

Biff's

a community resource

Overall, the district should create a sense of place through attention to good urban design, and establish a visually distinctive district identity through streetscape improvements and public amenities as part of a pedestrian-oriented urban design vision.

- A Key Parameter of V-B Specific Plan



BIFF'S RESTAURANT



**A PIVOTAL CENTRAL ROLE IN THE
VALDEZ-BROADWAY DEVELOPMENT**

Biff's - a Historic Property

1963 Standard Oil (now Chevron)

announces plans for a combination gas station and experimental \$750,000 6000 SF circular restaurant in Oakland that seats 125. Biff's will cater to families and offer a full range of meals.



Biff's - a Historic Property

1964 Built by Standard Oil (now Chevron)

The Architects, Armet & Davis, are known as premier designers of “Googie” style coffee shops. This was their only round diner.



Biff's - a Historic Property

1996

Closed by Chevron
on November 1 for
the proposed
“McChevron” project...



Biff's - a Historic Property

1997

Designated as a Historic Resource, rated "B" by the Oakland Landmarks Board in February

The Oakland Tribune.
ISLAND OF THE PEOPLE IT SERVES



1962 DRAWING BY ARNOLD DAVIS NEWLOVE. ARCHITECT

This 1962 drawing of JJ's Diner, formerly known as Biff's, shows the building's original look, complete with rounded plaster walls. The brown shingles adorning the building today were added.

Decision day for JJ's

Enthusiasts seek landmark status for space-age diner

By Diana M. Williams
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — When Eldon Davis designed Biff's coffee shop in 1962, the nation was captivated by outer space. Oakland's mayor had just unveiled plans for an industrial park to be named Space City. In San Francisco, the hottest show of the year was the Cow Palace Space Age Expo.

It was a theme that suggested boundless growth, and Biff's architects made the most of it. Their Oakland coffee house looked remarkably like a flying saucer, complete with round walls and a metallic glint.

Now the circular coffee shop sits empty as it awaits demolition, the symbol of a new kind of progress. The state's first "McChevron," where drivers can simultaneously buy a McDonald's meal and Chevron gas, is being lined up to replace the diner at Broadway and 27th Street.

The idea outrages residents, but their pleas for help have had virtually no effect on plans proposed by the property's owners, Chevron Corp.

But the coffee shop's supporters have one final punch to pull. This afternoon, they will ask an Oakland board to give landmark status to the restaurant, now called JJ's, as a classic example of "coffee shop modern."



1997 PHOTO BY KATHY STEINER — SHUTTERSTOCK

Oakland architects Joyce Hoy and Edol Charonnet, surrounded by a sea of booths they salvaged recently from JJ's Diner, are working to save the coffee shop from demolition. They plan to re-install the vintage seats if they are successful in their plea to the Oakland Landmarks Preservation Board.

PHOTOS: 1962 JJ's, A-7

Biff's - a Historic Property

1998 - Chevron withdraws McChevron project in Sept. after completing EIR.

The Oakland Tribune

OTHER OPINIONS

SUNDAY February 16, 1997 **C-7**

Diner gets no points for being loved

CAN it be true? JJ's Diner, the 1950s-style restaurant at 27th and Broadway that 10,000 petitioners love, will be demolished so a McChevron's can go up in its place.

Say it isn't so. All those memories of JJ's Diner, and before that when the place was called Biff's, will go down in a pile of dust so people can get a hamburger while they're pumping gas.

Never mind that at least 30 other fast food places are in Oakland, estimated at 3.5 places for every 100,000 residents, including babies who don't eat hamburgers.

All because petitioners are for



Peggy
STINNETT

commission reversed itself, saying it wasn't going to recommend that it become one.

Had the commission made the recommendation, it could have made a statement that it does serve the function of preserving the city's heritage buildings. That's all they were ever supposed to do. They should do that well, and leave economic development to the City

age, style, and familiarity are considered. Points are deducted for alterations and poor condition.

When the city planning staff's score came in short of points on JJ's — mainly because of alterations and the relatively young age of the building, built in 1963 — the commission members themselves added seven points, pushing it into the landmark zone of 30.8 points, the equivalent of a B-plus. Preservationists cheered, most especially Leal Charonnat and Joyce Roy, the Oakland architects who have led the drive to save the diner. Love counts! They rejoiced; and 10,000 people love JJ's. But it didn't.

