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Kettering Government Center
3600 Shroyer Road
Kettering
Montgomery County
Ohio'

HABS No. OH-429

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

AMERICA'S CITY HALLS PROGRAM

Name: Kettering Government Center

Location: 3600 Shroyer Road
City of Kettering
County of Montgomery
State of Ohio

Present Owner, Occupant, Use: The Kettering Government Center is owned, occupied and used by the City of Kettering for municipal government administration.

Significance: "A booming young suburb" is perhaps the best description of Kettering in 1955, the year of its incorporation. In fact, there were so many people moving to Kettering that it became Ohio's fastest growing city during the 1960's. Even during this exciting period of whirlwind growth, however, the city had no central business district, nor could it claim a significant identifying landmark. During this same time, municipal offices were rapidly outgrowing the limited space they occupied in an old school house, turned "City Hall," as the city workforce grew to meet the increasing demands for service.

Once it was decided in the late 1950's that a new municipal building would be built, the City Council wanted the new structure to clearly symbolize the progressive spirit of the area's newest city. The building would also help Kettering form a new identity for itself and a community landmark for its citizens.

The design selected by the architect was a striking contemporary pyramid style, symbolic of the three functions of government: legislative, executive and judicial. The setting chosen was an 8.23 - acre site rich in beautiful woods and natural surroundings, located in the geographic center of the City.

The Kettering Government Center was completed and occupied in 1969.

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Part I. Historical Information

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

1. Important Dates

April 12, 1966 - City Council passed a resolution authorizing the City Manager to advertise for bids and enter into a contract for professional architectural services for a new Municipal Building.

January 24, 1967 - City Council passed a informal resolution approving preliminary plans for a Municipal Building designed by Eugene W. Betz Architects, Inc.

January 16, 1968 - City Council passed a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into contracts for the construction of the new Municipal Building.

February 2, 1968 - Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Municipal Building took place.

December, 1969 - Kettering municipal offices moved into the new Government Center.

April 26, 1970 - Dedication ceremony for Kettering Government Center took place.

2. Architect

Eugene W. Betz Architects, Inc. was selected from a field of 32 architects expressing interest in designing the new Municipal Building.

Eugene W. Betz is a principal in the firm of Eugene W. Betz Architects, Inc. which he organized in 1956. Betz directs most design efforts for the firm's main office in Kettering, Ohio, and its branch office in Winter Park, Florida. He has lead design teams on numerous state, county, and city administrative building designs such as the Kettering Government Center.

Betz received his bachelor of science degree in architecture from the University of Cincinnati. He is actively involved in selected committees of the American Institute of Architects, Architects Society of Ohio and Dayton Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He has lectured and written articles on the fundamentals of functional government building design. He holds professional registrations to practice architecture in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Indiana, Florida, and N.C.A.R.B.

The firm now employs a full compliment of graduate architects, planners, and interior designers.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers

General construction and site work contractor:	Fryman - Kuck, Inc. Dayton, Ohio
Mechanical contractor:	Hughes Bechtol, Inc. Dayton, Ohio
Electrical contractor:	Chapel Electric Dayton, Ohio
Elevator contractor:	Dover Elevator Dayton, Ohio

4. Original plans and construction

A relatively new building, the Kettering Government Center has not undergone exterior alteration since its construction.

5. Alterations and additions

At the outset, the total municipal building site was studied for a complete, logical and exciting Government Center. The maturely wooded site was considered appropriate for a campus development of buildings. Development phases were programmed to accommodate future expansion while retaining the imagery and symbolic focus of the Administration Building.

The initial unit was the triangular shaped Government Center housing the Council Chamber and the City's administrative offices.

The second stage of the complex development, known as the Justice Building, was scheduled to be built within five years of the initial unit. It would house the Police Department and the Municipal Court. That initial schedule was accelerated, however, and the City of Kettering hired the architectural firm of Lorenz-Williams-Williams-Lively and Likens in January, 1970, to design the Justice Building.

