

An Adaptive [sub]Urban Place
a theory of space, place and the suburbs

by

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An Adaptive Suburban Place

The new space, the new time, the new suburbs

Abstract

An Adaptive [sub]Urban Place

a theory of space, place and the suburbs

In the era of post-industrialism it has been argued that we have lost touch with *places* in exchange for an increasingly individualized identity. The big box stores, power centers and seas of asphalt parking lots that have become ubiquitous in the suburban landscape speak to this notion. The suburban fabric constructed today will be the urban fabric of tomorrow, but our current suburban development patterns fail to plan for this inevitability.

Many have advocated that a new development must aspire to meet the social needs of a community and create a ‘sense of place.’

Architecture has played a large role in the physical manifestation of the ideas that inform the identity of the community, but the infrastructure that dictates its ability to evolve and grow circumscribe the architect’s impact. This thesis attempts to identify ways that contemporary suburban commercial forms can be designed to create an evolutionary instead of revolutionary *place*.

Big Boxes Made of Ticky Tacky

Big boxes on the hillside,
Big boxes made of ticky tacky,
Big boxes on the hillside,
Big boxes all the same.
There's a Costco and Home Depot
And a Walmart and a Best Buy,
And they're all made out of Dryvit
And they all look just the same.

Ah, the suburbs, the mystical land of uniformity and cars. The pharaohs may have left the pyramids and the Mayans a prophecy of destruction for December 2012 but we have given the world ticky tacky. Sure, we have created our own monuments – and our own prophecies for that matter – but for the most part we will leave behind a landscape of Styrofoam and Dryvit.

Of course big box stores in the suburbs were never meant to be a monument to the triumphs of man; they were created as monuments to consumerism and in that vein have found their place as an architecture of economy. If the gothic cathedrals were a physical manifestation of truth and honesty then it is not a big jump to say that the architecture of big box stores is a physical manifestation of corporate secrets and temporality. With the steep decline in people attending religious ceremonies over the last 20 years and a significant increase in retail space, it may be that the newest and fastest growing religion is shopping - the newest cathedrals being the big boxes.

Unlike the great cathedrals of the past, big box stores are not constructed to be around forever – in fact, they are built to be used for about 5 -10 years. When put into perspective, it seems absurd

that a 100,000 square foot building is only considered to be of any value to the company for 7 years ... maybe because it is absurd.

Ironically, these buildings, once vacated by their original tenant and creator, are now being converted to allow for a multitude of different programs with one of the most popular conversions being a church.

The question begging to be asked is: why do we keep creating buildings that are solely organized around the big box program when the program will only occupy the building for an average of 5 – 7 years? If retail architecture is consumer reliant why does it not promote social sustainability?

It is time for architects to take up the challenge of persuading retailers to think outside the big box.

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I am thankful to my supervisor, Benjamin Gianni, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final level enabled me to develop an understanding of the dynamics of suburban architecture and planning.

I also like to extend my thanks to the professors, students and staff at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism at Carleton University for the many joyful experiences that I had an opportunity to be a part of as a student.

Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to my family and friends who supported me in any respect during the completion of the project.

Michael LaPrade

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Chapter One

A Place Close to Everything

John A. W. ...

The notion of 'place' can seem so familiar at first, yet to try and define it concretely is an elusive task. The qualities that define a place or that of a non-place or placelessness have been discussed at length by many academics in fields ranging from geography, sociology and anthropology to architecture and urban design. There seems to be a general consensus, however, that a place must consist of layers and many have been introduced to breakdown the essence of what a space must possess to be considered a place. Layers such as thresholds, boundaries, edges, nodes, landmarks, destinations, identity, connectivity and historicity have been identified by geographer Edward Relph, urban planner Kevin Lynch, anthropologist Marc Augé and architect Ellen-Dunham Jones as necessary to instill a sense of place. Marc Augé, in his book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, argues that, "[all] places have at least three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be- places of identity, of relations and of history."¹

This thesis will look at the suburban landscape through the lens of place and non-place. As Michel Foucault said in his 1967 lecture entitled *Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias*, "...during the 19th century,

¹ Marc Augé (1995) *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [Non lieux] London: New York: Verso 52

the shift of cemeteries towards the suburbs was initiated. The cemeteries then came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses a dark resting place.”² Or as Augé says, “certain places exist on through the words that evoke them, and in a sense they are non-places, or rather imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés.”³ The suburbs have had a long standing reputation of missing the essence of place. The idea that a community will immediately develop because a series of houses are built in a field at the edge of the city is optimistic at best.

What, then, of the popularity of the suburbs? It is impossible to deny that the suburbs must offer something that thousands of people desire. If suburbia’s merits were only evaluated on its ability to provide land to the average person, it would be an unprecedented success. This is not the case, however, and as Augé argues, ‘history, identity and relations’ are the basis on which *place* must be measured.

To attempt to infuse history into a new suburban development would likely result in illusion – a Disneyfication. The history that Augé speaks of is not a constructed reference but the ‘authentic’ history that a place accumulates over time. This accumulation of history can be seen in many suburban developments constructed on what was once the edge of the city; areas that have now become integrated into the urban fabric. These places have accumulated

² Michel Foucault, (1984). *Of other spaces: Heterotopias* [Des Espace Autres] *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*

³ Marc Augé (1995) *Non-places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* [Non lieux]. London New York: Verso 95

history through their evolution and reinterpretation, adding sentimental, economic and social value. The social spaces that often developed around the commercial hubs of these communities provided a focus, a sense of place, and a collective public nature through their physical form. The importance of integrating the social and commercial spaces of a community has been identified by sociologist Ray Oldenburg and political scientist Robert Putnam, who argue that there has been a decline of informal social spaces.

The introduction of the automobile drastically affected the form of suburban commercial shopping centers. The ability to attract customers on a larger scale and the need to provide parking for the automobile dependent shopper required new architectural forms. The first attempt to orient a suburban commercial center around the automobile was undertaken by J.C. Nichols in 1923 at Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, but the forms that have become pervasive today grew largely out of the work of Victor Gruen during the Post WWII housing boom.

Our contemporary commercial centers have come to be heavily characterized by their parking lots, attempting to mediate the relationship between pedestrians and cars. Furthermore, the layout of the parking lot(s) has an inherent effect on the commercial area's ability to transform and respond to city infrastructure. By ignoring the long-term implications of design decisions, the viable lifespan of a project is effectively sealed. The opportunity associated with the 'death' of a shopping center/mall is the potential for future large-scale redevelopment. In other words, it reserves a large piece of land

in a heavily subdivided area. However, this is no excuse to ignore the importance of creating buildings and places that are able to adapt – much like suburban houses adapt over time with additions and renovations.

It is difficult to propose the design of a *place*. The success of design decisions and its appeal to the public can only be tested once it has been built. During first stages of a new suburban development it is impossible to tell whether a ‘community’ will eventually create a unique or distinct identity for itself. Today’s development practices often demand enough houses are built prior to the commercial area, ensuring the viability of retail business. This process makes certain that if the population target fails to be met, the commercial businesses will not be built. If the target population is achieved and the commercial area proceeds, it then has a greater responsibility to provide for and serve the people in the homes.

There has been a long discourse on the social function of commercial spaces in suburbia. Commercial spaces has often played an important social role in cities and prominent figures including pioneering Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes, Canadian urban planner Humphrey Carver, American mall designer Victor Gruen, American real estate entrepreneur Robert E. Simon and Canadian business tycoon E.P. Taylor have come to recognize its importance in the suburbs. There are several examples of commercial centers, including Northland Center in Detroit, Michigan, Don Mills Center in Toronto, Ontario, and Lake Anne Village Center and Reston Town Center in Reston, Virginia which have brought together a

variety of uses and amenities. The different approaches taken to integrate social spaces in the commercial spaces of these suburban developments demonstrate a wide range of design solutions that seek to create a 'sense of place.' Often today the program of suburban commercial districts, however, is often just that: solely commercial.

In the past decade there has been significant discussion about what to do with our dead and dying malls. Many books have been written and many architectural conversions and interventions have taken place. Notably, the biggest challenge for designers in repurposing dead malls is breaking down the psychological barriers that people build up about the empty structure. Convincing people that the old Wal-Mart will make a great new church is tough to do. Perhaps we need to anticipate this problem earlier in the process, at the initial creation of the mall.

By creating commercial districts in suburbia that are flexible to change and socially sustainable it is this author's belief that it is possible to avoid the tide of dead and dying malls and underperforming asphalt. To investigate and interpret the research on *place* this thesis puts forth a proposal for Findlay Creek Village Center in Ottawa, Ontario. The design should not be seen as a result of the research but as a way to gain a fuller understanding of how architecture contributes to the creation of *place*. The design proposes that it is possible to design *places* in the era of supermodernity, while being conscious of the fact that popular ideas and shopping habits change frequently. By creating commercial centers that people are able to socially invest in not only strengthens the suburban

communities they support but anticipates its integration into the expanding urban fabric.

Chapter Two

What is a Place?

The way that we build the world around us speaks of our aspirations. The ability to feel a sense of belonging and identity with places gives meaning to frame our lives. Today, we are entering into what Marc Augé has termed supermodernity. Our increasing mobility and ‘excess’ of time, space and events have forced us to individualize our identities. The *non-place* supermarkets and highways that form the commercial suburban landscape are testament to this fact. If these are the conditions of our era, how do we approach the desire for places? The issue of how suburban commercial architecture can approach the need for *place* in supermodernity is necessary, if we are to attempt the construction of places today. The definition of place is explored through Marc Augé’s ideas of ‘anthropological place’ and ‘non-place,’ contextualizing our past and current relationships with places. The need for places is then explored through the work of Ellen Dunham-Jones, Jean Baudrillard and Christian Norberg-Schulz, who reinforce the architect’s role in the creation and promotion of places.

Place is an integral part of existence. It provides context and meaning to the occurrences in our lives. When one talks about something that has happened it is always framed by the location in which it *took place*. The notion of *place* goes beyond a physical description of one’s geographic location though, and implies a sense

of belonging and understanding. We attach meaning to places of significance and erect monuments to commemorate events that have *taken place*. Our ability to memorialize allows us to mark our time in history.

A multidisciplinary discourse on *place* has emerged as many believe the mobility and technology granted by post-industrialism have undermined its importance. Distinct social identities that once framed human existence have been exchanged for individualization. Traditionally, spaces of commerce have been instrumental in forming the collective identity of a place. The benefits of trade were underscored by the social relationships that were created or strengthened. International trade and globalization have done much to increase the variety and availability of goods, but a focus on the economics of distribution has eroded the social role of commerce and in extension its role in the creation of *places*.

Attempts to establish a concrete definition of *place* have been undertaken by many academics including Kevin Lynch, Peter Rowe, Christopher Alexander and Edward Relph. None, however, approach the commercial spaces of today as thoroughly as Marc Augé in his book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. The exemplification of today's supermarkets and highways as the antithesis to *place* emphasizes the importance of suburban commercial spaces in the creation of a local identity. As an anthropologist Augé's idea of *place* focuses on the results of human creation, forming an interesting reflection of our current condition. It would be naive to assume we could simply revert back to the

traditional strategies used to create places—this would imply disengaging from a global community. Instead, we need to find a way to allow our communities to grow and evolve into the urban fabric, while retaining a unique identity and history.

Place, Non-Place & Supermodern

The balance between the importance of the individual and the collective in society has shifted. The post-industrial suburb is not characterized by the white, middle-class, nuclear family of the 1950's that has become the popular image of suburbia.¹

Contemporary suburbanites represent an increasingly diverse range of cultures, traditions and identities and with the movement of the suburbs farther from the centers of cities, floating autonomously with office parks and shopping centers, the search for personal identity has persevered. Throughout human history places have often been built around a geographically definable boundary and distinct center. The tribal-ring, river junction or town square once gave places a geographic and phenomenological sense of *place* but have been replaced by what Marc Augé refers to as *non-places* or Edward Relph calls *placelessness*. To investigate what is absent in the commercial centers of post-industrial suburban communities, it is necessary to identify essential components of *place*.

Augé identifies these characteristics as identity, history and relations. "The layout of the house, the rules of the residence, the zoning of the village, placement of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution, correspond for every individual into a

¹ David Brooks "Overspraying Super-size Utopia - New York Times - The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia 4 Apr 2004 Web 03 May 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/04/magazine/overspraying-super-size-utopia.html>>

system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social.”²

The identities and relations that are formed within a place are informed by the history of the place, which gives it stability. History in this sense is not a scientific endeavour to catalogue existence but actively informs the daily lives of the inhabitants. The signs and symbols that populate these places serve as indications of the knowledge that is awakened through ritual and passed on through generations. “The inhabitant of anthropological place does not make history; he lives in it.”³ Once the observances or rituals disappear in an anthropological place they are effectively gone and do not simply reflect the passage of time. That is to say that the history of anthropological space is lived and if it disappears or is transformed, the place inherently disappears or is transformed.

These three characteristics—history, identity and relations—form an inseparable paradigm in Augé’s definition of anthropological place. They are also the basis for what he describes as, “three simple spatial forms, which apply institutional arrangements and in a sense are the elementary forms of social space.”⁴ The forms are the line, the intersection of lines and the point of intersection. In geographic terms these elementary forms take on the role of routes, axes or paths; crossroads and open spaces; and centers which define one place in relation to others. The formation of markets, palaces and shrines along paths, at intersections and in

² Augé, 52

³ Augé 55

⁴ Augé 56-57

centers mark the space of assembly and allow religious, political and economic exchange. Furthermore, these spaces have a temporal dimension to them. Their existence revolves around ritual and the cycles of the earth and the activities that are related in an ‘alternating sacrality’ which “creates the conditions for the memory attached to certain places.”⁵ The repetition of events creates the opportunity to remind individuals of the groups to which they belong and also of earlier celebrations and assemblies.

The importance of *anthropological place* is its ability to contrast and contextualize what anthropologists have traditionally defined as *place* against the spaces (or *non-places*) that are constructed today. Our ability to successfully incorporate today’s suburbs into tomorrow’s urban fabric depends largely on our ability to create *places* that grow and evolve. Architect Ellen Dunham-Jones notes, “rather than simply assuming that the problems of non-places can be fixed by applying the traditional tools of place making, or that cohesive communities can be achieved simply through the construction of more traditionally organized places, architects need to be aware of the degree to which local cultures are becoming increasingly disengaged from place, increasingly absorbed in supermodernity.”⁶

The loss of places or the continuing proliferation of non-places is a condition of supermodernity. Supermodernity in itself is not a new idea; it can be thought of as congruous with “post industrialism, late

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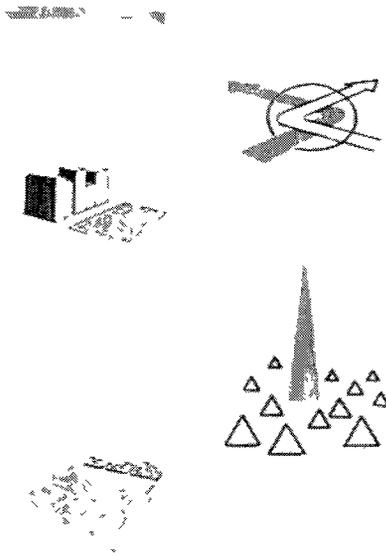
⁶ Ellen Dunham-Jones, “Placing Identity,” *Georgia Tech Architecture and Urban Institute*, 1998. Web 22 Jan 2011. http://smartechnology.technet.edu/bits/ellenhurdle/1853/1999/placing_identity.pdf?sequence=3

capitalism, and the condition of post modernity.”⁷ The increasing mobilization and globalization of the world has resulted in greater social awareness and mixing of cultures. Moreover, the traditional underpinnings of a collective identity—place and history—are becoming subverted. Augé contends that as people stop searching for meaning in the collective identity of the group, they give meaning to their identity through increased individualization. This individualization, a result of acceleration in time, space and identity, creates a world that becomes detached from the sense of an ‘unfolding destiny.’ We find meaning in the immediacy of things instead of being part of a continuum.

The density of events that have occurred over the past few decades, according to Augé, threatens to rob all of them of meaning. He says, “[f]or it is our need to understand the whole of the present that makes it difficult for us to give meaning to the recent past.”⁸ Not to say that there are more events occurring today than in the past, but because more people recognize occurrences as events today, they become part of a larger social identity that is diluted. The means of mobility and communication available have produced a condition where places and information can be accessed relatively quickly and easily. Not only is it possible to experience events on the other side of the earth through live video feeds, but advances in transportation technology have made these places more accessible. The excess of events makes it difficult to give hierarchy to the events that we

experience and invest with meaning. Jean Baudrillard reinforces this notion saying, “Whoever is underexposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial. Everywhere information is thought to produce an accelerated circulation of meaning, a plus value of meaning homologous to the economic one that results from the accelerated rotation of capital.”⁹

In supermodernity individualization has led to a destabilization in the reference points of our collective identity and thus the creation of individual meaning has become more important than ever. The individualization of references undermines man’s ability to ‘orientate’ himself in space and ‘identify’ himself with the environment. Kevin Lynch’s notion of an ‘environmental image’ comprised of ‘node’, ‘path’ and ‘district’ emphasizes the role of social identity in terms of orientation. Lynch says, “a good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of environmental security.”¹⁰ Without this environmental security one is left vulnerable and feels lost. To protect against this feeling of insecurity man uses his capacity to construct and interpret mental images of the environment, or as Lynch terms ‘imageability.’ These powerful images do not necessarily presuppose identification with the place however, as it is possible to orient oneself without ‘true identification’ and identify with a place without knowing its spatial structure; “that is, the place is only experienced as a general



Kevin Lynch
Path, Node, Edge, Land Mark, District

⁹ Baudrillard Jean *Symbolic and Simulation* Trans Sheila F. Glaser Ann Arbor University of Michigan 1991 80

¹⁰ Kevin Lynch *The Image of the City* Cambridge [Mass: Technology, 1960] 4

gratifying character.”¹¹ An experience of both orientation and identification simultaneously is essential to feeling a sense of belonging to a place, and as post-industrial orientation becomes consigned to practical functions, identification with a place is left further and further to chance.¹²

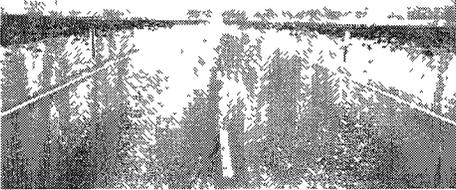
As North America has entered into the post-industrial era it would stand to reason that there are common examples of non-place and to this end Augé gives several important instances: the highway, supermarket and airport. The common thread amongst these non-places is primarily their formation in relation to certain ends (transport, commerce, transit, leisure), but secondarily that they are not organically social like anthropological place and instead rely on a “solitary contractuality.”¹³

The main roads that once directed traffic through the center of a town now only skirt their edges and offer a sign to denote the existence of place. According to Augé, the traveller headed down the highway does not need to stop and explore the town to learn what is available because a sign with language reduced to infographics—the gas pump denoting a gas station is a common example—gives him all the information he needs. The service stations that create a rhythm to the highway travel become the cultural landmarks by offering local goods, maps and guidebooks that give the travellers a taste of what is just off the next exit ramp.

¹¹ Norberg-Schulz, 70.

¹² Norberg Schulz, 71.

¹³ Augé, 94.



Highway

The invasion of text is not only limited to the highway and is everywhere in today's large supermarkets. "The customer wanders round in silence, reads labels, weighs fruit and vegetables on a machine that gives the price along with the weight..."¹⁴ To pay for the purchases the customer uses a credit card following instructions on a tiny screen. The credit card represents the contractual relationship to the non-place and allows access to the identity of 'customer.' The user of non-places is always required to prove his innocence by providing identification to enter into a contractual relationship with the space. "The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude."¹⁵

It is not difficult to see why the idea of non-place might apply at suburban commercial centers. For these 'centers' are chosen in relation to the space of the traveller—highways, airports, train stations—and they often consist of large supermarkets and big box stores. To say that all the commercial centers created in supermodernity are non-places, however, would discredit visionaries of the 20th century such as Victor Gruen, Robert Simon and James Rouse, who have attempted to reinterpret the idea of place. The creators of place like Country Club Plaza, Missouri, Don Mills, Ontario and Reston, Virginia are testaments of our aptitude to reinterpret place in supermodernity. "We should add that the same things apply to the place as to the non-place. It never exists in pure form; places reconstitute themselves in it; relations are restored and

¹⁴ Auge, 100.

¹⁵ Auge, 103.

resumed in it ... Place and non-place are rather like opposite polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled games of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Augé, 78-79

Chapter Three

Social Capital in the Suburbs

The social interactions that occur within a *place* are framed by the built environment and the articulation of space informs the type of socialization that is accepted/encouraged. The formalized or scripted experiences in non-places (i.e. the contractual agreement with the non-place) deny spontaneity, limiting the informal experiences that add richness to life. Architect Rem Koolhaas notes, “when air conditioning, escalators, and advertising appeared, shopping expanded its scale, but also limited its spontaneity. And it became much more predictable, almost scientific. What had once been the most surprising became the most manipulated.”¹ The informal spontaneous spaces that Ray Oldenburg terms ‘Third Place’ have been pushed out for more predictable and benign spaces. The type of capital exchanged in Third Place is not limited to money and social capital, although difficult to measure, provides an opportunity to profit from informal social interaction. In the context of attempting to understand the social dynamics of a suburban commercial center and the basic needs of those who frequent it, sociologist Robert Putnam’s ‘Social Capital’ and urban sociologist Roy Oldenburg’s ‘Third Place’ theories prove helpful.

The concept of ‘capital’ has changed over time and traditional neoclassical notions of capital—physical items, money, land or

¹ Rem Koolhaas 2000 interview by Jennifer Sigler *Index Magazine* (00) Web 4 May 2011
http://www.indexmagazine.com/interviews/rem_koolhaas.shtml.

labour—have broadened to include less tactile things like human capital, cultural capital and social capital. For Robert Putnam, who is often credited as being instrumental in the contemporary understanding of the term, social capital “refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.”² There is much debate about a concrete definition of social capital but it is often recognized that it would be erroneous to attempt to understand it as independent of human and cultural capital as they were developed in concert with each other.

Although difficult to measure, human capital is a relatively easy concept to understand. It is the investment into training, work or education that increases one’s productivity or knowledge, which can later bring financial return. In other words, when one goes to school or learns a new skill, one is increasing their human capital which remains “in the owner’s person.”³

Cultural capital originated in the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu cultural capital was defined as “high cultural knowledge that ultimately redounds to the owner's socioeconomic advantage.”⁴ Again, this is a relatively easy phenomenon to observe but one that is onerously difficult to measure. For example, dressing a certain way in certain situations comes from cultural knowledge. Most people going to a job interview at a major law firm would not

Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 61 (1995): 65-78.
Judy Hutchinson, Ivan Light, and Robert Putnam, “Using Social Capital to Help Integrate Planning Theory, Research, and Practice,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70 (2004): 142-51.
⁴ “Cultural Capital,” *Science in Society*, National Industries, Web, 14 Feb. 2011.
<http://www.natke.org/pages/7607/CulturalCapital.html>

dress casually. Coming from another culture this may seem absurd but having cultural capital means that you are aware of these ‘expectations’ and are able to use them to your advantage.⁵

The property that binds all these forms of capital (human, cultural, social, financial and physical) together is their “mutual metamorphosis.”⁶ One form of capital can be exchanged for another and these exchanges are the basis of what drives society. A simple analogy can be used to illustrate the power of these exchanges. Suppose Wayne, a high school student, wishes to get into university. There are different types of capital that he can use to achieve this goal. If Wayne is well connected and has a lot of social capital he can leverage these connections to get into university and obtain a higher education or human capital. The human capital gained at university can then be used to get a higher paying job or financial capital. The financial capital gained at work can then be used to buy something, say a car, and increase Wayne’s physical capital. Depending on the kind of car Wayne buys (we will assume that university education paid off well and he’s bought a Porsche) he can increase his cultural capital which might get him into more prestigious places which would increase his social capital. These exchanges and uses of capital allow contemporary society to function on a complex level that cannot be simply boiled down to the exchange of money for goods.

⁵ Htchu son, Light and Putuam.
⁶ Htchunon, Light and Putuam

The theory of Third Place developed by Roy Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place* provides an interesting way of interpreting the types of capital that we exchange, where we acquire them and the importance to society. Like Putnam, Oldenburg struggles to quantify the value of social interaction and in turn, unlike Putnam, relies heavily on anecdotal evidence. For Oldenburg there are three types of places that are essential to a good life: the home, work and 'third place.' The third place represents a place that is the core of informal public activity and allows people to enrich their lives through social interaction with a diverse group of others. Not any place can be a third place nor can the architectural program dictate whether or not a place is a third place, but Oldenburg contends there are fading forms that once epitomized third place. The English pub, Parisian café and North American drugstore counter are places that go beyond the contemporary notion of retail and offer a social atmosphere that can't be paid for. According to Oldenburg such places are on the decline. Whether or not this is actually the case is difficult to discern because Oldenburg's idea of third place is very inclusive.

For Oldenburg, the criteria for evaluating if an establishment can be labeled third place are quite strict. One such restriction is that "the activity that goes on in third place is largely unplanned, unscheduled, unorganized and unstructured."⁷ Oldenburg extends this characterization to exclude organized clubs and activities from the category of third place, which excuses him from discussing their

⁷ Ray Oldenburg. *The Great Good Place*. New York: Paragon House, 1989. 33

social value. Putnam takes a vastly different approach to the dichotomy between organized and unorganized social activity and breaks down social capital to include both bonding capital and bridging capital. As opposed to relegating formal social gatherings to the sidelines, Putnam's idea of social capital keeps them front and center as "both of those constitute networks in which there can easily develop reciprocity, and in which there can be gains."⁸

Social capital is largely based on trust and the amount of trust in a relationship determines whether bonding or bridging capital is being exchanged. Bonding social capital is developed in the social networks of closely related groups that have built trust based on information. Conversely, bridging social capital builds "across diverse social cleavages"⁹ and relies on trust based in faith. Although the trust in each type of capital is based on different things (information vs. faith), its existence is important because "the trust that is formed by both types of social capital thus enables different groups of people to cooperate and act collectively for their mutual benefit."¹⁰ Putnam warns not to be dismissive of the benefits of bridging capital "because there has been good experimental evidence that if you nod to people in the hall, they are more likely to come to your aid if you should have a fit or have a heart attack ... Merely nodding to someone in the hall generates visible, measureable forms

⁸ Robert Putnam, "Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences," *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* Web Jan 2001. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/6/1525848.pdf>.

⁹ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. ??

¹⁰ Richira Gump and Kurt Logan, "The Interplay of Third Place, Self-efficacy, Social and Human Capital in a New Zealand Community (CITYouth Project)," *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems Research*. Academic Publishing Inc. Jan 2011. Web Feb 2011. www.ejse.com/issue/download.html?id=issue_??

of reciprocity.”¹¹ It is this reciprocity that is so important for both the notion of social capital and third place.

Arguably, the ability to build trust in a relationship and move from a bridging to bonding social capital is difficult to do in the suburbs. The types of spaces available to become third places are few and far between. Looking at the original visions that Victor Gruen, E.P. Taylor and Robert E. Simon for suburban commercial centers, there is a common emphasis on the importance of social and communal spaces. The complex relationships that these men wished to nourish went beyond a fiscal transaction and an insincere ‘hello, how are you today?’ Their aspirations facilitated the exchange of social capital. The quest to find new markets and business opportunities has resulted in commercial centers that cater to purely shopping needs: are they missing out on opportunities to increase profits through the exchange of social capital?

John Sewell discussed this lack of social space and amenities in the suburbs in an article titled *Why suburbia hasn't worked* in 1974 yet we are still faced with the same problems. To contextualize the article Swell begins by acknowledging that the social and sociological problems of suburbia have been studied at length but has been done so erroneously by concentrating “on real or imagined social problems, and [ignoring] the political and economic problems generated by the suburban development pattern for suburbanites and for other urban residents.”¹² For Sewell the economic and social

¹¹ Putnam, "Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences."

¹² Lerner and Ross, 31

problems in the suburbs stem from four main issues: high house prices, the missing amenities, ‘nowhere is somewhere’ and open space that can’t be used.

The price of suburban housing and the concept of ‘nowhere is somewhere’ are beyond the scope of this thesis but missing amenities and open space that can’t be used are important issues that are still relevant today. The lack of amenities in new suburban developments has long been an issue and as Sewell says, “It is difficult to discover informal meeting places in the suburbs ... small amenities, taken for granted in cities and towns, are simply not present in suburbia. The result is that people are more isolated from one another...”¹³ The inability of suburban commercial developers to invest into third place for the exchange of social capital is having a detrimental effect on the ability of today’s suburban ‘town/shopping centers’ to become a place for social exchange. “For people who have difficulty in finding the time or money for an extensive social life, it does not work well.”¹⁴

Open space has long been regarded as an important element of suburbia and was one of the main reasons that people were so willing to leave the dirty cramped city. Sewell’s issue with open space is not the lack of but its ability to be used. By creating setbacks and zoning restrictions that divide the open space up amongst the various lots and buildings there is little useful open space left. This issues is not strictly with the housing either and

¹³ Lomme and Ross, 37-33.

¹⁴ Lomme and Ross, 33.

drastically impacts the layout of commercial areas as well. The shopping centers of today's suburbs are sparse and underutilize the land. As Sewell concludes, "The space is so poorly distributed that it is open but of little value."¹⁵

In the end, the inclusion of social spaces within new suburban commercial centers is paramount. Often these amenities are viewed as excessively expensive but even small interventions can create opportunities for social life and promote the exchange of capital. The current owner of Reston Town Center, Robert Kettler, recognizes this relationship and has said, "We have found that good architecture and good planning pay, at least a 15 percent premium."¹⁶ While the short term success can be predicated on how many people are willing to buy and which commercial giants can be attracted, the long term success of the 'community' will be its ability to generate and support relationships. In return for a financial investment into supporting social interaction the developer may not see a fiscal return but the reputation and publicity (human, cultural and social capital) the developer can garnish in return can easily surpass the cost of the investment. Furthermore, creating a master plan that has little if no room for flexibility and doesn't anticipate future changes and growth speaks to how many developers plan solely for their financial involvement and are unwilling to appreciate the impact they have on the people who purchase their product. Venturing into the trade of social capital creates return that is difficult to measure

¹⁵ Forster and Ross, 35.

¹⁶ Philip Langdon "Reston Town Center: a Downtown for the 21st Century?" *New Urban Network*, 1 Oct. 2006. Web. Feb. 2011. < <http://newurbanetwork.com/article/reston-town-center-downtown-21st-century/> .

and integrate into a business plan, often resulting in its dismissal. Its value, however, can be seen in Don Mills, Ontario and Reston, Virginia where social spaces were made a top priority. Many commercial centers strive to supply basics human needs—food, clothing, water—to suburban communities, but have left out our need for social relationships. It is one thing to supply products to the masses and another to become part of their lifestyle.

Chapter Four

Visions on the Periphery

The scale of suburban commercial shopping centers increased following the end of WWII and a distinction between shopping centers as destinations and practical places to purchase goods became intensified. This opposition has influenced the way construction of commercial centers is approached by developers. Long-term approaches often attempt to create commercial centers that can evolve in unison with a residential community and develop a unique identity, while short-term approaches tend to focus on making products available. A long-term evolution of a commercial center is critical to the establishment of social relationships that give meaning to our lives. Some short-term commercial centers, those that reserve large parcels of land for future development, are necessary but when do people aspire to more? Is there not a way to meet short-term needs with long-term aspirations?

To investigate the different ways that social spaces have been incorporated into commercial centers requires looking to people with aspirations to leave their mark in the suburbs. Victor Gruen, E.P Taylor and Robert E. Simons all had visions for the suburbs and the means to make large scale projects like Northland Center, Michigan, Don Mills, Ontario and Reston, Virginia a reality. The places they attempted to create went beyond satisfying financial considerations, endeavoring to redefine how suburban communities were structured.

To do this it was necessary to incorporate commercial infrastructure in a way that could grow with the community. Although the scale of these projects are beyond a typical suburban commercial center today, the risks necessary in their creation generated unique design solutions that anticipate the long-term impacts of suburban development.

Victor Gruen¹

A more detailed and comprehensive account of Victor Gruen's work can be found in the appendices to the Victor Gruen

The work of Victor Gruen is instrumental to understanding the development of suburban commercial architecture following WWII.

The shopping center designs that he created revolutionized the way that suburban commercial architecture is perceived.¹ While malls and shopping centers based on Gruen's designs have become a common feature in both the urban and suburban landscape, Gruen was never happy with the side effect of his ideas—suburban sprawl.

Victor Gruen, originally Victor Grünbaum, was born in Vienna, Austria and began studying architecture in 1917 at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Escaping from the Nazis in 1939, Gruen found work in New York City designing retail stores. His designs promoted the use of a threshold between the sidewalk and interior of the store, allowing the customer to 'enter' before opening the door. His success did not go unnoticed and soon he received commissions to design department stores in the emerging suburban landscape.

One of Gruen's earliest department store commissions came from California clothing chain Grayson's: the design of 11 stores between 1940 and 1946. Grayson's was not a company used to taking risks and set limits on Gruen's experimentation. With the development of suburban strips, department stores saw a valuable market to tap into and would often locate their stores in defined commercial areas to reduce risk. The department stores that Gruen

¹ See *Peterson Malls* under 'Suburban Shopping Centers' in the appendices for a detailed explanation of how these malls evolved.

designed were not limited to the suburbs and often he would play with new ideas by transposing elements between the urban and suburban locations. “As Gruen . . . prepared stores for both locations—moving from downtown to the strip back to downtown—their designs for the two became nearly indistinguishable.”¹ The aesthetic that Gruen developed for these stores was striking with “bright fluorescent lights on the exteriors, sweeping roof lines, tall display windows, and fanciful signage.”² Every component, material and design move was purely directed at attracting people to come to the store with their cars.

In the early 1940s, *Architectural Forum* began postulating about post-WWII planning in America. To encapsulate what the world after the war might hold, they funded and publicized a project to reimagine Syracuse, New York as a hypothetical city of tomorrow, commissioning Gruen to design the shopping center. The project became known as 194X—the ‘X’ denoting the unknown end of the war. The *Architectural Forum* editors developed a master plan with “district zones for diverse uses,”³ a new street order and an 11 block downtown closed to vehicular traffic. “The editors instructed the architects not to experiment with construction methods or the building’s function. Instead they should concentrate on design and style.”⁴

¹ Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 65.

² Peter Siegest, “Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream,” *Rev. of Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

³ Siegest.

⁴ Hardwick, 73.

