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The Central Bank of The Bahamas

Urban Planning & Architectural Design Competition

Design Brief

Tradition vs. Change

The Project presents a unique opportunity to marry traditional architectural traits and norms with modern technological and transformative trends in the Architectural world. Further, the development is intended to blend comfortably into the daily activities of people conducting business within the Town Centre. It also provides the opportunity to create a convenient City Centre for persons living in the City of Nassau proper to conduct business. Once completed, it is generally estimated that some twenty thousand visitors and residents will pass through the space daily.

The Urban Plan

The area selected by the design team for redevelopment is considered to be the Nassau Town Centre. Our concept seeks to establish and enhance existing system of movement of people throughout the downtown area, both by pedestrian ways and vehicular traffic thereby establishing an environment where people feel comfortable walking and socializing, thus injecting new life back into the City Centre. We intend to create the catalyst for a unified busing system, re-defined main streets using proposed building mass. We also seek to remove some of the many surface parking within the town Centre and create numerous parking garages around the perimeter of the designated area as well as some outside the area defined by the project.

At the heart of the design is that the proposal would connect both Bahamians and visitors alike to country's leaders thereby fostering a greater exchange of historical knowledge and at the same time create the atmosphere where the citizenry are able to freely provide suggestions to our Nation's leaders. Visitors disembarking the cruise ships will move into a newly created Rawson Square and move directly into the various historical museums created in the periphery of the Square to view our ancestral heritage ie. Greek, English and African; and also, our own Bahamian history. There will also be an opportunity for the exposure to our food and other cultural experiences within the Town Centre. (E.g. Music, Political and Judicial Systems, our economy and also our security (police) operations.)

While the Town Centre is intended to provide a taste of our societal norms around the project's perimeter, the opportunity further exists for a greater display of the Bahamian lifestyles through enhancements to our sporting and education facilities at the southern recreation site, C.R. Walker School, a new Junkanoo Village at the old city market site, a new cluster of Bahamian Confectionary Stores to compliment Mortimer's Candy Kitchen; and through a redevelopment of the area surrounding the Water Tower, locals and visitors alike could continue the traditions of visiting and working in these facilities once they have been upgraded.

A collection of government facilities such as the courts, the various ministries, the police, the parliament and indeed the Central Bank of The Bahamas creates a university like campus within the City Centre that would provide the citizen and visitor alike the opportunity to conduct numerous business functions within a designated area of town while enjoying multiple cultural experiences.

The main features of the re-development for the City Centre are:

- a) **A new Central Bank with its majestic display of wealth and strength;**
- b) **A new Parliament building designed in the spirit of the old Victoria Hotel;**
- c) **A new Post Office Building adjacent to the bank; and**
- d) **A new Office of The Prime Minister and Cabinet Office.**

New Parliament Building

The Royal Victoria site provides the perfect location for the construction of a new and modern Parliament building. The concept is to create a new three storey Parliament Building in the spirit of the old Royal Victoria Hotel. The building will house The House of Assembly, The Senate Chambers and the Office of the Leader of the Opposition in addition to Gallery and exhibit spaces for the display of past political leaders/figures and current exhibits. A newly developed Shirley Street overpass would serve as the connector to Rawson Square and the newly created Parliament Building at the Victoria Gardens site thus maintaining a sense of connecting the political power to Rawson Square.

New Office of The Prime Minister and Cabinet

Due to the state of disrepair of the current Churchill building and the awkward positioning of this building in Rawson Square, it is proposed that the building be demolished and a newly repositioned building, with a picturesque view of the harbour, be constructed to house the Cabinet Office and the Office of The Prime Minister, while at the same time expanding the square area to create more green space and pedestrian walks. The newly constructed building will also reshape the Bay Street space while at the same time create positive Urban Space.

Parliament Square Building

The buildings that currently constitute Parliament in Rawson Square are the House of Assembly, the Senate building and the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. With a new Parliament building to house these facilities, these buildings may be utilized as historical museums with exhibit spaces, gallery and restaurants. It is the design team view that this presents a great opportunity to display the historical roots of the various Bahamian Heroes and others who would have contributed to the development of the Bahamas.