The intent of the designers of this building was to complement rather than compete with the design of the more spectacular municipal building just to the south. The result was a two-story, 37,000 square foot concrete structure somewhat less dramatic than the Government Center, but also comfortably suited to the natural wooded site. The two buildings are connected by a landscaped plaza above ground and tunnel corridor underground. The Justice Building houses police functions on the lower level and the municipal court on the upper level.

On April 27, 1971, City Council passed a resolution authorizing the City Manager to advertise for bids and enter into a contract for construction of the Justice Building. The structure was completed and occupied in early 1973.

B. Historical Context

The Kettering Government Center has been used exclusively for housing the City Council Chambers and administrative offices of the City of Kettering.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

The architect's challenge in the design of a municipal building, for the area's newest and fastest growing city, was to create a symbol of its progressive spirit as well as a community focal point. Its image would have to identify Kettering with a unique, contemporary style, which would be dramatically distinctive, without overpowering its quiet suburban setting. This challenge was successfully met by the architect, Eugene W. Betz, by blending the style of a classical pyramid structure with striking contemporary features. The building provides an unusual dramatic visual appearance which is inherent in a structure of landmark quality.

The 34,728 square foot Government Center was wedded into a knoll of a rich wooded site. It appears as a low structure locked into the natural landscaping. From a distance, it appears essentially as a massive sculptured white roof hovering above the surface, while the ground is formed into beams which sweep up, reaching for the roof. The two are joined together with large poured concrete walls; which are firmly established in the ground. Steel trusses stemming from each vertex comprise the heart of the roof framing system. The roof itself is of white plastic and white painted tooled sheet metal fascia. Concrete abutments set the vertices, anchoring the trusses to the ground. The entire exterior perimeter wall is of glass with concrete piers as additional roof supporting members.

The two-story space in the center of the pyramid accommodates a spacious, open Council Chamber. The roof lines translate the Chamber's significance to the exterior and a large opening through the roof structure announces the Chamber's presence to any person approaching the building.

A nine-foot overhang creates a transitional space between the exterior and interior. Roof water is spilled directly into gravel sinks around the perimeter, carrying out the natural flow of rain water to earth and eliminating the need for a man-made storm drainage system.

B. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

The dominant feature of the interior of the Kettering Government Center is the Council Chamber located in the center of the building and elevated but not enclosed. The strong pyramidal roof lines define the basic dimensions of an impressive white ceiling with interesting angular treatment. The main roof truss loads are distributed to concrete abutments at triangle vertices to provide a column-free Council Chamber. The Chamber itself is of reinforced concrete, emphasizing solidity. The room provides the feeling of an open, receptive area, which encourages the public to communicate freely and participate in the City's decision-making process. There are no doors or walls which can be closed to the public in this space. Seating for spectators is in a modified amphitheater arrangement.

Administrative offices are located on the exterior perimeter of the triangular structure, grouped around the base of the Council Chamber. Use of the perimeter allows for maximum office space and minimum circulation space. The exterior wall is floor-to-ceiling glass, and offices look onto an ivy-covered earth berm. When rising, one may look over the crest of the ivy to the vista of the splendid wooded site. The earth berm surrounding the building helps to eliminate loud traffic noise and distractions from the street.

The interior construction consists of architecturally treated concrete using a retarder and rough sculptured form boards accented with red elm millwork. Textured floor-to-ceiling glass panels interspersed with colored panels in unistrut frames divide the offices from the corridors. Office interiors are illuminated with valance lighting. Painted drywall separates the offices. Acoustical plaster and tile are used for the ceilings. The floors are finished with wine-colored acoustical floor covering.

The mechanical systems include typical forced air heating, ventilating and air conditioning with perimeter finned tube radiation at the floor.

