

MASTER PLAN, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.

Location: Houston, TX

Client: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Completion: 1990

Houston's six-block Museum of Fine Arts complex lies on important arterial and throughway routes located between several different urban centers and precincts. Trustees sought a 30-year plan recommending ways to double the Museum's area and meld several buildings (including a Mies Van Der Rohe addition) into a coherent campus. Major requirements included reinforcement of the Museum's identity and image and the creation of a public realm within the complex. Other important issues included landscaping, the visual and physical connections between buildings, the pedestrian sequence to the Museum's front entrances, opportunities for safe and convenient parking, local and freeway signage, and the feasibility of a central power plant.

The master planning process required VSBA to act as urban designers handling zoning and aesthetic issues -- as architects programming uses, arranging spaces, analyzing building and life-safety codes, and setting out preservation and aesthetic requirements -- and as urban planners representing the institution on planning and transportation issues. Unlike the majority of our firm's planning projects, this process (at the Museum's request) remained centered within the Museum administration.

VSBA ultimately presented several options for the Museum's development. The chosen "inflected" option links two new buildings to the curve-fronted Mies addition on Bissonnet Street through the curved facades running not quite parallel to the city grid. VSBA also provided design guidelines for public spaces and new buildings within the chosen design option.

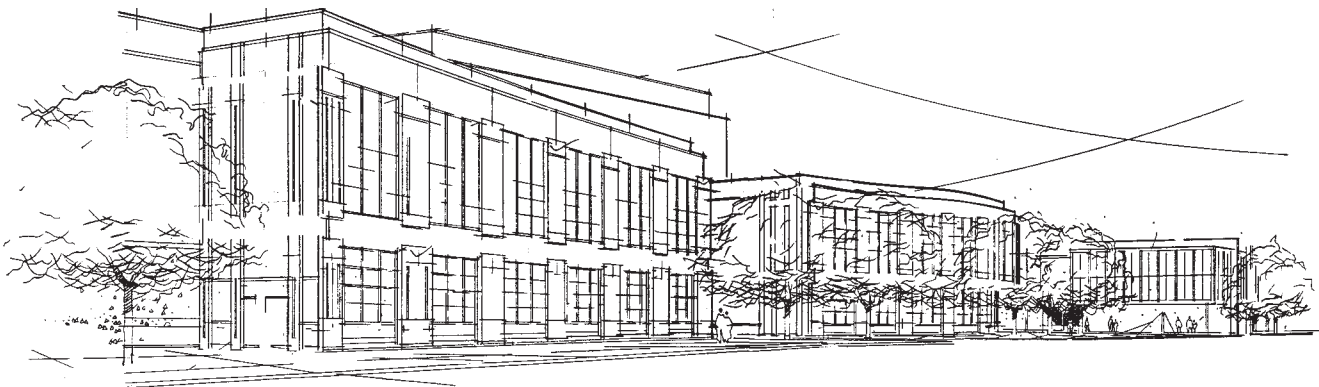


fig. 29. Inflected: View Looking West

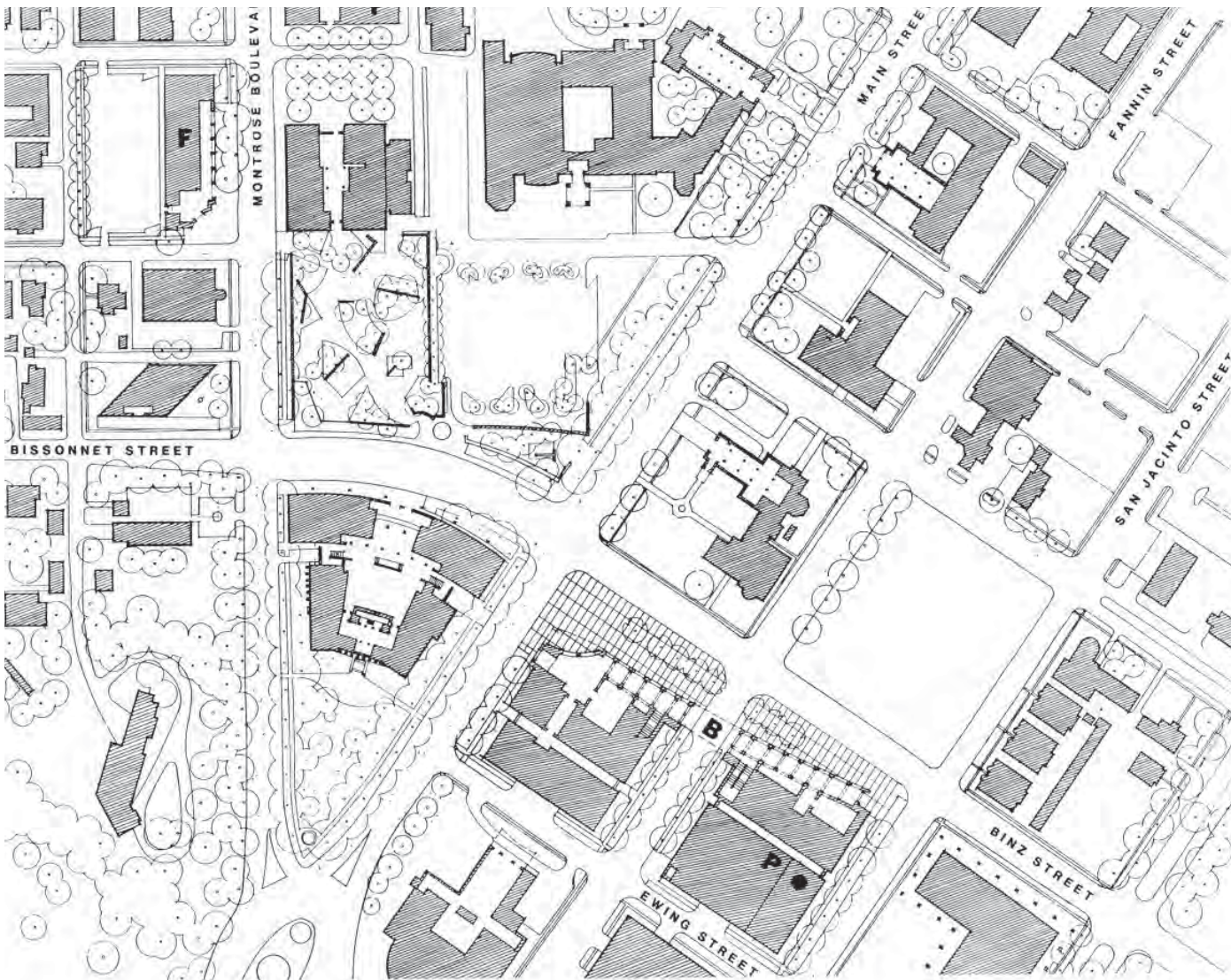


fig. 24. Inflected: Main Floor Plan Showing Public Realm