Then the Landmarks Com-

Building at 27th and Harrison streets could come down next; its owners, Wells Fargo Bank, applied for a demolition permit in September. The site would become a parking lot.

INSTEAD, Wells Fargo could contribute to its own historic beginnings and Oakland's future by providing the necessary leadership to create an automobile museum in the old Cadillac building, attracting thousands of visitors, who also might shop for new cars on Auto Row. That would be a real economic development move.

Meanwhile, the Adams Point Preservation Society wants to landmark the Cadillac Building and will go before the Land-

Biff's - a Historic Property

1999

Chevron sells property to Ken Betts who had the station franchise who, in turn, sold to the entire parcel to Steve Simi, a local auto dealer, and present owner.

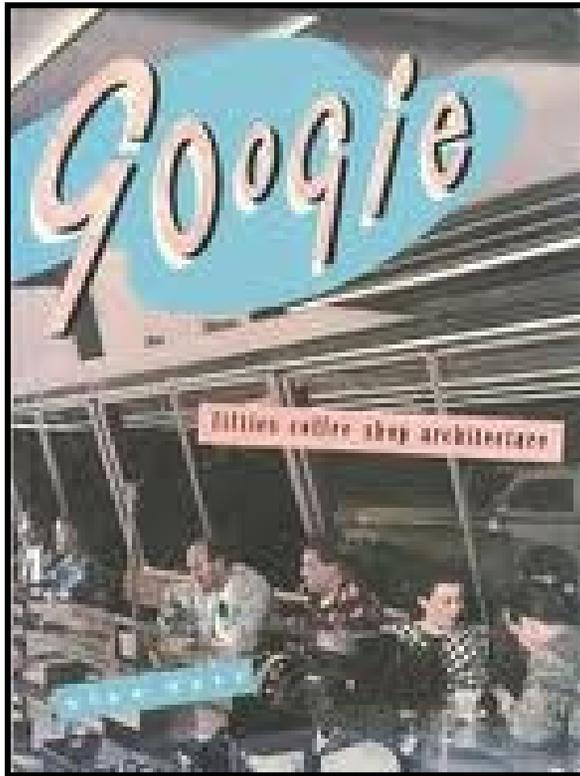


ONWARD: Only in San Francisco, even if it did happen in Oakland last Sunday — at 27th and Broadway: About 100 people joined hands and, at the count of three, gave a building a great big hug. The beloved structure was J.J.'s Diner, designed in the 1950s by the Frank Lloyd Wrights of diner designers, Armet & Davis of L. A. "It was like holding an old shoe," said Oakland architect Leal Charonnat, who dreamed up the hugfest as a signal to Chevron, which owns the property and wants to tear down the diner for a McDonald's. "McChevron," sneers Charonnat. "Fast food and fast gas — a perfect matchup."

★ ★ ★

Googie Architecture

A popular style for many diners in particular



This photo, courtesy of Larry Conrad, shows Frisch's Big Boy Coffee Shop and Restaurant as it appeared when it opened in 1962 at 1009 N. Memorial Drive.