C. SITE

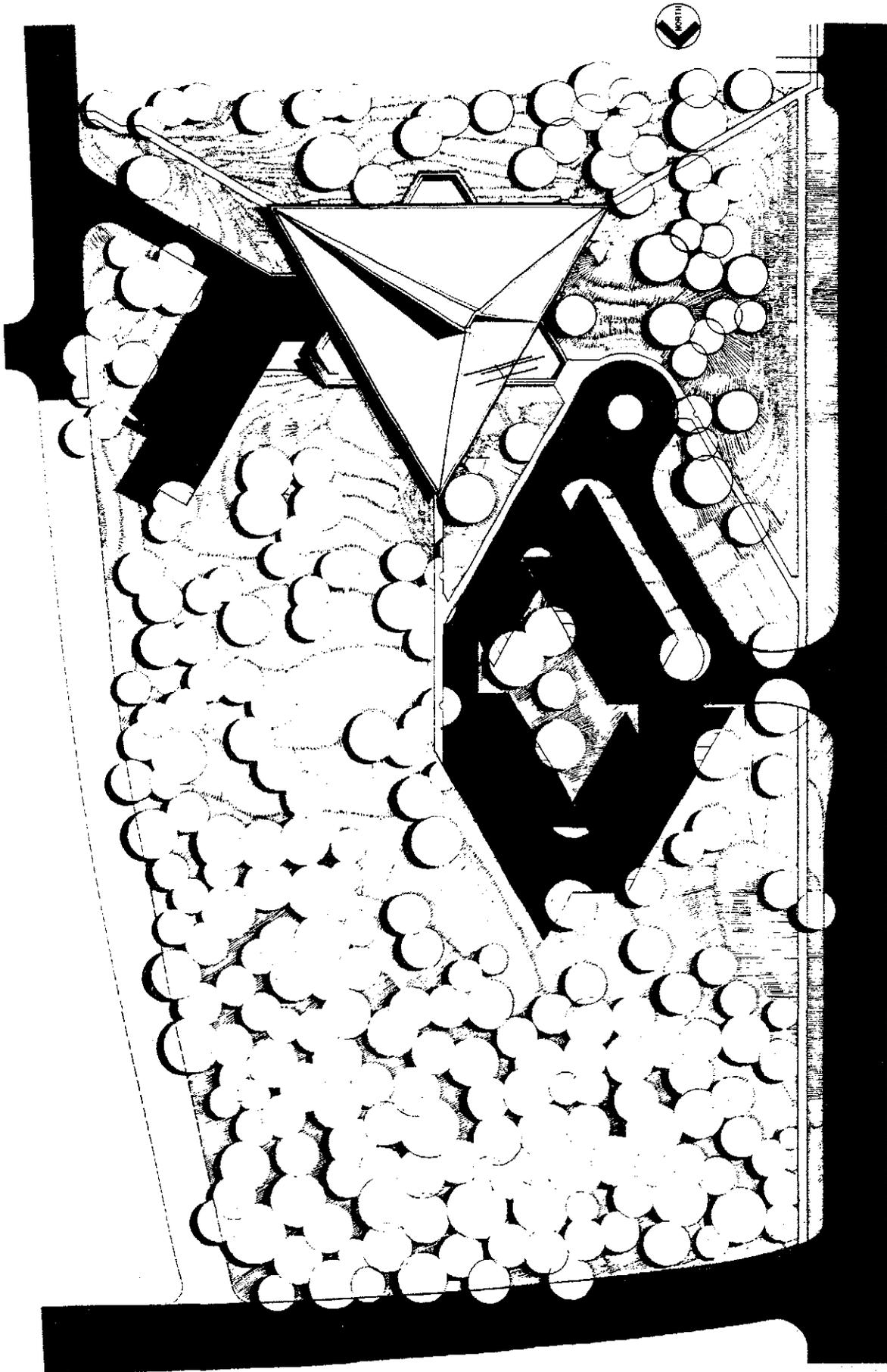
The eight acres of densely wooded, rolling land chosen as the site for the Kettering Government Center proved to be the perfect setting for the new structure. The low structure is locked into the natural landscaping which provides a fitting enclosure for the government offices of a suburban community where low buildings and open landscape form the dominant pattern.

The site, at the corner of Shroyer Road and Lincoln Park Boulevard, is near the geographic center of the City, in what constitutes a potential core area including a high school, several churches, a shopping center, library and Board of Education. The Government Center structure is located on the southwest portion of the site, with the front of the building facing the northwest, at an angle to Shroyer Road.

