



Source: Attoe and Logan (1989); courtesy of University of California Press

Figure 6.2 The Cadillac-Fairview proposal, 5th and Morrison Streets, Portland.

have acted as a catalyst for other similar developments. Portland would no longer be Portland.

Negotiations between the Portland Development Commission and Cadillac-Fairview over the nature of the design broke down and the regional economic climate turned sour so the development was shelved. What it did do was act as a catalyst for other possible ideas for the site so the commission invited other proposals. One presented by the Rouse Corporation was accepted. It was designed by ELS/Elbasani and Logan, Architects. It was regarded as being more in the public's interest. It too evolved as a result of negotiations; failures to attract tenants and eventual successes shaped it.

Named Pioneer Place, the proposal focusing on Morrison Street made the Pioneer Courthouse (currently being revamped in 2004) a foreground building instead of having it dwarfed by high-rise buildings (see Figure 6.3). While the four blocks of the project changed the architectural character of the

city, it maintained the city's nature of small blocks and open spaces. One of the blocks contains a 16-storey office tower with a 60,000 square feet department store – Saks Fifth Avenue, the complex's anchor store. Pioneer Place also contains an internal shopping pavilion of 155,000 square feet. Shops, nevertheless, grace the street frontages. The proposal does retain skybridges but they are smaller and less obtrusive than those in the Cadillac-Fairview proposal. They link the pavilion with Saks Fifth Avenue across the street.

This case study shows that 'context' has to be defined with some precision. Often it is reduced to simply the poorly defined 'visual character of buildings'. It has to do with the way buildings meet the street, their height (especially on their streets façades), their ground floor uses and the distribution of entrances, their materials and fenestration, cornice and roof patterns. Buildings can be designed to either support or change the context. What developers propose, depends on their values and what a society prescribes, if anything. It would have been easy for Portland to think 'We'll take anything' when the economy turned sour. It did not; the Morrison Street scheme is the result. Designing in context can be highly innovative but it does require additional thought. Fiscal conservatives would, nevertheless, question whether the original proposal was not more in the public interest.

Major reference

Attoe, Wayne and Donn Logan (1989). Portland Oregon: A positive catalytic reaction requires an understanding of context. In *American Urban Architecture: Catalysts in the Design of Cities*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 96–101.