The Googie Style



The Googie Style



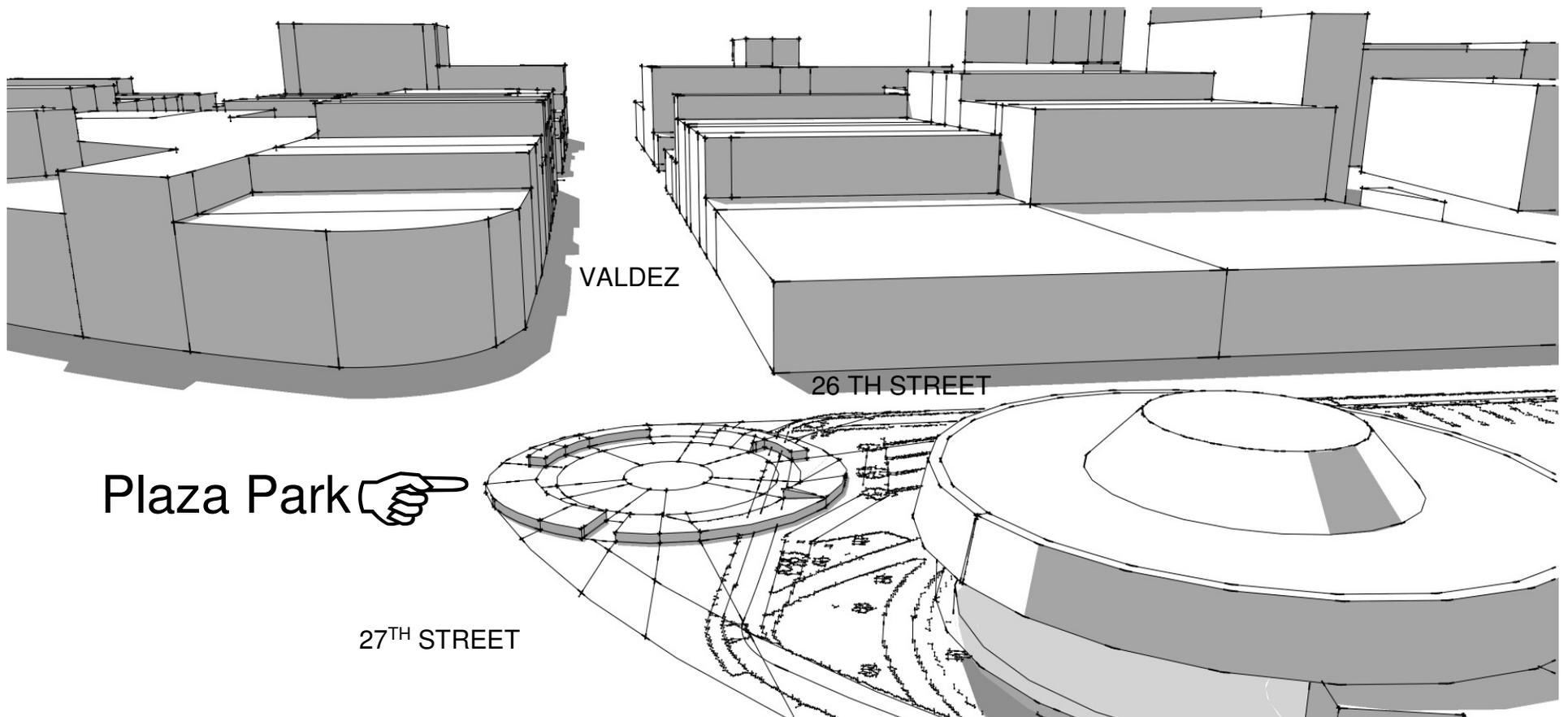
Character of Valdez

- Ample vacant space to accommodate
 - new development on empty lots
 - without replacing existing structures
 - Many lots are now used for parking (i.e., empty)



