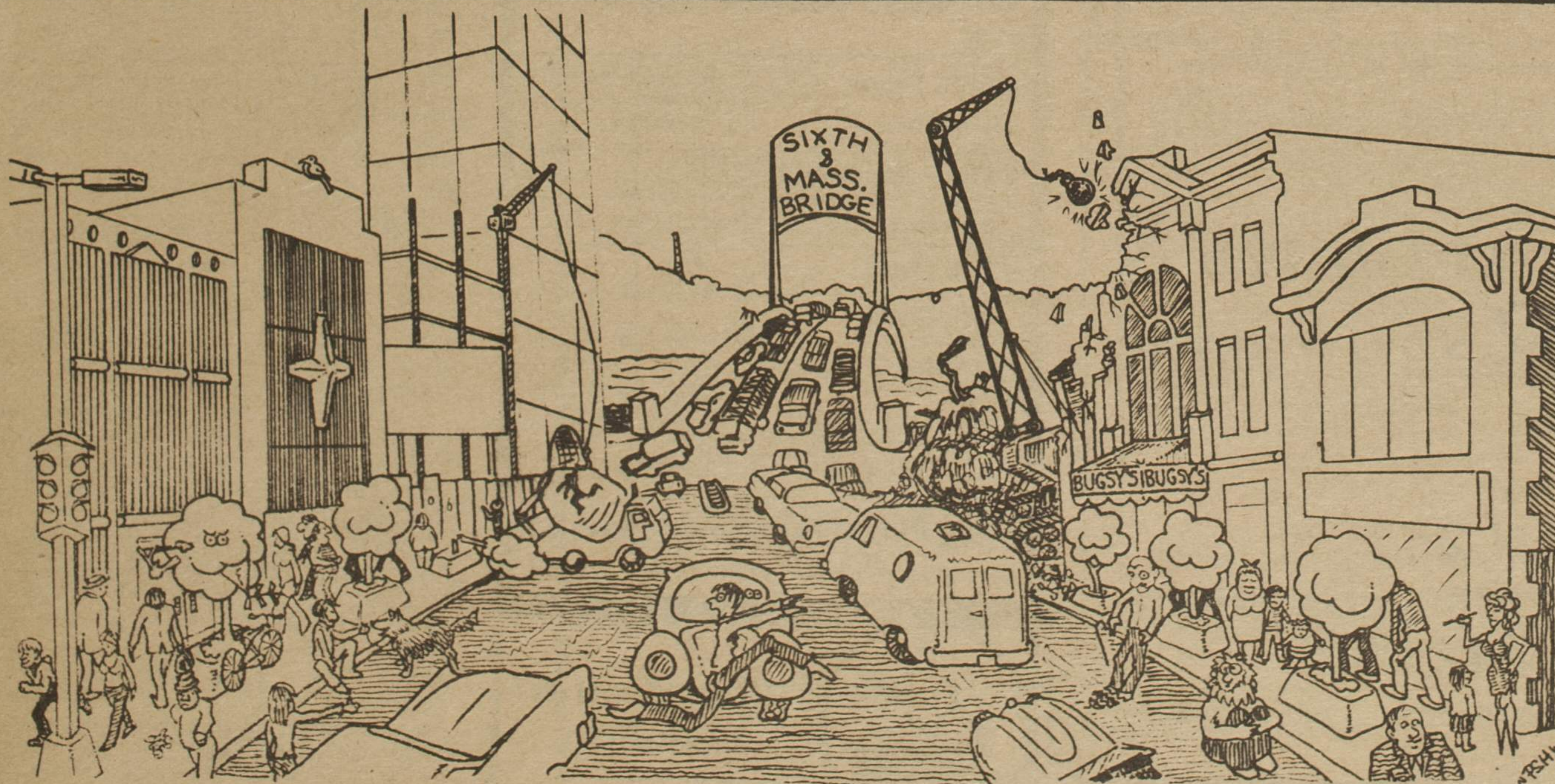
The revelation of the true nature of the design had a considerable impact on the question of danger to the patrons of the parking lot and the contiguous traffic on Sixth Street. By moving the exit point even farther south toward the Journal-World building, the already critically deficient visibility was worsened.

(continued on p. 2, col. 3)

Vol. 1 No. 4

AUGUST, 1976

25¢



Prophecy Fulfilled

Before you dismiss the photo at the top of this page as being unrealistic, take notice. The drawing to the left appeared on the front page of PUBLIC NOTICE, predicting major changes for the north end of downtown. The crane and wrecking ball are positioned in the rubble of what used to be Bryan Anderson's building.