The design of the Government Center gives utmost consideration to the preservation of the natural woods and landscaping that surround it. The contemporary building is dramatically distinctive; yet it appears to belong to the space that it occupies without disturbing the solace of its wooded setting.

Berming earth around the perimeter of the building forms a continuation of the roof line and relates the man-made edifice to the natural slopes of the site.

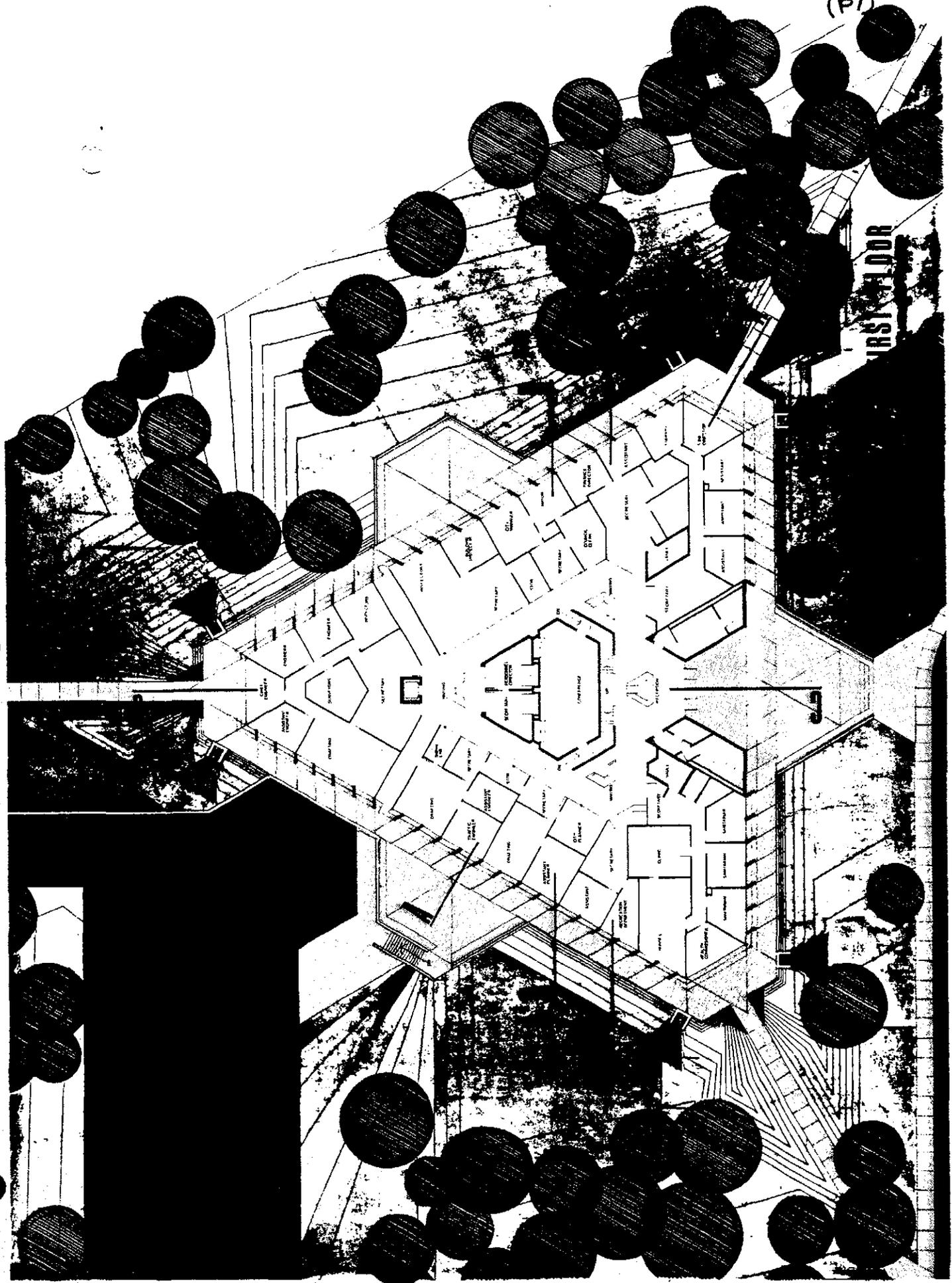
The total image is one of dignity -- a place where the goals of nature and man have been achieved in splendid harmony.