Character of Valdez

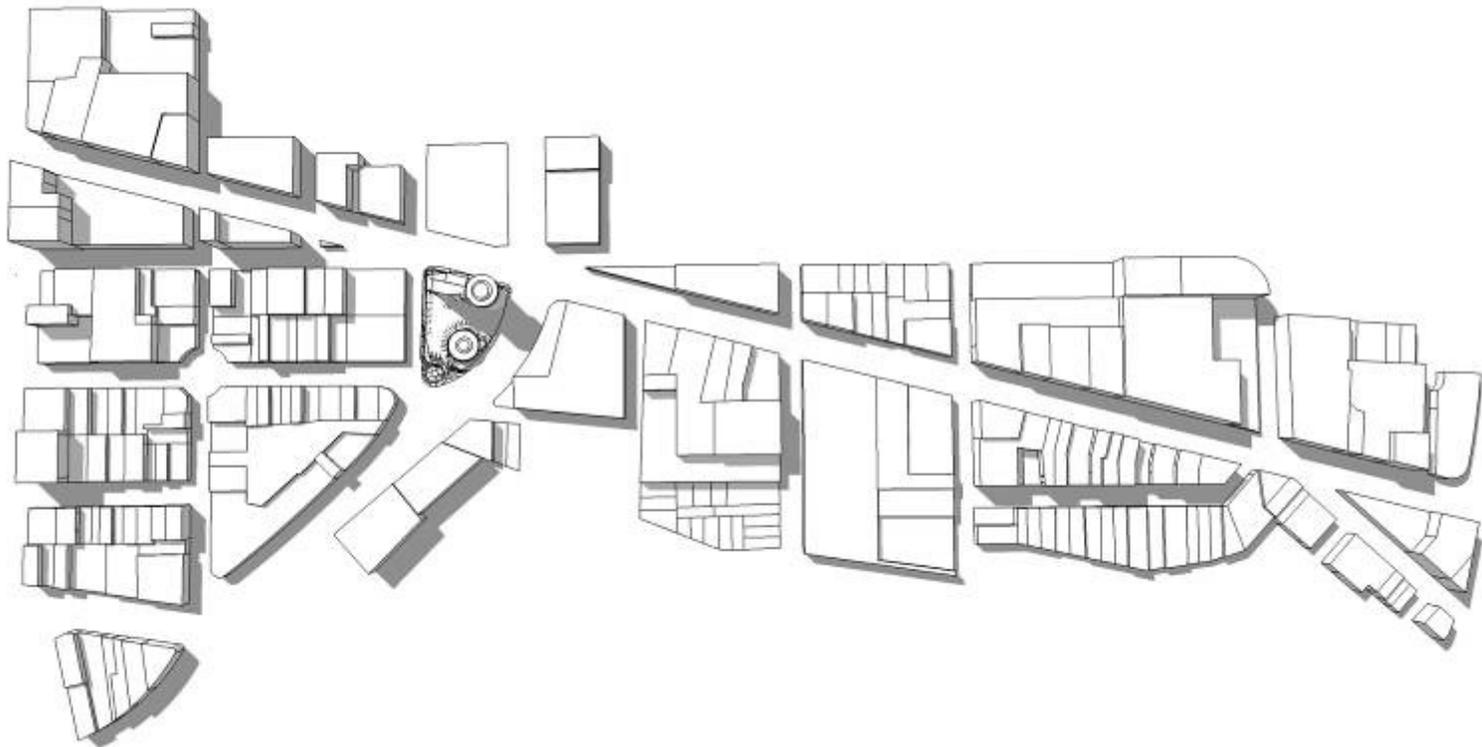
- Fine-grained mixed-use urban village
- Pleasant to walk down
- Similar to 17th Street between Franklin & Webster.



Character of Broadway

Continuation of Uptown Broadway with high-density development:

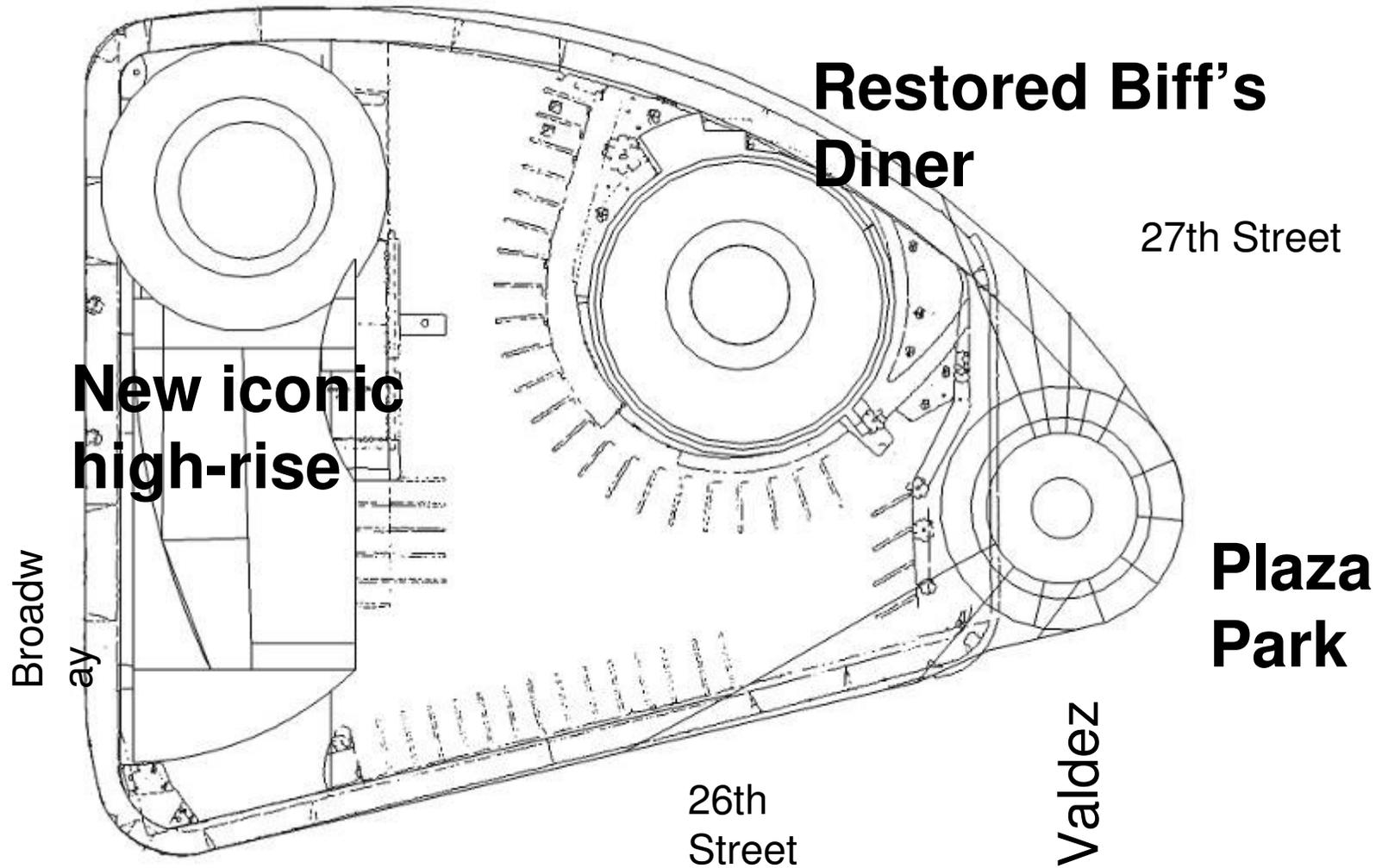
- Offices – Housing - Retail (with *not-so-big* big box)