Through a series of letters, the editors instructed Gruen to limit the scope to a “small neighborhood shopping center rather than a suburban center” and the program was restricted to small shops, a service station, a small movie theater and a corner drugstore.⁵ Gruen took issue with the center being only intended to serve a ‘neighborhood’ area and believed that the shopping center of tomorrow was one that served a larger regional context. Furthermore, Gruen wanted to create “a place for Americans to do more than shop.”⁶

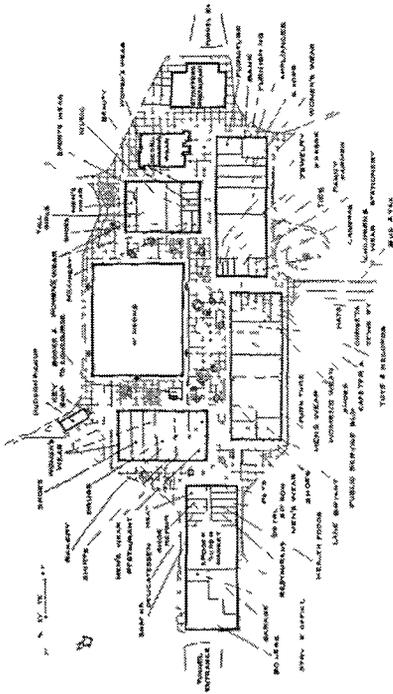
Gruen sought to push the potential of what a shopping center could offer but failed to satisfy the demands for the neighborhood center that *Architecture Forum* publisher Howard Meyer envisioned. After a series of submissions and revisions, Gruen submitted the final design featuring a conventional U-shaped building surrounding an exterior plaza. The structure stretched out over a block with parking on either end and featured a covered walkway for pedestrians to window shop comfortably. The final design was much more modest than the other proposals, but they anticipated the shopping center would grow and planned for another two buildings to be added to complete the courtyard. Convinced of the importance of the communal functions, the final design still featured a library, post office, community room, lounge spaces (for tired shoppers) and a ping-pong table amongst other games and activities.

⁵ Hadwin, 9
⁶ Hadwin, 79

The face of the retail market changed drastically following the end of WWII. Department stores began following their customers to the suburbs and some went as far as closing their flagship downtown locations. To compete with the new suburban alternatives, many of the urban stores underwent massive renovations to update their ‘tired’ façades. “Many intricate, historic facades were covered over with flat panels of metal and glass to mimic the new competitors.”⁷ Cities began to lose their appeal with increased traffic, congestion and crime. Dayton’s department store in Minneapolis, like many others, saw this as a serious threat to their business.

The idea for Dayton’s new shopping center marked a significant shift in the design and construction of suburban shopping centers. Although Gruen’s idea for an enclosed shopping mall first appeared in an unaccepted proposal to *Architectural Forum*’s 194X city of tomorrow, he never actually had the chance to realize his test his vision until Southdale: America’s first enclosed mall.

In June of 1952, Dayton’s department store announced its plans to develop 463 acres of land to the southwest of Minneapolis. Gruen’s idea for Southdale went beyond the creation of the enclosed mall and included a master planned community. The mall would serve as the commercial hub of the new community and was to be surrounded by houses, apartments, a park, a medical center, a man-made lake, highways and a school. Dayton’s, moving beyond department stores and into land development, would plan, finance and build the entire suburban community.



Southdale Shopping Center

Southdale opened its doors for the first time in October of 1956. The mall was composed of 72 stores on two floors, 810,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 5,200 parking spaces, ‘a soaring garden court,’⁴ and two full size department stores. The interior also features sculptures, glass mosaics, multiple fountains, exotic birds and tropical plants—the birds and plants epitomized the climatic control of the enclosed mall. At a cost of about \$20 million dollars, “Southdale created an entirely new retail environment, a new commercial palace for suburbanites.”⁸

⁶ The court bristled with things to see and do when customers weren't shopping and included a sidewalk cafe, marble mail-drop to the post office below, newsstand walls with glass mosaics, a cigar-store Indian, 42" tall eucalyptus, a birdcage with 50 exotic and brightly coloured birds, a children's carnival complete with a petting zoo, a juice bar, tobacco stand, airline kiosks and a radio booth

The success of the mall was clear. In the first year it saw an average of about 50,000 customers a day. To ensure that the department stores wouldn't dominate the mall's commercial activity Gruen made them inaccessible from the 15 parking lots, forcing customers to enter amongst the smaller retailers and make their way through. Furthermore, Gruen completely internalized all of the mall's activity. While the interior was full of colour and excitement, the exterior façades were blank and windowless; a direct reaction against the bright boisterous designs of commercial strips that Gruen had grown to hate. For Gruen the commercial strip represented “a deterioration of the surrounding residential areas by their appearance, their noise, their smells, their traffic congestion.”⁹

Gruen believed that the enclosed mall could also be instrumental in halting suburban sprawl by conglomerating all the commercial activity in a centralized location. The problem, as Gruen saw it, was

⁴ Harlow, 141

⁸ Harlow, 153

that strip commercial exacerbated sprawl. Moreover, he believed that residential and commercial activity must be segregated so that the gaudiness of commercial architecture would not negatively impact property values. To allow Southdale to function as a model for future development, Gruen included in his master plan for the area apartment buildings, office towers, the shopping center, a medical center and highways; with everything set in a park-like atmosphere.

Gruen, often too complacent in the idea that developers are more philanthropists than economists, never got the chance to realize his dream of creating a community around Southdale. Dayton's, in need of funds, sold 208 acres of the land to private developers. In place of apartments and offices came single family homes and strip commercial: suburban sprawl. There were other problems with Gruen's idea to stop sprawl by centralizing commercial activity. For one, the creation of the mall raises the value of the surrounding land. The higher valued land demands more intensive development than residential uses it is slated for. Developers saw this advantage and instead of stopping speculative development, the mall only intensified the problems.

In 1968 Gruen went to Detroit to attend the opening of Westland, a suburban shopping center that he had proposed years earlier. While in Detroit he visited the site of Northland, a shopping center he designed in 1954 that at the time was the largest in North America, and was appalled by the sprawl that the shopping center had spawned. For Gruen, the problem with the development patterns that he helped to generate was that they never took the form he

prescribed. He blamed the developers for taking only the profitable parts of his ideas and proliferating them ad nauseam, only to forget how important the other amenities in the master plan were in the creation of a community. In 1978 he delivered a speech in London lambasting American developers for perverting his ideas and famously said, “I refuse to pay alimony to those development bastards.”¹⁰ Soon after he moved back to Vienna to live out his days only to be greeted by a new enclosed shopping center that was accredited with destroying small businesses. As Malcolm Gladwell puts it, “It was crushing the life of his city. He was devastated. Victor Gruen invented the shopping mall in order to make America more like Vienna. He ended up making Vienna more like America.”¹¹

The impact that Gruen’s designs had on the history of commercial architecture are reason enough to discuss his work, but there are also valuable lessons in the way he conducted business. Gruen was able to convince developers that his designs would be not only beautiful but profitable. The design for the ‘Garden Court of Perpetual Spring’ in Southdale was approved because Gruen convinced Dayton’s that it would keep people in the mall longer and increase sales. Moreover, the enclosing of the mall, at great expense to the developer, promised to extend the number of ‘shopping days,’ again leading to increased sales. By framing his design decisions in

¹⁰ Malcolm Gladwell, ‘The Leaning Tower,’ *The New Yorker* (2004)

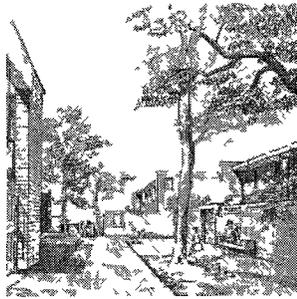
¹¹ http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/15/040315ta_fact

¹² Gladwell

terms of profit he was able to speak to the concerns of the developer and simultaneously push his design aspirations.

Reston, Virginia

"A more detailed and comprehensive account of Robert E. Simon and Reston can be found in the appendixes under Reston Virginia"



Concept Rendering for Reston

The post WWII housing boom in the United States generated many new subdivisions and commercial centers with a wide range of development methodologies. From Levittown, New York to Columbia, Maryland there is no shortage of examples of large scale developments to study, but some of the most interesting ideas for suburban commercial centers emerged in Reston, Virginia. Reston was the work of Robert E. Simon, a visionary with deep pockets, and was far from a prototypical way to build in the suburbs. The willingness to take risks that went against established financial arrangements produced innovative design solutions and makes this an interesting case study. Reston also went through unique circumstances that delayed the development of its regional commercial center until the surrounding land had been built-out. By the time that construction began on Reston Town Center the designers were planning a 'downtown for the suburbs.'¹²

The 7,400 acres of land outside of Washington, D.C. that would eventually become Reston was purchased by Robert E. Simon Jr. in 1961. Disgusted with the post WWII suburban landscape, Simon set out to create Reston as a vision of urbanity in the countryside. To accomplish his goal of building 'a self-contained city on the edge of

¹² Philip Langdon "Reston Town Center: a Downtown for the 21st Century?" *New Urban Network* 1 Oct 2005 Web Feb 2011 <http://newurbanetwork.com/article/reston-town-center-downtown-21st-century/>

an urban metropolis,¹³ Simon set down 7 rules to guide Reston's planning and development:

1) That the widest choice of opportunities be made available for the full use of leisure time. This means that the New Town should provide a wide range of recreational and cultural facilities as well as an environment for privacy.

2) That it be possible for anyone to remain in a single neighborhood throughout his life, uprooting being neither inevitable nor always desirable. By providing the fullest range of housing styles and prices—from high rise efficiencies to six-bedroom townhouses and detached houses—housing needs can be met at a variety of income levels, and at different stages of family life. This kind of mixture permits residents to remain rooted in the community—if they so choose—as their particular housing needs change. As a by-product, this also results in the heterogeneity that spells a lively and varied community.

3) That the importance and dignity of each individual be the focal point for all planning, and take precedence over large scale concepts.

4) That people may be able to live and work in the same community.

5) That commercial, cultural and recreational facilities be made available to the residents from the outset of the development—not years later.

6) That beauty—structural and natural—is a necessity of the good life and should be fostered.

7) That Reston be a financial success.¹⁴

There are several sources credited with inspiring the rules that Simon created. Many believe that Simon was a follower of Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1902)*, which informed the creation of Letchworth in England, while others believe that Reston was based off designs that Leonardo Da Vinci created in 1484 for

¹³ Gulf Reston Inc. "Reston Historic Trust - History of Reston." *Reston Historic Trust & Stratford Museum*. 1970. Web. 1 Oct. 2011. http://www.restonmuseum.org/wam/101_briefHistory.htm

¹⁴ *Reston Historic Trust & Stratford Museum*

satellite cities around Milan to control overcrowding that exacerbated the Black Plague. It would be a mistake however, not to mention that Simon's father was involved in financing the garden city of Radburn, New Jersey, which also influenced Don Mills, Ontario.

To design the master plan for Reston, Simon hired the firm of Whittlesey and Conklin. Whittlesey was a young architect when Radburn was planned but he learned much working for its designers Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. Creating the Reston that Simon envisioned was no small task; he proposed the design of a totally self-sustaining community with everything from residences, industry and commerce to schools, churches and cultural institutions.

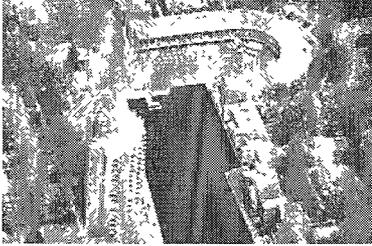
The final plan for Reston called for seven village centres with convenience shops and communal facilities to serve the anticipated 10-12,000 residents in each village. Out of the 7,400 acres that comprised Reston, 42% was reserved for public use such as open space, roads, parks, golf courses, walkways, schools and churches, and 1,000 acres was set aside at the heart of the development for an industrial centre. The most impressive piece of the plan, however, was Reston Town Center which was expected to not only serve the predicted 75,000+ population divided among Reston's seven villages but an additional 50,000 people from outside of Reston.

Lake Anne Village

In the spring of 1963, the plans for Lake Anne Village, the first of Reston's villages, was approved by Fairfax County. As the pilot project of such an ambitious scheme there was a lot at stake, ensuring no expense was spared to make Lake Anne Village successful. Not long after the plans were approved construction began on Lake Anne and the village center.

The construction of Lake Anne was a monumental undertaking. It required 94,000 cubic feet of earth be moved in order to create a 45 foot high by 500 foot long earth dam to impound the water of the Colvin Run. The construction of the lake, however, increased land value, created an amenity for the community and provided a water source for irrigation of a golf course.

Of the seven villages to eventually occupy Reston, Lake Anne Village was one of the five to include a village centre. Simon directed Whittesley and Conklin to design an 'unexpandable' plan so that the village center would not develop into the town center, meaning that it was surrounded with residential properties to limit the commercial growth. The firm was to also design the plaza, fountain and all of the village centre's buildings, while the townhouses were left in the hands of Washington based architect Cloethiel Woodward Smith. The final design for the centre drew inspiration from around the world and incorporated an iconic south-facing crescent of buildings opening onto a plaza in front of Lake



Lake Anne Village Center

Anne, intended to be reminiscent of the architecture on the Mediterranean Sea in Portofino, Italy.¹⁵

Simon's vision for Lake Anne Village Centre avoided many of the trends in commercial centers that were later deemed impractical. One such fad was to include all the communal functions under one roof. Although economic to build, the megastructure concept is both expensive to maintain and inflexible in the long-term. Lake Anne Village Center also included many ideas that were eschewed by other developers; one of the most important being the inclusion of residential units above commercial space that made Lake Anne one of the first true 'live-work' communities of post WWII. Using the urban form of an apartment above retail in the suburbs went against the separation from the city and was a risky idea.

The ingenuity that Simon employed in the design of Reston, however, proved to be at odds with established norms in land development and incongruences soon began to show. Although Reston's population grew steadily in the first years, the speed of sales and development failed to increase enough to cover costs and Gulf Oil Corporation was forced provide additional funding. At the time, Robert Durham, President of the American Institute of Architects, published an article in the Washington Post that identified the challenges that arise for would-be new town builders. Durham didn't blame the developers of Reston for their shortcomings but identified the need for special financing for new towns. He felt this special financing was required because "a New

¹⁵ Alan Ward, ed. *Reston Town Center: A Downtown for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Academy, 2006. 31-32.

Town by its nature must provide for a long lead-time between investments and returns--a time when costly community facilities and amenities, plus payments, taxes and land carrying cost in general will deplete early capital and there will be insufficient income to replace it."¹⁶

The early development of Reston including its first commercial center at Lake Anne was done in unison with the regional centre of Reston but Reston Town Center evolved in an entirely unique way. The investment that Gulf Oil Corporation made to save Reston in 1967 also meant that it had bought controlling interest in Reston's real estate. Ownership of Reston changed hands a few more times in the ensuing decades and with each change came a new designer. As modernist planning approaches fell out of vogue, there was a steady shift back to more traditional urban solutions. The design of Reston Town Center comes out of a different era than Lake Anne Village Center. Additionally, the area around the site of Reston Town Center had been built-out prior to its construction and was intended to serve a regional population; requiring a different approach to its development.

Reston Town Center

During the 20-odd years that it took to arrive at the final design for Reston Town Center (RTC), thinking about the role and nature of town centers evolved. Reston's planners and architects began asking questions like: how far do you take the making of a plan? And how

¹⁶ Reston Historic Trust & Corporation, May 1991

prescriptive can one be without stifling creativity? These are not easy questions to answer and it is impressive to see how they were approached in the final design of RTC.

In 1978 RTKL Architects was hired to put together four proposals for the master plan for Reston Town Center. In the plans Reston Town Center was oriented east-west, placing emphasis on restoring primary connections with Reston Parkway (Route 602), which bisects the site from north to south. Moreover, a traditional grid layout of streets emerged to break down the site into individual parcels. The actual street plan that was built in the 1990s strongly reflects the grid layout in these plans but in a scaled down version; the original blocks were much larger. Although much of what was in these original plans is not reflected in the final construction, two key elements remained: a central ‘main street’ (now Market Street) that runs east-west and a green buffer along Reston Parkway.

After getting the opinion of the Urban Land Institute, RTKL went back to work and, between 1984 and 1986, modified their master plan. Notably Fountain Square, an urban space framed by office buildings, retail businesses and a hotel, was introduced; and office and residential uses complemented by surface and structured parking were integrated into the town center. Furthermore, the gridded street pattern was refined and “RTKL’s 1986 plan featured a definite street grid and block pattern, a distinctly American commercial form descended from colonial times.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Ward, 45

The importance of returning to a gridded street pattern should not be underestimated. Creating a flexible framework was a markedly different strategy from the ‘unexpandable’ plan used at Lake Anne Village Center and represented a clear departure from the modernist planning principles of the 1960s and 70s. For Robert Gladstone, a Washington based real estate developer who advised Simon as an economic consultant in the 1960s, the idea of a framework was more than just a flexible layout; it was about using “key infrastructure elements to convey image and identity.”¹⁸ Moreover, Gladstone believed that it was necessary to allow for architectural individuality within the framework by decreasing the scale of projects to individual lots and buildings. Although he was unsuccessful in a bid to partner with the developers, he was instrumental in shifting the thinking in Reston by embedding the idea that “an effective urban design plan could help create value.”¹⁹

To pick an architect for the first 20 acre portion of the development, an architectural competition was staged in which participants were asked to create a “memorable, vital, urban place.” Several notable firms participated in the competition but RTKL proved—perhaps not surprisingly since their ongoing involvement with the master plan—to be the most in tune with the developer’s ideas for a flexible and phaseable design. Long gone were the ‘mega-buildings’ envisioned by Whittlesey and Conklin and *Architecture* magazine even went as far as to criticize the ambitious

¹⁸ Ward, 48

¹⁹ Ward, 48

design submitted by Skidmore Owings and Merrill saying, “We have had enough of the almost totalitarian designs a la Le Corbusier. We need something more intimate than that.”²⁰

The key element to RTKL’s plan was Fountain Square, a central plaza framed with buildings and arcades. When landscape architects Sasaki Associates joined the design team in 1988, the square became much more refined, becoming vital to the plan. Sasaki was concerned that if Fountain Square were too large it would appear empty and if too small it wouldn’t support big events. Portraying the right atmosphere was crucial and if it appeared that the streets were empty the urban character would not emerge.

Parking was also a significant issue for a ‘phaseable’ and flexible design. Where suburban developments privilege parking at each building, RTC created a shared inventory of lots for the businesses. One important thing to note about the parking created in phase one is that it includes not only surface parking but structures as well. At the urging of Kim Himmel, a design consultant well versed in large-scale projects, Mobil Reston included parking garages with the first buildings “as a tangible gesture toward downtown densities.”²¹

Between the master plan created by RTKL, the Phase One design by RTKL (refined by Sasaki Associates) and almost 40 years of work by others, construction began on Reston Town Center. When opened in 1990, it was greeted with critical acclaim and won several awards from the Urban Land Institute and American

²⁰ Ibid, 55
²¹ Wood 68

Association of Architects. After Phase One, Sasaki was given a bigger role in the development of RTC and took the part of town center planner and urban designer.



Reston Town Center – Skating Rink

The strategy for the construction in Phase Two was directed by Mobil Reston’s executive vice-president Thomas J. D’Alessandro IV. To capitalize on the financial investments in Phase One, D’Alessandro focused development in Phase Two on the edges of the town center. The central parcels would appreciate in value as construction continued and eventually require higher density buildings to justify the cost. Again significant changes were required to the master plan and instead of Market Street extending west to a hotel, it extended into a new high-density residential area. The extension seemed like a natural expansion of the downtown and it has often been commented that the idea of extending an open grid into the horizon was the “logical expression of a modern U.S. city.”²²

The multiple building scales and programs made it difficult to communicate RTC as a unified whole. To allow for individual expressions that have an underlying consistency D’Alessandro worked with Sasaki and Smith Group to develop a series of strategies for the treatment of buildings on Market Street. The resulting guidelines required the alignment of a cornice and a common pallet of materials and colours.

The development of Reston Town Center into an urban *place* was not an easy task. Simon’s vision, which carried through the

²² Word, 67.

numerous different planning stages of Reston was for a unifying scheme that sets the ground rules for future decisions. However, as times changes and different methods and ideas evolved it was also necessary to recognize when something wasn't working and to change; such as Simon's original idea for an 'unexpandable' plan for Lake Anne Village Center. William Conklin acknowledged this in *American Architecture Now II*, saying, "One unsuccessful aspect about [Lake Anne Village Center] is its inability to expand rapidly and yet remain coherent.... We designed a complete model of a town center...but it doesn't grow successfully.... Perhaps the problem all cities face is that of growth and change." Like creating as-built drawings to accompany the original plans, writer Alan Ward constructed a list of six principles that guided the construction of Reston Town Center to juxtapose against the original seven guiding principles of Simon. Ward's six principles listed here help to define the driving forces behind its creation:

1) Start with a vision or 'big idea.' The master developer was crucial at Reston Town Center, as were visionaries who had a view of the long-term 'big picture.'

2) Develop a clear framework of streets and public spaces that enables development to respond to the market with flexibility.

3) Have a long-term commitment to the downtown's development and wait for the market to support higher densities and a mix of uses—office, retail, residential, hotel, recreational, and institutional. To build downtown densities may require the staying power and financial resources of very large developers.

4) Leverage real estate value by extending the open-ended grid, which enables later phases to leverage the value of the earlier, established phases.

5) Be conscious of the scale of every street, space, plaza, and park during design. It is crucial to create the right feel. A sense of urban vitality is magnified with a plan that achieves an appropriate scale for the pedestrian, and dissipated when spaces are over-scaled, too open, and underused.

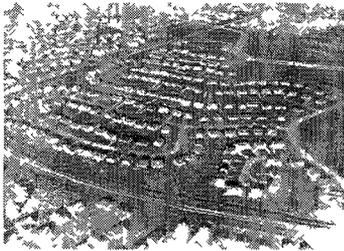
6) Design matters. Have a concern for details, but do not be obsessive. A design too mannered and controlled can begin to look fake and contrived. Draw connections between buildings by making relationships of scale and height, along with design treatments, such as cornice lines, building materials, and colors.²³

Reston is far from a prototypical suburban community in both scale and expense. The willingness to take generated unique design solutions and challenged the norms. The architectural strategies that emerged between the construction of Lake Anne Village Center and Reston Town Center illustrate the changing attitudes of developers and consumers toward commercial design. We have a fleeting relationship with the places we shop, and accounting for the discrepancy between long-term planning and short-term markets requires a flexible framework. Furthermore, phasing allows for periodic changes to the master plan, reflecting new markets and ideas in commercial architecture. The ability of a commercial center to grow and change with its context is fundamental to its long-term success.

²³ Ward, 182-183

The Streets at Don Mills

A more detailed and comprehensive account of E.P. Taylor and Don Mills can be found in the appendixes under 'Don Mills'



Don Mills

The most influential development in 20th century Canada is E.P. Taylor's Don Mills in the North York District of Toronto. As John Sewell notes in his book *The Shape of the City*, "the style it established has become so pervasive that people assume that it is the only way residential communities can be built."²⁴ This combined with fiscal arrangements that Don Mills established has fueled developers wishing to repeat its economic success.

Many new towns were being built following WWII when Taylor and Carl Fraser, Taylor's executive assistant, considered the idea of Don Mills. In Britain several new towns had been planned by the government and Levittown was well underway in the U.S. There are many influential precedents and people that influenced the plan for Don Mills. Some credit John Layng, an architect that worked on Taylor's earlier York Mills Plaza (the first regional shopping center in Canada), while others believe it is Macklin Hancock, a landscape architecture student who was Carl Fraser's son-in-law. Others credit Humphrey Carver's book *Houses for Canadians* which proposed how a community should be laid out and promoted private development over government sponsorship. While the planning at Don Mills likely reflects a number of influences, it was E.P. Taylor's land and money.

²⁴ John Sewell *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993: 80

In 1955, only a year after the official inauguration of Don Mills, the first shops in Don Mills Centre opened. The center took the form of a commercial strip mall and included a Dominion Supermarket, a Brewers Retail (which would eventually become The Beer Store), a Kaufflers Drug Store (the first Shopper's Drug Mart) and about a dozen other retailers. As the population grew within Don Mills, the commercial centre expanded; by 1961 Eaton's opened its first suburban department store in Don Mills. The introduction of Eaton's is an important milestone in the development of Don Mills Centre; with a department store the centre effectively graduated from a strip mall to an outdoor pedestrian mall.¹⁴ By 1965 the Dominion Supermarket moved into a new space in the center, allowing Zeller's to occupy its former location and there were a total of 65 stores. If the speed of its growth and ability to attract big retailers wasn't proof of its success, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) recognized Don Mills Centre as one of the highest grossing shopping centers in North America – proving its worth against Victor Gruen's malls to the south.

The success of Don Mills did not go unnoticed however and competitors appeared. In 1970 Fairview Mall opened a mere 6km south and the growth of Don Mills Centre leveled off. In 1978 Don Mills Center responded with a major renovation to enclose the mall (a full 22 years after Gruen's Southdale opened in 1956). The renovation also enlarged the mall to compete in a regional context, increasing it from 400,000 sq. ft. of retail space to 462,000 sq. ft. to

¹⁴ See 'Pedestrian Malls' under 'Suburban Shopping Centers' for as more references for a detailed explanation of how these forms evolved.

accommodate 120 stores, a food court and a fountain. The enclosed mall was well adapted to the Canadian climate and proved successful.

It is interesting to speculate about what Don Mills Centre would be like today had it never seen competition from the Fairview Mall but by the 1990s Fairview Mall was again renovated. This, combined with a recession, proved to be a crippling blow that even another renovation of Don Mills Centre in 1997/1998 couldn't fix. The final straw for the mall, however, came when its anchor store, Eaton's, declared bankruptcy in 2000.¹¹¹ In the absence of an anchor even the heartier retailers struggled to survive. The latest of a series of redevelopments initiated in 2003 was the first to break from the original dogma of segregated uses. To reinforce the idea of a fresh start and new business model the complex was rebranded: Shops at Don Mills.

Shops at Don Mills

From its inception Don Mills was intended to be a community designed at a high standard. Taylor and Hancock knew that making Don Mills into something more than just a place to shop meant investing into the atmosphere. As Sewell notes, "The design and colour controls were intended not to dominate people, but to create a sense of place that people might relate to in the early years. After all,

¹¹¹ See *Department Stores under Suburban Shopping Center Formats in the 1990s* for a detailed explanation of how this store evolved.

given the choice of house builders or architects deciding on the design, materials, colours, isn't it reasonable to prefer architects?"²⁵



Shops at Don Mills

With the lack of an anchor tenant, the mall proved to be a difficult form to re-inhabit and the decision was made to raze the old enclosed structure and rebuild from the ground up. The Cadillac Fairview's news release for the opening of the Shops at Don Mills on April 22, 2009 proclaims that the redevelopment "represents a new evolution in retail, showcasing a fresh concept where visitors stroll from stores to restaurants to public spaces in an open-air setting."²⁶ It is interesting to see that the developer is trumpeting the lifestyle centre²⁷ as a totally new form of development despite its similarities to the original open design of Don Mills Center. In fact, when the developer first proposed the redevelopment many residents were up-in-arms about the destruction of 'their' beloved mall. When Brian Gallagher, the City's Preservation Co-ordinator, was contacted about giving the mall heritage status he said it would be unlikely as "the new development is actually a closer approximation to the original complex."²⁷ The real significant change between the redevelopment and the original plans for Don Mills Center is the scale, density and mixing of uses.

The vision that Taylor had for Don Mills went beyond building houses and commercial areas and sought to instill a sense of place.

²⁵ See *Lifestyle Centre* under *Suburban Shopping Center* forms in the appendix for a detailed explanation of how these forms evolved.

Formal in R 5, 21

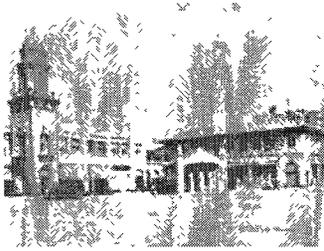
²⁶ Shops at Don Mills – Ontario's First Urban Village – Opens Its Doors – The Cadillac Fairview Corporation (article 22) of 2009 (Web Jan 2011)

Post-Formal Don Mills Centre Redevelopment Starts Conflict? (Site) of 26 Oct 2006 (Web Dec 2010)

<http://www.ca.gov/2006/10/26/don-mills-centre-redevelopment-starts-conflict>

The commercial areas were segregated from the residential areas to denote its regional customer base and provided amenities now associated with municipalities. His idea to provide these facilities took a substantial financial long-term investment that is beyond most developers. The Shops at Don Mills reflects many of the values that Taylor had but supplies public amenities to facilitate recreational shopping. To cope with the financial investment the complex has become mixed-use, which was only possible once the population of Don Mills had increased. Mixed-use development allows the developer to densify the site and spread the risk amongst different types of markets. Segregation of uses was one of the ways Taylor used to differentiate Don Mills from the city, but as demographics have changed there are a wider variety of lifestyles desired in the suburbs.

Country Club Plaza



Country Club Plaza – Circa 1923

Lifestyle centers have become a popular development trend in affluent subdivisions today, but their origins date back to the first suburban commercial center to be oriented around the automobile: J.C. Nichols' Country Club Plaza, built in 1922. It was planned as the commercial center for the 5,000 acre residential development known as the Country Club District. The plaza continues to thrive today and many interesting design evolutions and innovations have allowed it to keep much of its original character, while responding to the changing suburban landscape surrounding it. By evolving over time the plaza has become more than a shopping destination and has come to represent the heart of the community.

The Country Club Plaza was designed to evoke a small town atmosphere for shopping and commerce, partially based on the city of Seville, Spain. Nichols wanted to create a shopping village that invited people in by car while maintaining the traditional notion of a block layout with stores and individual buildings fronting the street. To manage and accommodate automobiles, Nichols dispersed the parking throughout the blocks, using both on-street parking and larger lots hidden within blocks, accessed through lanes and carriageways.

The product of Nichols's plan was an elegant commercial district "strongly reminiscent of a European town center, and the first modern suburban shopping center offering a full variety of goods

and services.”²⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that Nichols’s plan left out the main social space of the traditional European town center: a large, formal public space.²⁹ Instead of incorporating the social spaces into the shopping areas, they were relegated to small attached plazas and sidewalk cafés. The streets thus became social spaces taking the form of a continuous thread of public domain that weaves through the shopping. To reinforce the public nature of these spaces Nichols sprinkled imported sculptures, statues and water features throughout the streetscapes. This importation of artifacts also allowed the complex to reference the history that inspired it without being a direct copy or appearing like a stage set.

As the first commercial center to incorporate automobiles, there were no precedents to gauge the validity of ideas against. The new form of commercial design, later to be classified as the *shopping village*, referred back to a “traditional model of development, one that stressed small-town, villagelike [*sic*] values of cheerful familiarity, personal service, convenience, and quality. Individuality in the architecture ... of specific stores took precedence over mass consumption.”³⁰ Until the typology of the shopping village was firmly established, developers drew heavily on vernacular traditions, although not necessarily North American vernacular traditions.

Since opening in 1924 Country Club Plaza has changed significantly and has grown to provide for the increasing

²⁸ Peter G. Rowe (1991) *Making a riddle townscapes*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 170

²⁹ Charles C. Bahl & D. Schwabke (2007) *Place making: Developing town centers, main streets and other vibrant Washington, DC*. Urban Land Institute 43

³⁰ Rowe, 170

surrounding population. Originally the shopping center was limited to a small range of individually owned and operated shops and offices; department stores were not yet willing to take the risk of moving beyond the city. Over time it has increased in size to become a regional shopping center and more recently an entertainment destination. One of the main reasons that the original charm and appeal of the plaza have been maintained is that it quickly became a “community icon and beacon of pride.”³¹ The feeling of community ownership over the public spaces by the community prompted new development to respect the ideas that were intrinsic to the plaza.

The way that the plaza has evolved to handle the increased automobile load is also quite interesting. While to create an authentic feeling shopping village he would have to allow on-street parking, Nichols knew it would be impossible to accommodate all the parking on the streets. Moreover, placing all the parking in front of the stores would also ruin the atmosphere Nichols wanted to create by pushing the store fronts back from the streets. The solution of placing parking behind the stores while maintaining a minimal amount of on-street parking ensured that this shopping center would really be about the automobile. An interesting conundrum soon arose however; by placing the parking behind the buildings there was simply no room to expand the lots with the increase in density and use. To expand the parking without infringing on the ambiance of the place, an equally clever to solution was devised. Instead of simply removing buildings and continuing with surface parking, the decision was

Bohl & Schwanke, 44

made that the original lots would develop vertically into parking garages. Some of the garages even went a step further by introducing commercial on the ground floor with the parking above or camouflaged to the look of nearby buildings. By developing up instead of out the original aesthetic of the complex was maintained.

Given its success, the question arises as to why we do not simply continue to develop in the same manner as the Country Club Plaza. Amidst its successes there are also some key shortcomings. The biggest shortfall of the plaza is that it is not a true public center; it is and always has been a shopping center without a public gathering space. Although there are several niches within the plaza that support small public gatherings, there is no main square as one would find in a European town center. This has also resulted in the civic uses, specifically the municipal offices, being pushed to the edge of the shopping center hindering their integration into the place. Lastly the local library branch is not located in the plaza – it sits across a creek– where it would see increased use and add a counterprogram to the consumer-driven shopping.³²

Country Club Plaza can be seen as an example of a shopping center that has developed into a place. By accommodating the automobile and cleverly dealing with issues of parking and circulation the plaza maintained its desirability as a place to shop. The return to the values endorsed by J.C. Nichols can be seen in the lifestyle centers that are constructed today. When Country Club Plaza was built the idea of owning a car was a novelty reserved for

³² Bohl, & Schwanke, 45.

the rich, demonstrating the ideal clientele for a shopping center designed around the car. Today, lifestyle centers are located in affluent subdivisions and feature brand-name luxury goods. In Canada the population is much more dispersed than in the U.S.A., providing fewer opportunities to construct lifestyle centers. The Shops at Don Mills represents one of few such projects to be attempted and has met difficulties attracting retailers.³³ The lifestyle center represents a return to the inclusion of social spaces in suburban shopping centers but has failed to mitigate the discrepancy between shopping destination and *place*.

³³ Adam McDowell "McNally Robinson Files for Bankruptcy - Toronto Location Closes - Posted Toronto" *Posted Toronto* The National Post, 29 Dec. 2009. Web. 04 Mar. 2011.
<http://network.nationalpost.com/wp blogs/toronto/archive/2009/12/29/mcnally-robinson-files-for-bankruptcy-toronto-location-closes.aspx>

Plains, Barbara Sonneborn, Gen.

With the expansion of railway networks and highway systems many new suburban ‘communities’ have been established in the era of supermodernity. The motives that drive developers to undertake the long and expensive project of creating a new place, or non-place as the case may be, have varied, but the most successful are produced out of a profitable vision of progress. Our desire to continually improve our existence has compelled an unending reinterpretation of how to frame that existence through building. Every reinterpretation requires fundamental social values to be expressed in new ways and inevitably there are losses that accompany the gains. The question of whether the gains outweigh the losses is not easy to answer.

The non-places that Marc Augé describes—supermarkets, highways and airports—represent a pursuit for efficiency. To allow as many people as possible to share in the assets of humanity certain concessions must be made. Aisles of food from around the world at affordable prices, roads that form a network for shipping and commuting and non-stop flights around the globe would not be possible without the construction of non-places. According to Augé, these come at the cost of orientation and identity. The circumstances surrounding many of the spaces occupied during travel prevent them from becoming a place. It is not impossible for a frequent traveller to

feel a sense of belonging in certain travel spaces but it is only through familiarity that it gains any individual meaning.

