

Down on the Waterfront

The slippery shores of planning

By Margaret Young

The Riveredge Plan, prepared by the Chicago Department of Development and Planning in 1974, "carries out the directives of the 1966 Comprehensive Plan of Chicago by identifying the locations, ways and methods for waterfront improvements along the Main Branch of the Chicago River." In this article, Margaret Young, AIA, discusses two projects by the firm of Gordon/Levin Associates—The East Bank Club and River Plaza—and how they illustrate the limitations of the Riveredge Plan and the difficulty of its implementation. She is project architect for both the East Bank and River Plaza developments.

East Bank Club, a four-story, \$9 million indoor tennis/racquetball sports complex, is located directly adjoining the North Branch River bank immediately north of the Apparel Mart. It is a Residential-Business Planned Development on privately owned land and will be financed by a commercial bank loan and investing limited partners.

The Planned Unit Development agreement requires that "The river's edge shall be developed as a continuous pedestrian way, available to the public, with an average width of 20 feet. This pedestrian way shall be suitably paved and/or

landscaped, shall be unobstructed except for columns or piers supporting upper stories or a roof, may be constructed partially or wholly at an elevation from 20 feet above grade level down to water level, and shall be subject to the approval of the Department of Development and Planning."

Nothing more—nothing less. A generally noncommittal, nondirective statement regarding riverfront "beautification".

A site fronting the river presents entirely new challenges to its developer and architect. Regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over construction along the riverbank must be consulted for their requirements and separate permits for construction must be obtained from each of them. Three agencies are involved: the Corps of Engineers, the Illinois Department of Transportation—Division of Water Resources, and the Chicago Department of Public Works. The Corps of Engineers appears to be the prime agency. The other two proceed along with or after the Corps approval.

The Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over any project which extends beyond, above or below, the existing water edge or seawall line. At the East Bank Club site, a triangular-shaped old railroad bridge abutment which jogs into the site consti-

tutes the water's edge, and since this is clearly within the building line, a permit from the Corps is required. To eliminate floating debris from collecting in this indentation in the river bank, a steel sheet-piling bulkhead with suitable backfill has been proposed.

The Corps' main responsibility is to maintain a clear shipping channel in the river to a given depth. The line of this clear channel may not be encroached upon and may or may not coincide with the line of the river bank. At the East Bank Club, the channel is out some distance from the bank; thereby a promenade extension over the water at critically tight points as well as small boat docks would be permitted, provided they did not interfere with the clear channel.

There exist no standards or regulations pertaining to actual construction or repairs of the sea wall. It is however, the property owner's responsibility to maintain the sea wall in good condition and it is subject to inspection by the Corps as well as by the City. Any repairs or modifications must be approved by them.

The Corps permit process is lengthy. An environmental impact assessment must be prepared and submitted by the owner in accordance with Corps questionnaires. The ►

assessment is the owner's opinion as to why the proposed project will not be detrimental. If the owner's reasoning is acceptable to the Corps review, the permit processing proceeds. If, however, they question the effect on the environment, the Corps will order their own environmental impact statement, a very lengthy process. Along with the owner's assessment, schematic drawings must be submitted, illustrating the extent and type of construction that will take place. This package is made public to interested agencies or adjacent property owners, and after a review of all comments, the permit is issued. The estimated time for this process, assuming no environmental impact statement is required, is four to six months.

Concurrent with the Corps review, the State of Illinois Division of Water Resources reviews the proposed project's plans, profiles and speculations for compliance with Illinois statutes. It is unlawful to make any fill or deposit, or build any wharf, pier, breakwater, bulkhead, jetty, causeway, harbor or mooring facilities for watercraft, or do any work in any of the public bodies of water within the State of Illinois, without prior approval.

The Chicago Department of Public Works also reviews proposed project plans for specifically foundation location and design. Chapter 38 of the Municipal Code requires this department to issue harbor permits for any work within 40 feet of the river. In addition, a public way permit is required for any work within 50 feet of existing bridge construction.

Stormwater runoff along the river edge of the property is not allowed to run into the waterway, but must be collected by a walkway drainage system and diverted into a storm sewer.

Closeness to the river and its existing sea walls can present many unpredictable construction hindrances. Typically, existing work was installed years ago, with con-

struction records either lost or non-existing. In the case of the East Bank Club, the existing sea wall is partially of steel and partially of wood sheeting and is of varying elevation. For reasons of economy and unpredictable construction problems, it is of obvious advantage not to disturb this existing 700-foot-long bulkhead. Instead, the architects chose to construct retaining and support walls directly behind it in order to elevate the pedestrian way to relate to the new building's floor and exit elevations.