New Post Office Building

The current Post Office building comprises 7 to 8 floors and is mistakenly thought of as only housing the main post office. It should be pointed out that the Post Office in fact only occupies 2 ½ floors and the remaining floors presently remain un-occupied as the other agencies

that previously occupied the structure have all relocated due to the building's current state of disrepair. As noted earlier, the newly developed site will house both The Central Bank of The Bahamas and the main Post Office buildings.

Ministry of National Security

The Ministry of National Security is now temporary housed in the Mosko building on Shirley Street, and is scheduled to be re-located in the new building on John .F. Kennedy Drive; next to the Attorney General's Office. The Ministry in our opinion should also be a part of the Down Town Government Campus and Government should seek to acquire and renovate the Mosko building to achieve this goal. The Ministry will then have a prominent place within the City Centre and serve as a symbolic gestor of National Security to the Country.

Junkanoo Village & Museum at the old City Market site

The spirit of Junkanoo presently permeates this site as for more than 15 years the One Family Junkanoo Organization, one of the country's premier Junkanoo groups, have used this site to practice in preparation for the Annual New Providence Junkanoo Parade at-least six months of the year. The site is located in the "belly" of six of the major Junkanoo groups and adjacent to the C.R. Walker Senior School, Southern Recreation Ground, and the Government House Ground. The location lends itself for easy access to the school, the churches and corporate facilities to research the culture, host functions and create exhibits to display costumes and other artistic works.

New Bus Terminal

As we commence the revitalization of the New Nassau City Centre, a properly scheduled busing system must also be implemented to facilitate the smooth transfer of people to and from the town Centre. Consequently, a new Bus Terminal, equipped with public parking and food outlets must be included in the overall development. With a reliable bussing system, more persons would be inclined to use this method of transport into town to conduct business, rather than driving their personal vehicles.

New Courthouse and Sally Port

Continuing with the concept of removing some of the surface parking onto multi-storey garages, the parking lot just south of the Bitco building would be developed into a multi-storey courthouse complex with a lower level sallyport entry and holding cell to accommodate inmates being transported to and from Fox Hill Correctional Centre. This will eliminate the public spectacle that occurs in bank lane when inmates arrive for court or leave for the Correctional Centre. This will reduce the security risk involve in this process and limit the chances of escape by inmates.

The Police Compound at East Street

The Police compound presently occupies a large area within the designated urban design footprint. It houses among several other facilities;

- a) The Police Headquarters;
- b) The Staff Quarters;
- c) The Fire Branch;
- d) The Forensic Facilities;
- e) The Paul Farquharson Complex; and
- f) The Police Canteen;

It is the project designer view that the compound could be re-designed to better utilize the office space and provide greater parking. This could be undertaken as a separate project.

Re-Development of the Existing Central Bank

The Bank should become the new Ministry of Finance and Department of Inland Revenue, thus completing the campus-like atmosphere of the Government buildings located in the designated Down Town area. The location of the Department of Inland Revenue on Carmichael Road has made it cumbersome for the general public to shuttle from Town to the Carmichael Road area to conduct financial transactions. This premise provides the opportunity to bring all of the financial services under one roof and puts the Ministry in proximity to most of the legal and accounting offices within the Down Town area, where one may have to access documents from these businesses to complete matters related to the Ministry.

The Water Tower and Surrounding Area

The Water Tower, Queen's Staircase and the Fort Fincastle are located on what is considered to be one of the highest points in New Providence. At the bottom of the water tower is a make shift craft market; not properly planned. As a result, the craft market obstructs the view at the site and does nothing to enhance the esthetics of the Tower. The Tower itself has been inoperable for many years; the proposal is to demolish the existing craft market stalls and design new octagonal shaped structure in keeping with the Water Tower's architecture. It is also recommended that the Tower have an external (elevator) Lift to take visitors to the top while enjoying the views around the island. Additionally, land should also be acquired on Prison Lane so that tour buses and taxi drivers could have proper parking areas and not block the route to the Tower and the Fort.