The supermarket is not a space of travel. Unlike bus stations, highways, airports and train stations the supermarket is a destination. Its connection to commerce and trade that have long thrived off of social relationships put it in a unique position. The big supermarkets, not to mention big hardware stores, book stores and home decorating stores, of today are only one stage in the long history of trade. Supermodernity has individualized our reference points, propagating a shift from trusted department stores and low-cost big box stores. "the post-industrial economy has produced a series of distinct post-industrial landscapes characterized by short-term profit and minimal commitment."³⁴

The most successful suburban shopping centers have avoided association with the traveller's space. Instead of becoming subservient to the traveller, places like Country Club Plaza, Lake Anne Village Center and Reston Town Center are designed primarily for the local residents. It may sound like a simple distinction but the expectations of the groups are entirely different. The traveller neither expects nor demands that a shopping center go beyond its function as a convenient place to shop, but the residents require the space to become part of the community. The basic components that comprise a community (spaces to live, work, shop and play) must function in concert to produce an image and identity

See Peter B. Gordon "Suburban Shopping Centers: A Case Study in the Application of a Design and Planning Model to the New Forms of Retail

³⁴ Ben Danforth "The Temporary Community" *Harvard Design Review* 3 (1997)

for that community. Removing the commercial space from the equation limits the social space available, weakening the image. Some social space becomes reintroduced as parks and walking trails but fail to facilitate the exchange of financial and social capital. Without a commercial space that is in tune with the rest of the community, a piece of the social puzzle remains missing.

Department stores were once commercial and social centers, but our shopping patterns have changed. Ladies' Mile in New York City was designated as a Historic District in 1989 to preserve the buildings of some of the world's most famous department stores, demonstrating the extent of their decline.³⁵ The failure of the urban stores extended into the suburbs where the department store was integral in the creation of the enclosed mall, which many credit as its downfall. In suburban commercial development, market space was made available for big box stores to become common as an anchor store. Establishing a repeatable and profitable model, big box stores have secured their place as an archetype. Ellen Dunham-Jones writes, "The exurban landscape of sport-utility vehicles, sprawling lowrise office buildings, and big-box retail is the nexus of the post-industrial economy."³⁶ The inside of the store is focused on efficiency and value, demonstrating to the customers cost-saving measures. Power Centers³⁷ have brought back some of the aesthetic

³⁵ See "Power Centers' Under Suburban Shopping Center Terms" *NY Times* for a detailed explanation of how these terms evolved.

³⁶ Ladies Mile District Was Landmark for us - NY Times.com. *The New York Times* 07 May 1989. Web 5 Apr 2011. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9501D117C1631B1934A33756C0A961945260>

³⁷ Dunham Jones

of outlet malls, but to a limited degree, not to dilute the warehouse aesthetic.

Consumer priorities have changed since big box and power center development emerged in the suburbs. Today, environmentally friendly products and building practices are becoming standard. Christian Norberg-Schulz writes, “pollution and environmental chaos have suddenly appeared as a frightening *nemesis*, and as a result the problem of place has regained its true importance.”³⁷ The technologies and mobility of supermodernity has created the illusion of freedom from direct dependence on *place*. Jean Baudrillard terms this the ‘phenomonology of consumption’ and writes, “the general climatization of life, of goods, objects, services, behaviours, and social relations represents the perfected, ‘consummated,’ stage of evolution which, through articulated networks of objects, ascends from pure and simple abundance to a complete conditioning of action and time ...”³⁸ Can we ecologically afford to treat commercial centers as something to be consumed and disposed of?

Architecture has a unique role in supermodernity. With the capacity to commemorate events, achievements as people, it has the ability to contribute to the historical continuity of *place*. Commonly this feat is achieved in institutional buildings that aspire to permanence and identity, but how can architecture approach these issues in a commercial landscape of temporality? Dunham-Jones emphasizes the importance of this issue saying, “If the economic

³⁷ Schulz, 19

³⁸ Jean Baudrillard *Mass Identity Architecture: Architectural Writings of Jean Baudrillard* Comp. Francesco Proto, (Chechester: Wiley Academy, 2006) 100.

commitment to the post-industrial landscape is only temporary, the environmental and social consequences of this new kind of sprawl are not. ... We are building neither a sustainable landscape nor a sustainable culture.”³⁹ Our built landscape of big box stores and power centers demonstrates architecture’s vulnerability to the forces of supermodernity and transformation into a disposable product. Julia Christensen notes in her book *Big Box Reuse*, “...big box buildings are generally not being vacated because the companies have lost business in a certain location, or because a business model has not worked. Rather, big box buildings are being vacated because retailers are expanding to larger structures...”⁴⁰

The reuse of these structures is difficult; they are not integrated into the commercial fabric, sitting autonomously on the sidelines. Looking toward a plan of architectural reuse and evolution involves allowing for time in three states: past, present and future. We must consider what has come before us (and how it led to our current situation), how we repurpose the past for the present and what we leave for the future. The utilitarian architecture of factories in the city has been transformed into high-end lofts of today. Can suburban big box stores one day manage the same feat? “We need to wrestle with the question of how architecture — traditionally conceived of as an enduring cultural artifact — might better respond to the culture of the temporary contract.”⁴¹

³⁹ Dunham Jones.

⁴¹ Julia Christensen, *Big Box Reuse*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008

⁴¹ Dunham Jones

Project Findlay Creek Village

Centre for Urban Design

The City of Ottawa has been growing in size and density since its inauguration as Canada's capital on December 31, 1857. Like many other cities in the 20th century, Ottawa constructed a greenbelt to control outward sprawl and denote the extent of municipal services provided by the city. The success of the greenbelt in limiting sprawl is heavily debated but many point to Kanata, a large suburban area outside the greenbelt, as proof that its effects on sprawl are minimal. Whether or not it was successful is of little consequence today as it no longer prescribes the boundary of Ottawa. In 2001 the city amalgamated with the urban municipalities of Nepean, Kanata, Gloucester, Rockcliffe Park, Vanier, Cumberland and Orleans, and the rural townships of West-Carleton, Rideau and Colbourn. The amalgamation vastly increased the land that fell under the City of Ottawa's jurisdiction and officially made the site of Findlay Creek Village, in the former Township of South Gloucester, a part of Ottawa.

The site of Findlay Creek Village is interesting in its own right and has qualities that are specific to it, but its choice as an environment to study and contemplate arises out of its similarity to other mid-scale—bigger than a strip mall but smaller than a power center—suburban commercial developments. Suburban commercial

centers characterized by big-box stores and seas of asphalt have become a standard feature of suburbia, offering suburbanites a spot to park and a variety of reasonably priced goods. The design of the suburban landscape is heavily circumscribed by financial constraints as can be seen in the way commercial forms that have evolved to their present state. This is not to say that the cost of construction and ability to make a profit is not important, but if there is an opportunity to construct an environment that will frame the lives of future generations of Canadians, should it not be taken? How we construct the world around reflect our aspirations and goals as a society.

That said the suburbs embody tremendous potential. As development trends move away from the enclosed malls that Victor Gruen championed, a clear return to traditional forms can be seen. The lifestyle center, however vague in its form, represents the struggle for developers to create commercial centers that are both financially sound and able to naturally grow and mature. The aspirations to create a *place* are a sign of our desire for ‘orientation’ and a sense of belonging. The commercial center of a suburb must respond to both the financial and social need of the residents—and make a profit for the developer. Must we settle for signage to guide us through parking lots destined for redevelopment? or is it possible to provide an infrastructure that allows for a phased transition from *non-place to place and profit?*

Location

The area now known as Findlay Creek Village is located in Ottawa's south end and is a part of the Leitrim Community. It is bordered to the north by Leitrim Road which also delineates the southern edge of the Ottawa's Greenbelt. From east to west it extends from Albion Road to Bank Street and to the south it hugs the northern edges of the Leitrim Wetland. The name 'Findlay Creek' refers to a small creek that runs between the Leitrim Wetland and the residential development.

The amalgamation of Gloucester Township into the City of Ottawa in 2001 shifted the status of the Leitrim Community from Rural to Urban Policy area and allowed for the development of what was mostly farm land into Findlay Creek Village. The proximity of the site to the Ottawa International Airport, the access routes of Albion Road and Bank Street, existing city owned infrastructure (bus routes and the arena facilities) and the greenbelt with extensive walking and biking paths all make the location ideal for a new subdivision. It seems that the development of this land was inevitable and the community was aware of this when they came together to create the Leitrim Community Design Plan as an amendment to the City of Ottawa Official Plan in 2003 to guide the construction.¹

¹ "Leitrim Community Design Plan" *City of Ottawa* July 2005. Web. 28 Sept. 2010.
-http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/planning/community_plans/completed/leitrim/images/leitrim_en.pdf-

Development South of the Greenbelt

Leitrim Community Statistics & Demographics

Residential Lots Prior to Findlay Creek 62
Residential Lots Now 100
Rate of Growth + 700% over 40 years
Population Prior to Findlay Creek 285
Population Now 2100
Projected Population 15000
Size of Leitrim Community approx 1235 acres
Size of Findlay Creek Village approx 196 acres
Size of Leitrim Wetland approx 515 acres

*Not part of Leitrim Community in the
City of Ottawa's Community Design
Plan*

The residential build-out at Findlay Creek Village is the work of the developers Tartan Homes and Tamarack Homes. The two Ottawa-based companies came together to provide housing models for the co-created master plan of Findlay Creek Village. In Ottawa, when a subdivision is proposed, the city's planning department requires that a Community Design Plan be created, although not necessarily prior to the beginning phases of construction.

In July, 2005 the Leitrim Community Design Plan (CDP) became an amendment to the Ottawa Official Plan. According to the City of Ottawa's website, this allows "the City [to] work with the community, landowners, local businesses, school boards and other interested parties on community design plans that will be the backbone of any significant change in a community."² Therefore the plan becomes a way for the community to communicate with the developers about their vision for the future of their place. It is important to note however, the CDP was released over a year after the construction of Findlay Creek Village began in the summer of 2004, raising questions about the context in which the plan was informed by the CDP. The City has approved plans for a new commercial center for the community, which is slated to be built in the summer of 2011.

² "Community Plans and Studies" City of Ottawa Website, Nov 2010
³ http://www.ottawa.ca/resident/planning/community_plans/index_en.html

Leitrim Community Design Plan

The components that comprise the Leitrim Community Design Plan are broken down into five categories including: a Land Use Plan, Community Design Guidelines, a Greenspace Plan, a Transportation Network Plan and a Servicing Plan. Prior to the development of Findlay Creek the public amenities for 62 residential lots included a community center, Leitrim Park, an arena and sports fields. The most significant natural feature of the study area was the 330 hectare Leitrim Wetland, but there are also several small wooded areas that are identified as wildlife habitats.

The uses are divided into eight different categories including Low, Medium and High Density Residential, Mixed Use, Employment, Institutional, Open Space, Stormwater Management and Wetland Buffer. The area reserved for the commercial center has been designated as Mixed Use.

The Mixed Use classification, as defined in the Leitrim CDP, is intended to permit a wide range of uses beyond commercial. As the name suggests, residential, institutional and commercial activities are allowed, but the wording of the description suggests that it is not only allowed but encouraged; “[t]hese areas are intended to be the ‘core’ of the Leitrim Community.”³ The residential component—limited to low and mid-rise apartments in Mixed Use—is important in creating the idea of a core and is intended to help support the retail business. The commercial and institutional permitted uses range

³ Leitrim Community Design Plan 177

from retail and food establishments to medical offices and recreational uses. Additionally, large-scale commercial (big box) is permitted in accordance with the Community Design Guidelines. The wording of the Mixed Use designation suggests that a mixture of uses is encouraged and not just an option, but its ambiguity can be interpreted to include any mixture of the suggested uses.

The Community Design Guidelines are the key to understanding the character of place that the CDP envisioned. Phrases like ‘enhance the sense of community,’ ‘places with their own distinct identity’ and ‘new development respects the character of existing areas’ recall Marc Augé’s ideas of *place* while a mandate to ‘create places that can evolve easily over time’ reminds us of the design philosophies for Reston Town Center. The elaboration of how these ideas should be applied to the new Mixed Use Centers—the ‘primary’ center located at the intersection of Bank Street and Findlay Creek Drive being the focus of this study—supports these connections. The guidelines envision tree-lined, pedestrian friendly streets that are well connected to the residential areas, well designed buildings and pedestrian areas rich with public amenities. A preference for on street parking is suggested through selected imagery and a prescription that the center is “not dominated by parking.”⁴ Clearly a traditional village center layout is what the plan is suggesting, but the question of large-scale commercial is not directly addressed in relation to these guidelines. As a commercial form not traditionally associated with these ideals, it is interesting

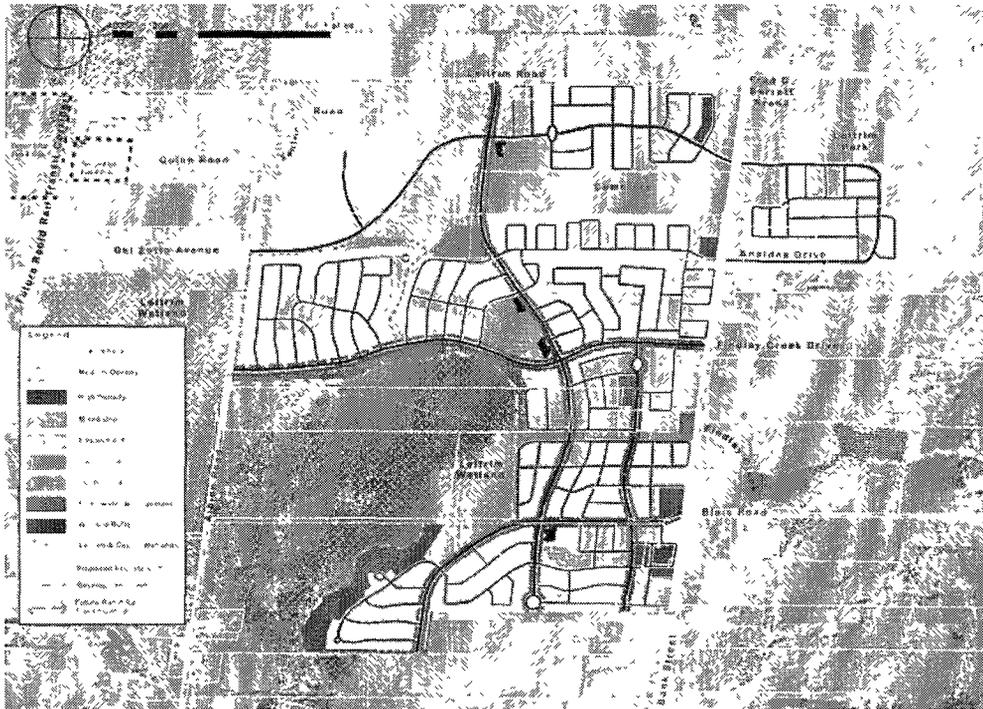
⁴“Twin Community Design Plan” 46

that the plan is silent on how a big box store might be integrated into the design, leaving a large space for interpretation.

The remaining sections of the CDP, Greenspace, Transportation and Servicing, present some challenges in relation to the vision of the commercial center. First, the Greenspace Plan does not discuss the creation or preservation in the commercial center; however, it does explicitly state that additional green space is encouraged and should not be limited to the suggested areas. Second, the Transportation Plan is largely based around the southern extension of the light rail O-Train line. The plans for this extension were cancelled in 2007 after a new City Council were elected and opted to focus on an east/west route. While it is still possible that this line will be built, it will not be in the foreseeable future. Third, the Servicing Plan has little impact because it focuses on the extension of existing water and sewer service and its phasing. That said, the commercial center is one of the first areas to be serviced because of its proximity to existing water lines.

Depending on how the Leitrim CDP is interpreted different conclusions may be drawn about the development currently proposed for the commercial center in question. The difficulty in creating a plan like the CDP is achieving a balance between a defined direction and flexibility. The Leitrim CDP suggests that flexibility in its interpretation is permitted but requires that the general intent (or spirit) of the policies and principles be maintained. It is also careful to mention that lists of approved uses are provided only to suggest a possible range and type of uses to be considered—

not exactly a reaffirmation a traditional village layout as pictured in the Design Guidelines of the Community Development Plan.



*Leitrim Land Use Plan
Community Development Plan*

Taggart Proposal

Statistics of Proposed Commercial Center

Size: 15.14 acres (659,526 sq. ft.)
 Retail Space: 167,500 sq. ft.
 Big Box Retail: 1 - 80,000 sq. ft.
 (about 50% of the Retail Space)
 Parking Spaces: 629
 Drive-Ins: 3
 Green Space: 10% (1.5 acres)
 including vegetated islands in parking areas

The proposal for the primary Mixed Use area at Findlay Creek Village from Taggart Realty Management, a subsidiary of Tamarack Homes, is entirely retail and service based. The main anchor stores are Canadian Tire, Sobey's supermarket and Shopper's Drug Mart. The Canadian Tire and Sobey's back onto the eastern boundary of the residential area and face west towards Bank Street. A

commercial strip bridges them leaving a large space in the center to allow for access to loading between the commercial center and three story townhouses. The rest of the stores stand alone on out lots and are surrounded by dedicated parking. There are a few small restaurants (mostly fast food) of which only a “Jonny Canuck’s” franchise offers patio space that fronts onto an internal road. As many of the fast food businesses feature a drive-thru, a significant amount of space is devoted to circulation routes that weave in and out of the individual parking lots.

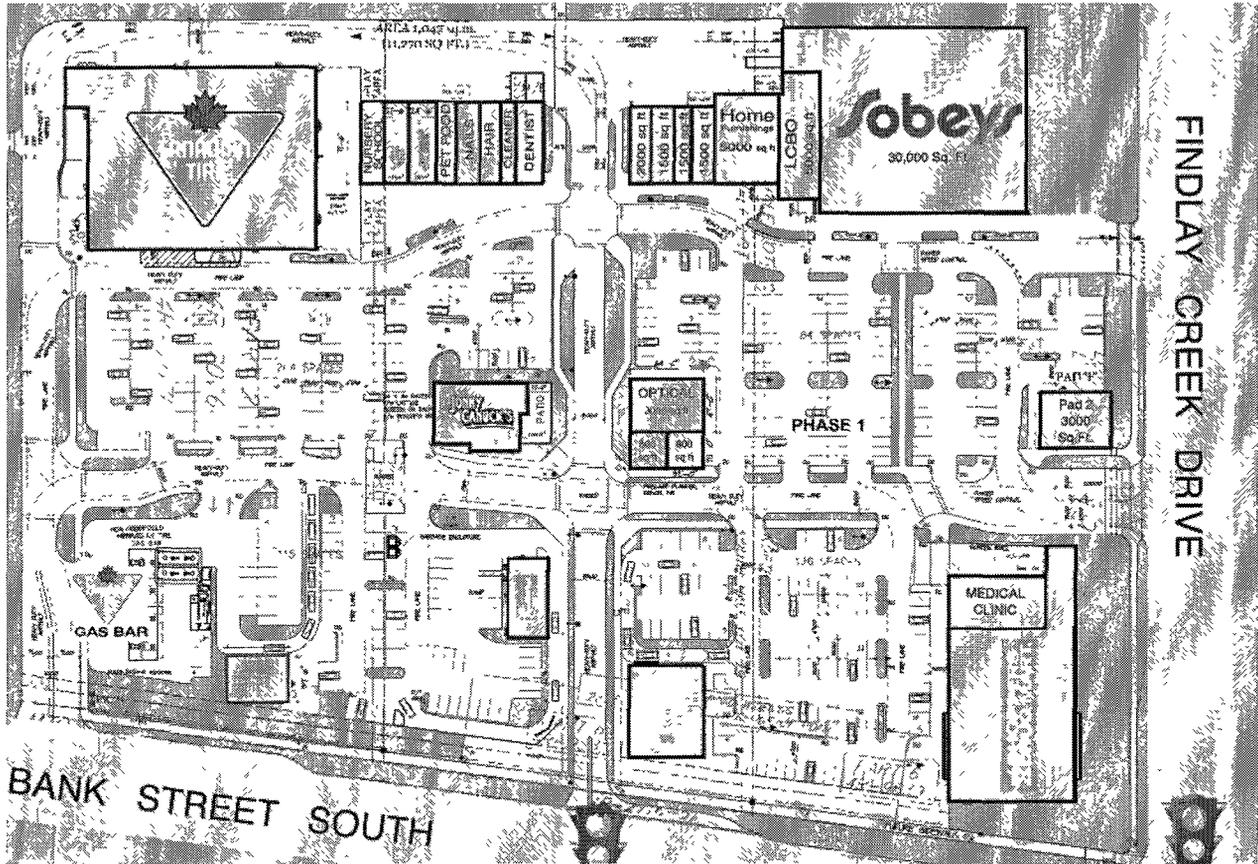
Among the service based businesses anticipated in the plan are an optician, medical clinic, bank, hair stylist, dentist and nursery school. While most of these are located in the strip mall, the optician is located on a pad lot in the center of the plan and the medical clinic is connected to the Shopper’s Drug Mart. Curiously, the nursery school is located at the southern limit of the strip mall and abuts the Canadian Tire garden center. A ‘play area’ is provided in two narrow strips in front of and behind the school. The rear play area sits between the shipping and garbage areas for the strip.

There is a limited amount of green space in the proposal, most of which is confined to small islands that define the parking lots. A sparse arrangement of benches and planters has been provided, but adjacent buildings greet the parking lot and turn their backs to the sitting area. These are the only identifiable gathering spaces. Although raised intersections mitigate the meeting of cars and pedestrians, the pedestrian pathways are oriented to allow access through the parking lots. The distances between stores, utilitarian

sidewalks and large parking lots do not immediately evoke the atmosphere described in the Design Guidelines of the CDP, and Taggart has not include residential uses.

The qualities suggested in the CDP are difficult to identify in the Taggart proposal. There are some small interventions that can be said to form a checklist of the ways that the CDP is met. Where it would be difficult to argue that the plan is *not dominated by parking*, but some like tree lined streets and connections to the residential community can be found. Assuming they survive, they will help mitigate the areas between the commercial and residential development. Arguably the Taggart plan adheres more to the letter than the spirit of the CDP and aspires to only satisfy its letter.

The discrepancies between the vision of the CDP and the proposal by Taggart come down to priorities. The community aspires to the best possible future they can envision for the place, but doesn't account for shifting market demands and the cost of producing the vision. The developer, in this case for both the commercial and residential portions, is trying to create a place where it is easy to park, make purchases and attract tenants. Between these two sets of priorities exists a middle ground, a vision for both the long-term and short-term success of Findlay Creek Village Center.



*Findlay Creek Village Center
Taggart Proposal*

goal of making money in his vision. The CDP does not look to the financial gains of the developer but to creating an ideal community environment. A compromise between the goals of the developer and those of the community is proposed, which mediates short-term financial conditions with a long-term vision. The CDP uses descriptive phrases to communicate the desired atmosphere, resulting in many possible built interpretations. The character envisioned has been correlated with architectural elements to give physicality to the ideas, refining their interpretation.

New Vision for Findlay Creek:

- 1) *The unique aspects of the site should be incorporated into the design to impart an identity and frame the place.*
- 2) *The site should be organized to allow for a long-term evolution through phasing. Space will be reserved for future businesses and should anticipate increased pedestrian use with population growth in adjacent areas.*
- 3) *The site should remain flexible to market demand by using a grid system. Most commercial architecture occupies rectilinear buildings and the grid allows for retailers to come and go without disrupting the entire center.*
- 4) *Connections should be made with the residential community to promote a sense of ownership of the place and encourage residents to walk to the center.*
- 5) *The development should include social spaces and facilitate the trade of a variety of forms of capital (financial and social).*
- 6) *That Findlay Creek Village Center must be a financial success.*

These goals represent a vision of Findlay Creek Village Center becoming a *place* for the residents, customers and developers.

The balance of this chapter will be devoted to a breakdown of the elements in the proposal for Findlay Creek. The different design approaches with the potential to make the commercial center into a *place* over time will be discussed and an argument for its profitability will be made. These proposals would most likely result in a higher cost of construction; the additional investment will reap a higher social and financial return in the long-term.

Busing

The approximately 19 acre commercial center at Findlay Creek Village is intended to serve as the commercial hub of the community. There are several other land development proposals planned, including an employment district, additional residential and roadside commercial. The commercial infrastructure is anticipated to extend along Bank Street between Leitrim Road and Rideau Road. Two schools and several parks are planned within Findlay Creek Village, adding to the existing school and recreational facilities.

The build-out of Findlay Creek Village Center will occur in three phases, allowing the commercial center to grow with the community. The phases are not restricted to a fixed timeline, but are pegged to the population of the Leitrim Community. The total anticipated population is about 15,000, while the current population is about 2,100. Making strategic gaps within the layout of the commercial centers allows the land value to grow in anticipation of a higher

population and density. These gaps are filled in later phases when additional construction is warranted in response to market demand.

To structure the phases, population targets that trigger the beginning of each phase are set. The population size is a reliable way of gauging a possible market and recognizes the increasing needs of the residents. In poor market conditions, however, it may not be possible to justify building and the developer may hold off until it is feasible. The financial returns are more predictable in shorter phases and require fewer tenants to commit before construction begins. Given that the first phase has just begun at Findlay Creek, the proposed first phase present a comparative model incorporating the same type, size and number of retailers. Additional elements that help build the framework to create *place* and will be discussed below. Taggart has begun construction with a population of about 2,000 people suggesting an apt size to initiate Phase One. For the second phase a target population of about 7,500 or half of the anticipated population of the community at build-out is suggested. At a growth rate of about 600 people per year this would mean about a 10 year period between the first and second phase. The final phase should begin before the population reaches 15,000, ideally around 12,500 people, allowing the improvements to raise the remaining residential values. The slow build-out accounts for both the financial circumstances and the long-term evolution of becoming a *place*.

Layout

The organization of the retailers on the site in the first phase plays heavily into the ability of the site to remain flexible. Like Taggart, only retail uses have been incorporated in Phase One. People moving into Findlay Creek are looking for affordable homes and a piece of land, not a rental unit away from the amenities of the city. There may be some willing to move into an apartment but they account for too small a proportion of the market in the first phase. The three types of retail included in the site, outlot, strip commercial and big box, all present individual challenges, but they are also very versatile.

The outlot sites that border Bank Street respond to the existing roadside commercial businesses on Bank Street between Rideau Road and Findlay Creek Village. Instead of orienting the buildings toward the parking lot, they respond to Bank Street in the same way as do existing businesses and create visual continuity along the road, encouraging the existing commercial to feel like an extension of the new development and recognize its commuting customers. Normally these buildings are pushed backed from the road in response to the speed of traffic. Bank Street is an 80 km/hour road; the new residential developments that flank it have necessitated several new traffic lights, effectively slowing speeds. Three planted medians are also proposed for Bank Street to announce entrance into the community. As roads often just move past or around *places*, reducing their existence to signage, the planted medians serve to

incorporate the road back into the center through a shared architectural language. Together the outlot buildings and planted medians create a threshold between the cars on Bank Street and pedestrians in the commercial center.

The strip commercial buildings are located behind the outlots and across a clearly identifiable street. On-street parking and the strip mall create a more enclosed and intimate pedestrian space along the sidewalks that border it. The façade of the buildings approach the pedestrian oriented streets and provide the bulk of parking in lots at the rear. As strip centers represent a pedestrian friendly link between parts of the site, parking is provided mainly in shared lots, while the street is oriented toward pedestrians.

The big box stores present a larger challenge. Their placement and orientation influence future phases and if they are vacated, the buildings must be able to support redevelopment. Normally big box stores are pushed to the edges of a commercial center and use large signs to broadcast to the road. The largest two in the plan, Sobey's grocery store and Canadian Tire, anchor the north and south ends of the proposal, leaving the smaller Shopper's Drug Mart to hold the corner of Bank Street and Findlay Creek Drive. Pulling the larger stores toward the center of the site reduces the amount of signage required and allows the store to be approached from multiple sides, giving it a more dynamic experience. Convincing a big box retailer to operate a store in this manner may be a difficult but it also puts the store from and center, more appropriate to the vital role it plays.

The remaining strip of land between the existing townhouses and new commercial area is to remain undeveloped in the first phase. In the second phase of construction this area would accommodate ground floor commercial with apartments above, which would mediate between the residential and commercial development. The third phase would include development of larger apartment and condominium buildings as well as continued refinement of the public spaces. This, however, depends on the growth of Ottawa beyond, or possibly within, the Greenbelt. Ottawa will continue to expand but the direction of that expansion is politically motivated and changes often.

10-1-2016

The Leitrim Wetland is located to the southwest of the commercial center. As a key part of the vision for Findlay Creek Center is to recognize unique features of the site, the wetland presents a perfect opportunity. It is not necessary for a developer to give something back to the community they helped create, but it does go a long way in securing a good image with the public. The residential and commercial developments at Findlay Creek encroach on the space of the wetland and have affected its vitality. While the wetland was neither ruined nor destroyed, adjacent development will have an impact. As a sign of good faith and commitment to the environment a Wetland Information Center is proposed at the southwest corner of the commercial center. The location is close both to the wetland and

to Bank Street, alerting passing cars of its presence. Findlay Creek also runs along this edge of the site and a boardwalk leads back into the wetland. Because Taggart Realty is constructing both the commercial and residential areas of Findlay Creek it must be possible to move the Wetland Information Center into the commercial area to be more available to residents, shoppers and commuters.

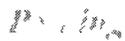
Pedestrian Path and Findlay Creek

Findlay Creek currently serves as part a storm water management system, bringing water to large reservoir on the east side of Bank Street. If it is significant enough to have a village after bear its name, it stands to reason that it is a significant natural feature. To accentuate its importance, it is proposed that a branch be diverted from the creek and run between the commercial and residential development, turning to follow a pedestrian path through the center of the townhouses. The creek then flows into a pedestrian plaza incorporating a pond. The creek itself will fill and drain as the seasons change, acting as the place's natural clock, marking the changing shopping seasons.

The small pond in the center of the pedestrian plaza controls the level of ground water on the site and provides a skating rink in the winter. While not present in Taggart's proposal due to other planned reservoirs, retention ponds and ditches, the Leitrim Community Development Plan mentions the struggle with water in the area. The plaza creates a pedestrian relationship with the big box store, while

allowing for practical movement of goods on the side facing the street.

The creation of the pond would represent a large investment on the part of the developer, but because it can offset the size of other planned reservoirs that must be built, the cost is just reallocated. It has the potential to provide both an amenity and site infrastructure. Furthermore, because vast infrastructure of storm water pipes buried beneath the parking surfaces to deal with excess water is not readily accessible, repairs can be expensive. The lake would not replace this entire infrastructure, but any reduction will decrease the cost of maintenance and servicing.



The parking lots are spread out around the center so that they may serve multiple retailers. Sharing lots reduces the total required parking and shortens the distances between stores, encouraging people to shop at more locations. Ideally the big box stores would provide for their own parking by moving it to the roof. The amount of land available in the initial phase makes this illogical but as the area becomes denser and land values rise, this may become economically viable. With this as the long term vision it is necessary to construct the big box stores to allow for the additional roof load. In Eastern Ontario this is not entirely impractical, as the roof must already support heavy snow loads. Even if the parking were never to make it to the roof, the additional structure provides versatility and

flexibility to future considerations. The roof may one day become a plinth for additional building or recreational space.

On-street parking is a major component of the proposal. The streets are designed to permit parking on only one side as the amount of space required for parking on both sides creates too much distance between the sidewalks and can look barren in the absence of cars. Parking along the street fills quickly and gives a sense of activity, while there may in fact be limited number of people and gives quick access to stores for specific trips.

lookout towers

By sinking the big box stores and pushing them closer to the road, their traditional large bright façades are gone. To replace these signs and give character to the place, lookout towers inspired by those found in nature reserves have been included. The towers form a small lobby space at the entrance to the big box stores and rise above the rest of the structure. At the top is a small room that is formed by signage, broadcasting the store's existence. Visitors can climb the lookout towers and survey the surrounding land, slowly watching it build up. Each visit to the store presents an opportunity to reaffirm the location of the site and its development.

In the center of the pedestrian plaza is a larger lookout tower that demarks the community. The main tower is taller than those of the big box stores and rises 20 meters above grade, the tallest element in the complex. The tower sits in the center of the lake and is accessed

by the paths leading from the wetland and residential development. At its base is a small enclosed space that can be used for skate rentals in the wintertime and paddle boat rentals in the summer.

Further lookout towers should be built in the wetland to tie it to the commercial center. The land is owned by the city but is monitored and cared for by the South Nation Conservation Authority. The conservation authority builds most of its projects through fundraising with local clubs and business groups. There is a perfect opportunity to build relationships between the businesses, residents and land, marking a step toward becoming a *place*.

It is difficult for local business to compete with big box stores but farmers' markets represent a unique opportunity. The types of goods available—crafts, local produce, regional art--cannot generally be found in big box stores and the low overhead costs do not require a large upfront investment. It is also possible to experiment with different products and find a business opportunity. Many times these small retailers are able to find a big enough market to warrant opening a store and establish a business, the same way that medieval fairs preceded the transformation into stores.