Sketchy records indicated steel tie backs extending 50 feet back from the river edge. This placed the concrete deadmen into the initially proposed limits of the basement garage. The projected cost and problems of rebuilding this present tie back system resulted in a smaller garage.

River Plaza

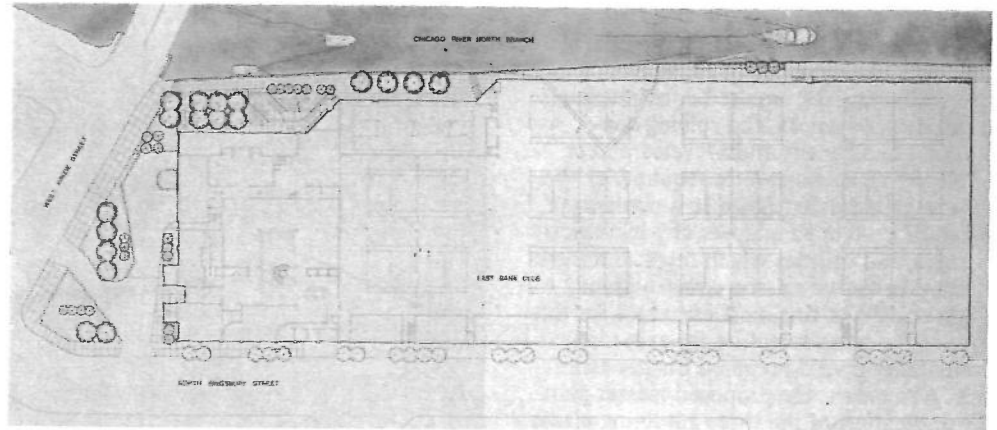
River Plaza is a 56-story rental apartment/commercial complex, built on privately owned property extending from Rush Street to Wabash Avenue and from Hubbard Street to N. Water Street.

At the time the Riveredge Plan was being drafted, a planned development

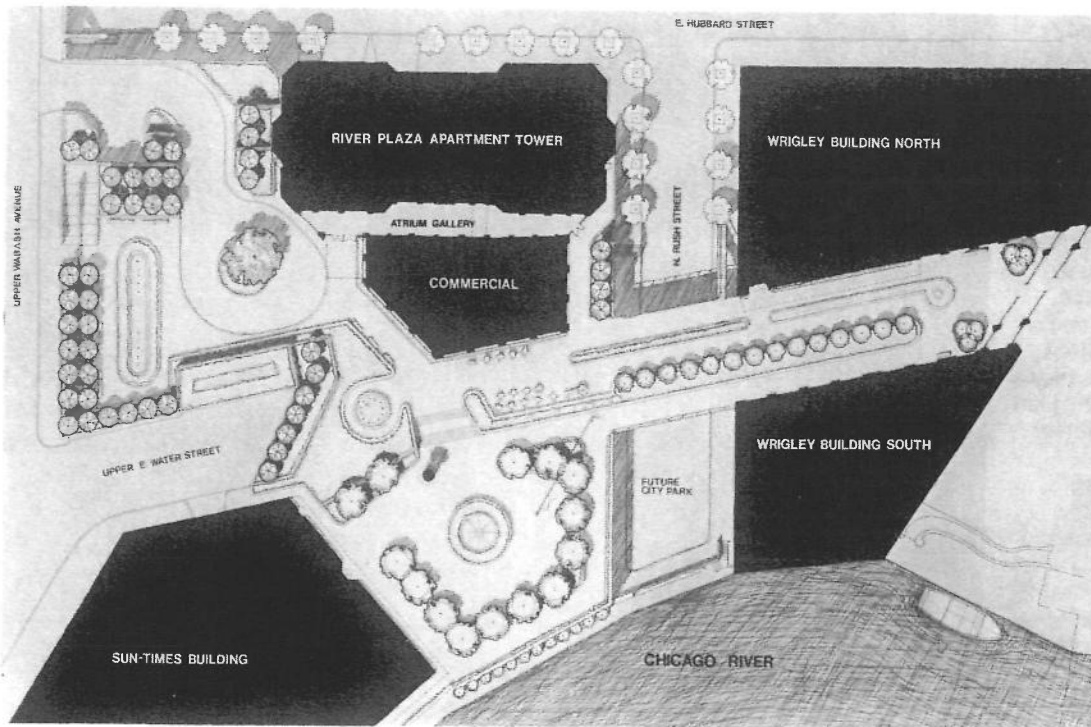
proposal for River/Water Street Plaza was submitted to the Department of Developing and Planning for review and approval. This proposal was recognized as an important link in Riveredge planning and was included in the Plan. Aside from the Apparel Mart (completed in 1977) and the Illinois Center developments (under construction), the River/Water Street Plaza development was the first major development built along the river since publication of the Riveredge Plan. The following projects illustrate the limitations of the Plan, and the difficulties of its implementation.