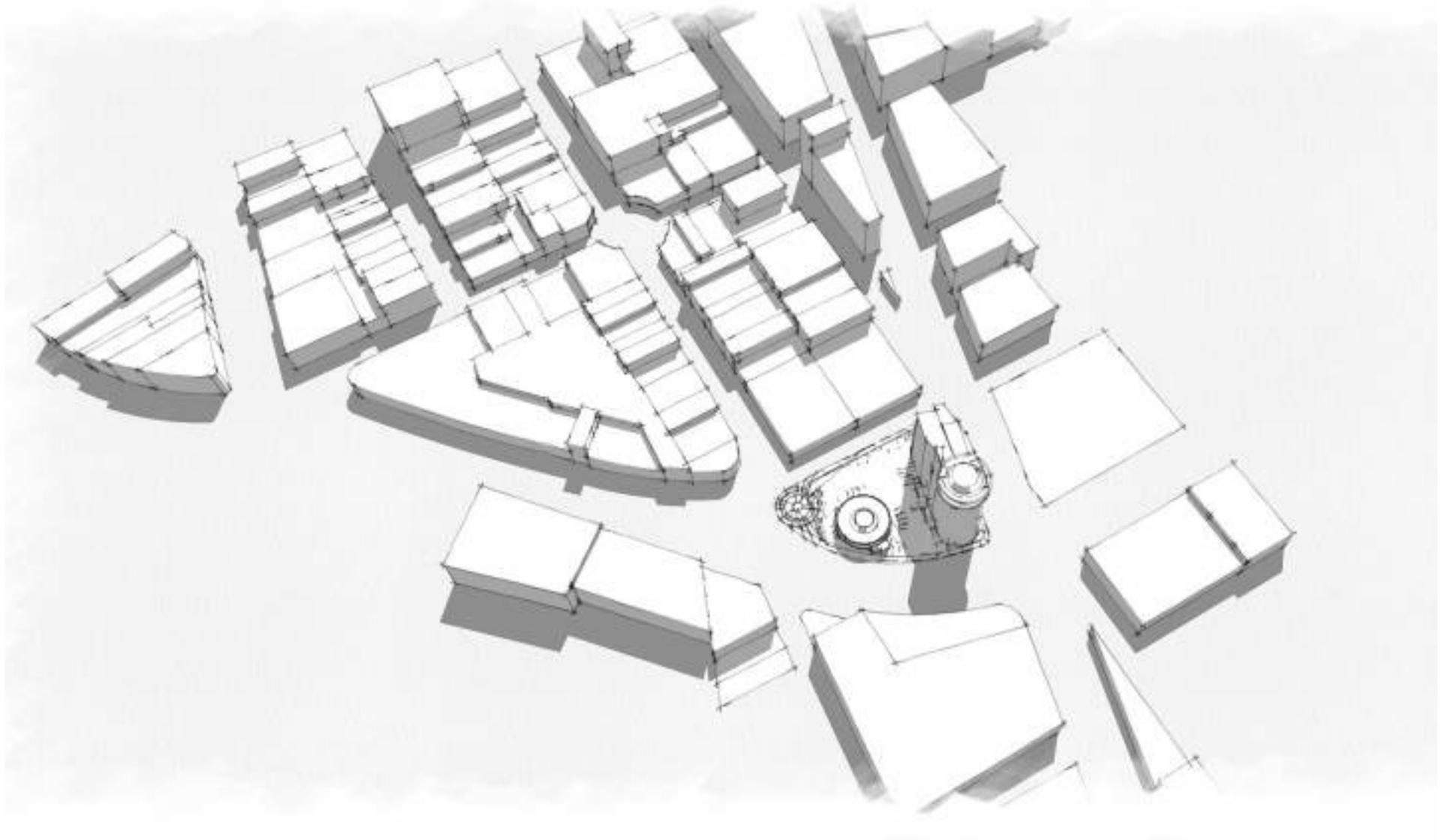
Biff's as node between Valdez and Broadway