The space reserved for a farmers' market is on the western edge of the pedestrian plaza. The sidewalk of the street above cantilevers into the plaza forming a shallow enclosed space of appropriate dimensions for a booth. When the market is not running the space

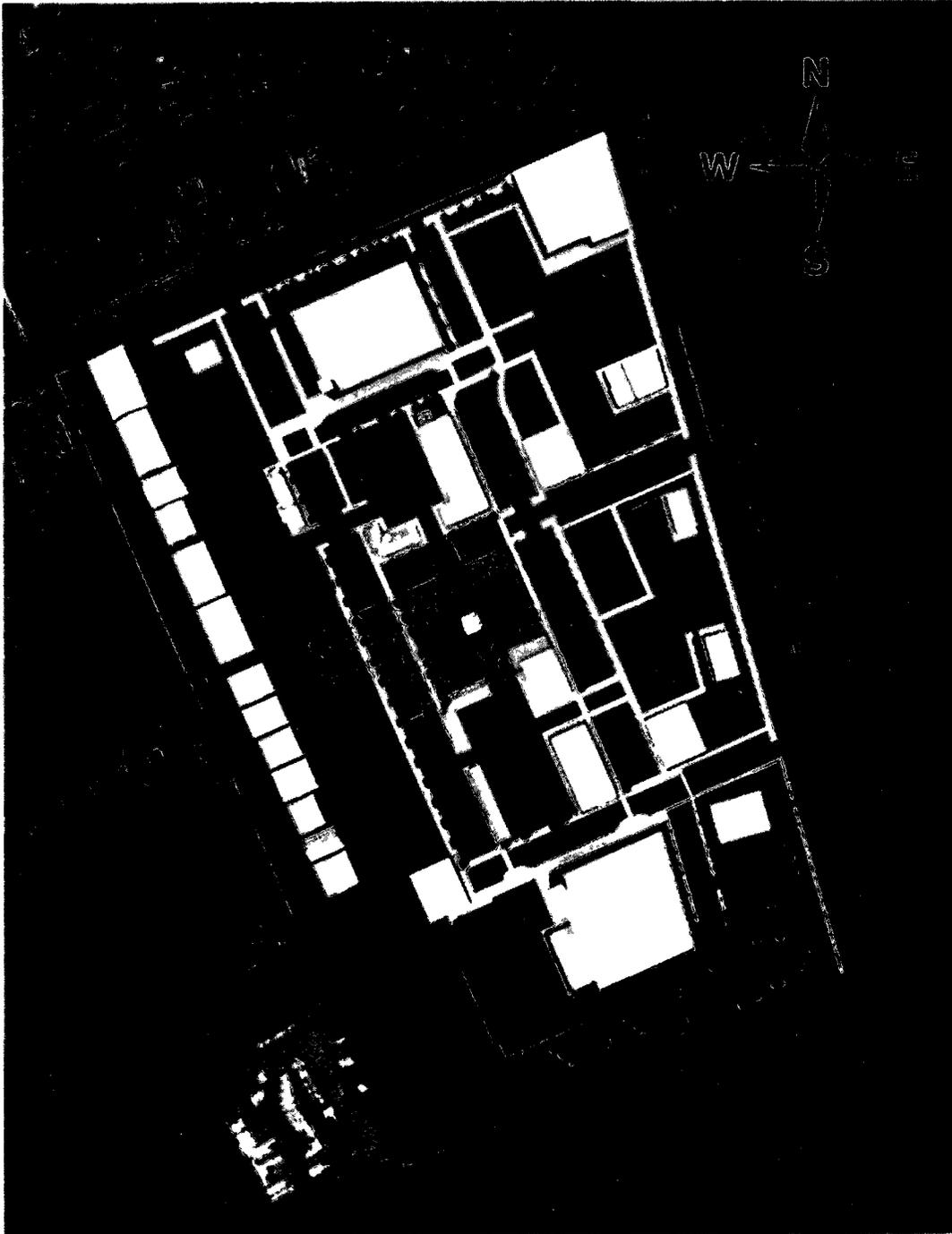
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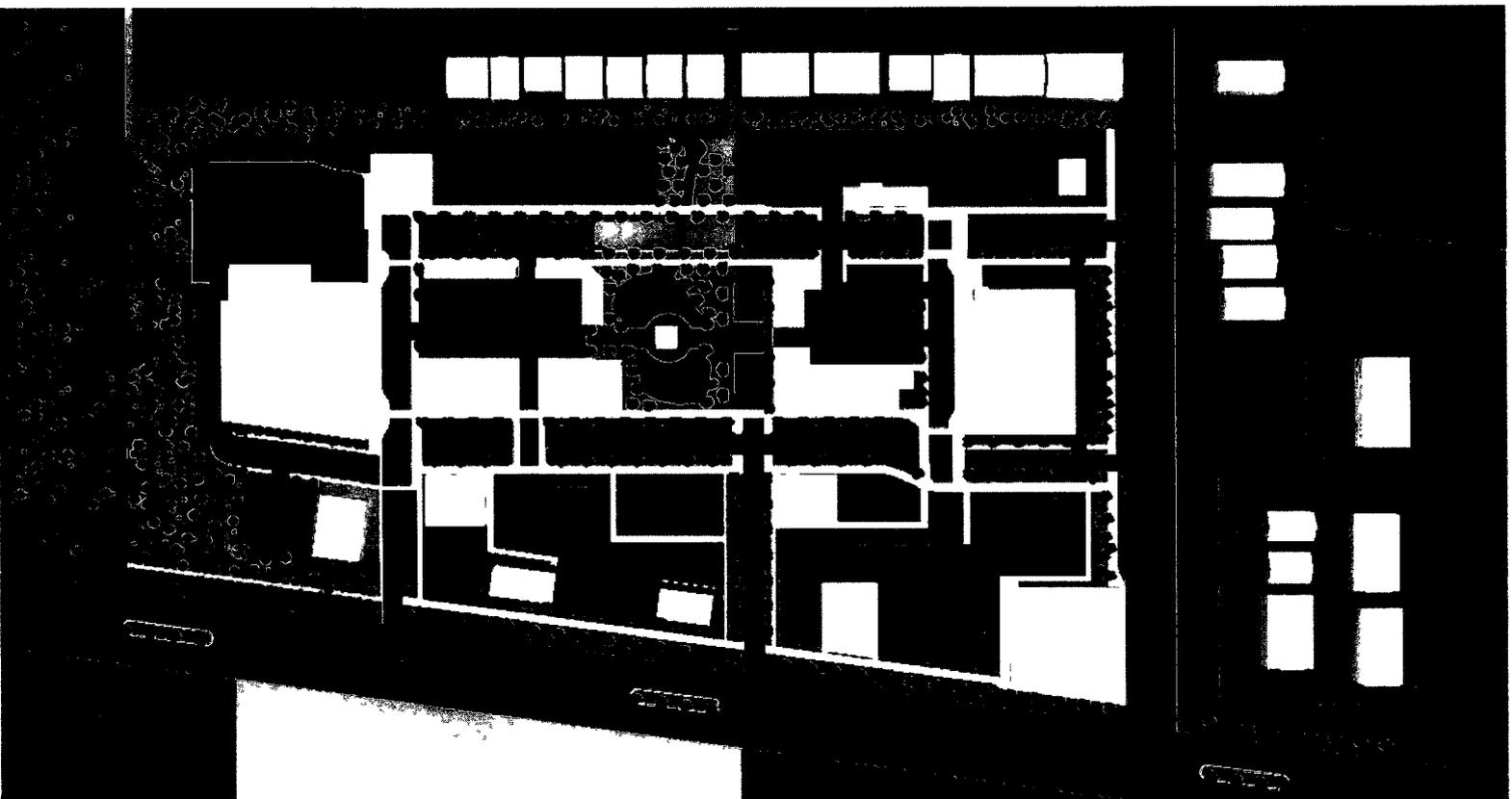
acts as an arcade and provides shade for pedestrians. Parking spaces above the area reserve space for future restaurants. In the later phases the farmer's market might transition into a design level of restaurants, reconciling the street and pedestrian plaza. The idea of a farmers' market stall selling fresh local produce transforming into a local restaurant also has a nice narrative.

Conclusion

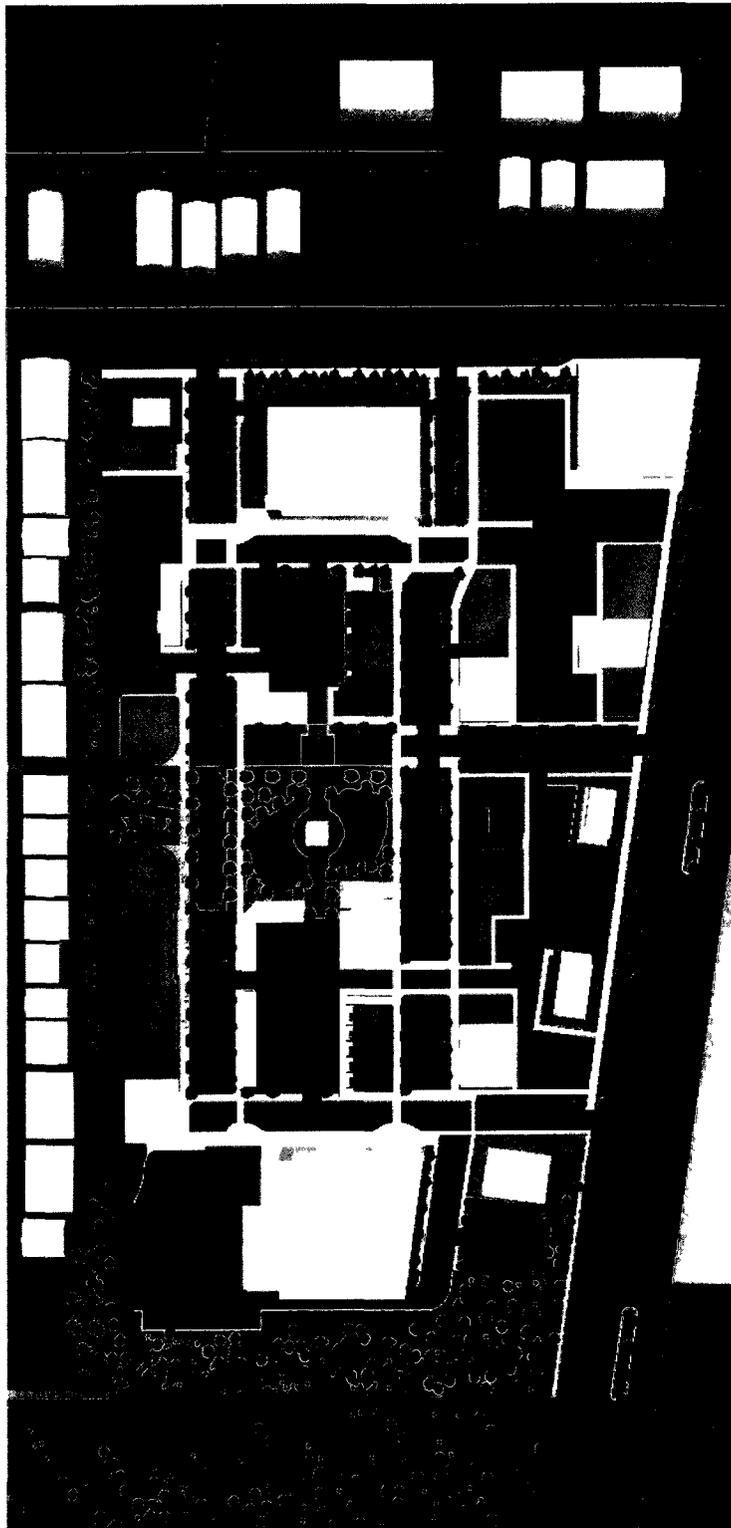
The phasing of the development is instrumental in its successful realization. Additional programmatic elements have been identified, such as apartment, condos or office towers that might find their way into the development over time but the point is to remain flexible. Specific elements will depend on market demands in the future. This proposal for Findlay Creek creates an infrastructure that allows for an evolution of forms and uses without redeveloping the site. There are benefits to building as cheaply as possible at the beginning and landbanking until more intensive development is feasible, but this does little to create a *place*. By nature *places* take generations to develop. A slow and methodical build-out over time will enable the center to grow in an evolutionary way rather than revolutionary way.

Findlay Creek Village Center

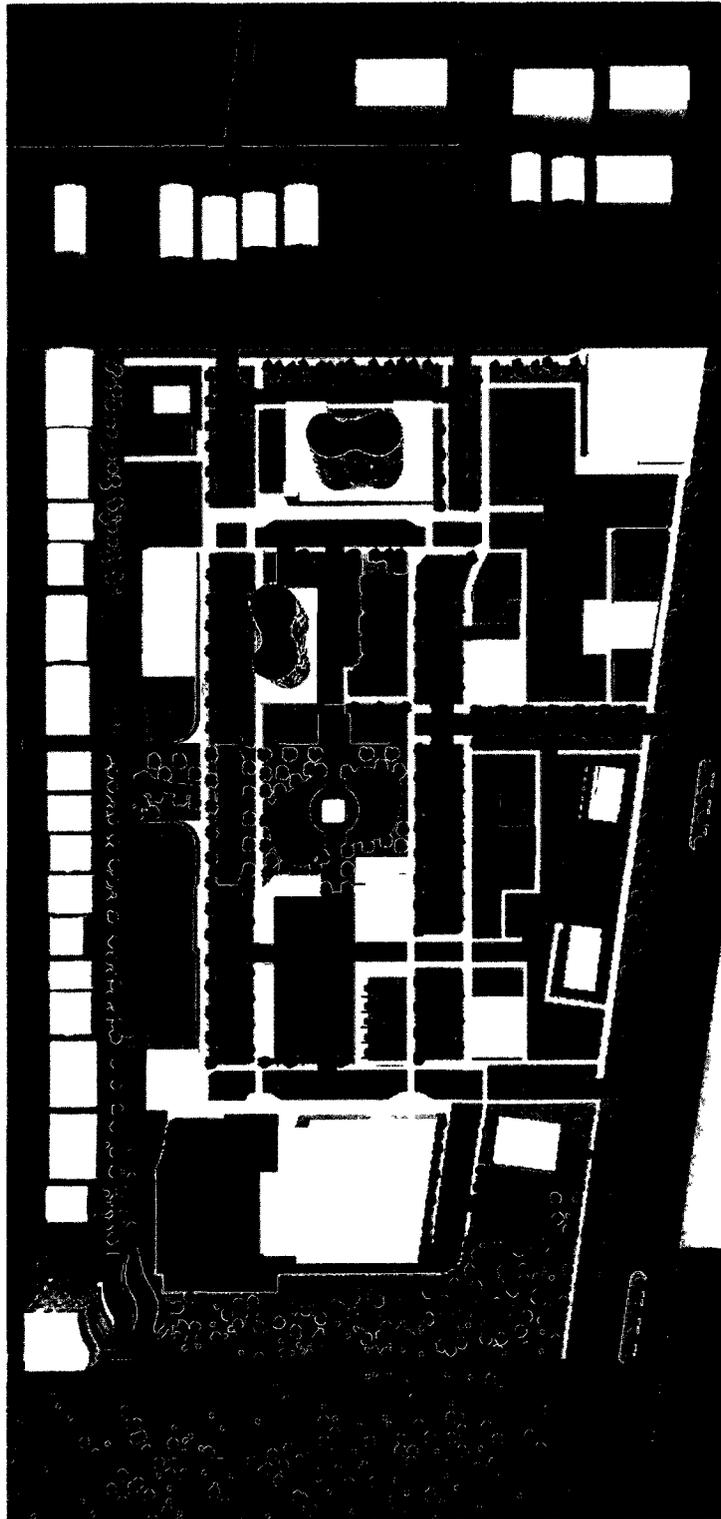




Phase 1 Plan



Phase 2 Plan



Phase 3 Plan

Main Street

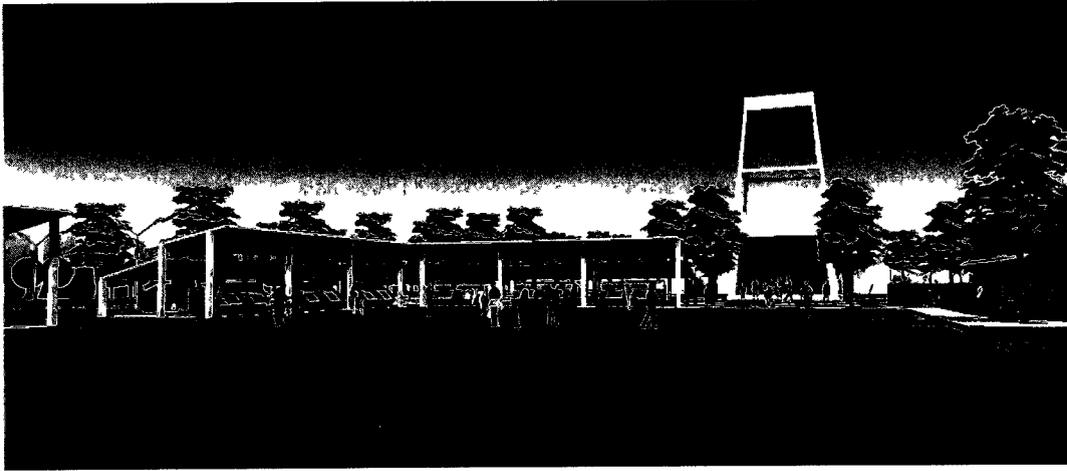


Phase 1



Phase 2

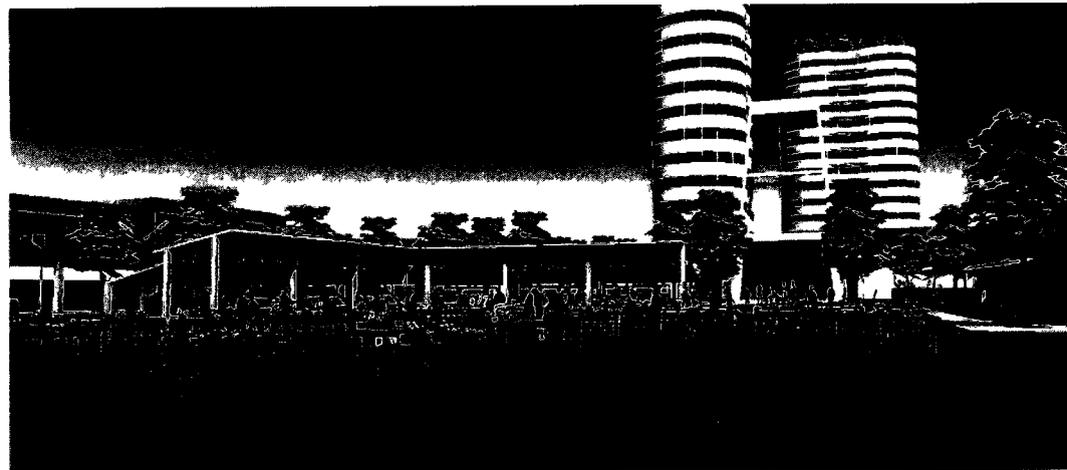
Farmers' Market



Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3

Northwest Entrance



Phase 1

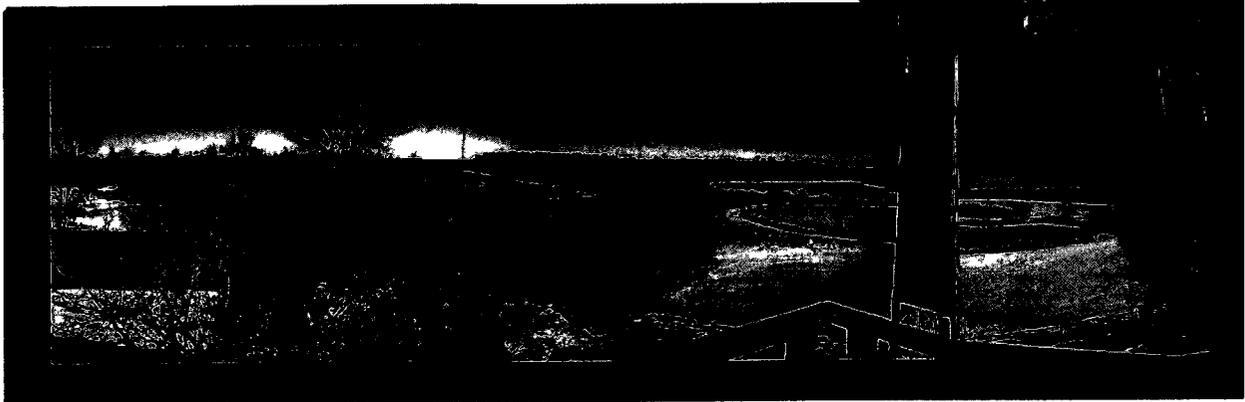
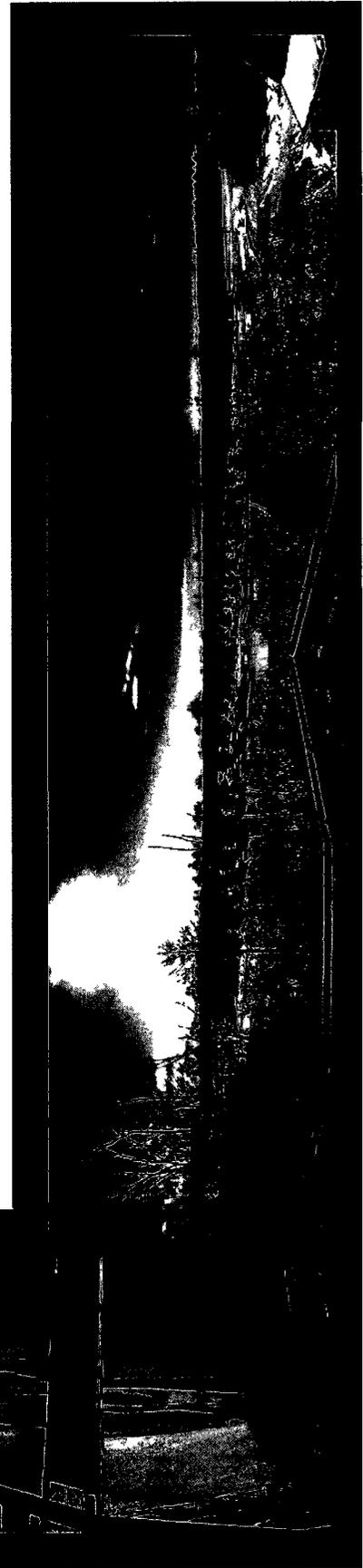
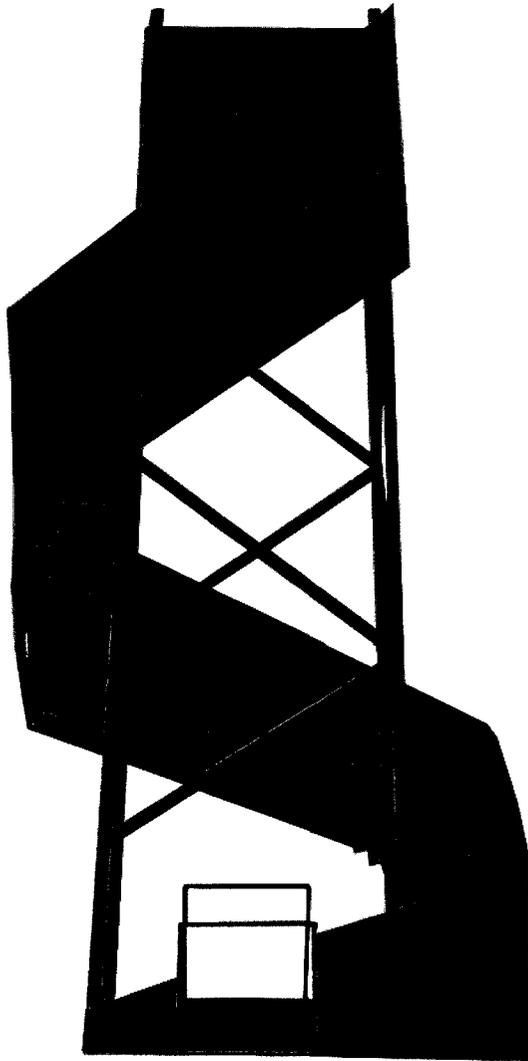


Phase 2

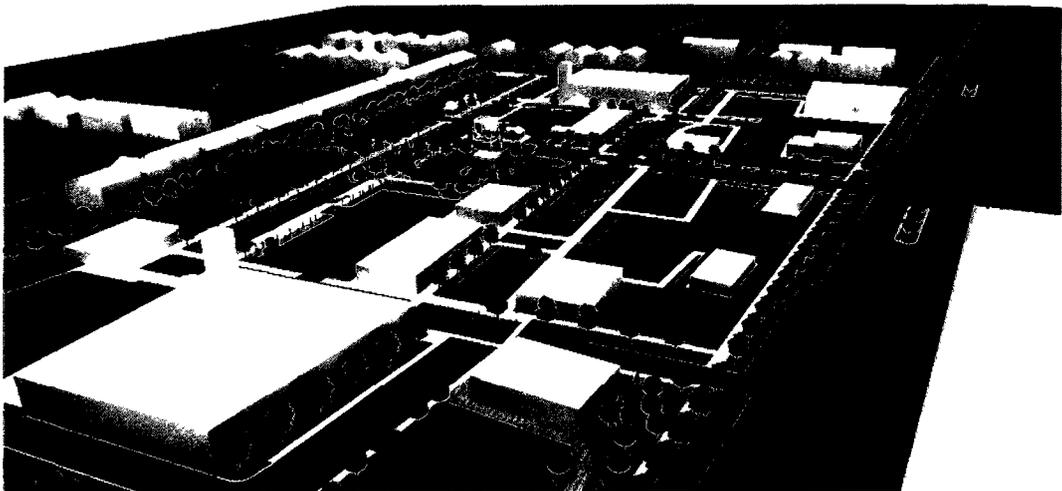
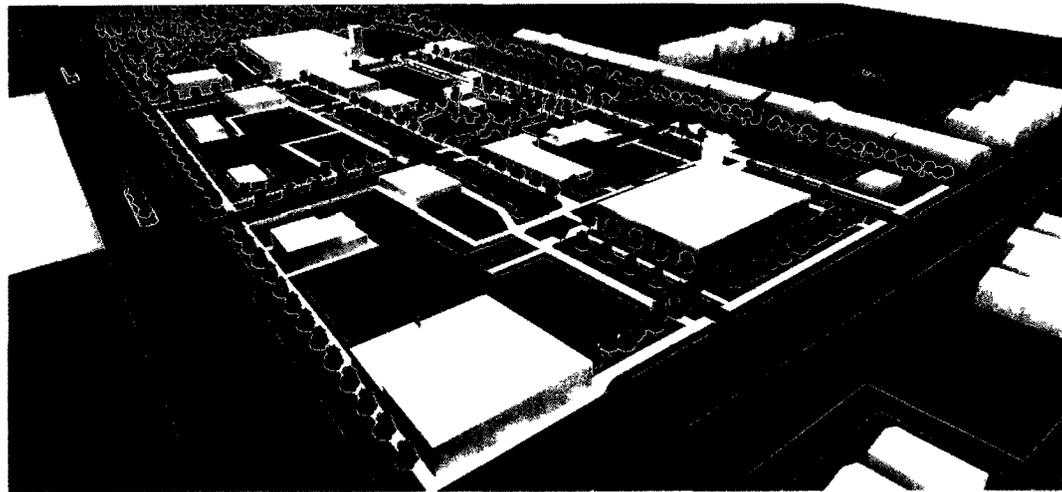
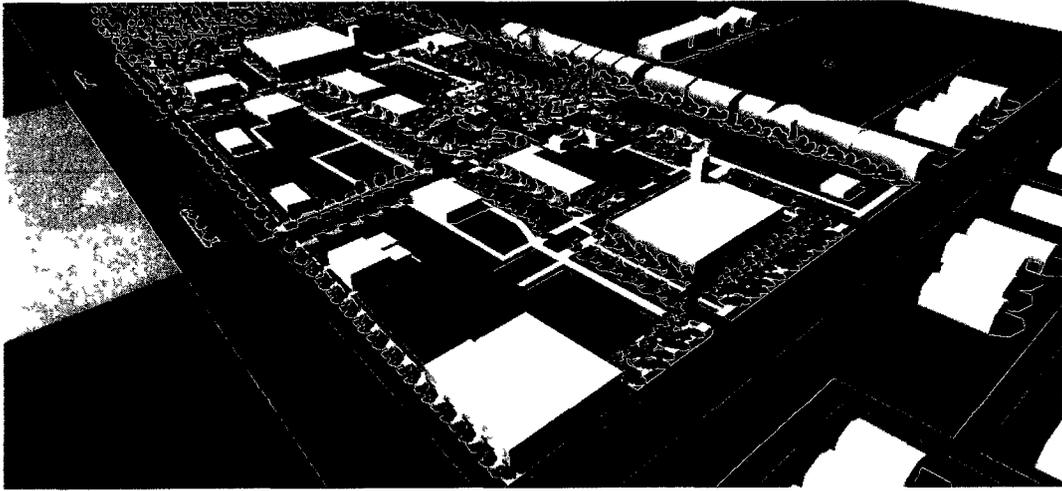


Phase 3

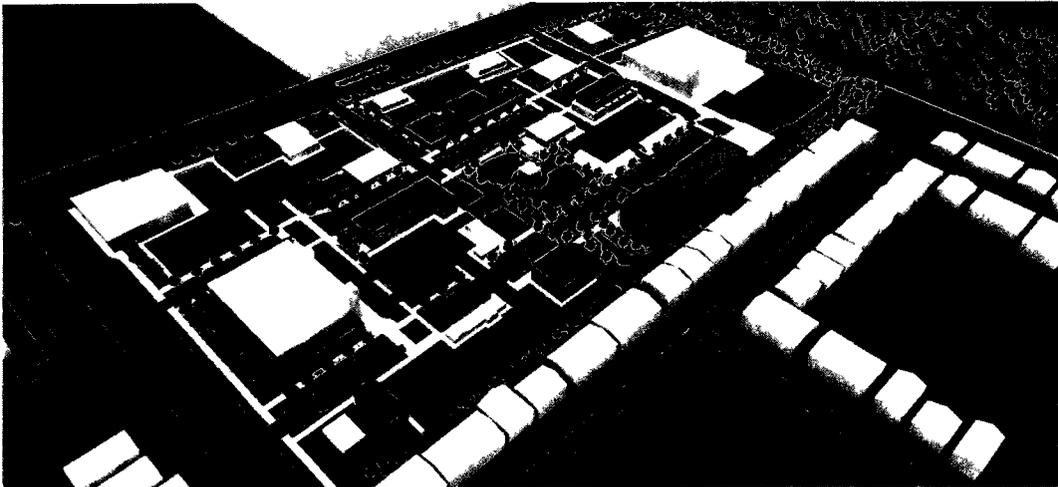
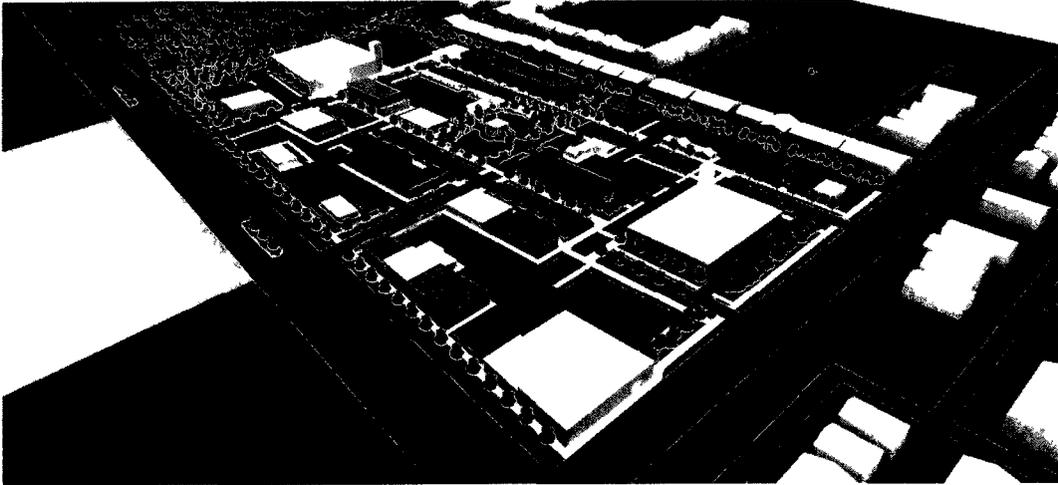
Lookout Tower



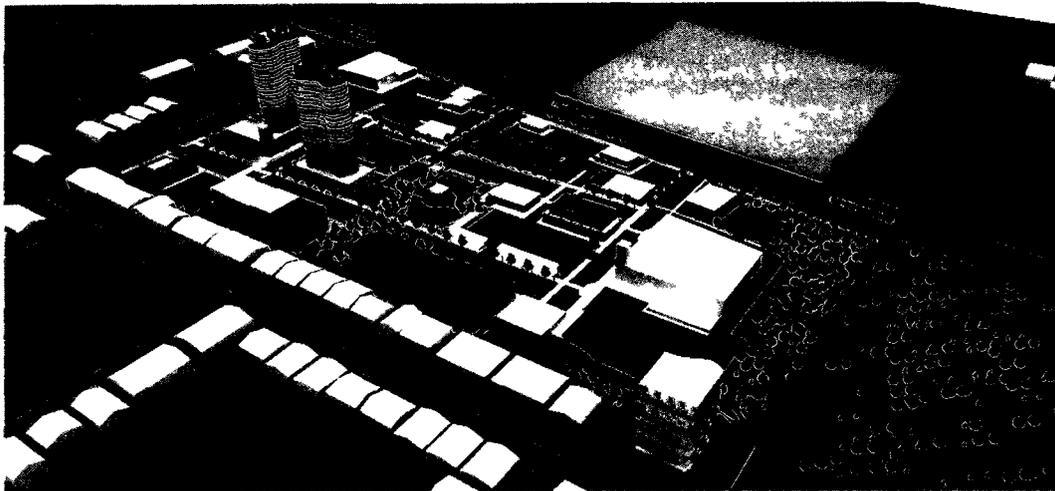
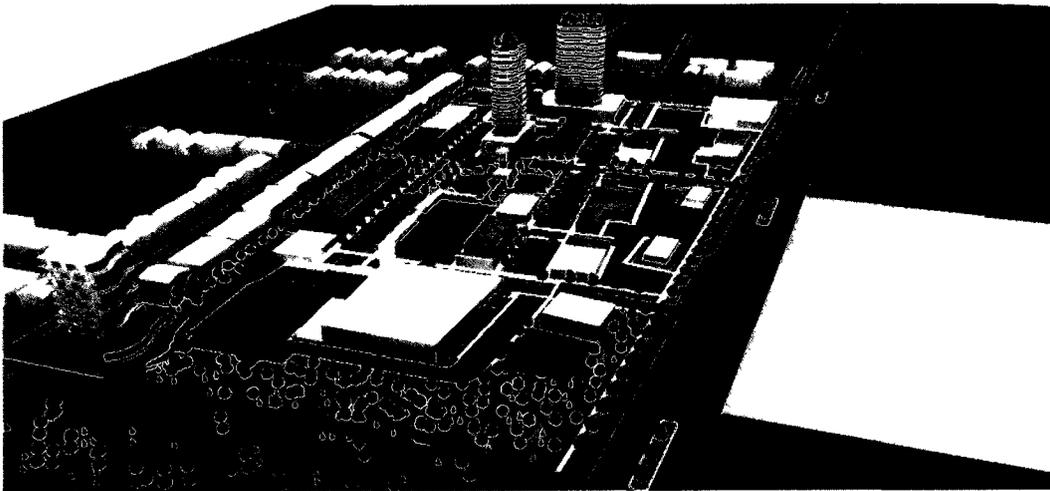
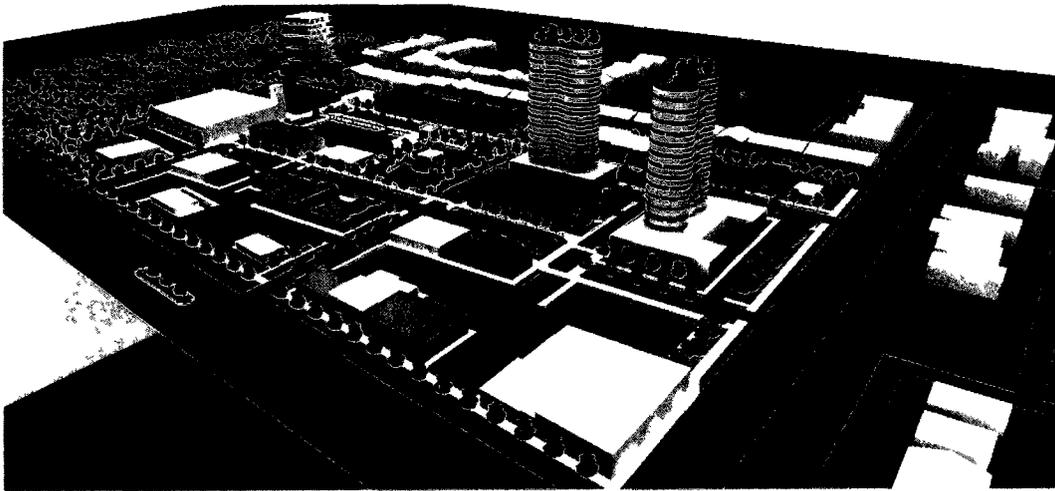
Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3



Conclusion

Commerce has long necessitated a social paradigm in which to thrive, and in turn has become an integral part of contemporary society. The ideas of community and *place* embodied the ancient agorae and marketplaces have become highly desired in today's notion of a shopping center, but commerce has grown, dispersed and become extremely complex since the simple notion of a stall in a public square.

The forms and typologies of commercial development have evolved vastly since the first automobile-oriented shopping center of Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri. With the proliferation of suburban housing after World War II came Victor Gruen and the enclosed shopping center of Southdale. The need for commercial and retail space in suburban communities was all too apparent to the big department stores but Gruen also had a vision of introducing civic and public spaces into the designs. His impact on suburban commercial architecture can best seen in the enclosed mall archetype he created, rather than in his individual buildings. Gruen, however, was never satisfied with the development patterns his creations spurred, relegating blame to developers. As the architect, however, the results are his creation. Perhaps the best thing to take from him is the realization that his creation was unsustainable.