River Plaza offers access from two levels. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic gains access to the garage entrance, apartment and commercial lobbies via Upper Wabash Ave. On the lower Hubbard Street level are loading docks.

In the spirit of the Riveredge Plan, the master plan included Water Street Plaza—a pedestrian mall over public property (the existing Lower Water Street), tying together the new \$24 million development and its open plazas with the existing Sun-Times Plaza to the south and with the existing Wrigley Tower Plaza to the east. The project's strong orientation, and full, ▶



Hedrich-Blessing Photo



Hedrich-Blessing Photo

Tennis, anyone? The East Bank Club (opposite page), now under construction. Site plan (above). At left is the original plan for the River/Water Street Plaza. The oval-shaped fountain (far left) and the continuous planting leading to the Wrigley Building were not installed because of budgetary problems. McHugh-Levin Associates is the developer of both projects.

Red tape entangles a plaza plan

open and unobstructed views toward the river were to be accentuated by changes of the plaza elevations and planter heights. The required approval from adjoining property owners of The Chicago Sun-Times and the Wrigley Towers was enthusiastically given.

However, the planning and co-ordination for construction of this proposed steel and concrete connecting plaza structure proved to be very time-consuming, costly and frustrating. The impacts of existing street and railroad traffic, as well as problems with major utility locations within the street below, required four separate structural designs and numerous meetings, lengthy conversations and reams of correspondence. Five private utility, railroad and 11 city regulating agencies, as well as structural engineers, architect and adjoining property owners had to be satisfied.

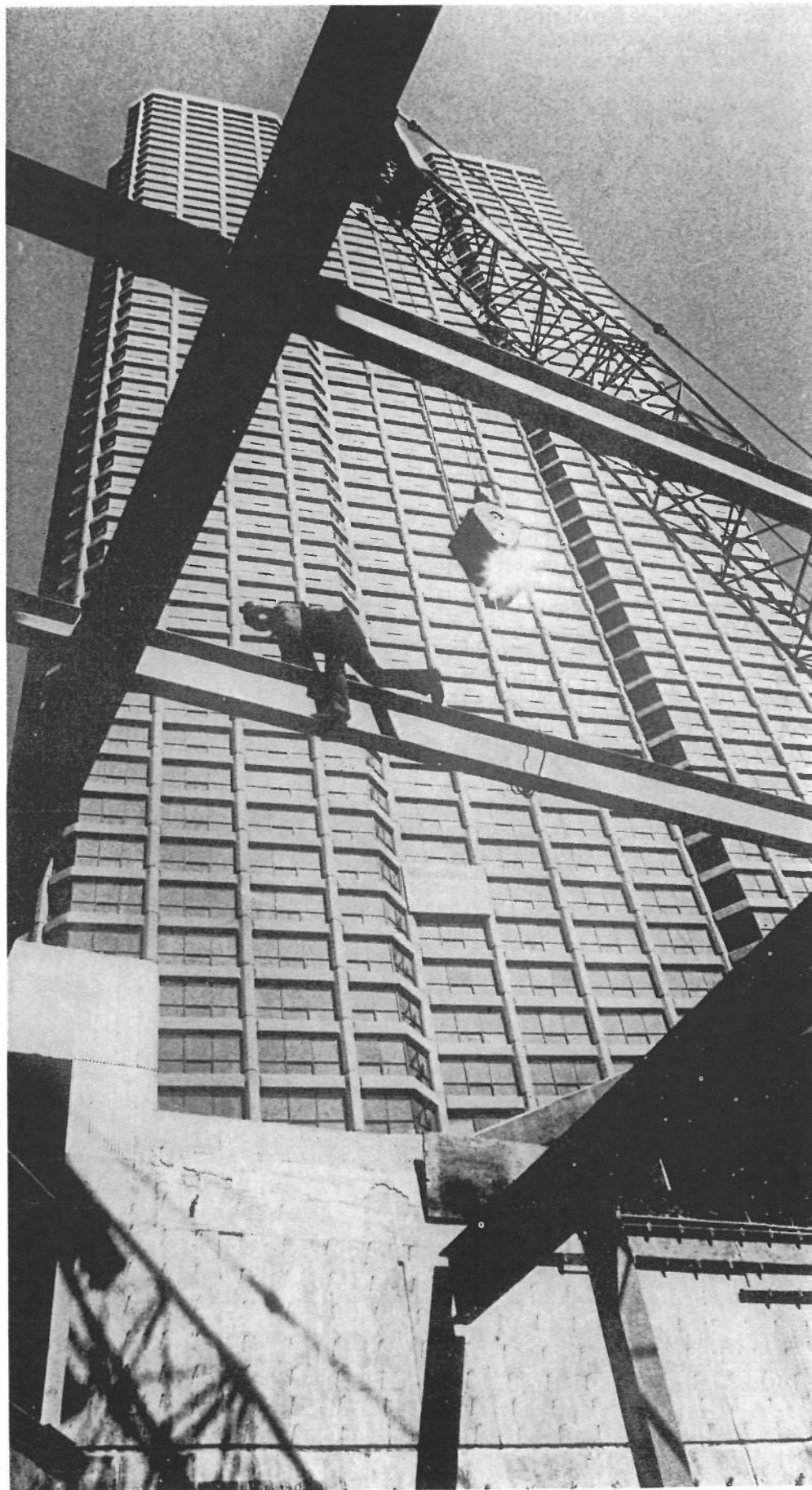
The major areas requiring co-ordination included locating structural steel columns and their caissons so as to have minimal or no existing interference with utilities and abandoned freight tunnels; no interference with existing vehicular and pedestrian access to adjoining properties; minimal structural ramifications of excessively long spans; allowing for required construction and street clearances, and solving connections to adjacent multi-leveled plazas.