- Distinctive **Place-making**
- The **hinge** connecting:
 - Valdez, lower density, fine-grained development with
 - Broadway's higher density.
- This node is Biff's "island" property with:
 - **Plaza park** - at the tip, centered on Valdez
 - **Restored Biff's Diner**
 - **New iconic high-rise** on Broadway accommodating housing and retail on Broadway

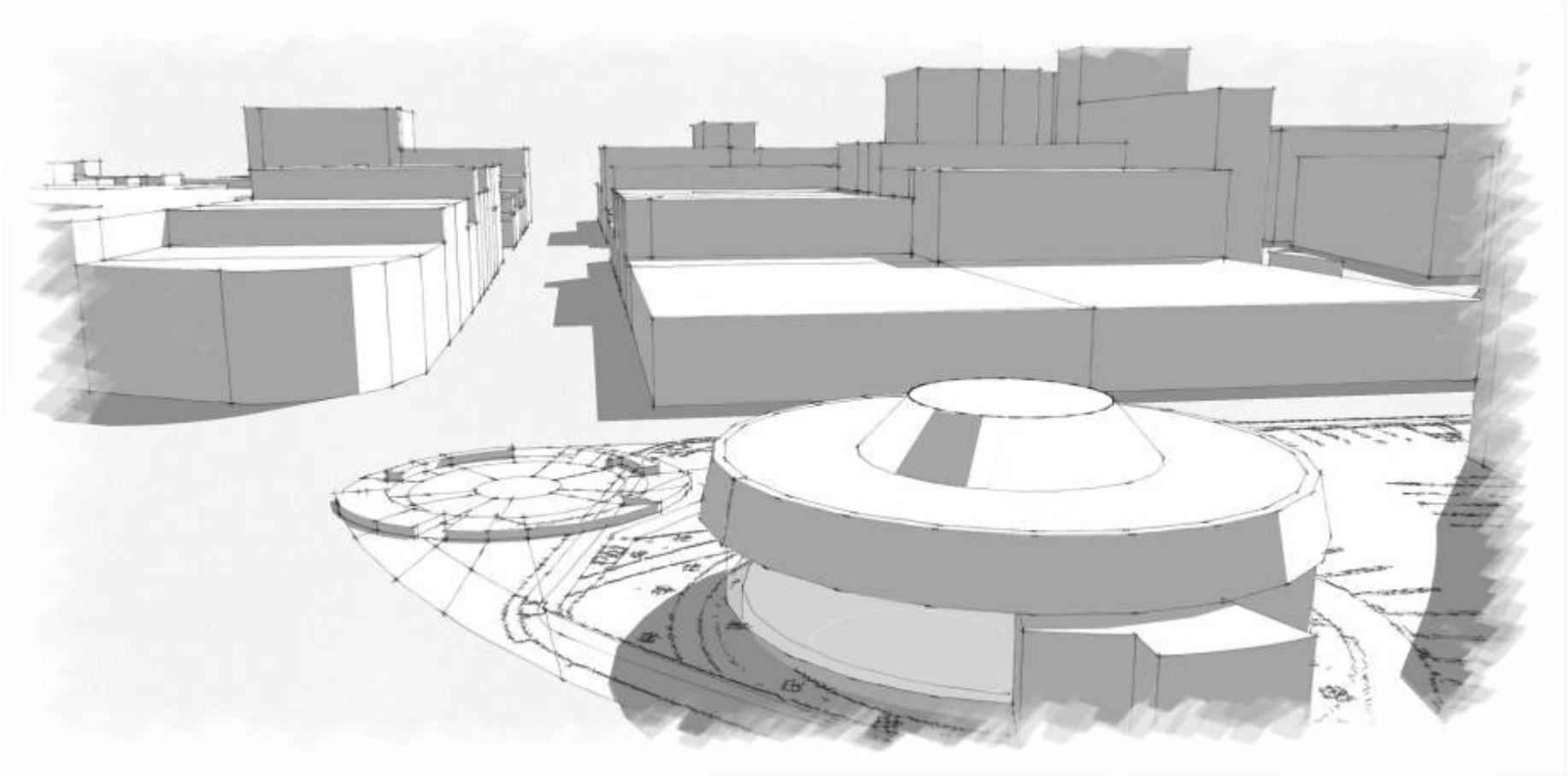
Biff's as node between Valdez and Broadway