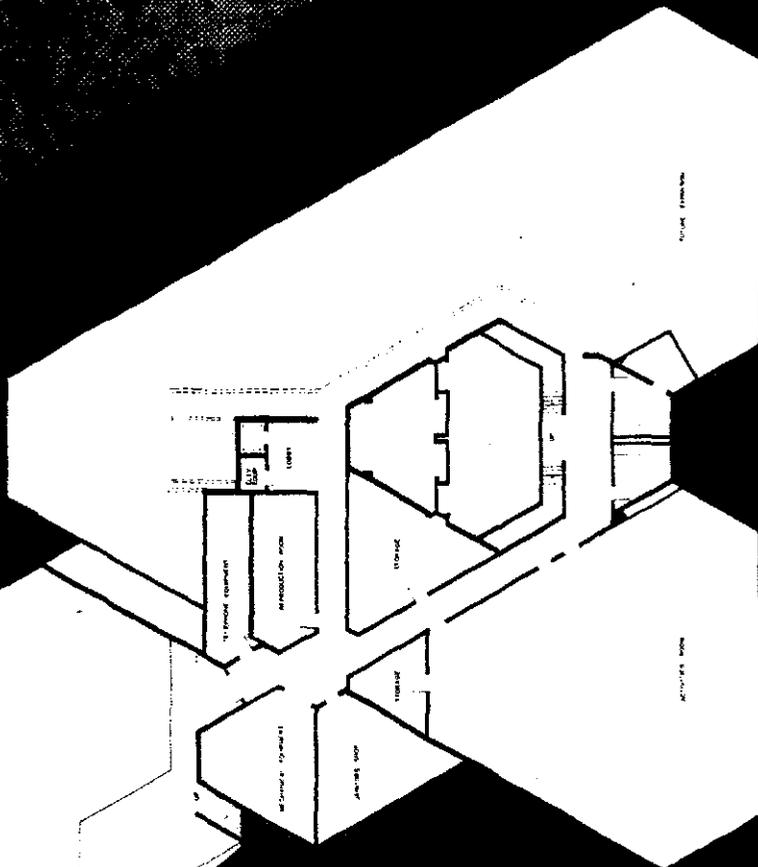
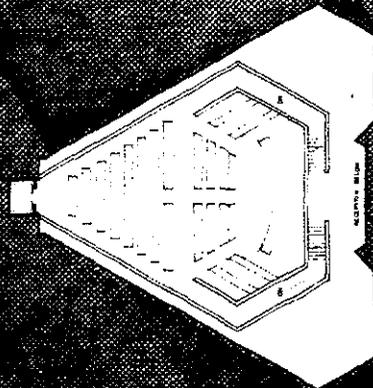