Nearly all caissons were required by the City to be hand dug down to a minimum depth of six feet to uncover any incorrectly or unplotted utilities which might interfere or straddle actual caisson construction.

At this point final cost estimates for this connecting plaza structure far exceeded preliminary owner-prepared budget estimates. As a result, the proposed master plan for unification of the three adjoining plazas, as initially prepared by a landscape architect and planner, was never fully realized.

Unification of the plazas through the confined use of existing materials, terrazzo and granite was impossible within the owner's budget. Instead, exposed aggregate concrete paving and exposed ribbed and plain surfaced concrete planter walls were specified for both River and Water Street Plazas. Free-standing benches were greatly reduced in number and seating detailed as a part of the planter walls was eliminated, as was one of two proposed fountains and a colorful kiosk. Light standards, hose bibbs, and planter and deck drains were reduced in number. And the original formal planting plan was replaced with informal layout of fewer and less costly plant materials.

It is interesting to note that The Sun-Times was not in full agreement with the original unifying master plan and considered alteration of its existing plaza layout a perhaps needless expense. Aside from installing matching light standards, at that time they saw little need for measures which would integrate the new plaza to their north. Eighteen months later it is encouraging to see construction completed on the ►



Constructing the underpinning of River Plaza.

Chicago Sun-Times Photo

fountain within The Sun-Times Plaza, as proposed in the master plan.

The Wrigley ownership and management showed less interest in relating their existing plaza layout to new adjacent developments. And proposals for visually opening up the window wall between their north and south towers fronting on Michigan Avenue, in order to alert and invite passers-by to the open plaza vistas beyond, fell on deaf ears.

It is of further interest that the agreement between the City of Chicago and the developer of the Water Street Plaza stipulated that, upon the completion of construction, the plaza would become the property of the City for the use of the general public. It further stipulated that the owner of the River Plaza would be responsible for the appearance, maintenance and repair of the Water Street Plaza and its supporting columns, and that this same owner be required to maintain a liability insurance policy indemnifying the City from and against any injury, death, loss or damage to persons or property arising out of or due to the maintenance, repair or use of the plaza.