Biff's as node between Valdez and Broadway



Biff's as node between Valdez and Broadway





THEN



NOW



NOW



RESTORED

Community need for restoration of **Biff's Diner**

- New families and singles, old and young, need full service family restaurant.
- Otherwise, fast foods will fill the vacuum.
- Now, where can you get breakfast?
- Popular with the many seniors living nearby.
- Good acoustics.
- Community center. Even has separate dining room for meetings.

Community need for restoration of **Biff's Diner**



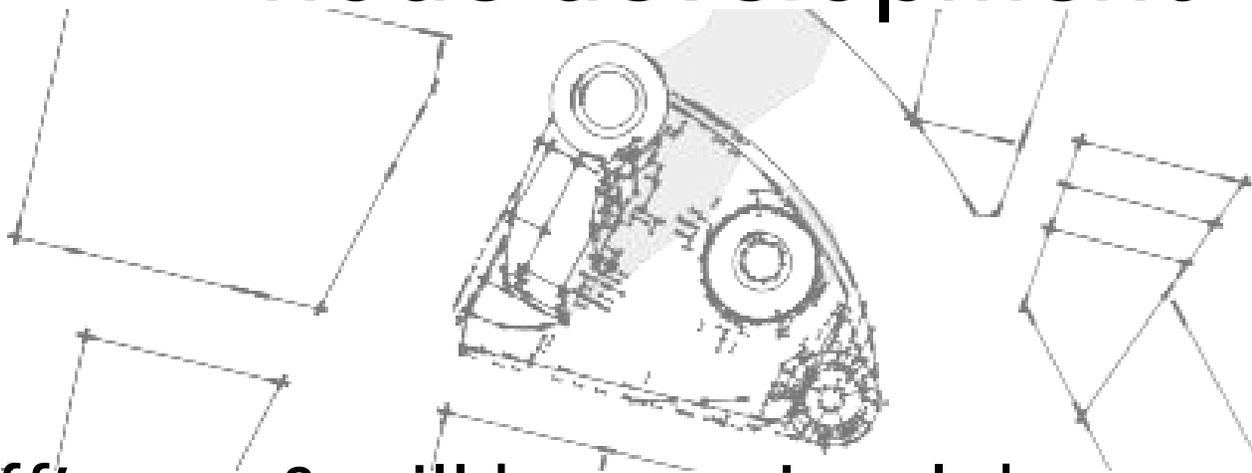
Community need for restoration of **Biff's Diner**



