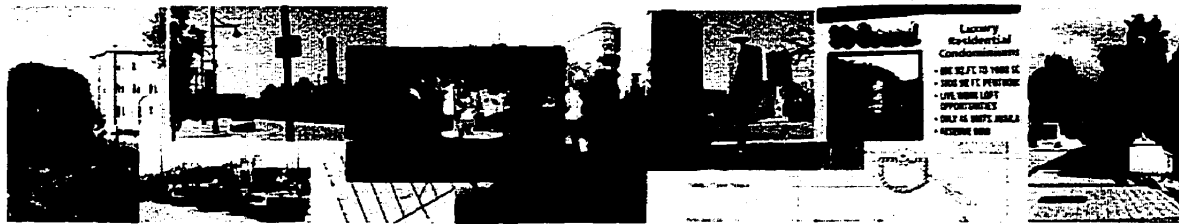


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Re-Inhabiting The Urban Landscape

An examination of the roles and qualities
of urban neighborhoods



Kurtis Michael Kowalke

a practicum submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Landscape Architecture

Department of Landscape Architecture

University of Manitoba



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**RE-INHABITING THE URBAN LANDSCAPE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLES AND
QUALITIES OF URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS**

BY

KURTIS MICHAEL KOWALKE

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of

Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree

of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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*To the memory of
Paul S. Kasprick,
grandfather and
master craftsman.*

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Re-Inhabiting The Urban Landscape

An examination of the roles and qualities of urban neighborhoods

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Introduction

'Decay', 'disinvestment', 'blight', are just a few of the terms that have become synonymous with inner city conditions throughout North America. Winnipeg's city center is characterized by its vacant sites, boarded-up storefronts, graffiti, physical deterioration, ubiquitous surface parking, and a sense of fear associated with many of its streets and areas.

However, the downtown also has its intrinsic qualities, despite that they have been masked by neglect. It is a storehouse of irreplaceable heritage architecture. It contains a dynamic mix of land-use functions and a rich variety of people. But most importantly, the traditional urban structure exhibits an intricate relationship between private property and public right-of-way that results in the very public life for which people congregated in cities in the first place. This relationship has disappeared from the residential landscape since the modern suburban development pattern took hold.

The downtown can no longer compete with the suburbs as a business park. It needs to reinvent itself. Those uniquely urban characteristics warrant intensive reuse, and there is one land use that never goes obsolete. This study examines the needs of *urban neighborhoods*, what makes them successful, how they fit into the city center, and how they can add a much-needed life to a struggling downtown.

This document is organized into four main sections. The first elaborates on the 'problem' as identified in the opening paragraph. How is it manifest in our environment? How is it tied to the condition and organization of the landscape? It closes by defining 'urban' in comparison to suburban environments, and the effect of this distinction on the lives of its inhabitants.

The second section looks at the root causes for the symptoms discussed in the first. It traces the history and ideology of urban form leading up to present times. It asks how the downtown came to be seen as obsolete and uninhabitable.

The third section examines changing attitudes towards urban centers. It reviews the tools that have been used to try to improve downtowns and urban neighborhoods. There is a look at policies adopted by Winnipeg, and other popular urban design theories. Case studies illustrate how some city centers have been changed for the better over the past decade. This section also touches on the role of regional planning in protecting downtowns. This section concludes with a collection of key points based on the literature that would serve a guide in planning a downtown around the needs of urban neighborhoods.

And finally, section four examines four Winnipeg neighborhoods and districts, comparing them to the key points from the previous section. The physical evidence in some cases confirms the principles from the literature. In others, it shows how balance of forces and the thresholds of success are unique in a specific city like Winnipeg.

1. The State of Urbanism

Most of us are all too aware of the common symptoms of a city center in decline. Buildings are boarded up; urban structure has eroded apart; traffic is congested; maintenance is neglected; crime and poverty have an acute presence; graffiti usurps urban and architectural narratives. This section is interested the circumstances that contribute to these conditions. What relation does each of these factors have to the state of the urban landscape?

1.1 Sidewalk Economy

Buildings are boarded up because a traditional urban morphology, which has buildings shoulder to shoulder fronting a sidewalk, is only functional in a pedestrian-oriented circulation system. There is typically no adjacent parking so these buildings are difficult to access by car, yet most businesses rely on passer-by patronage. Additionally, heavy traffic ten feet from the façade casts an uneasy atmosphere to the space in front of and within the building. Maintenance costs for many old architecturally intricate buildings are higher than average. That cost must be somehow justified by a high level use by a great number of people.

Office density at Portage and Main generates tremendous lunch hour activity. People enjoy stepping out for lunch or to run short errands, but at the center of the city they are landlocked by impassable traffic arteries. Thus, while historical storefronts waste away a few minutes walk from this hub, office workers patronize a subterranean but otherwise generic shopping mall.

1.2 Physical Landscape

The erosion of urban structure is closely tied to the decline of property values. When the value of cheap parking outweighs the value of living and doing business in the city center, the latter will overcome the former. Early in this century, it was taken for granted that the land between city blocks would be completely built upon. The value of a slice of real estate warranted an architectural enterprise. Modern erosion of this structure is poignantly evident among the Victorian warehouses of the Exchange. They rise multiple stories to achieve maximum volume from the land, yet many now sit isolated in the landscape. Their undesigned sides now exposed by the leveling of their neighbors. One can scarcely imagine the profound effect of this change on the human perception of the urban landscape.