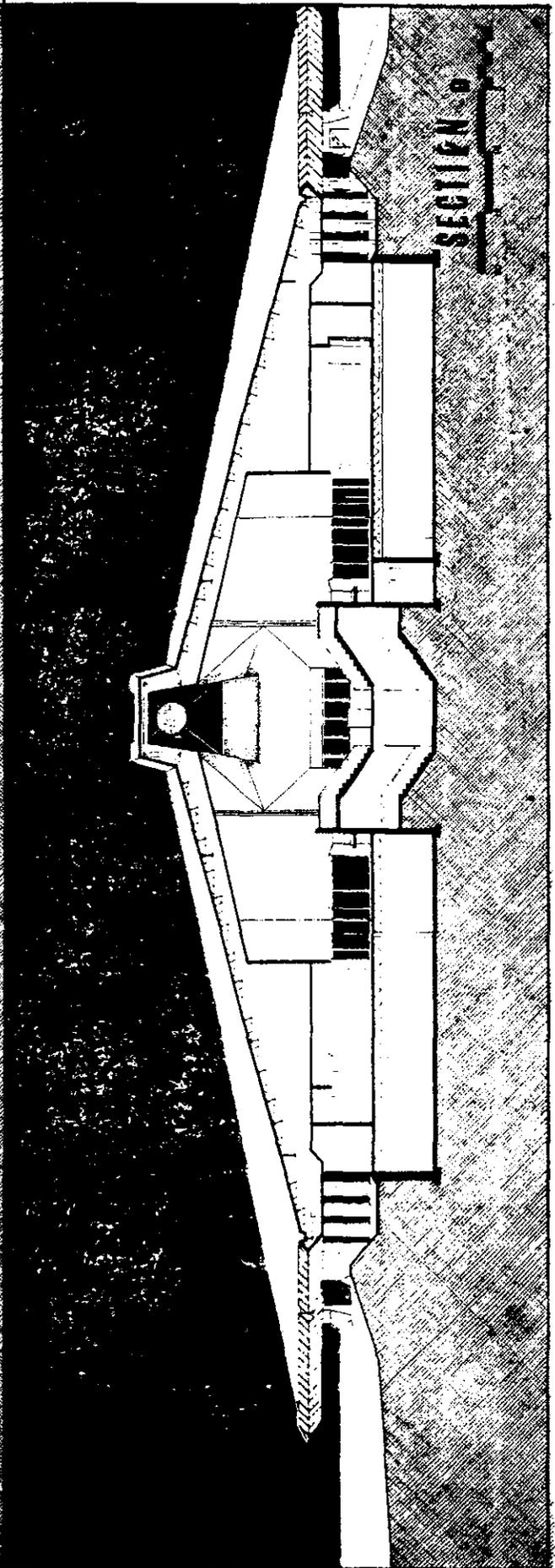
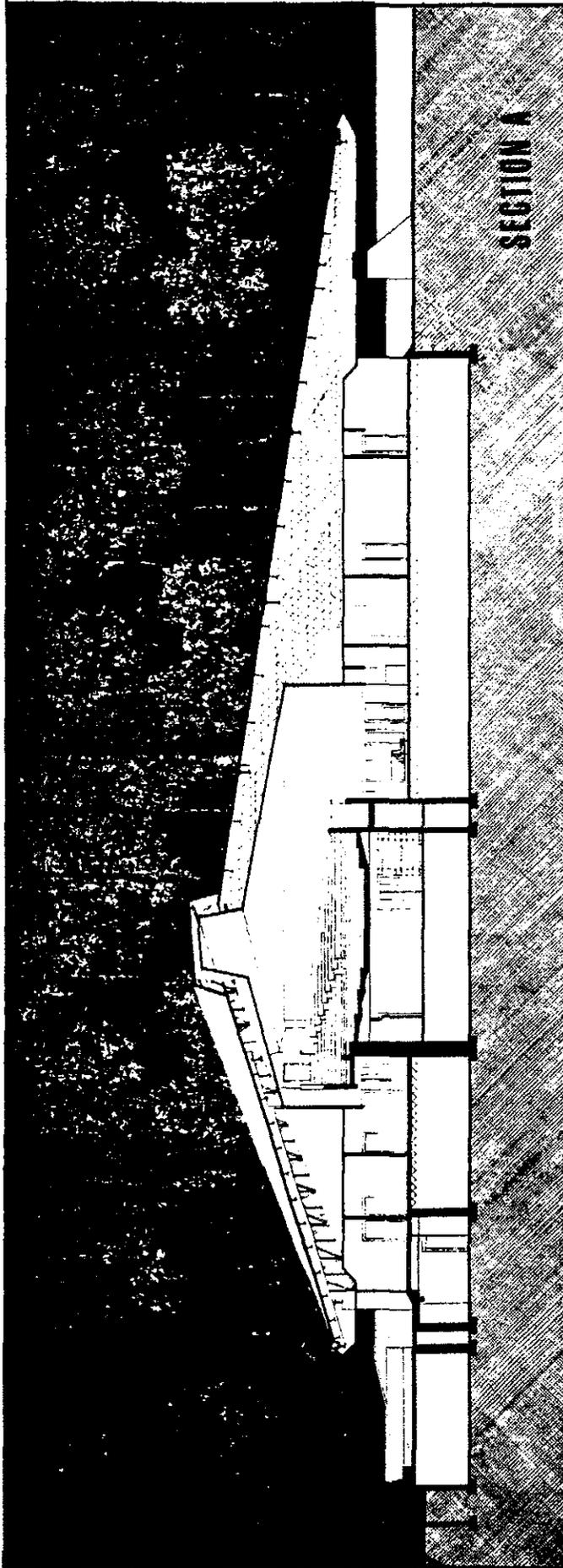
SITE PLAN