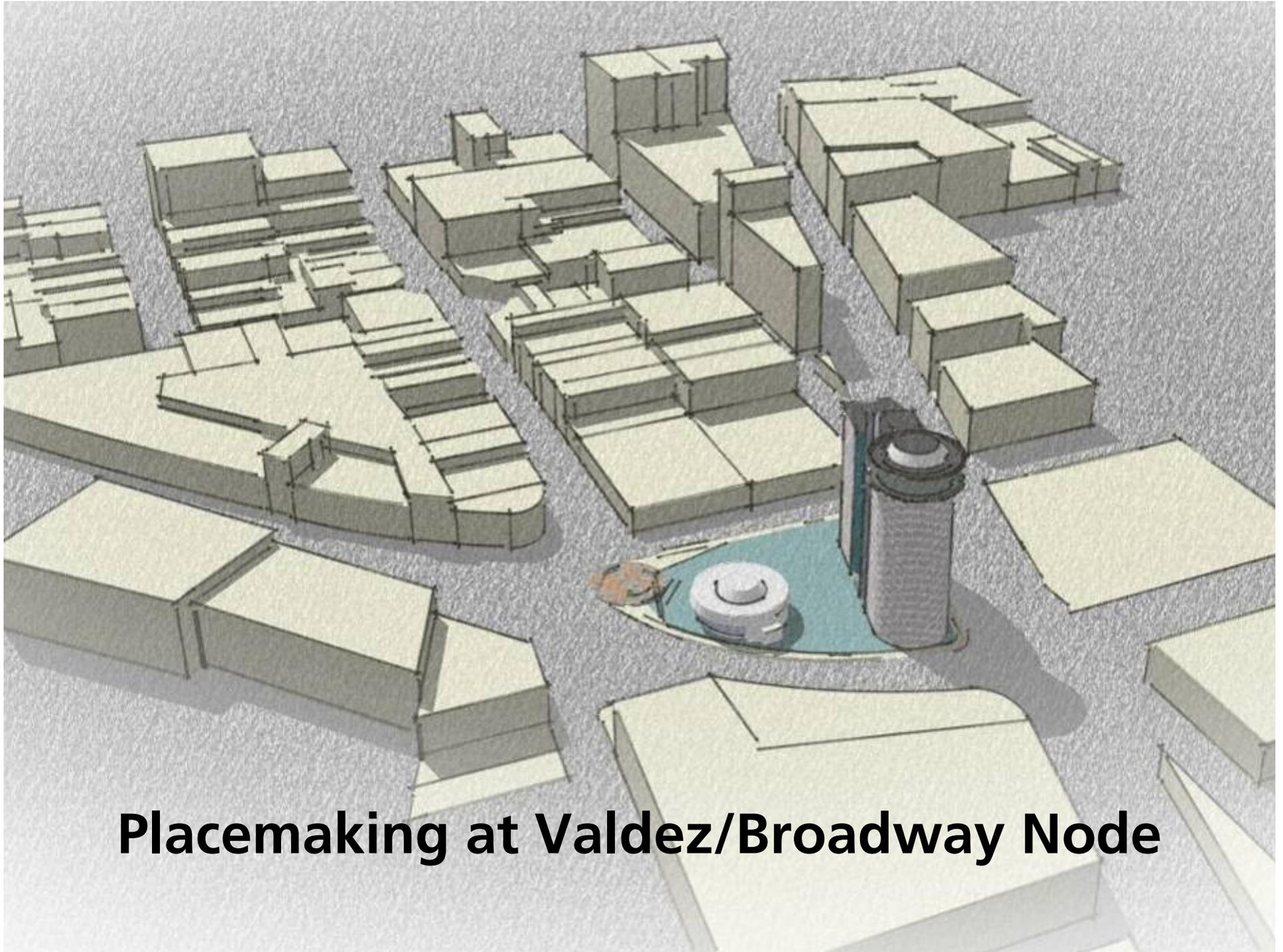
Community need for restoration of **Biff's Diner**



Desirability & Feasibility of this node development



- Biff's was & will be a regional draw
- Profitability of high density development on Broadway makes restoration of Biff's feasible.
- Floor plate of Broadway building: 8000 sf
- There has been interest but owner's "bubble-level" expectation made purchase infeasible.



Placemaking at Valdez/Broadway Node