The gridded layout in which our city was designed made no consideration for this unprecedented devaluation and deconstruction. In opposition to centuries of urban evolution, the modern downtown has been badly remade in the suburban image. Urban space is something that is unique to old city centers. There exists no substitute in the suburbs. *Space*, as it is defined in environmental design, requires physical elements that provide a sense of enclosure. The continuity of street wall creates a unique urban panorama that is completely distinct from

any other city block. The sum of these unique street spaces is a city of diverse visual experiences and surprises.

Proportion of street width, height, and relation to human scale all have an effect on psychological comfort. Street blocks set up a rhythm of mass and void. Urban environments traditionally had primary and secondary places of *focus*. Most often recognized by their architectural landmarks, they were inextricably tied to outdoor public spaces. Architecture, landscape, as well as the physical geography, all contribute to the making of place.

1.3 Autoscape

traffic congestion...

The traffic is heavy because modern neighborhoods are laid out in such a way that they demand the use of an automobile for nearly all aspects of societal exchange – work, school, shopping, entertainment. Traffic and traffic-oriented development also have the quality of making the environment less tolerable for walking, cycling, or rollerblading. Since only cars can compete in traffic, more and more people are reluctantly drawn into a vicious cycle, competing for asphalt.

Since the ascension of the automobile, cruising down the freeway has been the ultimate expression of freedom. The organization of cities has since been largely based on this ‘freedom’. More often these days, we feel our freedom is tainted by traffic congestion. The system is lacking in efficiency. Of this much we are certain. There are too many stoplights; there are not enough lanes. Robbed of its original elation, driving remains the choice mode of transportation.

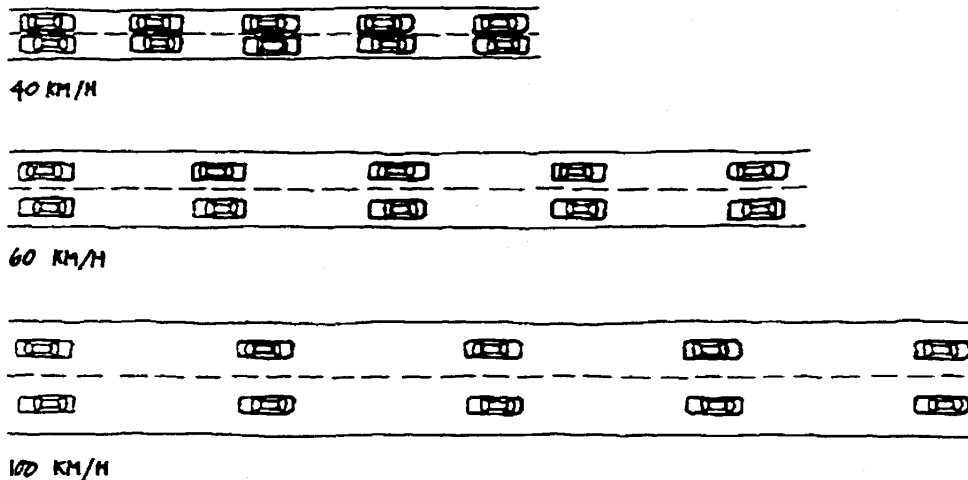
There is a broad belief that traffic congestion can be solved by further deconcentration and adequate transportation planning. This has yet to be proven. Even in Los Angeles, where tiered freeways overwhelm the landscape, rush hour gridlock persists. Too often, planners see only the immediate benefits and repercussions of growth and transportation. One of Leo and Brown’s examples from their paper, *Urban Development in a Slow-Growth City* (1998), is the direction of transportation planning in Winnipeg.

...Council has readily agreed to one road project after another, heedless of the fact that each one exacerbates the sprawl dilemma. Meanwhile, transit facilities that could contribute to the amelioration of sprawl are postponed indefinitely. (p.7)

landscape of speed...

Joel Garreau, author of *Edge City* (1991), discussed the spatial impact automobiles have on the landscape.

[Cars] are so physically big, and must be spread so far apart when they move fast, that it is impossible to get hundreds of thousands of them into one location at one time without spreading our built world all over the landscape and/or creating traffic jams. (p. 127)



(Engwicht 1993)

This principle governs the pattern of urban erosion by automobile proliferation. Moreover, it changes the way architecture and landscape communicate with us. Responding to high-speed traffic, its signage becomes grossly oversized; surfaces become simplified.

automobile dependence...

No matter how bad the traffic situation gets, we are forced to tolerate it because alternatives are practically non-existent. Destinations are too spread out for walking or bicycling. Transit schedules and routing are painfully awkward at such low densities. New Urbanist Architect Peter Calthorpe (1994) wrote, "...the density and configurations typical of suburban sprawl make transit a heavily subsidized safety net rather than a real alternative to the car." (p.xiv).

Because mobility in the suburbs is dependent on the car, those who do not drive lose out. Many seniors feel a loss of their independence. Adolescents demand to be chauffeured to be with their peers. Children are known to watch more television than those in pedestrian or transit oriented neighborhoods (Calthorpe 1993). If you include those who cannot afford or chose not to own a car, you have a group of non-motorists that comprise between 40 and 60 percent of the

population in most western cities, according to author David Engwicht (1993). In the context of automobile-dominated cities, he referred to these individuals as “access-to-exchange disadvantaged”(p.100). These are people who are discriminated against by common urban planning and development. This occurs in several ways:

- ▶ the subordination of public transit to private transportation
- ▶ the loss of viable pedestrian and cycling routes and the decrease in the safety and quality of remaining ones
- ▶ support for regional shopping outlets to the demise of local neighborhood stores
- ▶ many who cannot afford a car are often also resigned to live in heavily trafficked areas
- ▶ *everyone* pays the tremendous cost of vehicular infrastructure whether or not they use it.