The experiences encountered during this project indicate that there is obviously little incentive for private development to follow the 'guidelines' of the Riveredge Plan. In this instance the developer possibly benefits indirectly by providing pedestrian access to Michigan Avenue. Increased floor area ratio, reduced parking requirements, tax considerations or other compensations were not offered to the developer. The project does provide an expanded public plaza but there could have and there should be more for all than what exists there today.

As these case studies indicate, the developer of river frontage will incur additional construction and maintenance expenses, possible reduction of income-producing building area, longer planning and/or construction time, as well as public criticism for providing a less than perfect

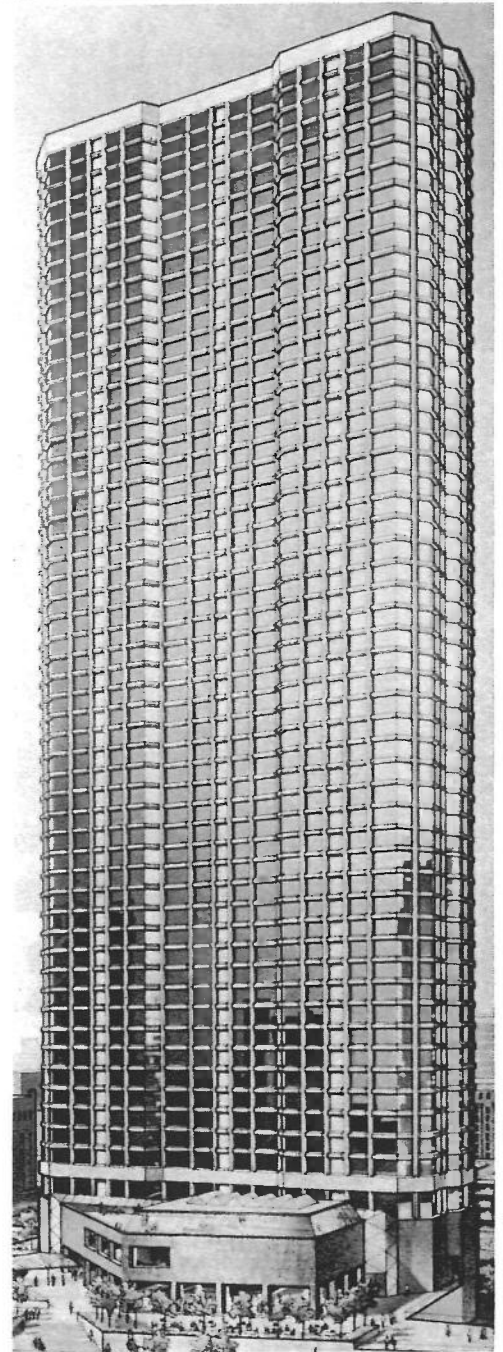
riverfront environment. But perhaps the area of riverfront developing of most concern to both the developer and the architect are its liabilities. Neither the Riveredge Plan nor the Chicago River Promenade Plan address themselves to the liability problems of a public way along a body of water, nor to specific recommendations or standards for acceptable railings or visual barriers along the river's edge.

It is true that city government and the public are becoming increasingly aware of the need to improve the visual qualities of our central urban water frontage. Existing and often abandoned warehouses, wholesale market places, parking garages or lots, railroads and industrial plants could be relocated and/or visually improved. Few improvements, if properly done, can equal the power, excitement and desirability of a well-designed project along water frontage.

One must remember, however, that a private developer's primary concern is making a profit, followed only then by community pride, interest in historic significance and a commitment to the beautification of the river edge for all.

Researching other proposed as well as existing urban-core waterfront developments, experience indicates unfortunately that a breakdown frequently occurs between plan preparation and the actual implementation. When planning and implementation are considered a continuous strategy, the breakdown of implementation is less likely to occur. When a distinct division between the two phases occurs and implementation becomes an afterthought, the chances for realizing the development plans are considerably less.

Experience further indicates that the primary reason why cities have not actualized their waterfront development plans is not because of lack of funding, lack of physical setting, or lack of technical or professional input, but because of a lack of leadership, public support and civic commitment.



Chicago Sun-Times Photo



The 56-story River Plaza apartments (above) with offices, shops, restaurants and a swimming pool in the low building. River Plaza's structural steel columns and their caissons (left) proved to be time-consuming and costly. Nearly all caissons had to be hand dug at least 6 feet.

Hard-hat goes with job for a woman architect

ALTHO A hard-hat goes with the rugged, demanding job, it's just a challenge for Margaret Young. She's the architectural field representative for construction of Newberry Plaza, a 56-story apartment-townhouse-commercial complex going up at State and Oak Streets on the near North Side.

