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Looking ahead B'ham's growth will

STEADY ACQUISITION of land throughout the past half-century has allowed Birmingham's area to increase over the years, but to day the physical boundaries are firmly set.

Where will future growth happen in a city that appears to have reached its geographical limit?

According to City Planner Bonnie Cook, Birmingham can't grow horizontally even though it is still occasionally annexing small parcels of land. The residential areas are also quite stable, she said, and there seem to be few areas zoned for multiple-family dwellings that aren't already developed.

COOK PREDICTED that the redevelopment of the central business district will be the primary growth area for the future. "It has had a lot of changes in the past ten years and they will probably continue."

This central business district redevelopment will probably be vertical, she said. That area is currently zoned for a maximum of four stories.

Exactly how many buildings will increase in size, and how high they will be built up is impossible to predict. But she did say that the future is doubtful for

more buildings comparable to the 15-story 555 Building on South Woodward which was completed in the middle seventies.

"Probably we won't see buildings that tall or of that scale anymore," Cook said.

That building met public opposition after it was completed, she explained, primarily because it was too tall to be a part of the street scape.

THE BUILDING evolved from ideas set forth in the 1964 plan for the future of Birmingham. That plan envisioned the city as a cosmopolitan area with a great deal of development taking place.

That is the only city plan Birmingham has not really adhered to, she said, adding that its ideas never really met with total public approval.

"They saw the results of that plan and they didn't like it — so they decided to put the brakes on for a while."

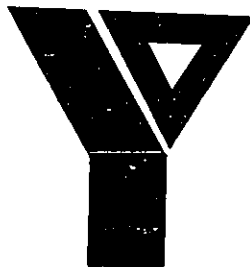
Cook said that reactions to the 555 Building echoed the community's feeling throughout the 1970s, which has been to bring the height and scale of development down.

"It was a conscious decision to bring the height down," she explained.

She said it's important to only allow growth when the necessary services —

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