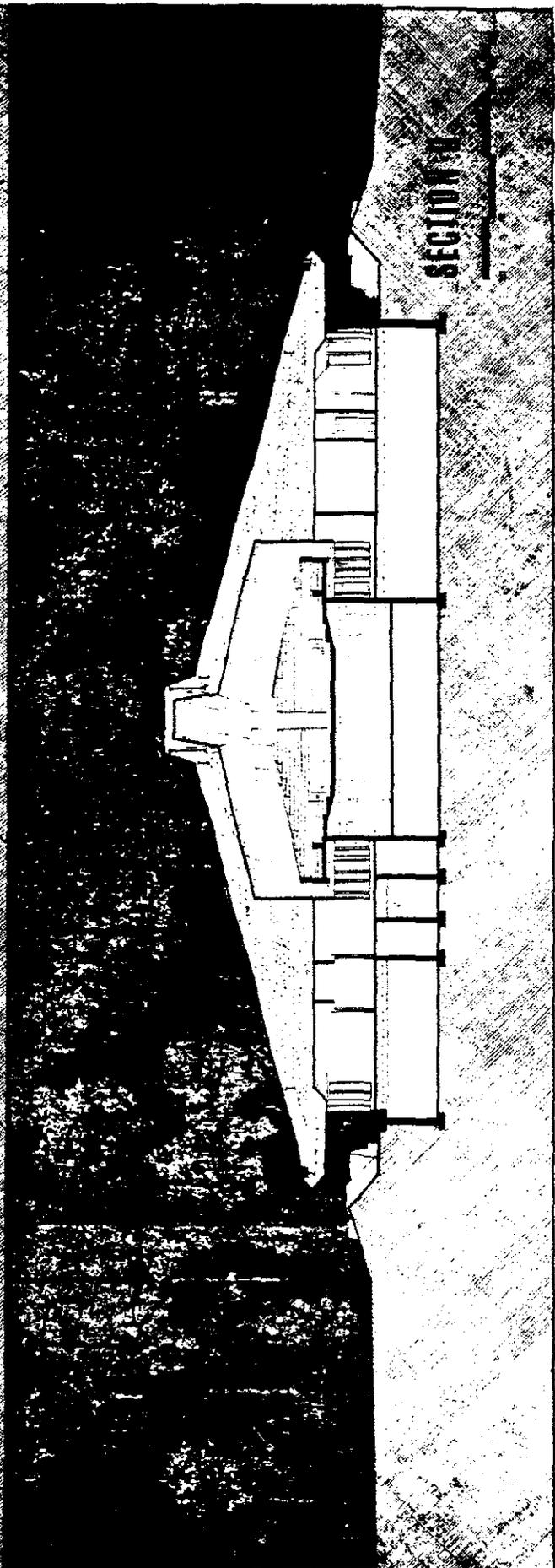
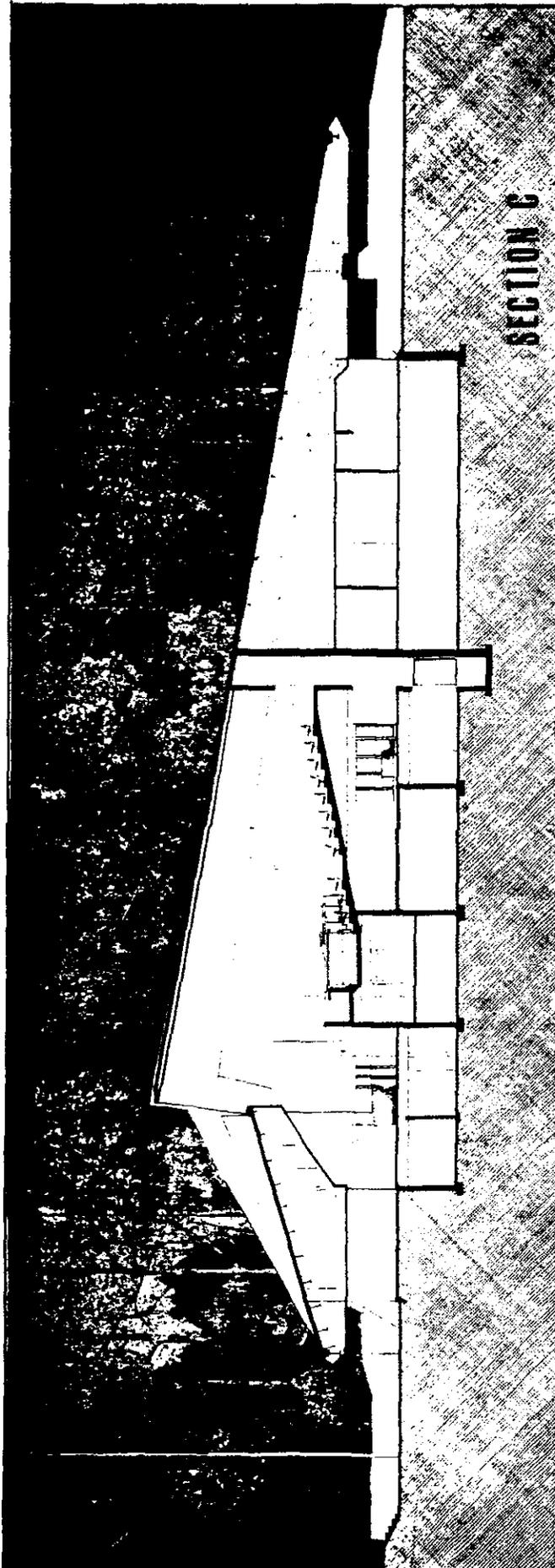
CONTINUOUS TONGUE