A development of McHugh-Levin Associates, the complex when completed next Spring will contain 624 de luxe apartments, 15 townhouses on a landscaped deck three stories above the ground, three floors of commercial space, a garage for 325 cars, a glass-enclosed atrium garden, swimming pool, and restaurant.

Mrs. Young, clad in hard hat and tailored pantsuit, can be seen almost daily inspecting parts of the building under construction, poring over working drawings in the construction office, and checking with superintendents, foremen, and workers.

MRS. YOUNG is believed to be the first woman architect assigned the responsibility for a project of this size in Chicago, and perhaps in the nation. Only three per cent of registered architects in the United States are women, compared with 24 per cent in the Soviet Union and more than 50 per cent in Greece.

She has been on the staff of Ezra Gordon-Jack M. Levin & Associates, architects for Newberry Plaza, since February, 1969. Newberry Plaza represents her first assignment to field inspection on an actual construction project.

Mrs. Young sees nothing unusual in what she is doing pursuing the profession she chose while she was a student at Senn High School.

She took an elective course in mechanical drafting, liked it, and thus decided on her future career. Even tho school counselors insisted that architecture was "not a field for women," she enrolled in the University of Illinois. She studied first at Navy Pier and then at Champaign-Urbana, where she received a bachelor's degree in 1966.

Before becoming a member of Ezra Gordon-Jack M. Levin & Associates, Margaret had married architect James Young, also a University of Illinois graduate now specializing in designs for schools and industrial buildings as partner in a north suburban firm.

The two make no secret of their long-range dream of forming a professional partnership.



A HARD-HAT is required on the job for Margaret Young, field architect on Newberry Plaza.

Campus Galleries Spotlight Women Artists, Architects

Nobody planned it just that way, but November became a sort of "alumnae month" in campus art circles. The Illini Union's small but much-visited art gallery offered "Perspectives of Four Women Artists," and "Chicago Women Architects: Contemporary Directions" drew students and faculty to Temple Buell Architecture Gallery.

Two women who got much of their art training at the University, a faculty daughter specializing in wood sculpture and a Chicago painter made up the Illini Union show, which gallery sponsors said had as its purpose simply "to demonstrate what some successful women artists are doing."

Barbara Polan Kaplan '61, M.F.A. '64, of Bloomington, Ind., showed lithographs, etchings and engravings illustrating her concern "with the figure, interior spaces, landscapes and seascapes, alone and together."

Wife of a former U. of I. faculty member who now teaches at Indiana University, she has studied in Paris at three different periods and has exhibited her work there and in Spain and at many juried shows in this country.

The other alumna in the local show was Kathryn Mowrer Leach, who attended the U. of I. in 1959-62, reared two children while working as a free-lance interior designer and then returned to school in 1973, receiving the bachelor of fine arts degree in 1976. Her work has been shown at museums and colleges in Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee and Illinois.

Working most recently in the San Joaquin Valley outside Stockton, Calif., Mrs. Leach brought portraits to the Union show, many of them of local persons done from photographs. They generally are not commissioned works, she said. "I am interested in the people as subjects. I ask them rather than them asking

me."

The artist is the daughter of the O. Hobart Mowrer of Urbana, both emeritus members of the faculty.

Others showing works were Laura Jane Alpert, a member of the art faculty at Indiana University who exhibited large laminated sculptures of wood which she favors as "a renewable resource," and Priscilla Humay, whose works in watercolor, pencil and acrylic showed her "concern with the stratification of nature's color, form and motion."

Miss Alpert, daughter of Daniel and Natalie Alpert, both faculty members here, studied at Stanford and the University of Oregon. Priscilla Humay, a member of the board of ARC Gallery and Educational Foundation in Chicago, studied at the Art Institute, IIT and at Charles University in Prague.

Eight graduates in architecture from the Urbana-Champaign campus were included in an attention-getting show mounted in Chicago, and efforts to bring part of the exhibit to the local campus came to fruition last month.

Occupying the Buell Gallery was the exhibit, which contained models, photographs,

CALLING IT LIKE IT IS

The 1960 building which Krannert Art Museum adjoins formerly housed part of the Department of Architecture along with the Department of Art and Design. To encompass both, it was called the Fine and Applied Arts Building. Now however, the architects have moved out, leaving only Art and Design, and the Board of Trustees has agreed that "Art and Design Building" is what the structure should be called. The renaming was approved at the October meeting.

plans and renderings by women who have been influential in shaping Chicago's architecture. And, on Nov. 9, five of the alumnae came to the campus to present a panel discussion on their work and to talk with students.