At the same time, we suffer a peculiar irony: While urban pollution was an original motivator for fleeing to the outlying countryside, this flight (and its daily re-enactment) is now the leading cause of urban pollution.

1.4 Landscape of Neglect

Crime and neglect stem in part from lack of pride and ownership in the neighborhood as a shared environment. Partners for Livable Communities, in *The Livable City* (2000), wrote,

The feeling of ownership is an important, if subtle, aspect of urban vitality. Psychologists have taught us that when people do not feel the environment belongs to them, they will treat it disdainfully, with vandalism, graffiti, and neglect. Although vandalism and graffiti are reprehensible, they are also symptoms of something dysfunctional in the city: poor maintenance, isolation, lack of visual access, barrenness, and ugliness. (p.117)

Often the very characteristics identified on page one are cause for contempt of the urban center. Environments that are too ‘open’ can appear to belong to no one. Urban areas that are homogenous in function are typically vacant during much of the day or night making them easy prey for property crimes. Depressed areas also tend to be abandoned to the poorest and most desperate in our society creating enclaves with insufficient human and economic resources. Any area that has a high proportion of low-income residents will suffer from a lack of a neighborhood

tax base, buying power, and political sway, as well as the secondary effects of concentrated poverty such as drugs, violence, theft and destruction of property (Suchman 1997).

1.5 Cultural Landscape

The suburb was founded on *separation* from the 'ills of the city'. This separation achieved an effective exclusion of the visible signs of poverty. As Anthony Downs pointed out in *New Visions for Metropolitan America* (1991), "this element is not acknowledged or even consciously desired." (p.6), yet it is inherent in the organizational structure of the suburb.

They tend to spatially organize by income bracket. In *Suburban Nation* (2000), Duany, *et al.*, explain.

One cluster consists entirely of houses that sell for \$350,000 and up. The second cluster contains houses costing about \$200,000. The third cluster is made up of apartments priced at less than \$100,000. This sort of organization, a suburban invention, [amounts to] ruthless segregation by minute gradations of income. (p.43)

This means that most retired grandparents do not have the means to live close to other family members (Markusen 1980). Similarly, when a child moves out on their own, they do not have the financial security to reside near their family. Often 'single-family' zoning further reinforces these constraints. It stands as a defiant tribute to the once dominant white middle-class nuclear family household. These neighborhoods are designed for homogeneity of age group, culture, income level, and architectural characteristics. They are sold in bulk to vast middle markets.

communication...

Most of our information and communication today involves printed or electronic media. It is suggested that our increasing ability to communicate through a variety of technologies begins to challenge the essence of the city as a spatial entity (Gillespie 1992). In the technological age, phone, fax, and modem allow us to communicate and work together without ever being in the same room.

In 'Communications Technology and the Future of the City' (1992), Gillespie referred to the position of Brian J.L. Berry who, over twenty-five years ago, outlined the concept of "an urban civilisation without cities" (p.68). The theory follows that if telecommuting and video-conferencing could replace the daily car trip to and from work, then logically, the impetus to congregate in cities would dissolve entirely, and people will live further and further away from urban centers. While Gillespie contests this position on the basis of technological, political, and

economic conditions, he does not address an urban design factor that could undermine Berry's entire premise. If commuting by car¹ were to be substantially eliminated, a tremendous right-of-way area, formerly reserved for cars, could be brought back in to the public realm as pedestrian promenades or linear parks. When employees might normally meet with co-workers over a coffee break, instead they might get to know their neighbors better. The quality of the urban environment would improve to such an extent that there would be a high demand for living in urban centers. Unneeded parking lots would become prime public spaces or infill sites.

Limiting cities to technological forms of communication changes the very nature of human interaction. The European Green Paper on the Urban Environment makes reference to "many forms of communication which go beyond the exchange of information" (Breheny 1992, p.155). Incidental communication, the interaction of strangers, seems to be continually, systematically eliminated. We use our voice-mails and e-mails to selectively customize our interactions. On the roads we can communicate with other vehicles only with the monosyllabic blast of our horn. It is appropriately non-human communication. We honk at a mechanical entity whose actions are comparable to a software glitch. It is the same degree of empathy (or apathy).

role of public space...

The importance of public space cannot be understated. There was a long-standing belief in the primacy of civic space. Even for Frederick Law Olmstead, who created parks as an escape from the city, they were "social safety-valves, mixing classes and ethnicities in common recreations and pleasures." (Davis 1992) The idea of a city as a collective environment persisted through western culture up until recent times. The streets, the commons, and civic institutions formed the public matrix of the city. Even the private built environment, through conscious intent or otherwise, contributed to quality and character of its context (Kemble 1991, Kunstler 1993). The remnants of such buildings and spaces, found exclusively in the core, are a legacy to this forgotten truth. Today, the privately owned shopping mall has replaced the public market. The phenomenon of gated communities has privatized entire neighborhoods (Calthorpe 1994). Even the predominance of overhead walkways and regional freeways preempts public freedom (Pope 1996).

The suburbanization of cities was as much about a change in cultural beliefs and values as it was about lifestyle and open space. Architect Jack Linville discussed the suburban conception of space.

¹ According to author David Engwicht (1993), half of all kilometres traveled in cities are for commuting.

We have much more individual lifestyles. We have our own excellent interior spaces. We have our own park. It's right out back. The yard.
(Garreau 1991, p.234)

replacing the public realm...