E. P. Taylor and Robert E. Simon were visionaries of their time. Their common goal of creating a community in which people can

live, work and play, led them to take risks predicated on more than financial security. Although the scale of their aspirations may be out of the reach of most, the design strategies they developed are accessible to everybody. The need for social space, monuments, flexible zoning, phasing and a vision are fundamental components for the creation of *places*. Robert Putnam and Ray Oldenburg reinforce the need for Third Places and amenities, maintaining that social capital is as, or more, important than financial capital. Financial capital is easily measured in dollars and cents, but social capital eludes quantification. Its assets in supermodernity can be seen in companies like Apple Computers, who have generated a cult following using social capital.

In the post-industrial era we search for an individual identity to replace the social identity of *place*. The highways, airports, trains stations and supermarkets have come to represent *non-places*; space without identity, history or relations. Not only has mobility increased our access to places, which according to Marc Augé has changed our relationship with them, but it has proliferated *non-places* to access them. Establishing a *place* most importantly takes time. The ability to feel a sense of duration and collect traditions in a *place* requires a slow evolution. The way that we construct our suburban commercial centers today is a product of supermodernity and it is difficult to argue the things we are losing are more important than what we have created. The sustainable building practices and ‘green’ products that are championed today reflect our ability to recognize these losses. The idea of sustainability is a long-term view of evolution, out of

sync with our short-term architecture. The most common suburban commercial development is a mixture of big-box stores and asphalt parking lots. More often than not, these commercial developments are vacated when new opportunities quickly arise – becoming, in effect, ‘dead malls.’ We have begun to treat commercial architecture the way we treat the products being sold, but in an era defined by excess there is time to remedy this discrepancy and reinterpret the importance of *place* in supermodernity.

A sendi

History of Leitrim Community

The choice to name the subdivision after a natural element of the site is a common way of christening a new community, although the feature is often destroyed in the process. In this case the Findlay Creek is actually part of the Leitrim Wetland and not the site, which has preserved its existence. But why was the creek called Findlay? To answer this question one must turn to the land registry records, where it will be found that the first official owner of land near which Findlay Creek Village now stands was John Findlay.¹

John Findlay was likely a member of the early Cowan's Settlement that was based around a parish who congregated at the Saint James' Church to the southwest of the Bank Street/Letirim Road intersection. The founding date of Saint James' Church, which still stands today, is widely regarded as January 18, 1853 when David Cowan had his two sons baptized, but records indicate that the land was being settled as early as 1842.² The settlement was an agricultural community composed mainly of 200 acre farms; John Findlay's being the plot that Findlay Creek runs through. Upon receiving a post office the name ceased to be Cowan's Settlement and changed to reflect the post office's name: Leitrim. Although people petitioned for the name to become Cowansville, a town in Quebec already had the name and the post office remained firm on its decision. The name Leitrim was picked to reflect the origins of the Cowan family and other community members who emigrated from Leitrim County in Ireland.³

A white clapboard school was built across from St. James' Church on land donated by David Cowan and the community continued to grow in tandem with neighboring settlements such as Metcalfe, which has since become a small village. Commercial establishments slowly developed along Bank Street which was an important trade route between Metcalfe, Leitrim and Ottawa, and moreover linked Ottawa to Upper Canada and the St. Lawrence in Morrisburg. The Leitrim community grew considerably until 1961 when land expropriations for the Ottawa greenbelt took place. The dislocation of many of the core community members and lack of

¹ "Map of Gloucester Township." *Map Gloucester Historical Society*. City of Ottawa Web 16 Oct 2010
<http://www.gloucesterhistory.com/gloucester%20map.html>

² "St. James' Anglican Church, Leitrim." *St. James' Anglican Church, Leitrim*. 28 Sept. 2010. Web 10 Oct 2010.
<http://www.saintjamesleitrim.com/history.shtml>

³ Glenn Clark. "A Historical Timeline for the Township of Gloucester." *Gloucester Historical Society*. Web.
<http://www.gloucesterhistory.com/placenames.html>

space to expand led the Leitrim community into a period of stagnation.⁴

Perhaps in an attempt to mitigate the effects of expropriation and segregation that came with the greenbelt, the Township of Gloucester built a new town hall next to St. James' Church in 1962. This new building replaced the town hall that was originally built to serve the community of Billings Bridge near the Ottawa River and Bank Street.⁵ The new building in Leitrim served as the town hall until 1988 when the municipal offices moved to their present day location near Blair Road and the Queensway. The building in Leitrim now exists as a senior citizens community center and the office of the Gloucester Historical Society.⁶ Today, on the land once occupied by the school stands a police station and the Fred Barrett Arena. The arena was built in 1970 and the property also consists of several baseball diamonds and soccer pitches.

⁴ "St. James' Anglican Church, Leitrim"

⁵ "St. James' Anglican Church, Leitrim"

⁶ Clark

Glossary

Was so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Anchor Store:

A major store (usually a chain store) in a shopping center having substantial economic strength and occupying a large square footage.

Big Box:

A single-use store, typically between 10,000 and 100,000 square feet or more, such as a large book store, office supply store, pet store, electronics store or toy store.

Birdbath:

A term used to describe a low area in asphalt paving which tends to collect water.

Category Killer:

A retail store that offers merchandise in a narrow category but a large assortment of merchandise within that category, usually at competitive prices. Dominates a retail category.

Dead Mall:

A shopping mall with a high vacancy rate or a low consumer traffic level, or that is dated or deteriorating in some manner.

Disneyfication:

The processes of stripping a real place or event of its original character and repackaging it in a sanitized format.

Factory Outlet:

A store offering merchandise direct from the manufacturer at prices lower than standard retail. The stores are often contained in centers that specialize in factory outlets.

Encounter Rate:

A measure that indexes the use density, i. e. the number of people observed in a space. A standardised technique to tally moving and static people on a route consisting of a stratified sample of spaces passed twenty times is used. The unit of axial analysis can be “number of persons/100 metres”.

e-Mall:

A mall or store that combines e-commerce with a physical location. The store allows people to test and sample products and then place a purchase or order. It may also include the warehouse/distribution center for the business.

Incubator Tenants:

Specialty leasing tenants (also known as temporary tenants) often need incubation before they are financially strong enough or experienced enough to have a long term lease.

Lifestyle Center:

Most often located near affluent residential neighbourhoods, the center caters to the retail needs and 'lifestyle pursuits' of consumers in its trading area. It has an open-air configuration and typically includes at least 50,000 square feet of retail space occupied by upscale national chain specialty stores. Other elements help make the lifestyle center serve as a multipurpose, leisure-time destination, including restaurants, entertainment and design ambience and amenities such as fountains and backyard furniture that are conducive to casual browsing. These centers may or may not be anchored by one or more conventional or fashion specialty department stores. These centers range between 150,000 and 500,000 square feet of gross leasable area encompassing 10 to 40 acres and the primary trade area is 8 – 12 miles (12.5 – 19 km).

Malls:

Malls typically are enclosed, with a climate controlled walkway between two facing strips of stores. The term represents the most common design mode for regional and superregional centers and has become an informal term for these types of centers.

Market Area:

The area around a shopping center from which the center draws its customers.

Multi-Use Pathways:

Off-road facilities for travel by walking, cycling and other modes such as in-line skating, that serve both recreational and utilitarian travel needs.

Outlet Center:

Usually located in rural or occasionally in tourist locations, outlet centers consist mostly of manufacturers' outlet stores selling their own brands at a discount. These centers are typically not anchored. A strip configuration is most common, although some are enclosed malls, and others can be arranged in a "village" cluster.

Pad Site:

This normally refers to the land area available for (or occupied by) a freestanding building within the parking area of a shopping center or enclosed mall. Parking for a pad site is generally provided through cross-easement access and parking arrangements with the shopping center owner.

Power Center:

A center dominated by several large anchors, including discount department stores, off-price stores, warehouse clubs, or category killers. The center typically consists of several large anchors, some of which may be free-standing and only a minimum amount of small specialty tenants. The centers range between 250,000 and 600,000 square feet in gross leasable area encompassing 10 to 50 acres and the primary trade area is 5 to 10 miles.

Regional Center:

This center type provides general merchandise (a large percentage of which is apparel) and services in full depth and variety. Its main attractions are its anchors: traditional, mass merchant, or discount department stores or fashion specialty stores. A typical regional center is usually enclosed with an inward orientation of the stores connected by a common walkway and parking surrounds the outside perimeter.

Specialty Leasing Program:

A program for establishing specialty tenants either in-line or on the common area in a shopping center, also known as *temporary tenant programs*.

Superregional Center:

Similar to a regional center, but because of its larger size, a superregional center has more anchors, a deeper selection of merchandise, and draws from a larger population base. As with regional centers, the typical configuration is as an enclosed mall, frequently with multiple levels.

Theme/Festival Center:

These centers typically employ a unifying theme that is carried out by the individual shops in their architectural design and, to an extent, in their merchandise. The biggest appeal of these centers is to tourists; they can be anchored by restaurants and entertainment facilities. These centers, generally located in urban areas, tend to be adapted from older, sometimes historic, buildings, and can be part of mixed use projects.

TYPE	CONCEPT	SQ. FT. (Inc. Anchors)	ACREAGE	TYPICAL ANCHOR(S)		ANCHOR RATIO*	PRIMARY TRADE AREA**
				NUMBER	TYPE		
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER	Convenience	30,000 - 150,000	3 - 15	1 or more	Supermarket	30 - 50%	3 miles
COMMUNITY CENTER	General Merchandise, Convenience	100,000 - 350,000	10 - 40	2 or more	Discount dept store, super-market, drug home improvement, large specialty/discount apparel	40 - 60%	3 - 6 miles
REGIONAL CENTER	General Merchandise, Fashion (Mall typically enclosed)	400,000 - 800,000	40 - 100	2 or more	Full-line dept store, jr dept store, mass merchant, disc dept store, fashion apparel	50 - 70%	5 - 15 miles
SUPERREGIONAL CENTER	Similar to Regional Center but has more variety and assortment	800,000+	60 - 120	3 or more	Full-line dept store, jr. dept store, mass merchant, fashion apparel	50 - 70%	5 - 25 miles
FASHION/SPECIALTY CENTER	Higher end, fashion oriented	80,000 - 250,000	5 - 25	N/A	Fashion	N/A	5 - 15 miles
POWER CENTER	Category-dominant anchors, few small tenants	250,000 - 600,000	25 - 80	3 or more	Category killer, home improvement, disc dept store, warehouse club, off-price	75 - 90%	5 - 10 miles
THEME/FESTIVAL CENTER	Leisure, tourist-oriented, retail and service	50,000 - 250,000	5 - 20	N/A	Restaurants, entertainment	N/A	N/A
OUTLET CENTER	Manufacturers' outlet stores	50,000 - 400,000	10 - 50	N/A	Manufacturers' outlet stores	N/A	25 - 75 miles

* The share of a center's total square footage that is attributable to its anchors
 **The area from which 60 - 80% of the center's sales originate

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Additional Research

Strip Commercial

Form

The lineage of suburban commercial architecture is a complex web of transformations and influences. The inclusion of commercial forms that have traditionally been urban—but underwent dramatic transformation in the suburbs—means the history of suburban commercial is more of an intersection of several histories. The basic typologies categorized here are intended to provide the reader with a background of the commercial forms associated with the suburbs.

Strip Commercial

Primary Trade Area:

Generally a small neighborhood but is general enough to include larger centers as well

Square Footage of Retail

Space:

Maximum of 10,000 sq ft

Area of Site:

Varies

Types of Retailers:

At least 3 independent retailers (almost always) and typically anchored by a supermarket or supercenter

With the emergence of commuter transportation systems came the emergence of the suburbs. As Peter Hall says, “new transportation technologies – the electric tram, the electric commuter train, the underground railway, the motor bus – allowed the suburbanization process to take place.”⁶ Along with suburban homes came the need for retail businesses to provide the basics of food, clothing and general goods. The most natural place for these retail enterprises was along the commuter route as they were the most high-traffic areas of the development. Although the form remained in the vernacular traditions of main streets, individual stores along a street, the community was replaced with commuters. As the strip of stores grew, new entrepreneurs would attempt to build as close to the transit stations as possible and always within walking distance. Due to the high demand for land within walking distance, the density of the stores would often increase, resulting in the coining of the term ‘ten foot store’ which referred to the narrow frontages allowed by the density.⁷

The design of commercial strips was predicated by the financial requirements of the time. As many would-be store owners could not afford to pay the yearly land taxes, a developer would construct a linear building, usually 2 or 3 stories high, and lease out the space. Thus the buildings became known as taxpayer blocks as the tenants would provide the money for taxes in the form of rent. This arrangement would allow the developer to retain the land until such time as it was sufficiently valuable enough to turn a profit and provide affordable space to the tenant in the process.⁸ The façade created a visual separation between the retail businesses, easily

⁶ Peter Hall *Cities of Tomorrow*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002, 19
Rowe 110

⁵ Rowe 110

identifiable by the large glass storefront windows, and the residential or office uses above. As the interior spaces could be easily manipulated to allow for a wide range of tenants, a greater level of flexibility was also afforded by this type of layout. The homogenous look of the stores, however, was not conducive to attracting business and resulted in large, flamboyant signs being erected to draw in consumers.⁹

Since the introduction of the car the commercial strip has changed greatly. The population boom after WWII made the commercial strip the dominant form of suburban commercial architecture through the late 1950s and well into the 1960s.¹⁰ The need to be within walking distance of transportation was no longer an issue as people provided their own transportation. Instead of vying for land close to the train or bus stop, the new commercial strips aligned themselves along commuter arteries and attempted to provide a balance between parking and visibility from the road.

Initially the line of the street was maintained by placing the parking behind the building(s) but soon the parking lots migrated to the front of the strip. It is difficult to say precisely why the decision was made to move the parking to center stage; there are likely several reasons for the move. First, the increase in the speed of traffic demands that the façade be placed farther from the road so that the stores can be seen and do not just whiz past in a blur. Second, to place the parking behind the commercial block requires two façades. Moreover, the space for deliveries and waste collection would have to be maintained at higher standards in a customer parking lot. Thirdly, it is easier to attract customers if they can see the parking while approaching the stores. This layout, however, also diminishes the stores' individual presence and the size of signage increases (again) to compensate. Lastly, the increasing speed of the road makes it an undesirable walking space and to provide a pedestrian friendly path between stores distance must be established.

The basic principles of locating along a commuter thoroughfare and occupying a linear interconnected building have remained relatively constant in suburban commercial strip development. By aggregating stores into a pedestrian friendly strip, people are more likely to park and walk between stores, increasing the potential customer base for all retailers. The location along a commuter road provides a convenient shopping destination to a large geographic area. The stability of the commercial strip makes it a fundamental building block of commercial architecture.

⁹ Rowe, III

¹⁰ Malachy Kavanagh, "A Brief History of Shopping Centers," *International Council of Shopping Centers*, Web 26 Nov. 2010. http://www.icsc.org/search/about/impacts/shopping_centers_01_briefhistory.pdf

Standalone Retailer Location

Primary Trade Area:

Very limited but varies depending on location

Square Footage of Retail Space:

Varies depending on the size of the building

Area of Site:

Minimum required to provide parking for store or limited to the footprint of the store

Types of Retailers:

Mainly restaurants and service stations

Along with the taxpayer block tenants were individuals who were affluent enough to erect their own building and sustain a business. These businesses often sold products tailored to the basic human needs and were able to not only standalone but expand their walkability circle from the restrictiveness of other ventures based on the necessity of their products. The most recognizable standalone building in North America is the fast-food restaurant – it is also one of the most successful. Others that could afford this development type were convenience stores, banks, motels and, of course, gas stations.¹¹ Some entrepreneurs took risks and speculated on development patterns, but most located just beyond the commercial strip. The necessity of the standalone stores products created a relationship similar to an anchor store. People would have to walk to the edges of the retail area to reach the necessities and pass by the strip centers. The standalone stores benefitted from volume of customers the strip centers drew.

Some of the first standalone stores to integrate into the parking lots of strip centers after their push away from the road were franchises. The large advertising budgets of franchises made their symbols a powerful way to attract customers. Several general observations can be made about franchises. Primarily there is the appearance of the buildings and parking. “The facilities are small, designed for customers to pause, purchase, and leave without lingering. They are usually set back from the road, amid a broad apron of car parking, often on three sides.”¹² Secondly, the fact that these stores are franchised means they strive for a level of standardization and are thematically designed to market their products. The brand image is often updated as well, translating to the renovation of hundreds (if not thousands, i.e. McDonald’s) of stores to stay current.¹³

When the franchise and strip commercial centers combined in the suburban landscape it was a good match. Parking spaces at the edge of the road went underused, except during periods of peak demand such as Christmas, at the suburban strip commercial centers because of the distance to the stores and the franchises thrived off of the roadside location. By building on what is known in the shopping center industry as pad lots, or more appropriately out-lots, the franchises had an ideal location and filtered views of the overwhelming parking lot from the passing traffic.

¹¹ Powe, 116

¹² Rowe 116

¹³ Rowe 117

As a single business occupying a single building, franchise really stands as a variation of the standard, individually owned store. The franchise's support network has given it a greater resilience to changing markets and its advertising capabilities benefit the strip center, prompting the creation of outlots. Other retailers have found their way onto these lots since and help to buffer the strip center from the road. With the strip center on one edge of the parking lot and the franchises on the other buffering the road, the traditional main street influences can be seen. Although the main street has been replaced with a parking lot it still functions in the same way. People can park and walk between stores and the draw of the out lot products create traffic throughout the site.

Department Stores

Primary Trade Area:
10+ kilometers
Square Footage of Retail Space:
Varies greatly
Area of Site:
Varies but heavily dependent on parking requirements
Types of Retailers:
N/A

While strip commercial and roadside franchises were the first types of commercial development in the suburbs, the department store took a while to find a place outside of the urban core. Ironically, the point at which the department store moved into the suburbs is regarded by many to be the point that marks the beginning of the decline of the department store. As *The New Yorker* journalist Adam Gropik paraphrases Harvard Business School professor Richard Tedlow, “Tedlow dates the beginning of the decline to the period just after the Second World War, when what seemed at first to be a great gift to the growth of the department store—the mall—first appeared, in places like Minneapolis and Kansas City.”¹⁴

Identifying the origins of the department store is no simple task. There have been many types of commercial architecture throughout history and as one form slowly changed into the next it is difficult to mark the first time the fundamental ideas that define ‘department store’ appeared. However, it is not imperative to find ‘the first’ department store to grasp its importance.

To begin with it is necessary to understand what constitutes a department store and what separates it from other types of commercial architecture. In an interview with Adam Gropik, Marvin Traub—often hailed as the godfather of the New York department store—describes a department store as follows, “it’s simple: it’s a place where you can get everything under one roof. Books and fraises des bois, dishwashers and Prada bags, everything under one roof.”¹⁵ Today there seems little separating this definition from many of the stores that we do not classically consider to be a

¹⁴ Adam Gropik “Under One Roof” *The New Yorker* (2003)
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/09/22/030922fa_fact

¹⁵ Gropik

department store but many of these are a further evolution—which will be discussed in *Rearranging the Pieces*.

In medieval Europe the sale and distribution of goods was strictly controlled by the various guilds. The guilds wielded enough power to control who sold what and where, and distributed the various shops amongst the city. Furthermore, at this point in history people did not buy many goods from stores and often relied on their own ingenuity and craft to create the things they wanted. If they were unable to make their own things they would barter amongst themselves. Even if they were to go to a shop to purchase something, the prices were not fixed. Bartering was the way that trade was done.

Over time the idea of fixing prices and selling large amounts of goods under one roof emerged again and again. There were many failed plans to change the consumer habits of people and several are worth mentioning. In 1653, Quaker leader George Fox was one of the first to complain about the lack of fixed prices in English stores. Fox felt that bargaining endorsed cheating and lying and pushed for his followers who owned stores to mark a fixed price on their goods. At first people were suspicious of the Quakers and their reluctance to participate in bartering but eventually some saw the value in being able to send children to pick up goods without being scammed. Outside of the Quaker community the value was failed to be seen and many of the Quakers eventually gave up on the notion.

In 1723, about 70 years after Fox made a stand for fixed prices, Daniel Defoe reprinted a letter from an English merchant in his book *The Complete English Tradesmen*. Defoe was obviously sympathetic to the shop owner who wrote complaining about what we would call window-shoppers. The merchant felt that people were coming into his store to merely pass the time, while he was forced to stay open and work full time. Defoe, perhaps ahead of his time, cautioned the shop keep that although some do not buy at the time they may be back and the ones that do buy make up for having to deal with the ones who do not. This was a sound piece of humble advice for any prospective department store entrepreneurs.

Not long after Defoe's publication, in 1750 a Mr. Palmer opened a new haberdashery on the London Bridge. The store was open from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm daily and sold a large amount of products divided into departments at set prices. Consumers loved the idea, but the other merchant's despised Palmer for attempting to compete with multiple types of stores and eventually Palmer closed shop. It would take much longer for the idea of variety under one roof to catch on but fix pricing was gaining momentum quickly. Even as early as the late 1700s Josiah Wedgwood used fixed prices

for his London fine china store. Beyond this, Wedgwood also offered a satisfaction guarantee and took returns.

There is much debate surrounding which store was *the first* department store but it is generally agreed that the most influential of the first was the one opened in Paris in 1838: the Bon Marché. At the beginning the Bon Marché, owned and run by Aristide Boucicaut, was opened as a small shop but by 1852 the store was being organized by department and had grown considerably. By the early 1850s the Bon Marché boasted fixed prices, took returns and focused on fast turnover of product. In 1870 the Bon Marché moved to a new building in Paris, designed by Gustav Eiffel, which featured an interior of glass, iron columns and sweeping stairs. The store also went well beyond the traditional role of a merchandiser by offering a reading room, art gallery and restaurant. After hours the store also hosted events and performances including fencing classes and English lessons. The store had such an impact on Parisians that Emile Zola immortalized it in his 1883 book *Au Bonheur des Dames*.

Fixed prices also created an opportunity for department store to make their goods available to rural areas. Not having to haggle with the shop keeper in person allowed for the creation of mail-order catalogues. The business garnered from catalogue orders often became a considerable part of the store's sales volume and gave access to people living beyond the limit of trolley lines, whose intersections became ideal sites. Mail-order catalogues were not only used by department stores, in fact some catalogue owners eventually built department stores, but the department store offered a shopping experience beyond the products. The rough and dirty street was no place for a woman to walk unescorted but the department store offered a clean and safe environment. Walking around the department store and 'window-shopping' became a pastime; one that Daniel Defoe saw the importance of.

As the idea of the department store caught on, the Industrial Revolution played a large role in its success. The factories were able to produce large quantities of goods that were more effectively sold at select locations, as opposed to many small retailers, and the disposable income, although often meager, made it possible for more people to shop. Without the ability to restock goods in a reasonable time span and have a large customer base the department store never would have existed.

To establish themselves as worth places to shop early department stores offered a destination and experience to the shopper. People were encouraged to browse and events were frequently held to attract the masses. Some of the early tactics used have become tradition now in North America (think Macy's Thanksgiving Day

Parade) while most faded away after WWI. By this time the department stores had staked their claim to their place of land in the retail world. The massive events and concerts that were held in the late 1800s started to decrease and become more subdued. After WWII department stores followed their middle class customers to the suburbs and as Tedlow said, their decline began.

Suburban Malls (open & closed)

Primary Trade Area:

Dependent on size of mall but can range from 5-40 kilometers

Square Footage of Retail Space:

Ranging from 30,000-800,000 sq ft

Area of Site:

Between 3 and 120 acres

Types of Retailers:

All types of retailers included and usually anchored by one or more department stores and/or supermarkets

The combination of strip centers, outlots and department stores on the suburban landscape created the pedestrian mall. By grouping the three forms together around pedestrian streets in the center of a large parking lot, the growing numbers of cars could be accommodated and people could leisurely stroll through the complex. The first suburban pedestrian malls were created after WWII when the demand for housing pushed residential development beyond the city limits and the department stores followed. The deep pockets of the department store permitted large land acquisitions to build the malls, which were chosen in anticipation of residential development. The developers of these early malls searched for favorable locations at major interchanges and on flat sites along arterial roads just beyond the retail market of the city core. This type of speculative building was frequently successful in predicting growth patterns as many times it would, itself, spur growth and raise land values. This was not always the case, however, and some early pedestrian malls failed to see a population size sufficient to sustain their predictions.

The relationship between cars and pedestrian space for shoppers has continually been reinterpreted. The use of a parking lot to replace the role of street in strip malls successfully distanced pedestrians from the increasing speed of traffic, but still placed the shopper in view cars, whose novelty had begun to wear thin. Furthermore, with the introduction of department stores to the suburbs, the scale of these commercial developments and parking lots grew significantly. Pedestrian malls were less opportunistic in their approach to development than strip malls. The larger size required more land and the money of the department stores that focused on a long-term return with less risk. The increase in scale and the aspiration to distance the shopping experience from the automobile required new forms.

Overall, pedestrian malls consisted of two basic criteria: large complexes of buildings and grade-level parking. The real difference between the designs of these malls was the way in which the building forms were articulated. There are 3 basic types of articulation: a pedestrian spine, a centralized organization around a

department store or a dumbbell plan with anchors tenants on either end.¹⁷

The pedestrian spine layout consisted of an irregular arrangement of stores around a well landscaped pedestrian path that linked back to parts of the neighborhood.¹⁸ Much like the way that the Country Club Plaza catered to both the pedestrian and the automobile by placing the majority of parking behind the buildings, the pedestrian spine attempts to conceal the parking by providing pedestrian space between the buildings. Thus it was possible to have the village aesthetic and the large amount of surface parking together, the formal layout was just inverted to accommodate more parking. The interesting feature of the pedestrian spine is how the department stores were integrated into form of the commercial strip. They did not act as anchors that defined the limits of the shopping center but border paths that led beyond it.

The centralized layout is simply as it sounds. A large department store was located in the center of the parking lot and then other buildings were arranged around it to create pedestrian corridors. One of the most famous examples—the largest mall of its time—is Northland Regional Shopping Center, Detroit, Michigan by Victor Gruen and Associate Architects in 1954.¹⁹ Northland went a step further in the integration of the pedestrian and automobile. The heavily landscaped pedestrian paths were raised with some extended into the parking lots. Now even the farthest stretches of parking could be accessed safely.²⁰

The dumbbell layout can also be heavily accredited to Victor Gruen. The dumbbell layout is organized around two anchor tenants, usually department stores. They are placed at either end of a landscaped pedestrian strip which is lined by smaller retailers. Unlike the pedestrian spine, the pedestrian zone within the dumbbell does not extend itself into the neighboring residential areas and is instead capped off by the customer-drawing department stores. After designing so many pedestrian malls in the dumbbell and centralized layout, it is not a stretch to learn that Gruen applied these basic layouts in the design of his enclosed shopping centers.

Always a leader in shopping center architecture, Victor Gruen pushed the idea of enclosing the pedestrian zone of pedestrian malls with a climate controlled envelope for years before his vision was realized in the Southdale Shopping Mall, the world's first enclosed

¹⁷ Rowe 124

¹⁸ Rowe 121

¹⁹ Jeffrey Harawick *Mani Meke: Victor Gruen Architect of an American Dream* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004, 128

²⁰ Rowe 126

shopping center. Located in Minneapolis, the site of Southdale was an ideal location for an enclosed mall. "By providing an enclosed, fully air-conditioned environment, the 123 good outdoor shopping days per year in Minneapolis were extended indefinitely."²¹ By the 1960s enclosed malls were more the rule than the exception.²²

Primary Trade Area:

Between 40 and 120 kilometers

Square Footage of Retail Space:

Between 50,000 to 1,000,000 sq ft

Area of Site:

About 10-15 acres

Types of Retailers:

Mainly manufactures selling their goods at discounted prices and typically not anchored

Outlet stores are located in standalone buildings and are operated by the distributor or manufacturer of the goods. Distributors were instrumental in providing rural residents access to products through mail-order catalogues and flyers. Their broad customer base allowed them to invest in large inventories and get better per item prices. The growth of these businesses soon required a dedicated space to run the mailing and warehousing of the goods, as early as 1917 for L.L. Bean one of America's biggest mail-order businesses, and distributors saw the opportunity to showcase the available products. For manufacturers, increased production scales often resulted in a surplus of goods that did not meet quality standards, instead of discarding the defective items there were sold at reduced prices; the practice continuing to today. Often outlet stores contain a combination of both defective and retail goods, the quality items being sold below the profit margin of retailers. Outlet stores have been common in the suburbs from early on, as strip commercial buildings would often contain an outlet store, however, manufacturers had to be cautious not to undercut the business of its retailers.

The first aggregation of outlet stores into an outlet mall, however, wasn't until Vanity Fair Outlet Village in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1974.⁵⁴ The site of Vanity Fair is an industrial area of reading that contained the company's factories. The first outlet store was Vanity Fair's, occupying part of a factory and "separated from the manufacturing floor by a simple drop cloth."⁵⁵ The popularity of Vanity Fair and available land far from retail competition, led other brands to the site and the mall slowly grew out.

The choice of a site for an outlet mall must be considered carefully. The main revenue of the manufactures comes from selling their goods to retailers. Placing an outlet mall too close to the

²¹ Rowe, 128

²² Rowe, 128

⁵⁴ "An American Original" *Vanity Fair Outlet Center*, Web 10 Dec 2010. <https://www.vfoutletcenter.com/our-history.aspx>

⁵⁵ "An American Original" *Vanity Fair Outlet Center*, Web 10 Dec 2010. <https://www.vfoutletcenter.com/our-history.aspx>

retailers carrying the same goods creates unwanted competition and jeopardizes the brands primary revenue source. Outlet mall developers preferred sites that were distanced from other retailers and often located mid-way in between two major cities or in industrial areas on their edges. The low prices and trusted brand names drew people out of the city and provided a place to stop a rest when travelling between cities.

Over time outlet malls began to take on the qualities of early pedestrian malls and became destinations. Other entrepreneurs saw business opportunities and began building amusement parks and different attractions, encouraging people to spend the day at the center. The amount of time the visitor is expected to stay at the center is reflected in their design. Pedestrian streets, various ‘village-like’ themes and even enclosure have all been used to create an environment the shopper wanted to stay in and make the drive worthwhile.

Power Centers

The decline of department stores after the introduction of the enclosed mall opened up opportunities for new forms of retail. The displacement of the department stores essential qualities, enclosure and different goods under one roof, into the mall degraded its necessity. Further intensifying its decline was the conglomeration of smaller retailers under a parent company. The mall would negotiate leases and space with the parent company, resulting in multiple stores with individual goods and brands in one deal. The parent company would run the individual stores like departments and the enclosure of the mall put them under the same roof. Enclosure allowed the conglomerated companies to usurp the position of the department store and predicated a transition to big box stores as anchors.

Some big box stores have retained the anchor status at the end of strip commercial developments, but many take the approach of the strip center and band together to create power centers, increasing pedestrian traffic between stores. Big box stores tend to remain autonomous of other structures, demonstrating both a departure from the department store and a fundamental change in the business model. Power centers are organized with the autonomous big box retailers occupying the edges of a centralized parking area. “Smaller retailers are left to ban together in the form of strip malls,”⁵⁸ but are usually limited to specialty stores and high-end brands. Power

Primary Trade Area:

15 – 25 kilometers

Square Footage of Retail Space:

Between 200,000 and 600,000 – sq ft

Area of Site:

Around 10 – 50 acres

Types of Retailers:

Mainly large anchor tenants including category killers, warehouse clubs & super department stores with a limit of amount of small specialty retailers

⁵⁸ Anthony Blumfelt “Worlds Away and the World Next Door” *Worlds Away and the World Next Door* Web <http://designwalk.com/orig/worlds-away-the-world-next-door/>

centers often feature more aesthetically interesting spaces than individual big box stores, aligning with the outlet centers goal of becoming a destination, however, they are more conveniently located in suburban developments, instead of in-between cities, where the length of the average visit is far less.

Since the early 2000s power centers have been one of the most favored types of commercial architecture to build in suburbia.⁶⁰ The biggest shift from the traditional pedestrian malls to the power center is the amount of floor space devoted to the anchor stores. Where a regional or superregional mall would have 50 – 70 % of its gross floor area devoted to the anchors, the power center has between 75 – 90 %. The densification of these ‘category killers’ makes it extremely difficult for small businesses to take root and turn enough profit to survive. As a result, the small businesses that surround the big box stores often offer service based retail and range from things like dry cleaners and hair salons to dental clinics and doctor’s offices.

Lifestyle Centers

The term ‘lifestyle center’ is heavily accredited to Poag & McEwen, a developer in Memphis, Tennessee, who coined the name in the late 1980s.⁶³ The lifestyle center model caught on as a popular development strategy in the early 2000s. Today, lifestyle centers can be found mainly near affluent suburbs and are characterized by high-end boutiques and luxury goods.⁶⁴ The lifestyle presents a pleasant atmosphere by aligning the ‘branding’ of the mall with the luxury goods that are carried in the stores.

On a more practical level, the lifestyle center is an open air pedestrian mall that relies on small scale retailers, wealthy customers and, more often than not, does not include a department store or major anchor. Much of the interest generated in lifestyle centers recently has been linked to a boom in the luxury goods sector. Howard Davidowitz, president of a New York-based retail consultancy and investment banking firm, has been quoted as saying, “The growth of lifestyle centers is absolutely tied to the strong performance of the luxury sector...Lifestyle centers are a means to that end.”⁶⁵ Moreover, the growth in popularity of lifestyle centers

⁶⁰ Kavanag

⁶¹ Andrew Blum, ‘The Latest Incarnation of the Shopping Mall’, *Slate Magazine*, 6 Apr. 2005. Web. 06 Feb. 2011.
<http://www.slate.com/id/2116246>

⁶² Parja Bhatnagar, ‘Call It a “Lifestyle Center,” Not a “Mall”’, Jan. 17, 2005. *Business Financial Personal Finance News - CNNMoney.com*. 11 Jan. 2005. Web. 06 Feb. 2011.

http://money.cnn.com/2005/01/11/news/fortune/00/retail_lifestylecenter/

⁶³ Bhatnagar

International Council of Shopping Centers Lifestyle Center

Most often located near affluent residential neighborhoods, the centers caters to the retail needs and lifestyle pursuits of consumers in a trading area. It has an open-air configuration and typically includes at least 50,000 square feet of retail space occupied by upscale national chain specialty stores. Other elements help make the lifestyle center serve as a multipurpose leisure-time destination including restaurants, entertainment and design ambience and amenities such as fountains, waterfalls and furniture that are conducive to casual browsing. These centers may or may not be anchored by one or more conventional or fashion specialty department stores. These centers range between 150,000 and 200,000 square feet of gross leasable area encompassing 10 to 40 acres and the primary trade area is 8 – 12 miles

has practical grounding. The increasing cost of energy has made the enclosed mall progressively more impractical. Also, the smaller format and clustered arrangement with internalized streets allows for on-street parking spaces next to each store, with larger lots to handle longer visits.