Senior among the visitors was Mary Ann Crawford '23, who is now retired "except for some small things I do for friends." In 1943 she became one of the few women in Chicago to have a private practice. On view in the exhibit were her drawings and models for the WPA Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930s.

The other alumnae here:

Gertrude Lempp Kerbis '48, in private practice and on the faculty of William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, who showed her designs for the Greenhouse, a cluster of 11 townhouses with a project cost of \$925,000. The project received a Distinguished Building Award from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1976.

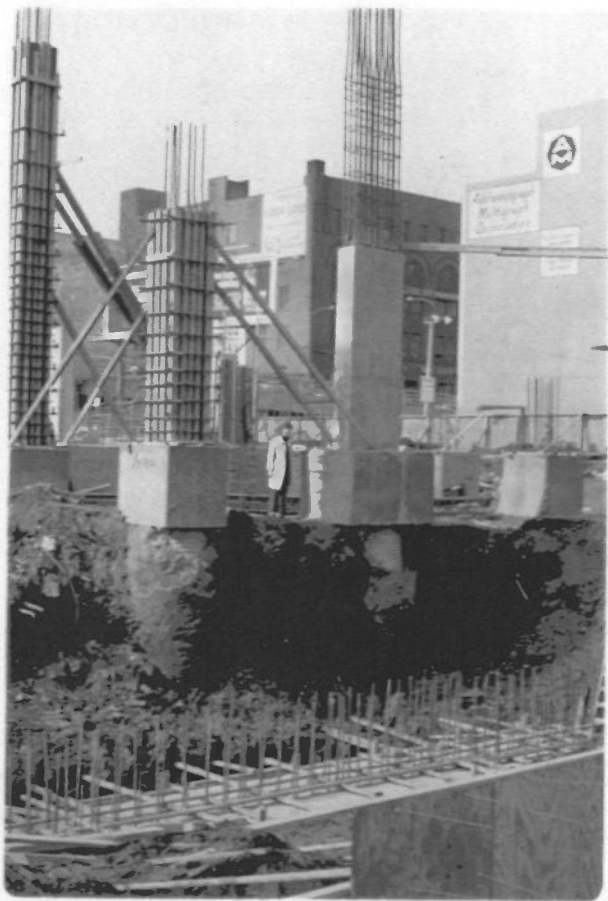
Gunduz Dagdelen Ast '62, partner in Ast Dagdelen, Architects, who was partner-in-charge for the Webster Condominiums, a 1977 "deconversion" making two luxury apartments from a three-flat with six rental apartments. One object was to "conserve the existing fabric of the neighborhood."

Margaret Zirkel Young '66, associate in Ezra Gordon/Jack M. Levin & Associates, who was project architect supervising construction of River Plaza, a 56-story apartment tower north of the Chicago River. During construction she was the sole person in charge until the building was completed.

Carol Ross Barney '71, associate in Holabird & Root and a Chicago Circle faculty member, project designer for fieldhouse alterations at the University of Chicago.



From left, Carol Ross Barney, Mary Ann Crawford, Gunduz Dagdelen Ast, Margaret Zirkel Young, Gertrude Lempp Kerbis.



Kup's column

KUPCINET

Political experts are mystified over Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign and its innumerable gaffes. They can't understand how Jimmy conducted such a brilliant primary campaign to win the Democratic nomination and, in a complete turnabout, such a ragged presidential campaign.... The presidential debates start Thursday night, but the kibitzers are saying Carter started a few weeks ago—debating with himself. . . . Gil Stern on Carter's interview in Playboy: "The Gospel according to Peanuts!"

POLICE ARE CONVINCED THE MOB, which wanted in, was responsible for the slaying of Paul Gonsky, but not because of his porno movies. Gonsky also owned some 20 pornographic book stores, which were more profitable than his films. In the rear of most of these stores, Gonsky operated peep shows. For \$1 patrons could peer at the explicit sex scenes. The mob, which reportedly helped Gonsky at one stage of his business, had declared they were his partners in the porno book stores—or else.