There *is* social space in post-urban city. It has gone inside. Garreau (1991) wrote, "The inside of a soaring glass office lobby is about as public a place as is ever built in Edge City." (p.52). The shopping mall is the prototype for the corporate space that acts as a surrogate public realm. Accessorized by potted trees and park benches, it creates a pedestrian street and evokes park-like imagery. Indoor pedestrian streets lined with eateries, shops, and salons often connect the glass atria of several office buildings, completely bypassing the public street.

These types of places clearly become competition for traditional outdoor *public* space. Their strongest feature, however, is not the amenities they *have*, but rather what they do not have – human disparity. Urban planner George Sternlieb was quoted as saying, "They don't want strangers. If it is a choice between parks and strangers, the people would sooner do without the parks" (Garreau 1991, p.52). Garreau suggests that that is why there is virtually no public space in new developments: "On purpose" (p.52). The average middle class consumer is far more comfortable² when in the presence of others of similar economic class. To author, Richard Sennett, this represents a challenge: "Our urban problem is how to revive the reality of the outside as a dimension of human experience"³.

design of cultural boundaries...

Mike Davis, in 'Fortress Los Angeles' (1992), discussed the politics of space in city whose current problems, while in many ways extreme, are not entirely unique. Abandonment of the downtown reached its threshold in the late sixties. Inner city riots prompted many more businesses to seek friendlier turf in the suburbs. In the following years, freeway projects increased vehicular access to downtown, as tenement housing was being systematically demolished. The setting seemed right for an 'urban renaissance'. Subsidized super-block projects were to be a catalyst to a successful, vibrant downtown.

The 'success' of these new projects could be measured in two ways. As commercial enterprises, they are stable and productive. As components in an urban context, they are black holes, pulling urban life into their bowels and giving nothing to the external environment. This is

² Garreau considers it a matter of comfort *and* safety, reflecting a belief that the underprivileged more prone to violence or criminal activity.

³ 1992. *The Conscience of the Eye*, p.xiii

not an architectural failing. It is a designed response to the intent of its investors. Architect/author Albert Pope described this as the prevailing condition of Late Capitalism, in his work *Ladders* (1996). It is the tendency of powerful corporations to ignore or eradicate what is outside their control. In the context of Los Angeles, Davis described the approach:

The goals of this strategy may be summarized as a double repression: to obliterate all connection with Downtown's past and to prevent any dynamic association with the non-Anglo urbanism of its future. (p.158)

The outcome of this strategy is two distinct and guardedly separate downtowns.

Just a few blocks from the newly redeveloped center, homelessness and poverty define the character of the street. Carefully timed sprinkler systems and police sweeps strive to prevent parks from becoming tent-cities. Increasing pressures of maintenance and liability led to the decision to demolish public toilets in the Skid Row area, aggravating already desperate conditions. Sadly, the greatest fear to public representatives is the spread of the Skid Row population into other districts.

Instead the city, self-consciously adopting the idiom of cold war, has promoted the "containment" (the official term) of the homeless in Skid Row... By condensing the mass of the desperate and helpless together in such a small space, and denying adequate housing, official policy has transformed Skid Row into probably the most dangerous ten square blocks in the world. (Davis 1992, p.161)

The ghetto neighborhoods of the working class hardly fair better. Here too, public space is seen as a threat to the well-being of the city. In the war against drugs, the policy of 'taking back the street' knows few limits. Street vendors selling fruit are thus barred from providing their service, as would be drug dealers. Worse-off neighborhoods have been subjected to police-regulated quarantines. All streets to these neighborhoods are blockaded. At a single entry-point, police are given the right to question and search all those who come and go with the right to deny entry or exit. They can also impose a curfew.

Richard Sennett wrote, "What is characteristic of our city-building is to wall off the differences between people"(p.xii). Under the guise of security, social and economic boundaries are being architecturally reinforced. Walled suburbs are nothing new. The earliest were elite estates, available only to the wealthiest few (Fishman 1987). Beginning in the late fifties, Leisure World retirement communities used security gates not only to instill a feeling of safety, but also to provide a sense of belonging (Rowan 1967). A gateway signifies the entrance to a distinct area; you have to belong to get in. The gated community seemed to be a popular and appropriate response to the elderly demographic.

The notion of the privatized community caught on a much broader scale in the decades to follow. Suburban developers have rediscovered the subdivision process. Instead of selling individual lots, and turning street right-of-ways over to the public realm, all land within the community can remain the holding of the developer. Tenure is in the form of condominium ownership of platted land areas. Residents, through association membership, can collectively own the streets and all common (as opposed to public) areas. Mike Davis identified a landmark case where an existing open community was able to achieve these same results.

...residents of Whitley Park have won the unprecedented privilege of withdrawing their streets from public use. Eight high-tech gates will restrict access to residents and approved visitors... (p.173)

'Shadow Government' was Garreau's term for the organizational entity that has emerged to help suburbanites exert draconian levels of control over their contextual environment. These neighborhood associations, whether developer-based or independent, are structured on the basis of wealth and/or property ownership. They are not accountable to a voting public, yet their power to control the functioning and appearance of their context is immense. "Not only can they prohibit the organization of everything from a synagogue to a Boy Scout troop; they can regulate the color of a person's living room curtains."(p.185). People choose these communities because they will be guaranteed an environment in which everyone thinks they way they do. This minimizes conflicts over the outward presentation of private space and results in a unified image of status and refinement.

the battle for privatization...

While Davis suggested that fortification of suburbs does more to deter the leisure pedestrian than elements of crime, one proven spin-off is the reinforcement of property values. Pope suggested that the protection of property value has become "the highest possible civic objective"(p.183). The term means much more than it appears. For most people, property value, in and of itself, has little effect on how they go about their lives, but it *is quantifiable* in dollars and cents.