The lifestyle center goes beyond the role of a shopping center and attempts to become a destination that is in tune with the lifestyle of its clientele. Like outlet malls for luxury goods, lifestyle centers treat shopping as a recreational activity and invite people to stay for extended visits. Consolidation of various retailers into powerful luxury brands demanded a shopping environment that reflected the quality and expense of the products.⁶⁶ Michael Baker, director of research for the ICSC, says, “design ambience is critical; the centers often feature fountains and other landscaping elements that collectively recreate a village square, marketplace or Main Street atmosphere.”⁶⁷

With any ‘new’ type of shopping center model it is difficult to define its boundaries. In the case of the ‘lifestyle center,’ boundaries have been blurred between the strictly retail centers and those incorporating a mixed-use of residential, commercial and office space. Many suburban commercial centers that were built before the term was coined are considered lifestyle centers, with the first often being considered Country Club Plaza.⁶⁸ There is an ongoing debate over the concrete definition of ‘lifestyle center.’ Some developers want to align themselves with the terminology, while others like Yaromir Steiner, owner of Easton Town Center in Columbus, Ohio, wish to avoid it all together. Easton Town Center has been recognized as incorporating lifestyle center elements, but as Steiner says, “What I call a lifestyle center is a non-anchored strip center, but with mall tenants. So when I look at Easton, with its large department stores and a cinema, that doesn’t make much sense.”⁶⁹ Although the definition remains loose, the lifestyle center has been created out of consolidation of national brands and a desire to create shopping destinations.

⁶⁶ Pam Danziger, “Retail Is Undergoing Dramatic Consolidation,” *Unity Marketing: Consumer Insights for Competitive Advantage*, 15 Mar. 2006. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.

⁶⁷ <http://www.unitymarketingonline.com/cms/shopping/retail/shopping-pr-overview.php>

⁶⁸ Michael Baker, “SCC: Shopping Centers Today Online,” ICSC: International Council of Shopping Centers, Apr. 2007. Web. 07 Mar. 2011. <http://www.icsc.org/erh/sc/sct/sct0407/page59.php>

⁶⁹ ICSC, “Lifestyle Centers Abound,” *USA TODAY.com*, USA TODAY.com, 31 Jan. 2007. Web. 07 Mar. 2011.

⁷⁰ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/nation/2007/01/31/lifestyle-master-plan>

⁷¹ Hazel

www.fundinguniverse.com

The Kroger Co. Company History
FundingUniverse.com
http://www.fundinguniverse.com/companies-histories/the-kroger-co-company-history.html

Big box is a very general term that describes, in my opinion, a large group of retailers that all share a basic scheme of volume sales at low prices. There is often little differentiating what constitutes one type of big box store from another architecturally, but the products they offer vary greatly. The layout can be seen as an extension of distributor owned outlet stores and department stores. The distribution of goods to a wide range of people from a centralized location required increasing larger warehouses. In outlet malls the warehouse and retail format fused, but only to the extent of providing a showroom to display sample items. The big box format allowed the retail area and warehouse to blend together functionally and aesthetically. The origin of the business model is similar to that of department stores; combining traditionally separate businesses in one building using departments. The scope of goods available in big box stores was much more limited, however, often restricted to a single category of products. Both the department store and the big box focus on creating a vast and varied selection of products under one roof, but the evolution of grocery stores into supermarkets aligns more closely with the big box.

In 1901, the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company in Cincinnati, Ohio became the first grocery store to feature a bakery and in 1904, the first to offer butcher services.⁷⁰ The butchers and bakers appreciated a steady pay cheque and customers enjoyed being able to stop in one place to shop for food. The success of the first store was encouraging and by 1929 there were 5,575 stores in the chain.⁷¹ The practice of buying up the competition allowed Kroger to expand its market share into new places quickly, but the buildings were still modest in size and considered grocery stores. In 1930 Michael Cullen, a southern manager at Kroger, proposed an idea that would change the grocery and retail industry; “a bigger self-service grocery store that would make a profit by selling large quantities of food at low prices that competitors could not beat.”⁷² Cullen failed to convince the executives at Kroger and left to try it himself. On August 4th, 1930 the King Kullen opened in Queens, New York as the first ‘supermarket’ in America.⁷³

The proposition to sell a larger quantity of products demonstrates the economies of scale. By buying larger quantities and varieties of

⁷⁰ The Kroger Co. Company History *fund Funding with Banks, Investors, and Other Funding Sources*
⁷¹ *FundingUniverse.com* Web Jan 2011 <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/companies-histories/the-kroger-co-company-history.html>
⁷² The Kroger Co. Company History
⁷³ The Kroger Co. Company History
⁷⁴ The Kroger Co. Company History

products from manufacturers, the price per product is reduced and the savings are passed on to the customer. People would then come to the supermarket for both low prices and a wide selection of goods. The challenges with this proposal are that a large investment must be made into the inventory, particularly with the short shelf life of many foods, and a large customer base is needed to sustain sales projections. Kroger's resistance to the idea was well founded, even though Cullen was able to overcome these challenges.

The King Kullen supermarket model remained the standard for more than thirty years but things were to change yet again in 1962. It is heavily debated who was the first to open a store with a supermarket and department store in one and two almost synonymous terms were born to describe the new model: supercenter and hypermarket. In the U.S. Meijer opened a store in Grand Rapids, Michigan called Meijer's Thrifty Acres and at almost the same time in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois, France Carrefour opened their hypermarket. Both businesses built on the supermarket model that was established with the supermarket (low prices, a rapid inventory turnover and self-service to reduce expenses) but the hypermarket and supercenter pushed the idea further by combining food and non-food items.

The goods once normally associated with a department store had been integrated into the supermarket to create the hypermarket (supercenter). The department store flourished because it was able to establish trust with customers in a time when bartering was the standard. The clientele that they wished to establish this trust with, however, were affluent people with time and money to spare. An established price system in place and a wider demographic with disposable income have allowed hypermarkets to put low prices and variety at the forefront. Predicting the desired products for a broadening diversity of people becomes increasingly difficult and hypermarkets offer variety not only in the range of products but in colour, style and brands of the same product.

Another variation of hypermarkets is warehouse clubs like Price Club and Costco, which have prospered in suburban locations and further reduce prices by charging a small membership fee. The fee encouraged loyalty to the store and could easily be earned back in saving if enough purchases were made. Price Club is credited with being the first retailer to embrace a warehouse's aesthetic and location, opening the doors in 1976 to its first store in San Diego. The stores model was to "operate warehouse stores located in the city outskirts, where buildings and real estate property are priced lower. Consumer products are bought directly from the manufacturers and delivered straight to these warehouse stores,

where they are sold by the bulk at cheaper prices than that in department stores.”⁷⁴ In 1978 Price Club opened its second store in Phoenix, Arizona and eventually became the leading name in the warehouse format. The tall steel shelves, high ceilings, cheap land and a general warehouse character further promoted the idea of obtaining the lowest possible price. Tensions amongst the company’s board members led to executive vice president Jim Sinegal leaving Price Club to found Costco Wholesale Corporation in 1983.⁷⁵ In the same year Sam’s Club was also formed by Wal-Mart creator Sam Walton. Price Club and Costco soon became fierce competitors and eventually they entered into a partial merger in 1993, spurred by large losses by both companies, to become PriceCostco Inc. The merger was short-lived and in 1994 the companies split again becoming Price Enterprises and Costco Wholesale. At the time of writing, Costco and Sam’s Club are the largest grossing stores in the discount warehouse club model.

The preferred site of big box retailers is generally at the major intersection of a new suburban community, capturing the customers in the residential community and travelling on the road. Although this is the most common site, big box stores have also been built in urban and rural locations and tend to follow market demand. The closest competition in these areas are often far from the development and the smaller ones nearby cannot compete with the big box. Grouping together to form a power center allows individual ‘category killer,’ stores based around one product type like home improvement and electronics, to aggregate what were originally parts of the department store back on the same site and increase customer traffic. Smaller strip centers link the big boxes, keeping the walk between anchors interesting, and the strip centers feed off the big box customers.

If and when anchor tenants leave power center developments, there is little left and the small retailers are unable to draw in enough customers to remain viable. Accordingly there are only a few options for the mall and its owner: redevelop the property; sell the property to another developer or the city; or landbank the property until it is profitable to sell. Landbanking is a common choice, but innovative reuses have also been found for these ‘dead malls’ and often they are repurposed by the community, building strong social bonds amongst its users.

⁷⁴ History Costco Wholesale "History of Price Club Company Model - Histories of Notable Companies, Web. In 2011. <http://www.historyofcorporates.com/companies-by-industry/retail/costco-wholesale/>. [31 Dec 2011]

⁷⁵ History Costco Wholesale "

The lifestyle center generally avoids the problem of an anchor store altogether and in the opinion of many developers is defined by its separation from big box stores. Often, located in prosperous suburban neighborhoods and full of high-end national retailers the lifestyle center is able to survive without a big box store and have returned to creating a destination.

Victor Gruen

The life and works of Victor Gruen are instrumental to understanding the development of suburban commercial architecture following WWII. The man, however, was a paradox. He disliked shopping but spent his life designing retail architecture; he despised automobiles in the landscape but the suburban shopping centers he designed depended on them; he wanted to stop sprawl but the success of his suburban malls only exacerbated the problem.⁶ While malls and shopping centers based on Gruen's designs have become a common feature in both the urban and suburban landscape. Gruen was never happy with the side effects of his ideas—not that he took the blame though.

Victor Gruen, originally Victor Grünbaum, was born in Vienna, Austria and began studying architecture in 1917 at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. He studied under the now recognized 'father of industrial design' and modernist, Peter Behrens. Gruen was forced to give up his studies in 1918 after the death of his father but quickly found work in the architectural and construction firm of Melcher and Steiner. What Gruen lacked in a formal education, he more than gained in practical experience at the firm. Perhaps more importantly "his practical background encouraged him to reject the prevalent dogmas of modernist architecture and instead embrace the practicalities of completing successful projects in a profession dominated by commercial considerations."⁷ After eight years of working for the firm he emigrated from Vienna to America in fear of the Nazi annexation of 1938.

It is said that Gruen landed in New York City in May of 1939 with only "an architect's degree, eight dollars, and no English." Lucky or determined, however he found as a draftsman for a firm designing an exhibit for the 1939 World's Fair in New York. When work on the exhibit ended, the day after to be precise, Gruen ran into a Viennese acquaintance who owned a series of leather-goods shops in Europe. He was looking for someone to design a new store for Fifth Avenue in New York and Gruen was hired on the spot.⁸

Peter Siegist "Mall Maker: Victor Gruen: Architect of an American Dream" *Rev. of Mall Maker: Victor Gruen: Architect of an American Dream* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004

Paul Edwards "Remigrating the Shopping Mall: European Invention of the 'American' Consumer Space" *British Association for American Studies*, 2005. Web. 3 Dec. 2010.

http://www.neas.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137:issue 7 spring 2005 article 1&catid=15

Siegist

The Lederer de Paris leather-goods store designed by Gruen was markedly different from the other stores on Fifth Avenue. Gruen introduced recessed arcades, lined by large glass display windows and theatrical lighting, into his modernist store and shoppers loved it. A slew of awards and commissions followed in the wake of the success that Gruen had by introducing the architectural techniques that he had learned in Vienna. He played games with the customers and created inset entrances with display cases to get people into the store before they even opened the door. He challenged the traditional notions of how goods are displayed and pushed retailers to be experimental. Never one to be shy about his success, he took every opportunity to promote his designs and ideas. First and foremost he argued vehemently about the merits of shopping becoming a national pastime. Especially for someone who disliked shopping, he felt that shoppers wanted more than just merchandise.

Only two years after arriving in New York and building a career as a retail architect, Gruen moved to California with his wife and architectural partner Elise Krummeck. Gruen set up an office in Beverly Hills and built upon his previous successes in New York to gain bigger and bigger commissions. Eventually Gruen moved into department store design. His biggest commission came from California clothing chain Grayson's: the design of 11 stores between 1940 and 1946. Grayson's was not a company used to taking risks and set limits on Gruen's experimentation. With the development of suburban strips, department stores saw a valuable market to tap into and would often locate their stores in defined commercial areas to reduce risk. The department stores that Gruen designed were not limited to the suburbs and often he would play with new ideas by transposing elements between the urban and suburban locations. "As Gruen and Krummeck prepared stores for both locations—moving from downtown to the strip back to downtown—their designs for the two became nearly indistinguishable."⁹ The aesthetic that Gruen and Krummeck developed for these stores was striking with "bright fluorescent lights on the exteriors, sweeping roof lines, tall display windows, and fanciful signage."¹⁰ Every component, material and design move was purely directed at attracting people to come to the store from their cars.

As commercial and retail architects were often seen to be below the stature of other architects, Gruen felt it was paramount to branch out beyond store designs. With the increase in traffic and the sporadic build out of suburban malls, Gruen found his architectural niche in the master planning of retail areas. Although he had trouble

⁹ Hardwick, 65.

¹⁰ Siegrist

getting the stores to take part in his risky planning ideas, he was given the chance to voice his aspirations in 1943 when *Architectural Forum* propositioned him to design a shopping center for their post-WWII ‘city of tomorrow’ in Syracuse, New York.

In the early 1940s, *Architectural Forum* began postulating about post-WWII planning in America. To encapsulate what the world after the war might hold, they funded and publicized a project to reimagine Syracuse as a hypothetical city of tomorrow. The project became known as 194X—the ‘X’ denoting the unknown end of the war. The *Architectural Forum* editors developed a master plan with “district zones for diverse uses,”¹¹ a new street order and an 11 block downtown closed to vehicular traffic. Nationally respected architects, including Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Willam Lescaze, and Charles Eames, were then commissioned to design the different components of the city. Not surprisingly, Gruen was hired to design the shopping center.

“The editors instructed the architects not to experiment with construction methods or the building’s function. Instead they should concentrate on design and style.”¹² Beyond this there were few guidelines stipulating the design of buildings, other than it should be generic enough to work in other cities. Not even the site for the shopping center was given, but Gruen and Krummeck saw this as an advantage and conveniently placed their structure at the intersection of two major streets within a grid. Through a series of letters the editors instructed Gruen to limit the scope to a “small neighborhood shopping center rather than a suburban center” and the program was restricted to small shops, a service station, a small movie theater and a corner drugstore.¹³ Gruen took issue with the center being only intended to serve a small ‘neighborhood’ area and believed that the shopping center of tomorrow was one that served a larger regional context.

The first proposal that Gruen and Krummeck submitted to *Architectural Forum* went well beyond what the editors had requested and was a retail facility designed to serve the entire city. To avoid the problems of traffic and congestion that commercial strips generated, Gruen and Krummeck devised a plan to have the stores face inward towards a plaza that featured “a garden restaurant, milk-bars, a music stand, and other recreational facilities.”¹⁴ The center was to be “a place for Americans to do more than shop.”¹⁵

¹¹ Stegnsel
¹² Hardwick, 73
¹³ Hardwick, 79
¹⁴ Hardwick, 79
¹⁵ Hardwick, 79

To push the potential of what a shopping center could offer, Gruen divided the functions into retail and communal. The retail portion included: two markets, eight clothing stores, two drug stores, a cafeteria, a bar, a department store, a movie theater and service station.¹⁶ For the communal aspects of the plan Gruen let his imagination run wild and included: a nursery school, a post office, a library, stables for ponies, a gameroom, a theater, a clubhouse, an auditorium, an exhibition hall, an information booth, restrooms and announcement boards. Gruen and Krummeck wanted the shopping center to be much more than just retail establishments and predicted that it would serve “as the center of cultural activities and recreation” and become “the one important meeting place of the community.”¹⁷ It resulted in a proposal that didn’t even mention style, colour or materials.

Gruen and Krummeck’s first proposal went well beyond what Howard Meyer, *Architectural Forum*’s publisher, was looking for. He wanted something that could be built as soon as the war ended and specifically not some “stratospheric approach to planning, construction and equipment.”¹⁸ Moreover, he wanted the shopping center to be a neighborhood facility serving about 1,500 families that was accessible to pedestrians living near the center—a far stretch from the proposal that Gruen and Krummeck had just submitted.

Not wanting to lose the commission and unwillingly to give into the definition of shopping center that Meyer had, Gruen set a letter into associate editor George Nelson defending the need for a shopping center to serve the city, while acknowledging that a neighborhood center should exist in tandem with the regional center. Gruen maintained, however, that the neighborhood shopping center should serve a population of about twenty to twenty-five thousand people; not even close to the 1,500 families that Meyer envisioned.

The second proposal featured an enclosed pedestrian corridor with the stores opening onto it. This was the first time that Gruen proposed connecting the individual stores under one roof. Upon receiving the proposal, George Nelson wasted no time in informing the pair that he hated it. The enclosure of the building was a sticking point for Nelson and he complained that by enclosing the center it lost its best quality—the court yard. Furthermore, the expense of enclosing the building was seen as frivolous and Nelson suggested that “a landscaped plaza idea might be less expensive and much more agreeable with the present scheme.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Hadwick, 80

¹⁷ Hadwick, 80

¹⁸ Hadwick, 80

¹⁹ Hadwick, 83

For their final version of a neighborhood shopping center Gruen and Krummeck created featured a conventional U-shaped building surrounding an exterior plaza. “The novel design of many stores under one roof completely vanished.”²⁰ The structure stretched out over a block with parking on either end and featured a covered walkway for pedestrians to window shop comfortably. The final design was much more modest than the other proposals, but they still envisioned the shopping center would grow and planned for another two buildings to be added to complete the courtyard. Convinced of the importance of the communal functions, the final design still featured a library, post office, community room, lounge spaces (for tired shoppers) and a ping-pong table amongst other games and activities.

Although the Syracuse shopping center never garnished Gruen with the work he had hoped for, he stayed vehement about the validity of his ideas. He began travelling the country giving lectures and speeches and writing articles to spread his ideas and boost his career. It was three full years after the *Architectural Forum* project that Gruen was hired by Milliron’s department stores to design a building for the suburban Los Angeles store.

In 1947 Gruen began work on the challenge of creating a department store for Milliron’s with optimal street visibility while still maintaining the necessary parking. For Gruen, placing the parking between the street and the building was not an option. Gruen did not share America’s love affair with the automobile; if it were possible he would have banished parking altogether. To allow the department store to sit tightly against the road and still provide the required parking Gruen came up with the solution of locating parking on the roof. This allowed him to reduce sea of asphalt behind the building—reducing walking distances—and used the platform of the roof to house a restaurant with expansive views of the surrounding area. To reach the roof Gruen dropped two crisscrossing ramps across the façade of the building. When the department store opened it was praised for its innovation.

The face of the retail market changed drastically following the end of WWII. Stores began following their customers to the suburbs and some went as far as closing their flagship downtown locations. To compete with the new suburban alternatives, many of the urban stores underwent massive renovations to update their ‘tired’ façades. “Many intricate, historic facades were covered over with flat panels of metal and glass to mimic the new competitors.”²¹ Cities began to lose their appeal with increased traffic, congestion and crime.

²⁰ Hardwick, 83
²¹ Siegrist

Hudson's department store in Detroit, like many others, saw this as a serious threat to their business.

In 1950 Gruen was hired by Hudson's department store to develop a 20 year decentralization plan to tap into the growing market in the suburbs. After travelling around the outskirts of Detroit and analyzing data about population movements and traffic patterns, Gruen came back to Hudson's with a proposal to build not one shopping center but four. Hudson's, surprised by the recommendation, saw the value in Gruen's plan and agreed with the idea. The first of these four shopping centers was to be called Eastland but despite good press coverage and publicity the project was never realized.

At the same time that Gruen was searching for Hudson's site in Detroit he was hired by a Houston, Texas developer to design a shopping center called Montclair. It was a large project, even by Gruen's standards, and called for over a hundred stores with two department store anchors. Realizing that the common form of commercial centers with a plan of stores clustered around a huge plaza might be undesirable in the hot Texas sun, Gruen proposed a "covered street" to connect the stores. Gruen argued that a covered mall would attract people on even the hottest of days and encourage them to spend hours lingering in the air conditioned interior. Again the design received wide publication and national attention but was never built. To Gruen's benefit, while working on Montclair he became introduced to real estate analyst Larry Smith. Smith taught Gruen how to 'talk-the-talk' of the retail industry—instead of relying on aesthetic arguments. "From that point on, he would rarely fall back on appearance alone to justify a design."²²

Northland

Northland, with its parks and rest areas, its sculpture, its auditorium for the use of civic groups, is generally regarded as a new or revolutionary approach towards shopping centers. It is that; yet essentially it is not new, but rather a re-creation of much earlier schemes. It has its historical antecedents in the Greek agora and in both medieval European and early New England towns, where mercantile functions were woven into the social and cultural fabric of the time – where the city had a true core in which the primacy of the individual was asserted in the form of pedestrian reservations.

-- Victor Gruen, *Dynamic Planning for Retail Areas*, Harvard Business Review (Nov. – Dec. 1954)

²² Sigrist

Although plans for Eastland had been abandoned, Gruen convinced Hudson's to begin construction of a different shopping center. Plans for Northland, which would be the largest shopping center in America, followed and ground was broken "[t]en miles from Hudson's downtown flagship store" in Detroit, Michigan.²³ The project was a massive undertaking, costing about \$25 million to construct, it went beyond anything that had been built before. Gruen used outdoor pedestrian streets, fountains, sculpture, benches and colonnades in an internalized system that was surrounded by parking. The arrangement allowed for people to easily drive to the center and find parking while at the same time enjoy a pedestrian oriented shopping atmosphere. "This was little more than a decade and a half since he stepped off the boat, and when Gruen watched the bulldozers break ground he turned to his partner and said, 'My God but we've got a lot of nerve.'"²⁴

The instant success of Northland, evident by the fact that over 330,000 people visited between the opening in 1954 and spring of 1959, was heavily attributed to Gruen's ability to create a human-scaled and pleasant shopping atmosphere. Providing places to relax and a leisurely environment were not the only things that were hailed as innovative in Gruen's design, however, his inclusion of auditoriums, an infirmary, post office, bank and restaurant were also well received.²⁵ Furthermore, Northland was located in the fastest growing of Detroit's suburbs and only ten miles from the city core. The strategic placement allowed the malls owners to capitalize on the increasing white suburban population.

The most popular design for suburban shopping centers around the time that Northland was planned and built (1951 -1954) was the dumbbell arrangement, with two anchoring department stores connected by strip malls bordering a pedestrian street that was segregated from the parking lot. Gruen's idea for Northland created a more dynamic plan that he referred to as a 'cluster scheme,' but came to be known as a centralized plan because of the large department store in the center.²⁶ His arrangement allowed for more variety in the park-like spaces between the buildings, which were designed in a range of styles and referenced traditional European cities and their street life.

Because the success shopping center like Northland heavily depended on the automobile, Gruen carefully designed the layout of

²³ Hardwick, 124

²⁴ Malcolm Gladwell "The Teraso Jungle" *The New Yorker* (2004)

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/03/15/040315fa_fact1>

²⁵ Hardwick, 127

²⁶ Hardwick, 128

the parking lots to attempt to ease congestion. He feared that if the parking was too difficult to navigate—at 8,344 parking spaces it is easy to imagine forgetting where you parked—it would scare off customers. To allow the parking to be efficient and comfortable as possible Gruen made the parking experience pleasurable by providing 45 degree spaces, extra wide stalls, double lines between the stalls and bright lights overhead. The site of Northland, a break from Gruen’s tradition of using the corner of a major intersection, was between two main roads, allowing for an internal privatized road system.²⁷ The ability to quickly get customers in and out of the parking lot, especially the parking lot of what was America’s largest mall, prevented traffic backups and provided shoppers with a more enjoyable shopping experience.

Southdale

The enclosed shopping mall first appeared in Gruen’s work in his proposal for *Architectural Forum’s* 194X city of tomorrow. Though this project was never intended to be built, it laid the foundation for Gruen’s ideas on regional shopping malls. He furthered his ideas in his design for Montclair’s, but never actually had the chance to realize his dreams of creating an enclosed mall until Southdale: America’s first enclosed mall.

In June of 1952, Dayton’s department store announced its plans to develop 463 acres of land to the southwest of Minneapolis. Gruen’s idea for Southdale went beyond the creation of the enclosed mall and included a master planned community. The mall would serve as the commercial hub of the new community and was to be surrounded by houses, apartments, a park, a medical center, a man-made lake, highways and a school. Dayton’s, moving beyond department stores and into land development, would plan, finance and build the entire suburban community.

Southdale opened its doors to shoppers and the press for the first time in October of 1956. The mall was composed of 72 stores on two floors, 810,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 5,200 parking spaces, ‘a soaring garden court,’ and two full size department stores. The interior also features sculptures, glass mosaics, multiple fountains, exotic birds and tropical plants—the birds and plants epitomized the climatic control of the enclosed mall. At a cost of about \$20 million dollars, “Southdale created an entirely new retail environment, a new commercial palace for suburbanites.”²⁸

Gruen's idea to stop sprawl by centralizing commercial activity. For one, the creation of the mall raises the value of the surrounding land. The higher valued land demands more intensive development than residential uses it is slated for. Developers saw this advantage and instead of stopping speculative development, the mall only intensified the problems.

The Rise and Fall of Detroit

In 1968 Gruen returned to Detroit to attend the opening of Westland, Hudson's third shopping center. While there he visited the site of Northland and was appalled by the sprawl that the shopping center had spawned. Gruen's gift to the suburbs had only intensified the problems he promised it would solve. Never one to take the blame, Gruen exonerated himself saying, "at the time Northland was created nobody in the United States had the slightest inkling that such formidable, dynamic growth could take place around a shopping center."³²

For Gruen, the problem with the development patterns that he helped to generate was that they never took the form he prescribed. He blamed the developers for taking only the profitable parts of his ideas and proliferating them ad nauseam, only to forget how important the other amenities in the master plan were in the creation of a community. In 1978 he delivered a speech in London lambasting American developers for perverting his ideas and famously said, "I refuse to pay alimony to those development bastards."³³ Soon after he moved back to Vienna to live out his days only to be greeted by a new enclosed shopping center that was accredited with destroying small businesses. As Malcolm Gladwell puts it, "It was crushing the life of his city. He was devastated. Victor Gruen invented the shopping mall in order to make America more like Vienna. He ended up making Vienna more like America."³⁴

Today enclosed malls are so common in the North American landscape that it is hard to imagine that they have only existed as a building type for just over 50 years. The same steadfast rules of organization that Gruen pioneered in his malls can still be seen; department stores as anchor tenants and a wide variety of other uses between, with easy access to parking and highways. Strangely, even with the unprecedented success of Gruen's mall designs we do not place much historical value on his original creations. Southdale and Northland aren't protected with any kind of historical landmark

³² Harwick 167

³³ Gladwell

³⁴ Gladwell

status nor are there busts or statues of Gruen in the halls of contemporary malls. Perhaps it is because “Victor Gruen didn’t design a building; he designed an archetype.”³⁵

The impact that Gruen’s designs had on the history of commercial architecture are reason enough to discuss his work, but there are also valuable lessons in the way he conducted business. Gruen was able to convince developers that his designs would be not only beautiful but profitable. The design for the ‘Garden Court of Perpetual Spring’ in Southdale was approved because Gruen convinced Dayton’s that it would keep people in the mall longer and increase sales. Moreover, the enclosing of the mall, at great expense to the developer, promised to extend the number of ‘shopping days,’ again leading to increased sales. By framing his design decisions in terms of profit he was able to speak to the concerns of the developer and push his design aspirations.

³⁵ Gladwell.

Don Mills

The most influential development in 20th century Canada is Don Mills in the North York District of Toronto. As John Sewell notes in his book *The Shape of the City*, “the style it established has become so pervasive that people assume that it is the only way residential communities can be built.”⁶ This combined with fiscal arrangements that Don Mills established has fueled developers wishing to repeat its economic success.

In 1947 E.P. Taylor began to buy large amounts of farmland north and east of Toronto. Taylor, one of Canada’s most successful businessmen at the time, made his money by conglomerating a series of small beer breweries into the O’Keefe Breweries. It was assumed that Taylor was buying land to build a new factory with worker housing. By 1952 the land totaled 2063 acres and it became obvious that Taylor had something much bigger in mind.⁷

While this was not Taylor’s first foray into real estate, it was a big jump from his previous residential development experience. In the early 1940s Taylor built Wrentham Estates York Mills, Toronto to prevent it from being subdivided into small 25-foot lots, which he believed would devalue his nearby estate. He serviced the land and subdivided it into large lots. The serviced lots were sold for the high price of \$3,200 per lot to a builder who then put up house and sold the properties for a profit. Taylor realized he could make more money if “controls were established throughout the process of servicing, subdividing, building, and selling, so that the profits at each stage could flow into one pocket rather than two or three.”⁸ With an idea of how to increase profits in real estate development and a housing shortage following WWII, Taylor decided to build a new town and in it a commercial center.

Many new towns were being built following WWII when Taylor and Carl Fraser, Taylor’s executive assistant, considered the idea. In Britain several new towns had been planned by the government and Levittown was well underway in the U.S. There are many influential precedents and people that influenced the plan for Don Mills. Some credit John Layng, an architect that worked on Taylor’s earlier York Mills Plaza (the first regional shopping center in Canada), while others believe it is Macklin Hancock, a landscape architecture

⁶ John Sewell *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993: 80

⁷ Sewell, 81

⁸ James Corns and Evelyn Ross (eds) *The Second City Book: Studies of Labor and Strife in Canada* Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1977: 18

student who was Carl Fraser's son-in-law. Others credit Humphrey Carver's book *Houses for Canadians* which proposed how a community should be laid out and promoted private development over government sponsorship. While the planning at Don Mills likely reflects a number of influences, it was E.P. Taylor's land and money.

By 1951 Taylor had gathered enough information and ideas to present his plans to the North York Council. Taylor met objection for his residential development from North York's planning consultant Eugene Faludi. Faludi felt that like the British New Towns an industrial component should be added to the project to "balance the assessment and tax load."⁹ During the redesign process Taylor and his architect/planner Layng had a falling-out. Upon taking the position of chief planner, Hancock promptly hired Toronto architects Douglas Lee, Henry Fliess and James Murray. The group identified principles to inform the planning of Don Mills.

The first, and probably most important of these principles, was the use of neighborhoods. The land was divided into four quadrants, each of which was to be its own neighborhood. While this was not a new model its effectiveness was heavily debated among planners. The "neighborhood unit" model was developed by Clarence Perry in 1910 and widely promoted by American planners Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. It had been explored in their plan for Radburn, New Jersey in 1929. Humphrey Carver saw the neighborhood "as the basic building block of planning: it was on the neighborhood that one could hang all the necessary numbers to determine land use."¹⁰ Carver advocated that population based on a neighborhood unit should be used to determine the number of ancillary uses available. He believed that neighborhoods of about 250 acres and 20,000 people should have a public school, three acres of play space for children. He also advocated 30 acres of playing fields, retail shops and for every five neighborhoods one high school.¹¹ Carver argued that, "I tried to define which elements of community life should constitute the town centre ... provide a starting point for organizing a full social mix in each new off-spring community, so as to avoid having ghettos of middle class blandness in the suburbs and ghettos of poverty remaining in the central city."¹²

Hancock adopted the idea of the neighborhood and planned Don Mills accordingly. Each of the communities four neighbourhoods received an elementary school, a church and a local store, while a

⁹ Sewell, 81

¹⁰ Sewell, 84

¹¹ Sewell, 85

¹² Sewell, 85

‘central nexus ring’ was planned at the center for regional uses such as community facilities, a high school, a post office, a community and recreational center and a library. Places for people to work were located at the periphery of the site. The ability to live, work and play in Don Mills was vital in its design.

The second principle that Hancock applied to the design of Don Mills was a discontinuous road system. While most of the site on which Don Mills was constructed was flat and the roads easily could have been laid out in a grid. Hancock wanted to give Don Mills a distinct style that was different from the existing neighborhoods of Toronto. Furthermore, the system of short, curvy roads that end in cul-de-sacs and T-intersections proved to be an effective way to deter outsiders from casually driving through the private (seemingly exclusive) streets in Radburn.

Green space, Hancock’s third principle, played heavily into his decision to create the curving streets which could bend to preserve natural elements on the site. Moreover, parks occupied about 20% the development and sidewalks were traded for a pedestrian path between blocks so the lawns could come to the edge of the street.

Hancock’s fourth was the reorientation of the lots. The lots in Don Mills were to be built wider and shallower to allow for what Hancock termed ‘elbow-room.’¹³ Hancock felt that by being able to build a house on a lot broadside would allow for more special depth in the street scape with some houses broadside and some narrow-side. He also argued that the backyards were often in deplorable condition and a burden to land owners.

The fifth principal that Hancock applied to the planning of Don Mills was that of self-sufficiency. To completely mimic a traditional community Hancock included commercial, industrial and institutional uses. Rather than deploying traditional mixed use blocks with commercial/office below and residential above, Hancock felt it paramount to separate the all of the uses. He even went so far as to separate the different types of residential buildings from each other; all this to ensure that Don Mills would not have competing uses that Hancock believed made a mess of the city. When the community did not attract the anticipated number of residents part of the commercial area was converted to residential use.

As the community was built out Don Mills spurred praise. In 1954 *Architectural Forum* pronounced that, “The new town of Don Mills is a planner’s dream come true.”¹⁴ The pairing of Taylor and Hancock proved to be successful, Sewell notes that “While Hancock delivered innovations in land-use planning, it was Taylor’s skills as

¹³ Sewell, 88

¹⁴ Sewell, 93

an entrepreneur and developer that made the plan so very successful.”¹⁵ The success of the plan is evident by its influence: by the 1970s every Canadian city incorporated some of the planning principals Hancock’s advocated in Don Mills.

Taylor’s vision for Don Mills influenced every aspect and the construction of the commercial center followed the principles used to develop the residential areas.

From a description of the community as a whole and the uses included in the neighborhoods we now move to a discussion of the retail component up to the recent redevelopment of the Shops at Don Mills.

Don Mills Centre

The influence that Don Mills exerted on suburban developments extends well beyond its residential component. Hancock’s approach to commercial, communal and ancillary areas is also significant. The approach of building both the residential and commercial areas has been followed by other developers, but not often to the scale of Don Mills. Specialization in either residential or commercial construction has become a normal practice because of the money and expertise it takes to pursue both. By segregating the uses within Don Mills, Hancock effectively laid out a pattern of development that would be mimicked time and time again.

In 1955, only a year after the official inauguration of Don Mills, the first shops in Don Mills Centre opened. The center took the form of a commercial strip mall and included a Dominion Supermarket, a Brewers Retail (which would eventually become The Beer Store), a Kaufflers Drug Store (the first Shopper’s Drug Mart) and about a dozen other retailers. As the population grew within Don Mills, the commercial centre expanded; by 1961 Eaton’s opened its first suburban department store in Don Mills. The introduction of Eaton’s is an important milestone in the development of Don Mills Centre; with a department store the centre effectively graduated from a strip mall to an outdoor pedestrian mall. By 1965 the Dominion Supermarket moved into a new space in the center, allowing Zeller’s to occupy its former location and there were a total of 65 stores. If the speed of its growth and ability to attract big retailers wasn’t proof of its success, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) recognized Don Mills Centre as one of the highest grossing shopping centres in North America – proving its worth against Victor Gruen’s malls to the south.

¹⁵ Sewell, 93.

Between the mid and late 1960 many new programs were added to Don Mills Centre. Within this relatively short period a post office, curling rink, movie theaters, hockey arena, service stations and 15 story office building found their place in Don Mills. The different aspirations of building a village center versus a commercial center can be seen in the incorporation of these amenities. The infrastructure that would be supplied by a municipality today was included in Don Mills to accelerate its evolution into a *place*.