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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

Architectural drawings dated December 18, 1967, are available in the Office of the Clerk of Council, City of Kettering, 3600 Shroyer Road, Kettering, Ohio 45429.

B. EARLY VIEWS

Not applicable.

C. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Primary sources

A. Kettering Government Center Project Description document by Eugene W. Betz Architects, Inc.

B. Kettering City Council Minutes of the following dates:

April 12, 1966
January 24, 1967
January 16, 1968
April 27, 1971

The above documents are available in the Office of the Clerk of Council, City of Kettering.

2. Secondary sources

Newspaper articles -

Babcock, James. "Building Plan Approved," Journal Herald, January 25, 1967.

"Contracts okay for City Hall," Kettering-Oakwood Times, January 18, 1968.

Lohrer, Bill. "Kettering Breaks Ground on Municipal Building," Dayton Daily News, February 3, 1968.

"New Justice Hall Dedication, Tour Scheduled Sunday," Kettering-Oakwood Times, May 12, 1973.

Copies of these articles are enclosed.

SEE FIELD RECORDS

D. SOURCES NOT YET INVESTIGATED

More detailed supplementary information can be obtained from the office of Eugene W. Betz Architects, Inc., 2223 South Dixie Avenue, Dayton, OH 45409.

E. SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Attached SEE FIELD RECORDS

Prepared by: Robert J. Makarius, Jr., AIA
 Kettering City Councilman and
 Registered Professional Architect
 August 27, 1981