Across North America, this value is assessed based on marketability – what it would sell for at a given point in time, which has always been closely tied to its location within a context⁴. There would be two ways to foster a strong neighborhood context. One is to advocate for investment in the quality of the public realm. The precept behind this model is the belief that all private spaces are components within a greater public matrix. But the very phenomenon of the urban exodus suggests that most people do not feel they are part of the public realm, and

⁴ as per conversation with Andy Swar of Winnipeg Assessments Department, May 16, 2000

therefore, have no obligation to it. This is evidenced by the second approach, which involves projecting the dominion of the private realm onto the surrounding neighborhood. This leads to alienation of the 'public', shutting out the unknown.

Albert Pope made the observation that despite all the talk about a united global community, the physical city drifts toward increasing dissonance.

1.6 Summary

Why should we support investment in urban neighborhoods when suburban neighborhoods can be privately funded and developed. and are clearly the popular preference?

urban versus suburban...

Urban development is more complex and therefore is frequently passed over in favor of simpler, familiar patterns of greenfield development at the suburban fringe. However, urban environments have a number of advantages over suburban development that affect both residents and the functioning of the city as a whole.

1. Urban environments foster free public social interaction; suburbia favors controlled mechanical interactions.
2. Urban environments contain a variety of housing types in close proximity, while suburbia discourages different incomes, ages, and races from mixing.
3. Urban environments present an array options when it comes to routes of travel, means of travel, and destinations to travel to. The suburbs favor exclusive use of the car and a predetermined route – from residential street, to collector, to arterial.
4. While the suburbs offer private yards and open spaces, urban densities bring more services and amenities directly to the neighborhood.

Vital urban environments represent an entirely distinct culture, dependent on the proximity of strangers of all walks of life. The newer suburban alternative trades this cultural environment for increased mobility. Unfortunately, this increase in mobility comes at the cost of creating generic, placeless destinations. We have also learned that it is not a balanced trade-off and the costs of a suburban existence wear on both urban and suburban residents alike (details on page 54). What are the specific shortcomings of the suburban environment?

1. Traffic, while equally a problem in city-centers, is general the product of people traveling to and from suburbia, not within the downtown itself.

2. We have become slaves to the automobile and addicts of petroleum. Without the constant availability of both, coping with day-to-day tasks would be impossible.
3. Suburban development is both environmentally and economically unsustainable.
4. Suburbs lack the balance of mass and void that make true urban *spaces* possible.
5. The suburbs lack a recognizable hierarchy of spaces and landmarks.
6. In failing to enable functional pedestrian use of the suburbs, its creators all but forfeit any meaningful public realm.

2. Roots Of The Problem

Plan Winnipeg – Toward 2010 (1993) stated in its chapter on Urban Development Management that “Winnipeg’s Downtown is too large for the size of the City...”(p.89). What do they mean by ‘Downtown’? This statement is based on an earlier paradigm wherein the downtown’s primary role was as the central business district for the metropolitan region. Of course today, businesses are found all around the city, and this redefines of the role of the downtown. If the research presented in the following sections can prove that a central mixed urban environment is more socially and economically viable than the suburban environment that surrounds it, it would then mean the reverse: Winnipeg’s suburban expansion is too large for the size of the city.

2.1 An Abandoned Core

Low-density population spread is a key factor in our urban condition. The geographic isolation of wealth in the suburbs along with the proliferation of automobile infrastructure downtown have crippled the core area. Political planners such as Leo and Brown (1998) have also made an argument for our slow economy as a reason our downtown has slid into disrepair, but they have been quick to point out the undeniable link between urban decline and suburban sprawl.

Between the 1991 and 1996 censuses, Winnipeg's population increased 2.3 percent or 15,246 people. During the same period, there were 7036 new housing starts.⁵ Given the average household size of 2.5 people,⁶ this should represent 17,587 new home residents. (In fact, the average family size for new home buyers is probably higher than that of the metropolitan average.) This surplus of growth ($17,587 - 15,246 = 2341$) could only be accounted for by a corresponding number of old homes that are either vacant or torn down. As the suburbs continue to grow outward, they leave behind a trail of neglected core urban land.

The suburbs have a number of desirable qualities. One of the most noteworthy is their arrangement in distinct, identifiable neighborhoods. Developers give them catchy names, proudly displayed on the neighborhood's grand entranceway. People can associate with it because there is no ambiguity. For much of the population the suburban package simply out-competes core area living even at its ideal best. However, an entire host of sprawl-related problems compromise the quality of the urban environment to such an extent that they drive out many who might otherwise choose an urban living experience. Suburban commuting inflicts incredible strain on the downtown in the form of parking pressures, congestion, noise, and pollution. Traffic engineers seeking to alleviate the situation unwittingly exacerbate urban conditions, increasing traffic capacity and speed, and eroding away the capacity and viability of the pedestrian realm. Understanding this aspect of the problem, it is clear that the alleviating conditions downtown cannot begin by solving the 'parking problem', or the 'congestion problem' directly, in isolation.

Even if the city were to stop or reverse the tendency of letting automobile right-of-way undermine all other transportation options, it would only effect limited improvement in the

⁵ as per CMHC, Canadian Housing Statistics: 1986-1999

⁶ Statistics Canada Census – Winnipeg Metropolitan Area

viability of the downtown. Ambitious streetscaping and pedestrian malls have consistently fallen short where they were not directly linked to a resident population by means other than auto.