The success of Don Mills did not go unnoticed however and competitors appeared. In 1970 Fairview Mall opened a mere 6km south and the growth of Don Mills Centre leveled off. In 1978 Don Mills Center responded with a major renovation to enclose the mall (a full 22 years after Gruen's Southdale opened in 1956). The renovation also enlarged the mall to compete in a regional context, increasing it from 400,000 sq. ft. of retail space to 462,000 sq. ft. to accommodate 120 stores, a food court and a fountain. The enclosed all was well adapted to the Canadian climate and proved successful. In 1986 the underused curling rink was demolished to make way for a 4 story, 74,000 sq. ft. office building while in 1989 another 6 story addition was made incorporating about 10,000 sq. ft. of ground floor retail, 72,000 sq. ft. of office space and 133 parking spaces.

It is interesting to speculate about what Don Mills Centre would be like today had it never seen competition from the Fairview Mall. By the 1990s Fairview Mall was again renovated. This, combined with a recession, proved to be a crippling blow that even another renovation of Don Mills Centre in 1997/1998 couldn't fix. The final straw for the mall, however, came when its anchor store, Eaton's, declared bankruptcy in 2000. Absent of an anchor even the heartier retailers struggled to survive. The latest of a series of redevelopments initiated in 2003 was the first to break from the original dogma of segregated uses. To reinforce the idea of a fresh start and new business model the complex was rebranded: Shops at Don Mills.

The Shops at Don Mills

From its inception Don Mills was to be a community designed at a high standard. Taylor and Hancock knew that making Don Mills into something more than just a place to shop meant investing into the atmosphere. As Sewell notes, "The design and colour controls were intended not to dominate people, but to create a sense of place that people might relate to in the early years. After all, given the choice

of house builders or architects deciding on the design, materials, colours, isn't it reasonable to prefer architects?"¹⁶

With the lack of an anchor tenant, the mall proved to be a difficult form to re-inhabit and the decision was made to raze the old enclosed structure and rebuild from the ground up. The Cadillac Fairview's news release for the opening of the Shops at Don Mills on April 22, 2009 proclaims that the redevelopment "represents a new evolution in retail, showcasing a fresh concept where visitors stroll from stores to restaurants to public spaces in an open-air setting."¹⁷ It is interesting to see that the developer is trumpeting the lifestyle centre as a totally new form of development despite its similarities to the original open design of Don Mills Center. In fact, when the developer first proposed the redevelopment many residents were up-in-arms about the destruction of 'their' beloved mall. When Brian Gallagher, the City's Preservation Co-ordinator, was contacted about giving the mall heritage status he said it would be unlikely as "the new development is actually a closer approximation to the original complex."¹⁸ The real significant change between the redevelopment and the original plans for Don Mills Center is the scale, density and mixing of uses.

The vision that Taylor had for Don Mills went beyond building houses and commercial areas and sought to instill a sense of place. The commercial areas were segregated from the residential areas to denote its regional customer base and provided amenities now associated with municipalities. His idea to provide these facilities took a substantial financial long-term investment that is beyond most developers. Shops at Don Mills reflects many of the values that Taylor had but supplies public amenities to facilitate recreational shopping. To cope with the financial investment the complex has become mixed-use, which was only possible once the population of Don Mills had increased. Mixed-use development allows the developer to densify the site and spread the risk amongst different types of markets. Segregation of uses was one of the ways Taylor used to differentiate Don Mills from the city, but as demographics have changed there are a wider variety of lifestyles desired in the suburbs.

Lorimer and Ross, 21.

¹⁶ 'Shops at Don Mills - Ontario's First Urban Village - Opens Its Doors' *The Cadillac Fairview Corporation Limited* 22 Apr 2009 Web File 2011

<http://www.cadillacfairview.com/Notes/0411IR-CL-EP4W-IND-WebStation.nsl/page/Shops+at+Don+Mills+-+Ontario's+first+urban+village+-+opens+its+doors>

¹⁸ Josu Hurie "Don Mills Centre Redevelopment Status Confirmed" *Spectrum*, 26 Oct 2006 Web Dec 2010

<http://pacing.ca/sites/2006/10/26/don-mills-centre-redevelopment-status-confirmed>

Reston, Virginia

The post WWII housing boom in the United States generated many new subdivisions and commercial centers with a wide range of development methodologies. From Levittown, New York to Columbia, Maryland there is no shortage of examples of large scale developments to study and glean information from, but some of the most interesting ideas for suburban commercial centers emerged in Reston, Virginia. Several of the strategies used in Reston were far enough ahead of their time. Reston was the work of another visionary with deep pockets and, like Don Mills, was not a prototypical way to build in the suburbs. It is the willingness of these developers to take risks that others cannot afford that makes them interesting case studies. Reston also went through unique circumstances that delayed the development of its commercial center until the land surrounding it had been built-out. By the time that construction began the designers were planning a ‘downtown for the suburbs.’⁶

The 7,400 acres of land outside of Washington, D.C. that would eventually become Reston was purchased by Robert E. Simon Jr. in 1961. Disgusted with the post WWII suburban landscape, Simon set out to create Reston as a vision of urbanity in the countryside. To accomplish his goal of building ‘a self-contained city on the edge of an urban metropolis,’⁷ Simon set down 7 rules to guide Reston’s planning and development:

1) That the widest choice of opportunities be made available for the full use of leisure time. This means that the New Town should provide a wide range of recreational and cultural facilities as well as an environment for privacy.

2) That it be possible for anyone to remain in a single neighborhood throughout his life, uprooting being neither inevitable nor always desirable. By providing the fullest range of housing styles and prices—from high rise efficiencies to six-bedroom townhouses and detached houses—housing needs can be met at a variety of income levels, and at different stages of family life. This kind of mixture permits residents to remain rooted in the community—if they so choose—as their particular housing

⁶ Philip Langdon "Reston Town Center - a Downtown for the 21st Century" *New Urban Network* 1 Oct 2006 Web Feb 2011 <<http://www.urbanetwork.com/article/reston-town-center-downtown-21st-century>>

⁷ Call Reston Inc "Reston Historic Trust - Historic Reston" *Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum* 1970 Web Feb 2011 <<http://www.restonmuseum.org/museum/rlht/briefhistory.htm>>

needs change. As a by-product, this also results in the heterogeneity that spells a lively and varied community.

3) That the importance and dignity of each individual be the focal point for all planning, and take precedence over large scale concepts.

4) That people may be able to live and work in the same community.

5) That commercial, cultural and recreational facilities be made available to the residents from the outset of the development-not years later.

6) That beauty-structural and natural-is a necessity of the good life and should be fostered.

7) That Reston be a financial success.⁸

There are several sources credited with inspiring the rules that Simon created. Many believe that Simon was a follower of Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1902)*, which informed the creation of Letchworth in England, while others believe that Reston was based off designs that Leonardo Da Vinci created in 1484 for satellite cities around Milan to control overcrowding that exacerbated the Black Plague. It would be a mistake however, not to mention that Simon's father was involved in financing the garden city of Radburn, New Jersey, which also influenced Don Mills.

To design the master plan for Reston, Simon hired the firm of Whittlesey and Conklin. Whittlesey was a young architect when Radburn was planned but he learned much working for its designers Clarence Stein and Henry Wright and was ready to test his skills. Creating the Reston that Simon envisioned was no small task. He envisioned a totally self-sustaining community with everything from residences, industry and commerce to schools, churches and cultural institutions.

The first challenge for Reston was to convince the local planning authorities of Fairfax County that conventional zoning ordinances would not allow for the Reston Simon wanted. Simon vehemently detested conventional zoning ordinances that segregate land use and even went as far as saying that, "They have helped produce chaos on our highways, monotony in our subdivisions, and ugliness in our shopping centers. They are to blame for the whole neon-lighted wasteland that exists because of the subdivision's separation from

commercial and recreational facilities."⁹ A mixed land use zoning in Simon's mind would not only help to create a more accessible community but would allow for a greater flexibility in planning with the topology of the land. In July 1962 Simon successfully convinced the County Board of Supervisors of the validity of his ideas and obtained *Residential Planned Community* (RPC) zoning for Reston. The new zoning allowed for 'apartments above stores, high-rises with townhouses and the spread of commercial, recreational and communal facilities throughout.' The zoning stipulated that the developer had to provide a master plan to be approved by the county and maintain a maximum density of 13 people per gross residential acre.

The master plan that emerged for Reston took a new approach to the use of green space. Instead of a protective boundary, like the greenbelts of so many other suburbs in both Europe and America, Simon directed Whittlesey and Conklin to think of the people first and strategically place the green space to provide recreation areas for the residents. To ensure recreation space was in walking distance of all residents, the designers created what they termed as high-density sinews; an elaborate path system that wove through the property from north to south and linked the recreation facilities.

The final plan for Reston called for seven village centres with convenience shops and communal facilities to serve the anticipated 10-12,000 residents in each village. Out of the 7,400 acres that comprised Reston, 42% was reserved for public use such as open space, roads, parks, golf courses, walkways, schools and churches, and 1,000 acres was reserved at the heart of the development for an industrial centre. The most impressive piece of the plan, however, was Reston Town Center which was expected to not only serve the predicted 75,000+ population divided among Reston's seven villages but an additional 50,000 people from outside of Reston.

Lake Anne Village

In the spring of 1963, the plans for Lake Anne Village, the first of Reston's villages, was approved by Fairfax County and a loan from Gulf Oil Corporation allowed Simon to put his plans into action. As the pilot project of such an ambitious scheme there was a lot at stake and no expense was spared to make sure Lake Anne Village was successful. Not long after the plans were approved construction began on Lake Anne and the village center.

The construction of Lake Anne was a monumental undertaking. It required 94,000 cubic feet of earth be moved in order to create a

⁹ *Reston Historical Trust & Storefront Museum*

45 foot high by 500 foot long earth dam to impound the water of the Colvin Run. Residential units soon accompanied the new lake but Simon was cautious not to bank purely on mixed use housing. Simultaneously Simon began to lay out the roads for Hunters Woods Village to the south of the development. Hunters Woods Village consisted of standard single family lots and was a backup plan for Simon if the clustered townhouses of Lake Anne Village failed to make headway with the Washington market.

Of the seven villages to eventually occupy Reston, Lake Anne Village was one of the five to include a village centre. Simon directed Whittesley and Conklin to design an ‘unexpandable’ plan so that the village center would not develop into the town center, meaning that it was surrounded with residential properties to limit the commercial growth. The firm was to also design the plaza, fountain and all of the village centre’s buildings while the townhouses were left in the hands of Washington based architect Cloethiel Woodward Smith. The final design for the centre drew inspiration from around the world and incorporated an iconic south-facing crescent of buildings opening onto a plaza in front of Lake Anne that was intended to be reminiscent of the architecture on the Mediterranean Sea in Portofino, Italy.¹⁰

Many master planned communities and town centers were emerging during the time that Lake Anne Village Center was being constructed. Developers were experimenting with new types of commercial centers and trying to appeal to consumers in emerging markets. Often the commercial centers would separate the vehicle and pedestrian traffic, create superblocks to replace the urban grid and group retail uses into shopping malls/centres. The result was centers that lacked ‘pedestrian character, human scale, commercial dynamics and intimate public spaces,’ but featured low prices and variety.¹¹

Simon’s vision for Lake Anne Village Centre avoided many of the trends in commercial centers that were later deemed impractical. One such fad was to include all the communal functions under one roof. Although economic to build, the megastructure concept is both expensive to maintain and inflexible in the long run. Lake Anne Village Center also included many ideas that were eschewed by other developers; one of the most important being the inclusion of residential units above commercial space that made Lake Anne one of the first true ‘live-work’ communities of post WWII. The use of the urban form apartment above retail in the suburbs went against the separation from the city and was a risky idea.

¹⁰ Alan Ward, ed. *Reston Town Center: A Downtown for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Academy, 2006. 31-32

¹¹ Ward, 10

The first resident moved into a townhouse on the shores of Lake Anne on December 9th, 1964 and by February of 1965 the entire commercial space within Lake Anne Village Centre was leased. This included a pharmacy, library, decorator studio, hairstylist, hardware store / garden shop, drycleaners, barbershop, restaurant, art supply store, card and gift shop, supermarket and children's store. Additionally, space in the first office building quickly was leased to a life insurance company, a bank, a lawyer and two dentists.

In 1965 Lake Anne Center officially opened. Above and beyond the commercial leases that were already secured, Lake Anne Center featured "two swimming pools, four tennis courts, a volleyball court, numerous playgrounds, a pedestrian underpass and several miles of pedestrian walkways, the first 18-hole golf course, a [horse] riding center, a fifteen story high-rise, 227 townhouses, 113 apartments, about 100 single family dwellings and the village center itself."¹² A full spectrum of amenities despite the fact the population had only reached 500 people at the opening.

The investment proved to be worth the gamble and not long after the opening of Lake Anne Village Centre the John Hancock Life Insurance Company, who had been following the progress at Reston attentively, announced that they would invest a 'sizeable amount' of permanent financing for the "orderly long-term development of Reston."¹³ More good news was soon to follow at the official dedication of Reston by President Lyndon B. Johnson on May 21, 1966. At the dedication the President gave Reston a ringing endorsement saying, "In this age of ever-mounting urban growth... the birth of a new town such as Reston is a living influence which invigorates our concepts of urban planning... I extend greeting to all of you as you dedicate the City of Reston."¹⁴ The favorable publicity contributed to growth and Reston's population had tripled to 1,500 by the end of 1966.

The ingenuity that Simon employed in the design of Reston, however, proved to be at odds with established norms in land development and incongruences soon began to show. Although Reston's population grew steadily in the first years, the speed of sales and development failed to increase enough to cover costs and Gulf Oil Corporation was forced provide additional funding. At the time, Robert Durham, President of the American Institute of Architects, published an article in the Washington Post that identified the challenges that arise for would-be new town builders. Durham didn't blame the developers of Reston for their

¹² Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum

¹³ Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum

¹⁴ Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum

shortcomings but identified the need for special financing for new towns. Durham felt this special financing was required because “a New Town by its nature must provide for a long lead-time between investments and returns--a time when costly community facilities and amenities, plus payments, taxes and land carrying cost in general will deplete early capital and there will be insufficient income to replace it.”¹⁵

Gulf Oil Corporation wasn't about to relax its financial model for Reston though and decided to expand and accelerate the development. While the design continued to follow the original Reston Master Plan, to make it viable it was determined that 1,000 residential units would have to be sold and built each year. With a recession looming, 1970 proved to be a tough year for the housing market but Reston managed to keep on pace with its development goals. By the end of the year there were over “100 businesses and industries, associations and educational institutions, government agencies and professional services, and shops and stores.”¹⁶

The early development of Reston including its first commercial center at Lake Anne was done in unison with the regional centre of Reston but Reston Town Center evolved in an entirely unique way. The investment that Gulf Oil Corporation made to save Reston in 1967 also meant that it had bought controlling interest in Reston's real estate. Ownership of Reston changed hands a few more times in the ensuing decades and with each change came a new designer. As modernist planning approaches fell out of vogue there was a steady shift back to more traditional urban solutions. The design of Reston Town Center comes out of a different era than Lake Anne Village Center. Additionally, the area around the site of Reston Town Center had been built-out before it got constructed and it was intended to serve a regional population; requiring a different approach to its development.

Reston Town Center

During the 20-odd years that it took to arrive at the final design for Reston Town Center (RTC) thinking about the role and nature of town centers evolved. Reston's planners and architects began asking questions like: how far do you take the making of a plan? And how prescriptive can one be without stifling creativity? These are not easy questions to answer and it is impressive to see how they were approached in the final design of RTC.

¹⁵ Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum

¹⁶ Reston Historic Trust & Storefront Museum

During the construction of Lake Anne Village in the years preceding 1965, Conklin (Whittlesey & Conklin Architects) chose the site for RTC and began work on its master plan. Conklin—who also heavily involved in the design of Lake Anne Village—was faced with a conundrum of how to site RTC in relation to a high-speed toll road (Route 602 now known as Reston Parkway) that bisected the site north-south. Not surprisingly he favored the east side of the road, close to Lake Anne Village, for the pedestrian connections that could be made. While Conklin drew up several ideas for RTC, he favored a plan that separated pedestrian and automobile traffic, a single large building, monumental paved plazas and mainly 8 story buildings. Essentially an enclosed shopping mall, the building would be oriented in a “gesture resembling an open hand to the east, making connections—especially pedestrian connections—to Lake Anne Village.”¹⁷

The original ideas proved to be well beyond economically feasible and Simon referred his designers to new towns in England. The revised schemes they produced, however, were heavily criticized for their conventional blocks and commonplace planning solutions. The new plan also moved entirely to the east of Route 602 and involved a phased built out in which surface parking would be used as place holders for larger buildings. Simon was so positive about the revised plans that in 2004 he was quoted as reminiscing that the plans were “so wonderful, they designed a town center that belongs in Rome and not in Virginia.”¹⁸

The plans were to never be realized. The power shift from Simon to Gulf Oil Corporation allowed Gulf to unseat Simon as the chairman of the board and take over management, planning, construction, and sales in 1967. James Todd was brought on as the executive vice-president of Gulf Reston (which eventually changed again when Gulf was bought out by Mobil) where he was promoted to Chief Operating Officer. Todd wanted to repeat the general guidelines that Simon established for Reston but felt changes were needed in the design and development end of the process. To make the changes Todd brought on Gladstone Associates as economic consultants and David A. Crane and Partners of Philadelphia as the master planners.

The most interesting part of Crane’s design was part of a phased strategy for the development of RTC. Crane envisioned an enclosed, conditioned, multiuse spine 4,500 feet long with public buildings such as a police station, hospital and library attached to it. The phased part of his plan centered around the idea that the spine

¹⁷ Ward 40
¹⁸ Ward, 40

could be extend over time and the surrounding land would ‘densify’ by building high-rise structures on the surface parking lots and/or replacing the lots with parking structures.

In 1978, yet again another master plan for Reston Town Center was scrubbed when Reston Land Corporation (a subsidiary of Mobil Oil Corporation) bought out the remainder of Gulf Reston’s ownership and land, including the site for RTC. Todd remained on as COE but Crane was replaced with RTKL of Boston. The principal of RTKL, George Pillorgè, had worked on the South Lakes Village plan for Reston and was also the project director for the ‘New Communities Project’ at Harvard University. Not surprisingly, some of the ideas formed in the project found their way into the design of RTC.

In the four proposals that RTKL put together, Reston Town Center was reoriented east-west and placing emphasis on restoring primary connections with Reston Parkway (Route 602). Moreover, a traditional grid layout of streets began to emerge to break down the site into individual parcels. The actual street plan that was built in the 1990s strongly reflects the grid layout in these plans but in a scaled down version; the original blocks were much larger. Although much of what was in these original plans is not reflected in the final construction, two key elements remained: a central ‘main street’ (now Market Street) that runs east-west and a green buffer along Reston Parkway.

After getting the opinion of the Urban Land Institute, RTKL went back to work and, between 1984 and 1986, modified their master plan. Notably Fountain Square, an urban space framed by office buildings, retail businesses and a hotel, was introduced; and office and residential uses complemented by surface and structured parking were integrated into the town center. Furthermore, the gridded street pattern was refined and “RTKL’s 1986 plan featured a definite street grid and block pattern, a distinctly American commercial form descended from colonial times.”¹⁹

The importance of returning to a gridded street pattern should not be underestimated. Creating a flexible framework was a markedly different strategy from the ‘unexpandable’ plan used at Lake Anne Village Center and represented a clear departure from the modernist planning principles of the 1960s and 70s. For Robert Gladstone, a Washington based real estate developer who advised Simon as an economic consultant in the 1960s, the idea of a framework was more than just a flexible layout; it was about using “key infrastructure elements to convey image and identity.”²⁰

¹ Wad 15
² Wad 48

Moreover, Gladstone believed that it was necessary to allow for architectural individuality within the framework by decreasing the scale of projects to individual lots and buildings. Gladstone pitched these ideas to the Reston Land Corporation in a bid to partner with the development. Though he was unsuccessful in the partnership, he was instrumental in a shift in thinking in Reston by embedding the idea that “an effective urban design plan could help create value.”²¹

By 1986 the success of Reston’s large-scale residential developments was obvious. With 46,500 residents, a low vacancy rate and almost seven million square feet of commercial space, Reston was booming. That said, the design of Reston Town Center presented novel challenges to the Reston Land Corporation. Having never built anything at a significant urban density the ULI recommended that the developers partner with a firm “well-versed large urban projects and multiple uses.”²² Kim Himmel/MKDG (Miller Klutznick Davis Gray) of Chicago were hired on as design consultants based on their experience with projects such as Boston’s Copley Place and Chicago’s Water Tower Place. However, neither of these designs was to be the basis of Reston; the model for Reston would be their City Center project in Denver that “covered four blocks of high-rise offices and a hotel on the city’s street oriented downtown.”²³

To pick an architect for the first 20 acre portion of the development, an architectural competition was staged in which participants were asked to create a “memorable, vital, urban place.” Several notable firms participated in the competition but RTKL proved—perhaps not surprisingly since their ongoing involvement with the plan—to be the most in tune with the developer’s ideas for a flexible and phaseable design. Long gone were the ‘mega-buildings’ envisioned by Whittlesey and Conklin and *Architecture* magazine even went as far as to criticize the ambitious design submitted by Skidmore Owings and Merrill saying, “We have had enough of the almost totalitarian designs a la Le Corbusier. We need something more intimate than that.”²⁴

The key element to RTKL’s plan was Fountain Square, a central plaza framed with buildings and arcades. When landscape architects Sasaki Associates joined the design team in 1988, the square became much more refined and became vital to the plan. Sasaki was concerned that if Fountain Square were too large it would appear empty and if too small it wouldn’t support big events. Portraying the

²¹ Ward, 48

²² Ward, 49.

²³ Ward, 49

²⁴ Ward, 52

right atmosphere was crucial and if it appeared that the streets were empty the urban character would not emerge. The size of streets, distances between buildings and height of buildings congregate pedestrians into central areas and by closing down streets to traffic the space could accommodate large events. Sasaki also used trees as an organizational device to break up the individual spaces along the street, further refining the pedestrian scale.

Parking was also a significant issue for a ‘phaseable’ and flexible design. Where suburban developments privilege parking at each building, RTC created a shared inventory of lots for the businesses. One important thing to note about the parking created in phase one is that it includes not only surface parking but structures as well. At the urging of Himmel, Mobil Reston included parking garages with the first buildings “as a tangible gesture toward downtown densities.”²⁵

Between the master plan created by RTKL, the Phase One design by RTKL (refined by Sasaki Associates) and almost 40 years of work by others, construction began on Reston Town Center. When opened in 1990, it was greeted with critical acclaim and won several awards from the Urban Land Institute and American Association of Architects. After Phase One, Sasaki was given a bigger role in the development of RTC and took the part of town center planner and urban designer.

The strategy for the construction in Phase Two was directed by Mobil Reston’s executive vice-president Thomas J. D’Alessandro IV. To capitalize on the financial investments in Phase One, D’Alessandro focused development in Phase Two on the edges of the town center. The central parcels would appreciate in value as construction continued and eventually require higher density buildings to justify the cost. Again significant changes were required to the master plan and instead of Market Street extending west to a hotel, it extended into a new high-density residential area. The extension seemed like a natural expansion of the downtown and it has often been commented that the idea of extending an open grid into the horizon was the “logical expression of a modern U.S. city.”²⁶

The building scale at Reston continued to increase and by 2002 the 16-story One and 18-story Two Freedom Square were completed, marking the geographic center of Reston. As the towers are visible from the nearby Dulles Toll Road, they also help to signify the life and vitality that are so close by. The multiple building scales and programs made it difficult to communicate RTC as a unified whole. To allow for individual expressions that have an

underlying consistency D'Alesandro worked with Sasaki and Smith Group to develop a series of strategies for the treatment of buildings on Market Street. The resulting guidelines required the alignment of a cornice and a common pallet of materials and colours.

With the continued build out of the urban core through the mid-2000s, Reston has achieved what many believe is a 24-hour environment. The idea of creating a downtown in the suburbs has always been met with opposition. Many think that the population density will never be great enough to create a true downtown. Defining the necessary density for a viable downtown is difficult and subjective but Witold Rybczynski attempted to do so in the *Wharton Real Estate Review*. Rybczynski analyzed the density of two opposing U.S. cities: New York and San Francisco. He found that the compact island of Manhattan had a density of over 80 people per acre while the sprawling San Francisco has just 24 people per acre; downtown being defined as including all residents within a 20 minute walk of the downtown core. In Reston there was predicted to be about 3,500 units with 6,000 people by 2010 for an unbelievable 75 people per acre, just shy of the density of Manhattan. This analysis is useless however without being qualified within context as Rybczynski says, “[A] successful downtown must be more than a neighbourhood, it must support sufficient infrastructure to be a magnet for the surrounding city and region.”²⁷ In the end Rybczynski believed that a total population of around 40,000 people is necessary to create a downtown on a “truly urban scale.”

The development of Reston Town Center into an urban *place* was not an easy task. Simon’s vision, which carried through the numerous different planning stages of Reston was for a unifying scheme that sets the ground rules for future decisions. However, as times changes and different methods and ideas evolved it was also necessary to recognize when something wasn’t working and to change; such as Simon’s original idea for an ‘unexpandable’ plan for Lake Anne Village Center. William Conklin acknowledged this in *American Architecture Now II*, saying, “One unsuccessful aspect about [Lake Anne Village Center] is its inability to expand rapidly and yet remain coherent.... We designed a complete model of a town center...but it doesn’t grow successfully.... Perhaps the problem all cities face is that of growth and change.” Like creating as-built drawings to accompany the original plans, writer Alan Ward constructed a list of six principles that guided the construction of Reston Town Center to juxtapose against the original seven guiding

²⁷ Ward, 23.

principles of Simon. Ward's six principles listed here help to define the driving forces behind its creation:

1) Start with a vision or 'big idea.' The master developer was crucial at Reston Town Center, as were visionaries who had a view of the long-term 'big picture.'

2) Develop a clear framework of streets and public spaces that enables development to respond to the market with flexibility.

3) Have a long-term commitment to the downtown's development and wait for the market to support higher densities and a mix of uses—office, retail, residential, hotel, recreational, and institutional. To build downtown densities may require the staying power and financial resources of very large developers.

4) Leverage real estate value by extending the open-ended grid, which enables later phases to leverage the value of the earlier, established phases.

5) Be conscious of the scale of every street, space, plaza, and park during design. It is crucial to create the right feel. A sense of urban vitality is magnified with a plan that achieves an appropriate scale for the pedestrian, and dissipated when spaces are over-scaled, too open, and underused.

6) Design matters. Have a concern for details, but do not be obsessive. A design too mannered and controlled can begin to look fake and contrived. Draw connections between buildings by making relationships of scale and height, along with design treatments, such as cornice lines, building materials, and colors.²⁸

Reston is far from a prototypical suburban community in both scale and expense. The willingness to take risks that most could not afford generated unique design solutions and challenged the norms. The commercial strategies that emerged between the construction of Lake Anne Village Center and Reston Town Center illustrate the changing attitudes of developers and consumers toward commercial architecture. We have a fleeting relationship with the places we shop, and accounting for the discrepancy between long-term planning and short-term markets requires a flexible framework. Furthermore, phasing allows for periodic changes to the master plan, reflecting new markets and ideas in commercial architecture. The ability of a commercial center to grow and change with its context is fundamental to its long-term success.

²⁸ Ward 187-187

Thesis Defense Images



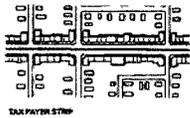
"Certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés."

Marc Augé, *Non-place*

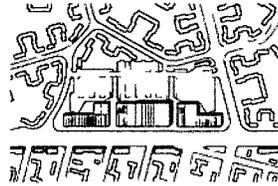
Places consist of three principal things:

- History
- Identity
- Relations

Strip Commercial



TAX PAYOR STRIP



GLEN OAKS

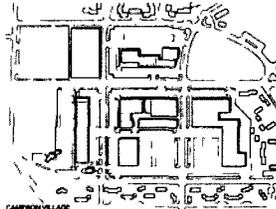


FOSTER VILLAGE

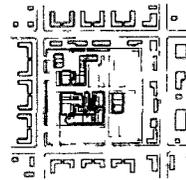
Shopping Villages



FARNHAM MARKET



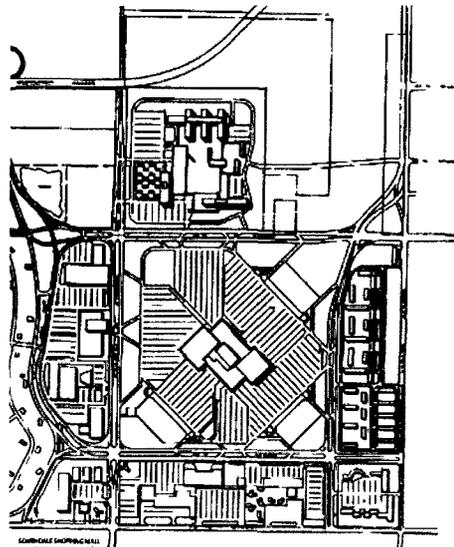
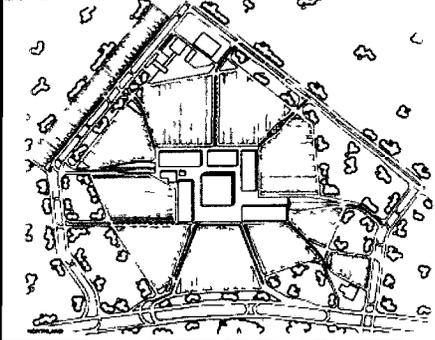
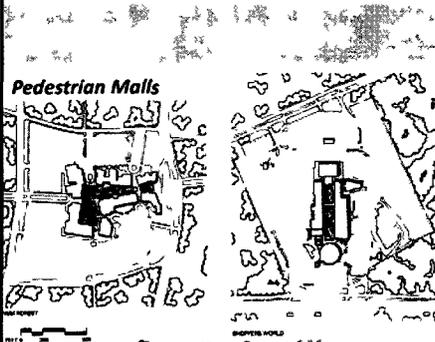
CARDONAGH VILLAGE



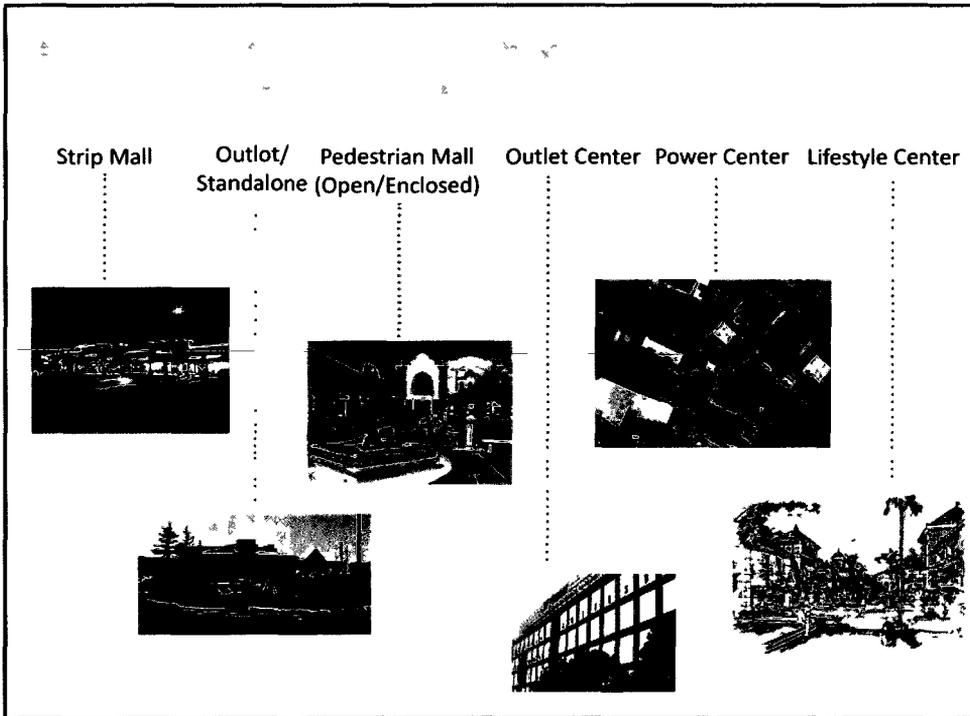
TOWN AND COUNTRY VILLAGE

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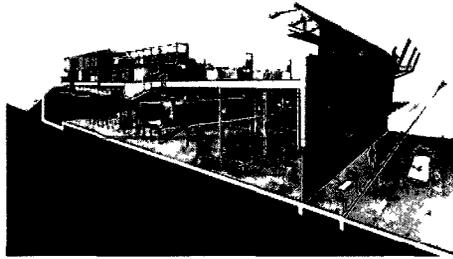
Pedestrian Malls



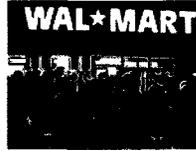
SCARBOROUGH CENTRAL MALL
FROM THE SOUTH EAST CORNER



Big boxes on the hillside.
 Big boxes made of ticky tacky.
 Big boxes on the hillside.
 Big boxes all the same.
 There's a Costco and Home Depot
 And a Walmart and a Best Buy.
 And they're all made out of Dryvit
 And they all look just the same.



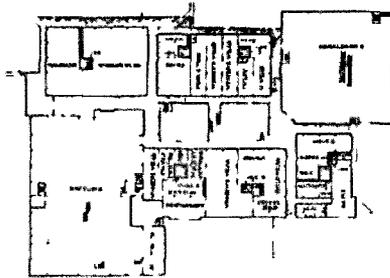
Lewis.Tsurumaki Lewis New Suburbanism





"I believe that it will be necessary to inject in our sprawling metropolitan regions which are basically centerless, new central facilities which slowly will grow into being cores of the regional area."

Retail Space 75,250 m²
Site Area 84 Acres

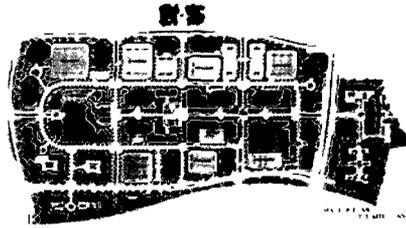
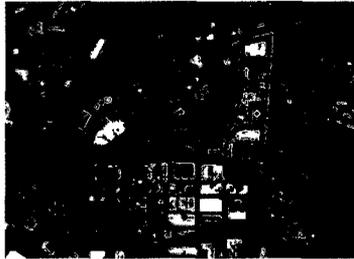


- 1) That the widest choice of opportunities be made available for the full use of leisure time
- 2) That it be possible for anyone to remain in a single neighborhood throughout his life, uprooting being neither inevitable nor always desirable
- 3) That the importance and dignity of each individual be the focal point for all planning, and take precedence over large scale concepts.
- 4) That people may be able to live and work in the same community.
- 5) That commercial, cultural and recreational facilities be made available to the residents from the outset of the development-not years later
- 6) That beauty-structural and natural-is a necessity of the good life and should be fostered
- 7) That Reston be a financial success.