Bank Lane:- A Pedestrian Mall

Over the years Bank Lane has generally become famous as a prisoner drop-off point for prisoners being transported to court on buses through this roadway. Our plan removes vehicular traffic away from Bank Lane and transforms this area into a pedestrian walk with access to the proposed Museums and Restaurants. Bank Lane will also connect to the new Parliament offices at Victoria Gardens via the overpass across Shirley Street.

Parking Structures

The proposal attempts to remove as many surface parking as possible and to create numerous multi-level parking garages within the designated area including the perimeter of the planning. This new construction frees up the present parking to be used for commercial and residential developments. The new parking structures become a great revenue source for the Downtown Nassau Management Team.

Utilities

Utility upgrades will become necessary to facilitate the development of Downtown. It is recommended that the development also explore opportunities to utilize more efficient energy sources such as natural gas, or solar.

The Central Bank of the Bahamas

Often times when faced with Architectural issues, such as the ones presented in this proposal, the initial reaction is to duplicate traditional styles and norms. In some aspect of this proposal that might be deemed appropriate, such as with the new Parliament Building, its placement on the old Royal Victoria site and its connection to the Architecture in Rawson Square; however this approach is not always appropriate. The Bank present a great opportunity to depart from the traditional styles and began a new era of Architecture in anticipation of new neighbours like the United States Embassy, the New Post Office and other proposed developments around the core or the City Centre.

The ground floor is dedicated to the arts, both visual and performing and also houses the reception and general information areas of the Bank. The roof top over the theatre is ideal for budding and accomplished artist to set up and have live sessions. The middle floors are dedicated to the various departments of the Bank, leaving the top level floor for the Executive Offices and board rooms with a large balcony area for hosting small groups while taking in the views of Nassau Harbour and the surrounding historic communities. Most successful businesses in the 21st century are recognized by Brand and Logos that are emblazed on their equipment, products and facilities. As the Central Bank currently has the Sand Dollar as its Logo, the newly designed Bank will have the existing logo themed throughout the entire structure. The simple clean lines of the glazing and walls emblazed with the Bank's logo depict the elegance of the design. Our beautiful climate is also embraced through the provision of the roof top areas for public and private use and could still be enjoyed while transitioning from the parking facilities to the Bank through the glass enclosed sky bridge.

The Central Bank stands as the barometer of strength and wealth of the Bahamian society. Strategically positioned between the law maker and the guardians of the law; the Parliament and the Police.

Several major considerations went into identifying the proper site for the bank. The considerations were:

- a) Its placement within the City Centre.
- b) Its location with respect to adjacent facilities.
- c) Its placement in relations to Government Offices and other Financial Institutions.
- d) The displacement of the existing main Post Office.

- e) The existing configuration of the Post Office site and the possibility of reusing some aspects of the site and building, and more importantly;
- f) The scope of the bank and the ease of transposing it onto this site.

By strategically placing the Bank, as shown, on the eastern portion of the site and through the removal of the existing surface parking lots, both east and west of the existing Post Office building, the possibility exists to locate both buildings on the site using a common entry way. As both the Central Bank and the Post Office in the past have used their main foyers to exhibit major Art works and other public exhibitions, such as stamp collection, coin collection, etc. As designers we see no need to duplicate foyers when savings may be experienced simply through a shared planning schedule by both agencies. It is noteworthy that both facilities also share similar security requirements as it relates to the transport of cash, valuables and other high security items, consequently the design takes this into consideration with common access to basement security levels.

Other Government Entities

Other Government institutions within the designated area, such as Government House Grounds and Ministry of Tourism, should be considered for improvements as well as signage, street lighting and sidewalks.

Private Properties

Private Property owners within the Urban Planning Zone should be encouraged to improve their properties through tax breaks and other incentives in keeping in line with the proposal to upgrade the public facilities in the City Zone.