Roger Kemble, author of *The Canadian City* (1989), calls this, “the single overriding issue that faces the development of the modern Canadian city.”

Titivating, tarting up tacky old districts means nothing if there lacks a dense population of people of all incomes: families, singles, rich and poor. People living in an affordable downtown, working, shopping, enjoying life free from debt, noise and pollution in a pleasant environment... (p.138)

By increasing the residential component of an urban center, a pedestrian network can truly be used to its fullest extent – it does not have to begin and end with parking. William H. Whyte believed that any increase in residential occupation of the city center is an important stride. “Of such steps is a center revitalized” (Whyte 1985, p.329). A downtown’s neighborhoods are its source of life. They are its customers, its attendants, its advocates, its watchful presence.

There are, of course, two ways of looking at this urban problem. On the one hand, improvements to the quality of the cultural, physical, and economic landscape of the central city would yield a more attractive environment in which to live and do business, thereby increasing its overall vitality. The flip side of the argument is that if we could increase commercial and residential occupation downtown, that in itself would yield a number of environmental improvements. Vacancies would be decreased; infill would reinstate the continuity of the urban fabric; more people would be closer to employment and essential services; traffic would decrease; improved mass transit would become viable.

The largest obstacle to the second approach is a perceptual one. Most people do not see the city center as a suitable place to live. In Winnipeg, one hardly needs a survey to substantiate this belief. Yet from a historical perspective it is remarkable. For thousands of years people have congregated in cities. What is the origin of this anti-urbanist sentiment that pervades our culture? How and when did a ubiquitous suburbia overcome the traditional city?

2.2 The Industrial Revolution

Despite the trend to romanticize the Victorian era streetscape, it is doubtful that we would want to return to that period of history. The nineteenth century urban dweller abhorred city living for good reasons. While few of those reasons exist today, many feelings of fear, unrest, or disgust of the city still linger in a deep-seated perception that originated in the industrial era.

The industrial city was born in Europe when the technology of steam power freed factories from the river mills. Their move to the city allowed the managerial class access to social and political contact. It also brought employment closer to a large pool of potential workers. As a reciprocal effect, industrial manufacturing also attracted more workers to the city. David Schuyler in his book, *The New Urban Landscape* (1987), discussed how the rise of the market economy in the early railroad era changed the nature of agrarian existence.

The transportation revolution added new concerns of price fluctuation and competition from distant regions to such traditional risks as weather and crop productivity. ...what may once have been a stable, industrious enterprise was becoming a speculative venture. (p.27)

Mechanization coupled with a decrease in crop value caused many to leave the farm for the promise of a steady income in the factories.

urban boom...

The center of the city had previously been the domain of the bourgeoisie, but there was a mixing of classes. Laborers' quarters were often attached to the shop where they worked or off the lane behind the master's dwelling (Fishman 1987). As industrialization set in, the demand for industrial workers incited a population implosion that overwhelmed the existing city.

In the walking city, there was a finite area within reasonable distance of the workplace. This sent land prices soaring. All available space became necessary to house the rural immigrants. Tenement apartments were erected with little regard for basic sanitary needs. The industrial worker's income was barely sufficient to cover the cost of dwelling rent, and typically several families were packed into a single room. This was aggravated by the coal exhaust of the factories to which the labor class clamored to be near.

To make matters worse, public open space was not protected. Eliel Saarinen, in his 1943 book *The City*, described Paris in the year 1800 as having 1000 acres of parkland, but only 300 acres remaining by 1900. And as cities continued to grow, one's distance from the outlying countryside also increased.

That combination of crowding and unsanitary conditions, forged an image of the city that for a long time remained. Richard Sennett in *The Conscience of the Eye* (1992), described a typical street scene:

Those who walked in cities were forced to wade through horse dung and slops from houses on streets that were usually unpaved or poorly laid. The biology of disease, the offense to the senses of rotting vegetable, fish, and flesh – all these less-pleasing emanations of nature were on pungent display in concentrated form. (p.89)

In the eighteenth century much was proposed and accomplished toward the refurbishment of cities in Britain. Wide boulevarded streets with prestigious townhouses were created in London. Manchester's Mosley Street area represents a redeveloped quarter for leading merchants and manufacturers. A threshold was eventually reached, though, where the unhealthy conditions associated with the working poor became a powerful deterrent to the long-standing tradition of the common use of public places by all classes.

new cities of America...

Settlement of the new world represented a fresh start. Its endless expanses seemed a limitless bounty. The conception of the landscape was one of rediscovered Eden. With the Great Fire of London and the recent plague still fresh in the minds of planners, rationalist planning was employed as a means of overcoming the trappings of the old European city. Open space and the natural environment were seen as mediators of the city's growth. William Penn, in the planning of Philadelphia, specified buildings on large lots, neatly aligned on broad streets, "so there may be ground on each side for gardens or orchards, or fields, that it may be green country town, which will never be burnt, and always be wholesome." (Reps 1965, p.160).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the industrial revolution, with its concomitant population implosion, had come to America, just as it had to Britain. Schuyler wrote, "The sheer numbers of newcomers to the cities taxed the ability of municipal governments and philanthropic organizations to meet the increased demand for services." (p.29). Philadelphia's long, generous blocks were cut by narrow side streets to accommodate tightly packed alley dwellings. In spite of their enlightened planning, the large cities of North America had come to resemble those rejected models of Europe. The rationalist grid had little effect on the overriding perception of cities as being dirty, crowded, congested, unhealthy, and choking themselves to death (Blumenfeld 1967), a perception that prevailed through modern times in the collective consciousness of western industrial society. In 1943, Eliel Saarinen, on the cusp of the suburban revolution, wrote,

Having been so far forced to live in dark rooms, the town-dweller now longs for more light and sunshine. Having been cramped in narrow quarters, he now desires fresh air, more space, and more opportunity for outdoor exercise. And having been accustomed to exist midst a stony desert of building masses, he now prefers to be surrounded by gardens and the freshness of nature. (p.148)

If this declaration reflects the popular sentiment of the day, it would seem to support a radical restructuring of the city. Did city leaders and builders go to such an extreme in trying to resolve the problems of the industrial city that they equally missed the mark? To what extent were their actions guided by a larger conceptual vision?