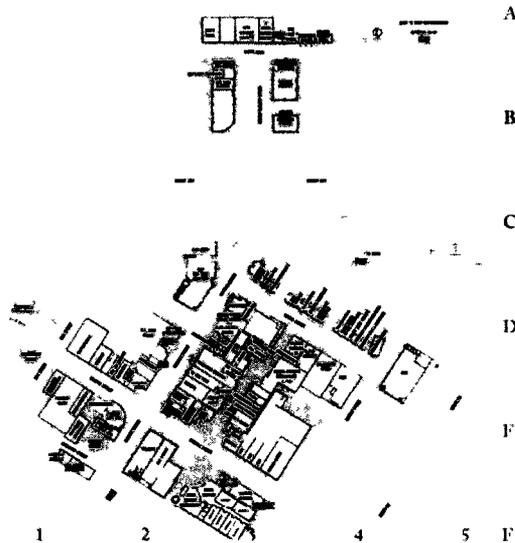
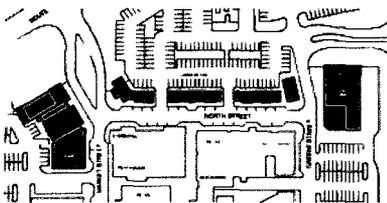


- 1) Excellence in planning, urban design, and architecture will be community hallmarks.
- 2) Planning will provide for environmental sustainability and green technology.
- 3) Development will be phased with infrastructure.
- 4) Reston will continue to offer a mix of urban and suburban life styles.
- 5) The rail corridor will be transformed.
- 6) Reston will become a more vibrant employment center.
- 7) Housing will be provided for all ages and incomes.
- 8) Connectivity and mobility will be strengthened.
- 9) High quality public open space will be required.
- 10) Public participation in planning and zoning will continue to be the community's foundation

Retail Space: 33,445 m²
 Office Space: 195,000 m²
 Residential Units: approx. 300
 Site Area: Approx. 80 Acres

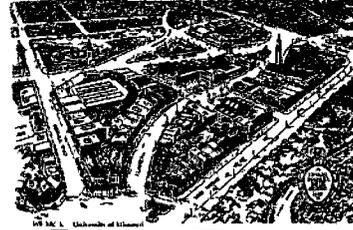


Retail Space: 25,915 m²
 Residential Units: approx. 40
 Site Area: Approx. 40 Acres



Site Area Approx 55 Acres

The Country Club Plaza was built in Kansas City, Kansas by Developer J.C. Nichols. It was the first shopping center designed to accommodate automobile traffic and parking.



Country Club Plaza - J.C. Nichols



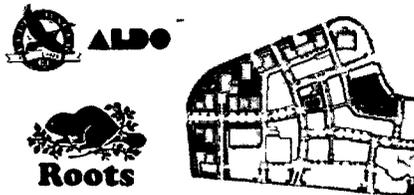
- Design based on traditional main street and Seville, Spain
- Does not incorporate a public square like traditional European village centers
- Incorporates treed boulevards and imported sculptures and fountains from Spain
- Main parking areas behind the commercial buildings with on street parking
 - Transformed into garages over time to accommodate more vehicles

Shops at Don Mills

Retail Space 47,550m²
Site Area Over 30 Acres

"The growth of lifestyle centers is absolutely tied to the strong performance of the luxury sector. Developers want to take shopping centers closer and closer to where the affluent, professional people live. Lifestyle centers are a means to that end. Their location is convenient to consumers because you can drive right up to the shops and park the car."

— Howard Davidowitz, president of Davidowitz & Associates

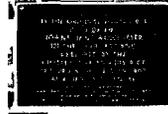




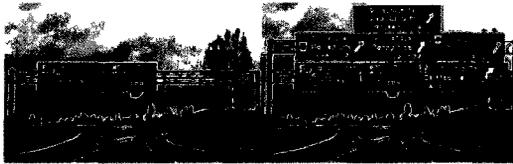
"If a place can be defined as relational historical and concerned with identity then a space which cannot be defined as relational or historical or concerned with identity will be a non place"



Social
CAPITAL

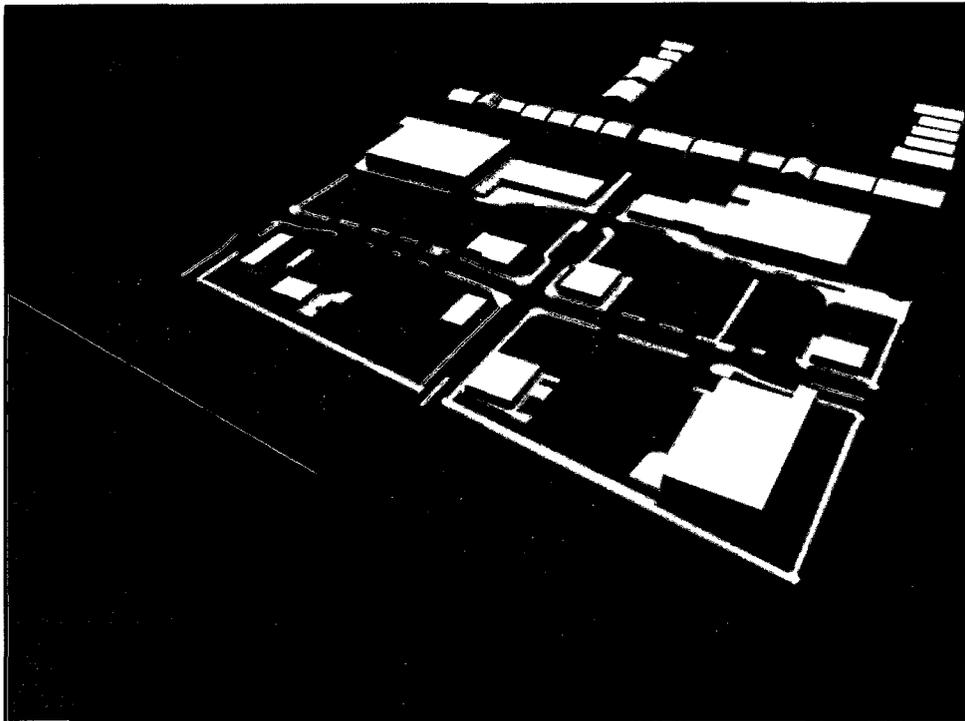
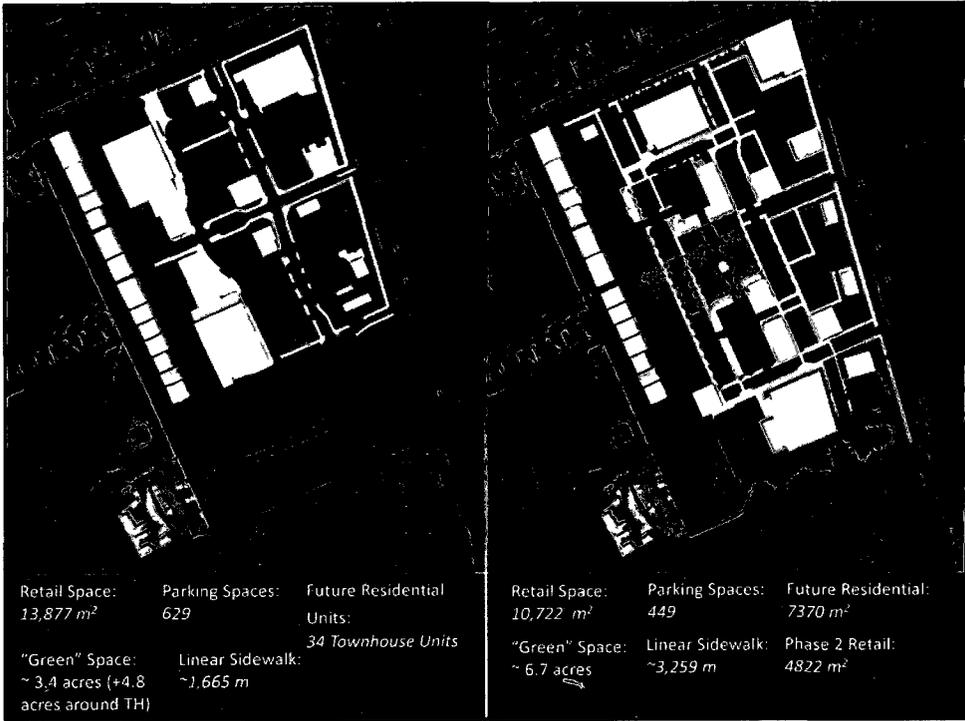


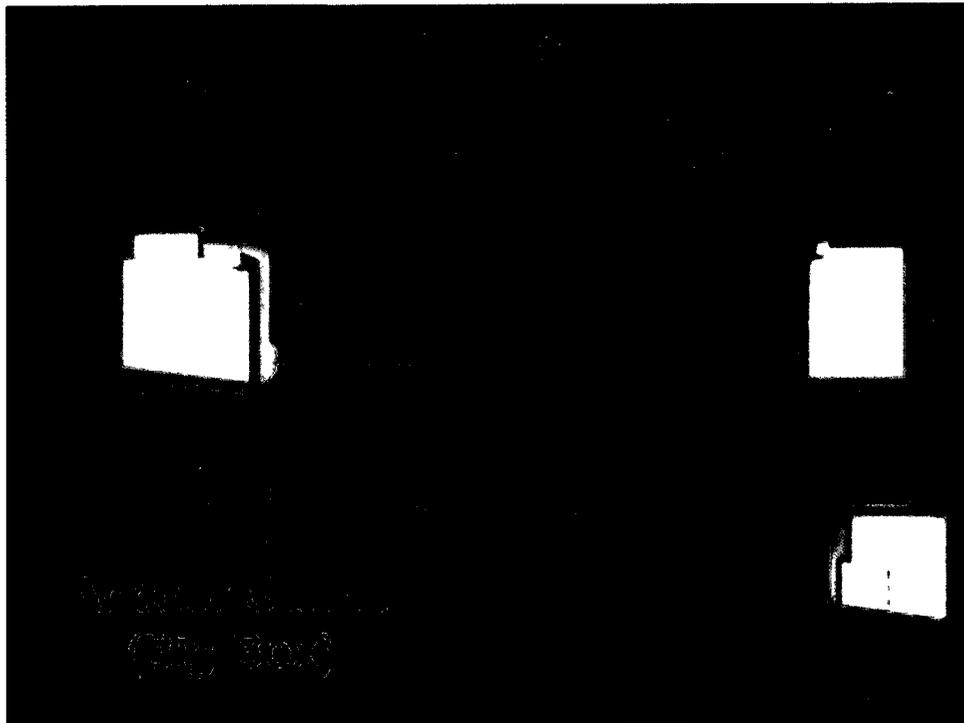
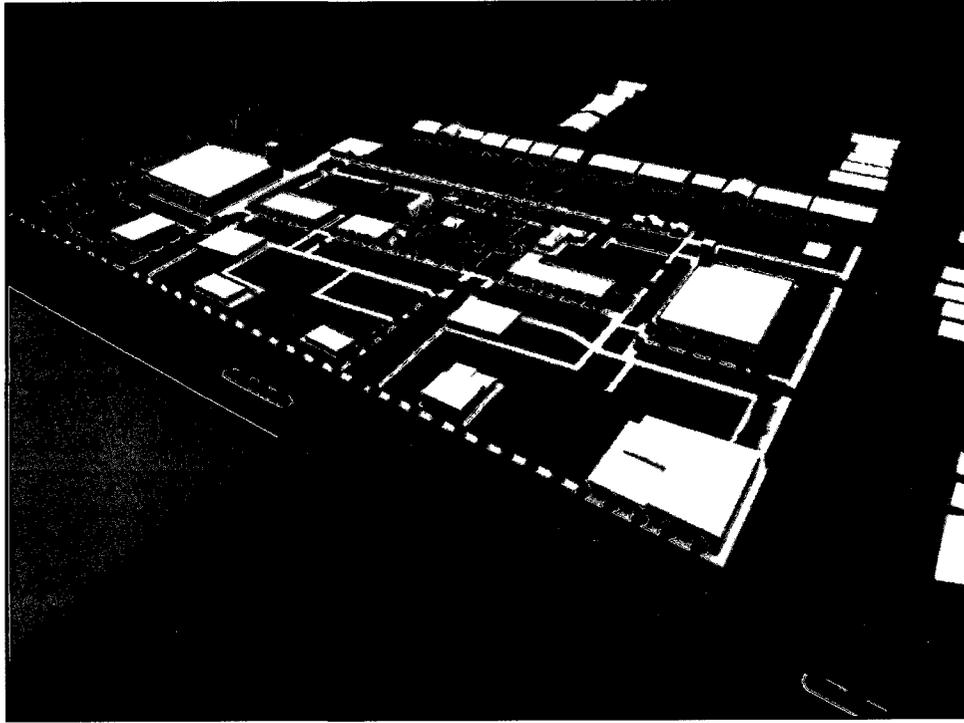
"In contrast to modernity's temporality of linear progress supermodernity is marked by a temporality of the immediate divorced from the past. The postmodern collapse of the grand narratives of history loosens the present from the sense of an unfolding destiny. Instead we live in a perpetual now whose meaning lies only in its immediacy an immediacy that is hyped and accentuated by media events and fashion" Ellen Dunham-Jones

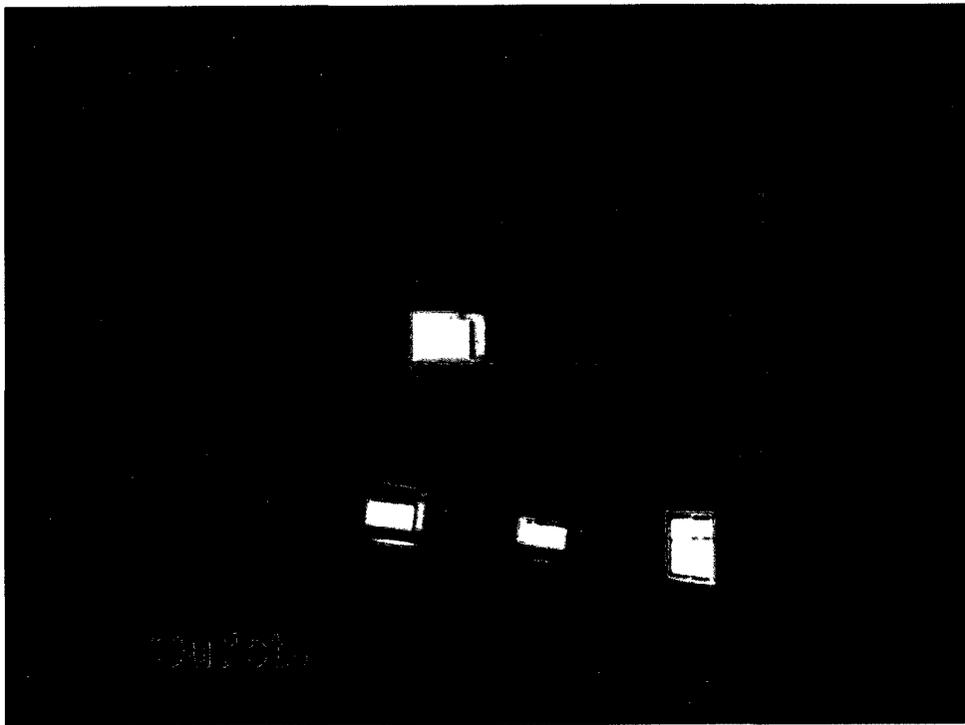
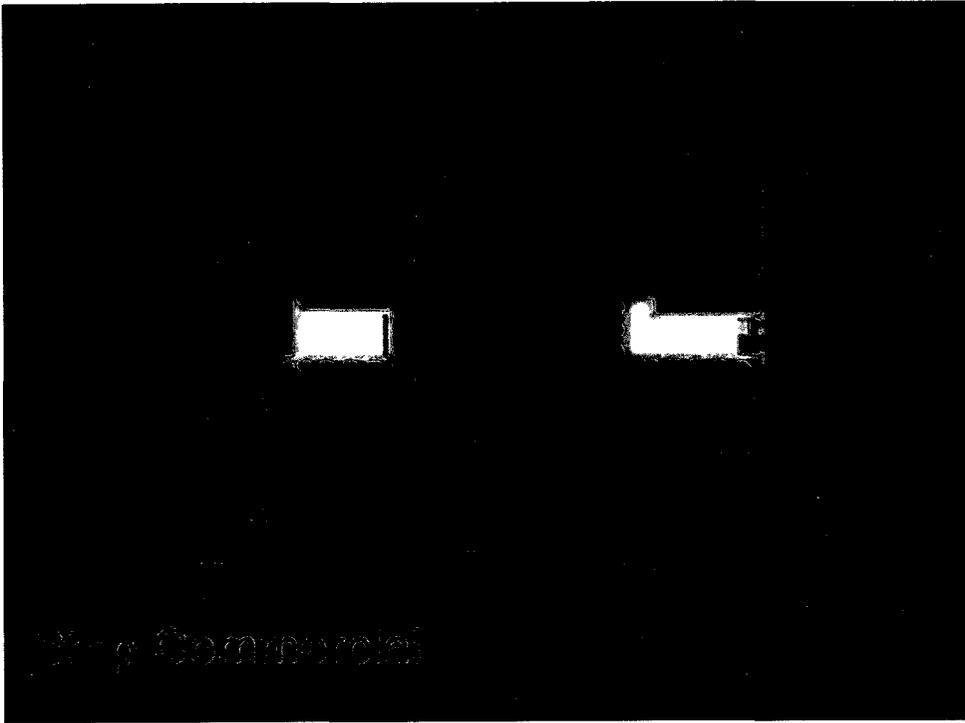


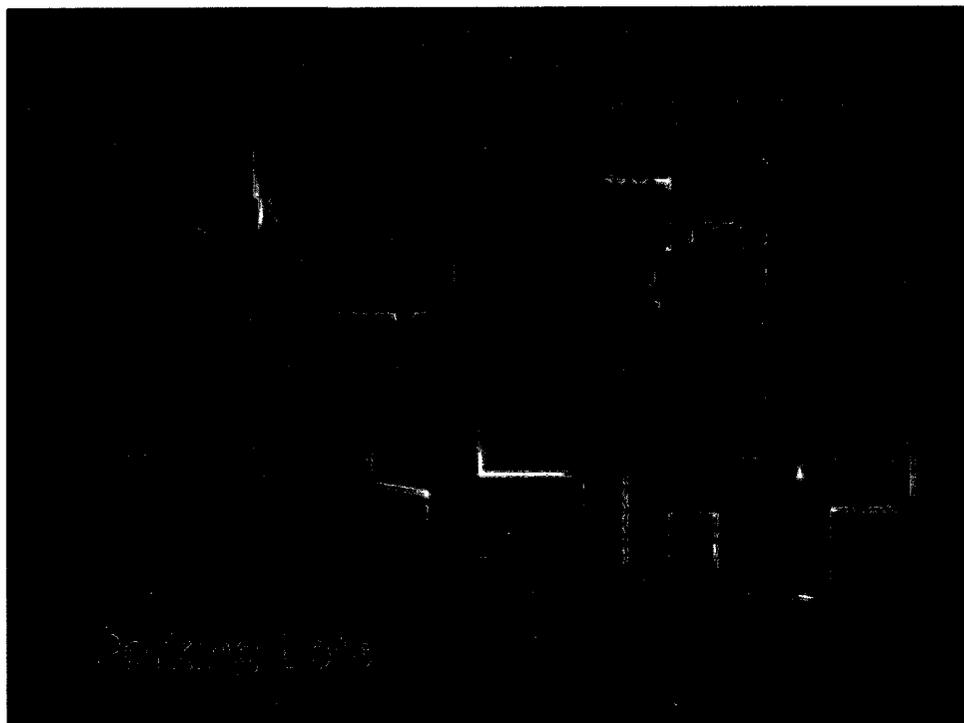
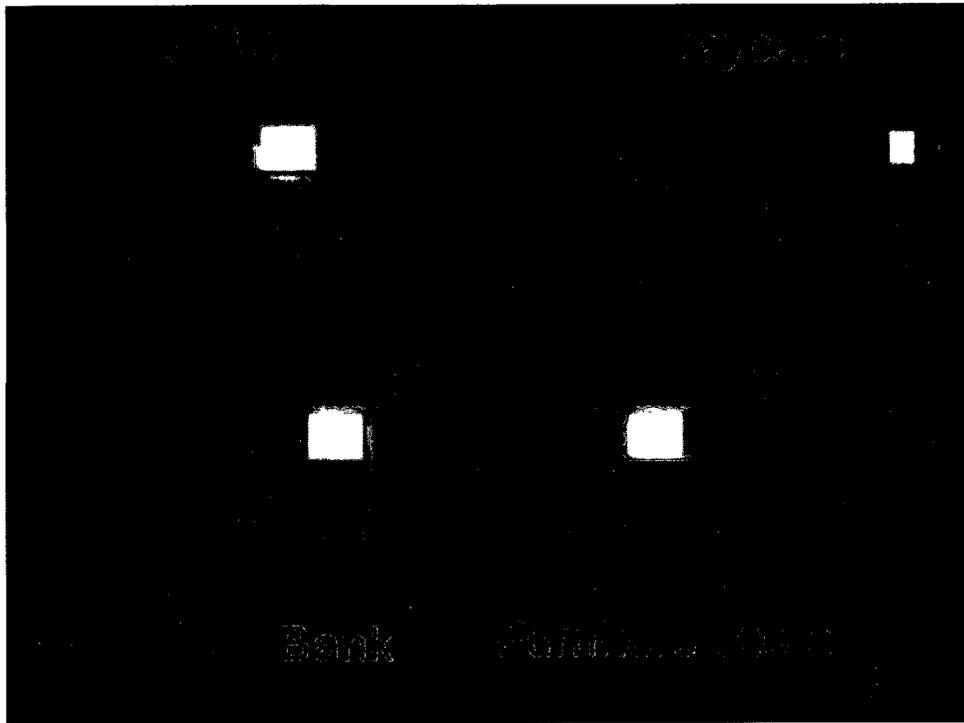
Pre-existing Homes:
62
Homes Now:
about 700
Growth:
about 200 lots/year
Population:
about 2,100 people
Projected Population:
15,000
Findlay Creek Area:
about 196 acres

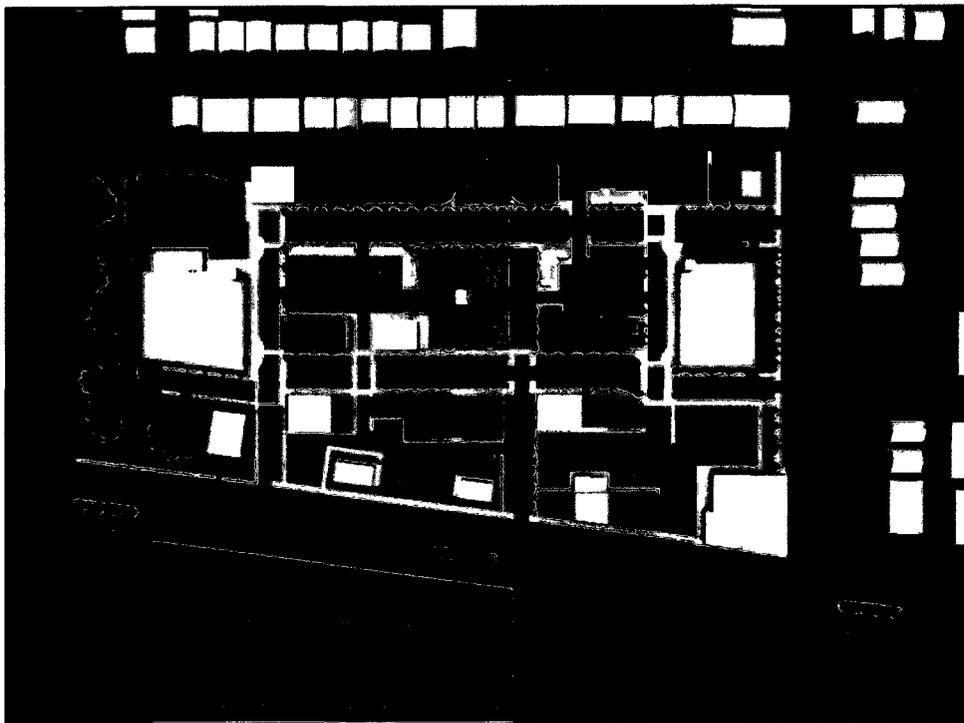
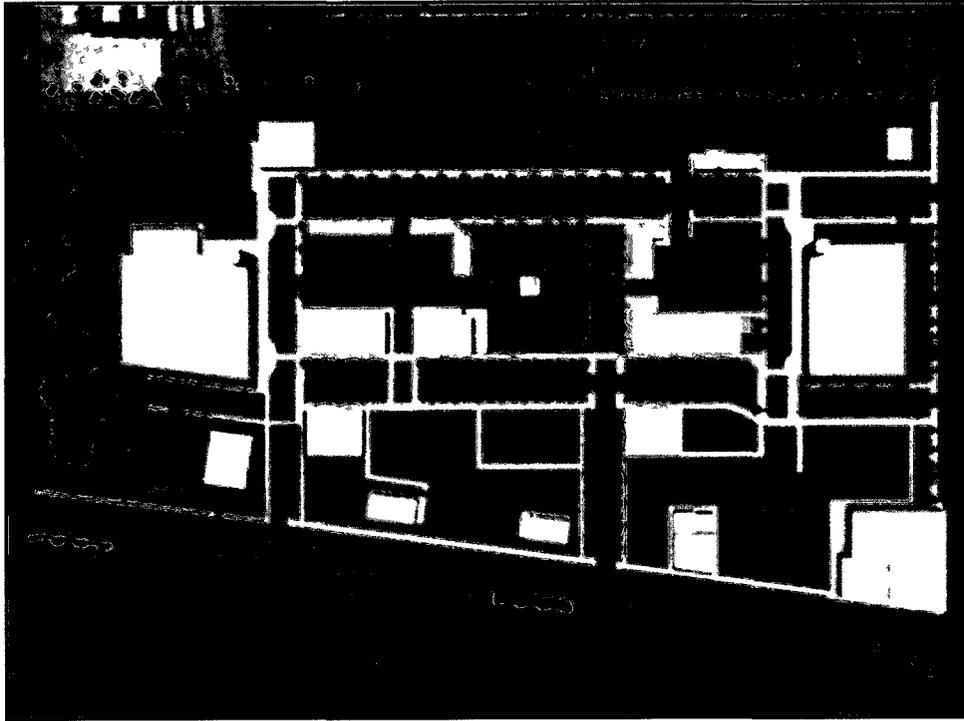


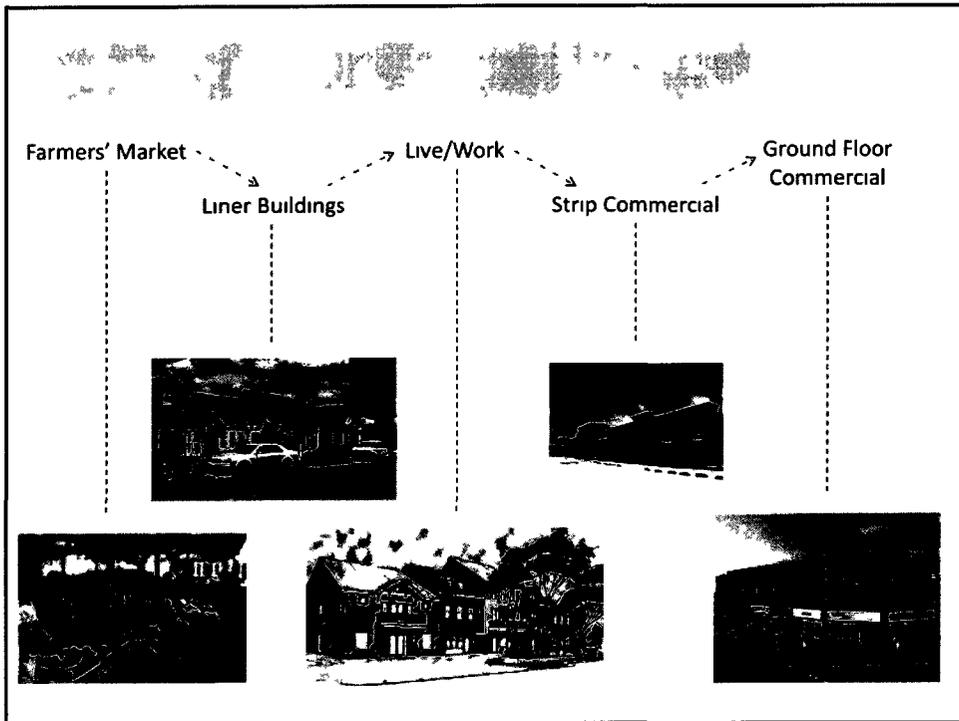
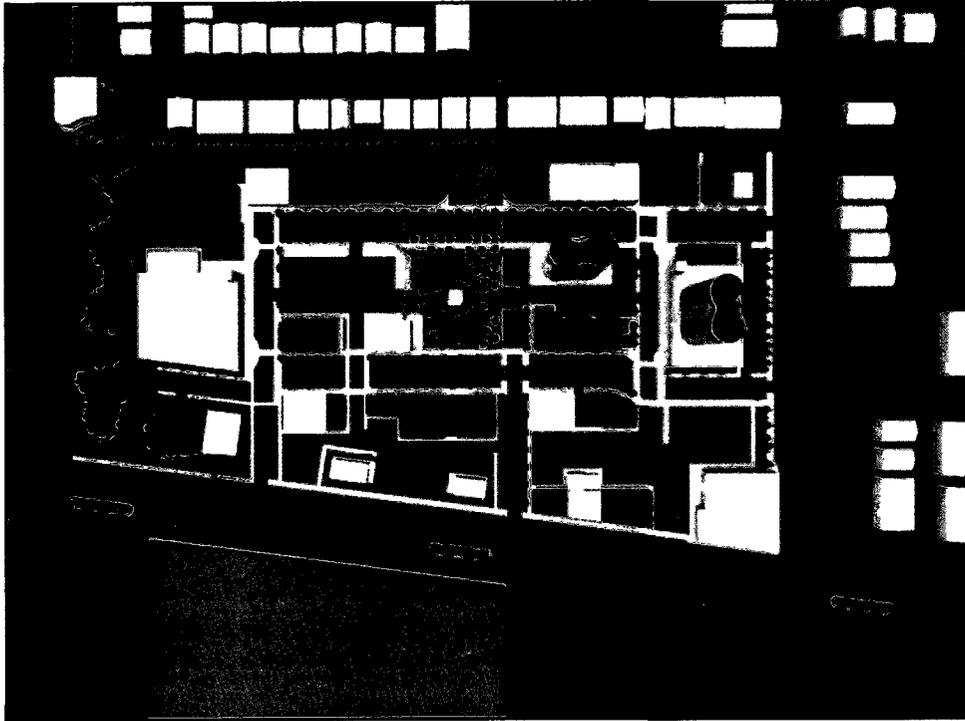


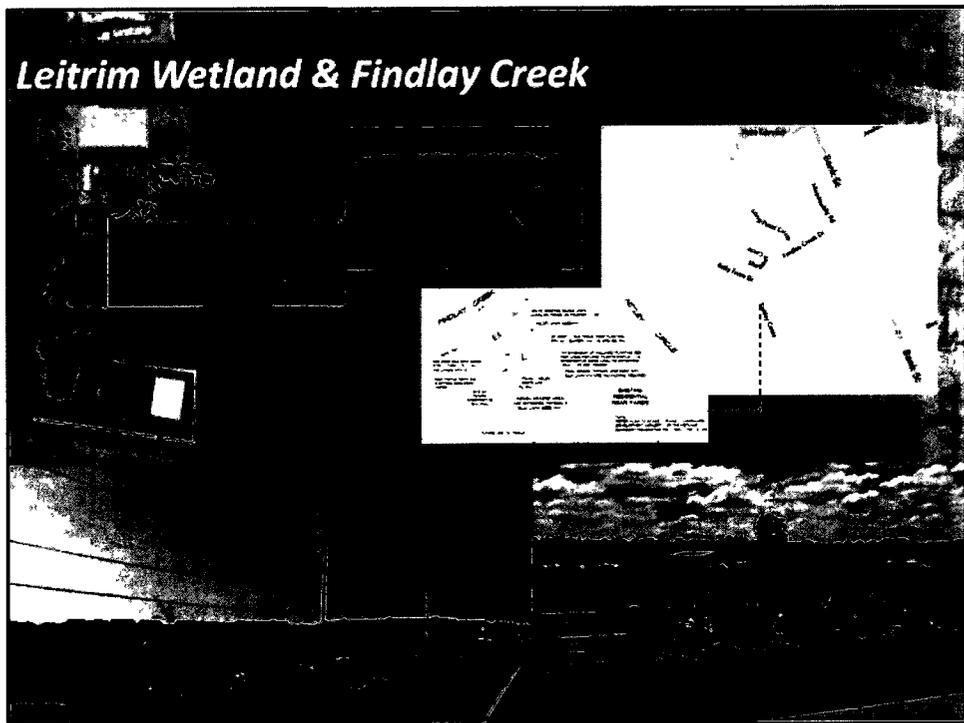


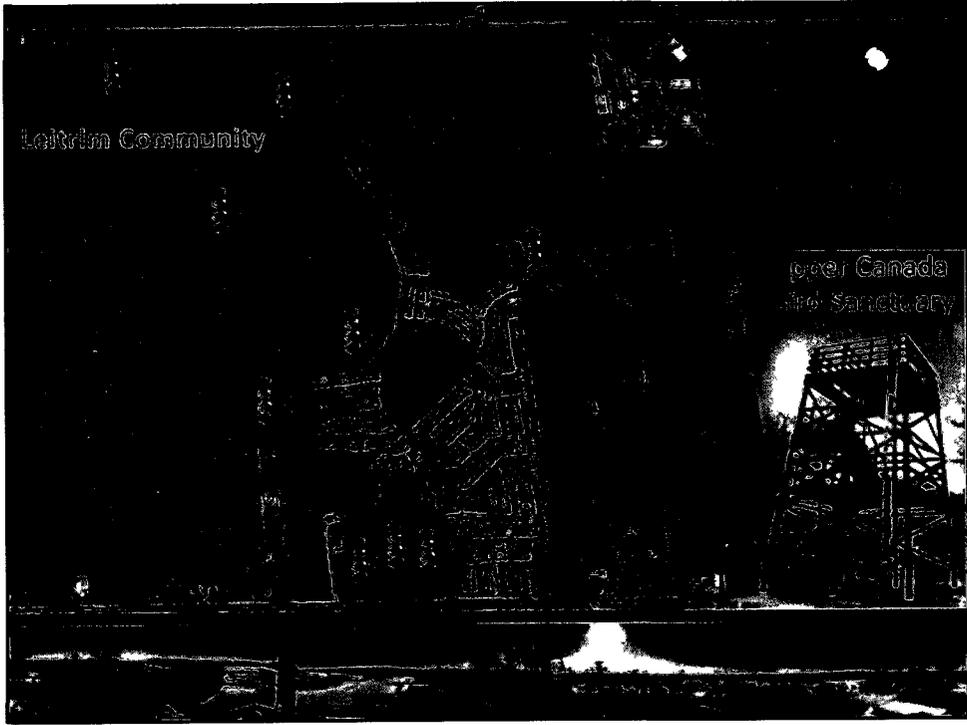












Why make it a Place?

Any architectural project we do takes at least four or five years, so increasingly there is a discrepancy between the acceleration of culture and the continuing slowness of architecture.
- Rem Koolhaas

Architects need to be aware of the degree to which local cultures are becoming increasingly disengaged from place, increasingly absorbed in supermodernity.
- Ellen Dunham-Jones