THE TV CRITICS TOOK ONE LOOK at the new CBS series, Jim Bouton's Ball Four, and cried "Three strikes, y'er out." . . . In recent days, the Rev. Malcolm Boyd and Rod McKuen came out of the closet to discuss their homosexuality. This could be a trend. Who's next? . . . Former hairdresser Jon Peters, Barbra Streisand's love who produced her movie, "A Star is Born," visits Our Town Oct. 1 to discuss the film. And Hollywood reports Barbra and Jon soon will wed.

ARTURO PETTERINO, THE PUMP ROOM'S colorful maitre d', is the subject of a Page 1 story in the Wall Street Journal.

Arturo, dean of the elegant, palm-outstretched maitre d's, compares the clubs of yesteryear with today's. He likes the old era better. Arturo, known to hundreds of celebrities, indicates his earnings, including tips, run to \$50,000 per. He currently is writing his memoirs, titled "This Way, Please." . . . WGN's Roy Leonard will be feted by fellow Red Clouds Thursday at Ray Harrington's on Milwaukee Av.

THE UNSINKABLE DEBBIE REYNOLDS, in an interview in the October McCall's, relates that she had only admiration for Elizabeth Taylor, to whom she lost Eddie Fisher, and Edie Adams, both of whom assumed tremendous debts when their husbands died. "When Mike Todd died, he was \$8 million in debt," Debbie explains, "and she paid off every cent." And the same for Edie, currently starring in "Bus Stop" at Drury Lane North. "Ernie Kovacs owed more than \$500,000 when he died. And Edie went to work and paid that one off." Debbie admires that trait. She did it herself when financial reverses hit her former husband, Harry Karl, which cost her a tidy fortune.

EX-CHICAGOAN HARVEY KORMAN, a regular on the CBS-TV Carol Burnett show, just signed with ABC for a half-hour comedy series next season. . . . Dick Kallman, now very large in men's fashions, visits Marshall Field & Co. at Water Tower Place Thursday to exhibit the latest styles. . . . Our condolences to publicist John Itlis on the death of his father Fred. Funeral services will be Thursday.

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME: River Plaza, the 56-story apartment building going up just north of The Sun-Times and Daily New Building, has an attractive woman project architect bossing more than 100 men. She's Margaret Young of Ezra Gordon & Jack Levin Associates. . . . Judy Baar Topinka is the new president of the West Suburban Executives Breakfast Club, first woman so honored. . . . And Mrs. Carolyn T. Miller, mother of three and holder of a B.A. degree, becomes the first female to graduate from Coyne American Institute's electrical course on Thursday. She'll



ARTURO PETTERINO

IMPORTED

Woman Architect Directs Strategy at Newberry Plaza

Though part of a tiny minority in her profession, architect Margaret Young is less interested in making feminist-movement waves than in establishing high personal standards of performance to demonstrate her capabilities in the architectural field.

Right now, she's taking a large step toward that goal in her job as architectural field representative on the construction of Newberry Plaza, the 56-story apartment-townhouse-commercial complex at State and Oak streets.

A development of McHugh-Levin Associates, the complex when completed in late spring will contain 624 deluxe apartments, 15 townhouses on a landscaped deck three stories above the ground, three floors of commercial space, a garage for 325 cars, a glass-enclosed atrium garden, swimming pool and a first-class restaurant.

Doing a rugged job usually left to men, Mrs. Young, clad in hard hat and tailored pantsuit, can be seen almost daily inspecting parts of the building under construction, poring over drawings in the construction office, and checking with superintendents, foremen and

workers.

Mrs. Young is believed to be the first woman architect assigned the responsibility for a project of this size in Chicago, perhaps in the nation. Merely by being a lady architect, she rates notice. Only 3 per cent of registered architects in the U.S. are women, compared with 24 per cent in the Soviet Union and more than 50 per cent in Greece.

Just 31, Mrs. Young has been on the staff of Ezra Gordon-Jack M. Levin & Associates, architects for Newberry Plaza, since February, 1969. Though she has been directly involved with at least nine major design projects in the past three-and-one-half years, Newberry Plaza represents her first assignment to the vital role of field inspection on an actual construction project.

Said Ezra Gordon, one of the firm's two principals: "Margaret was the project manager for Newberry Plaza in our office, coordinating the design as well as the working phase of the construction documents. It therefore seemed only right that she should be the field supervisor on the construction phase as well."

REPRODUCED FROM THE
CHICAGO DAILY NEWS
1972