2.3 Urban Utopias⁷

While the crowding and dirty conditions of the late nineteenth century might have been expected and tolerated in the medieval city, this was the Age of Improvement. Men who felt distraught by the conditions of the city were compelled to ask themselves why it could not be otherwise. Emerging forms of transportation and communication suggested new, previously unconceived possibilities for urban form.

Charles Booth in 1901 proposed locomotion in the city to alleviate the housing situation, a process that had already begun in other British cities. Concurrently, H.G. Wells predicted national networks of motorways in his book, *Anticipation on the Contribution of Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*. The most influential visionary of this time period, however, was British court clerk Ebenezer Howard.

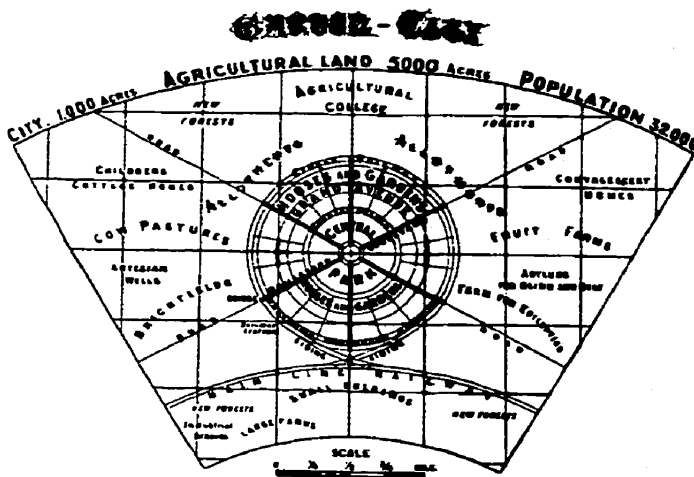
Howard's garden cities...

In 1898, Howard published *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (later released as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*). The garden city was a loosely spread community of 30,000 inhabitants (the maximum number that could be encompassed within the range of a fifteen minute walk at low-density). Land values were negligible compared with inner London and open

space was plentiful. An agricultural belt of 5000 acres (2000 ha) surrounded the built community.

His primary motivation for the creation of the Garden City, however, was not a longing for a rural arcadia in the romantic countryside. In fact, he wanted to transpose an urbanity and cultural life to his proposed communities.

But can the cultural life of a town of 30,000 hold a candle to that of the great cities? This is the criticism made by Jane Jacobs. She



Ebenezer Howard's Garden City
(Fishman 1977)

⁷ One authority on this subject is Robert Fishman and his work serves as the armature for this discussion.

expressed passionate opposition to the suggestion that small masterplanned communities could replicate the complex social systems of the city. The very use of the word 'city' to describe his towns was seen as an offense.

...Howard was not planning cities. ...His aim was the creation of self-sufficient small towns, really nice towns if you were docile and had no plans of your own and did not mind spending your life among others with no plans of their own. (p.17)

Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* maintained that the garden-city movement spawned the anti-urbanist sentiment. In Fishman's *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* (1977), we find a deeper analysis of the situation. He claimed that Howard was hardly the anti-urbanist that Jacobs portrayed. He was responding to the extreme economic polarization that existed in the city that he saw as oppressing. For Howard, the most vital components of his scheme (and sadly, the ones first omitted in future iterations) were the independent public cooperatives and other socialist-based systems to ensure a decent standard of living for the unskilled labor class.

For Howard, the Garden City was an environment in which capitalism could be peacefully superseded. Most of his supporters [and financiers], however, looked to the Garden City as the place where capitalism could be most easily preserved. (Fishman 1977, p.65)

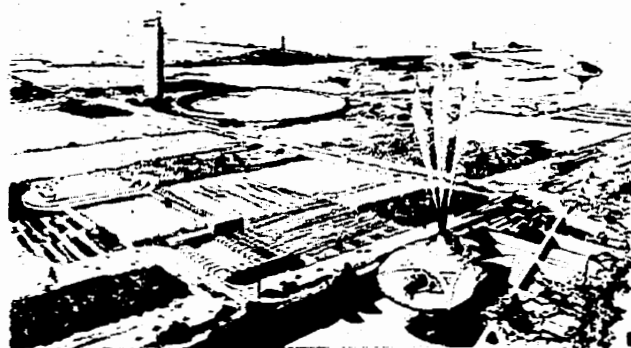
Colin Ward of *Town and Country Planning* (1985) discussed how the Garden City movement became inadvertently associated with suburban sprawl.

They feared, and their fears turned out to be justified, that the emphasis [of subsequent development] would be on housing rather than on planning, and that every suburban development would be described, as a sales gimmick, as a garden suburb. (p.150)

There were protests from the Garden City group against the suburban movement. Frederic Osborn who worked under Howard, was particularly critical, but by the 1930's had to concede, "I doubt whether, in the then state of opinion, anybody could have stemmed the tide"(Ward 1985, p.150).

Wright and Broadacre City...

In 1932, Frank Lloyd Wright published *The Disappearing City*, which unveiled his Broadacre City proposal. His sprawling hundred square miles of contiguous homesteads made the Garden City look quite traditional and urbane by comparison. Unlike Howard, Wright felt



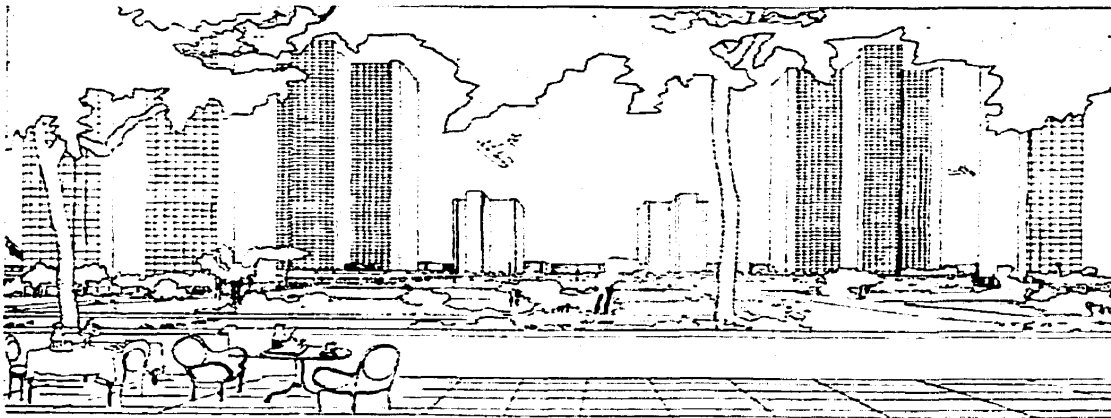
Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City
(Fishman 1977)

no affinity for the culture and activity associated with the existing city.

Individual land and ownership was the fundamental basis for Wright's plan. It was Jeffersonian democracy married to the modern communication and transportation technologies (Fishman 1977). There was no need for a concentrated center. The center was the family home and anything needed that the homestead could not provide was a short drive away along a high-speed traffic network. It is implicit in his proposal, as well as in his theoretical writing, that the only form of taxation that would be tolerated in his city would be that which is necessary to construct and maintain the freeways and institutions designated in his plan.

the cities of Le Corbusier...

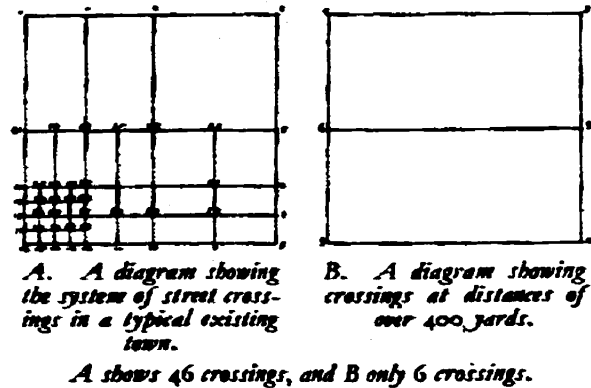
Radical modernism was even more influential across the ocean in these intra-war years. Le Corbusier's personal experience with the emerging machine age had the greatest effect in shaping his ideas and work. The principles that guided Le Corbusier were not that unlike those of Howard and Wright. He saw a need to 'de-congest' the industrial city, in other words, to alleviate over-crowding, as it related to the unsanitary conditions of the day. He proposed increasing parks and open spaces, and improving transportation. Where he stood apart was in his belief in increasing density.



Le Corbusier's Ville Radiuse
(Fishman 1977)

It must have seemed preposterous to those living the squalor of the industrial city to talk of increasing density in light of such crowded conditions. Even today, many people consider crowding and density to be of equal consequence. Le Corbusier, however, saw otherwise. Communication and interaction required a concentration of people. Cities were about the interchange of ideas.

One of the goals for the Contemporary City was “rapid intercommunication” (Le Corbusier 1929, p.180). It is strange how the movement of services and automobiles became associated with communication and exchange. (Saarinen used a similar term, *intercommunicative arteries*, to describe a network of freeways.) “The city that achieves speed, achieves success,” Corbusier wrote (Fishman 1977, p.191). He felt no sentimentality toward the winding medieval street. “The ‘corridor-street’... full of noise and dust and deprived of light... should be tolerated no longer, for it poisons the houses that border it and leads to the construction of internal courts...”(Le Corbusier 1929, p.175).



(Le Corbusier 1929)

To facilitate this tenet, he eliminated the redundancy of streets and reduced the overall number of intersections. His diagram is surprisingly illuminating. While ‘B’ is his model of efficiency, ‘A’ suggests a richness that beacons for human exploration.

Three types of public space were to be found in his proposal. The shops and cafés could generate social interaction depending on how they were to be accessed by pedestrian and vehicular connections. He does not suggest the form of tenure under which these enterprises would operate, nor any methods for ensuring the spatial and economic niches that allow for a diversity of services. Like any form of pedestrian mall, its individual components are privately controlled, and can be considered public only within a clientele demographic. The streets of La Ville Contemporaine are considered public. They occur on a completely different grade than the pedestrian mall. These high-speed arteries are single-purpose right-of-ways. Even different modes of movement are separated from one another. Under the premise of safety and efficiency, social space and functional space never coexist. The center point of the city, which he describes as ‘the hub of the wheel’, lacks the natural focus of a traditional town center. Instead it accommodates every form of traffic in a complex multi-level station. Fishman remarked, “Le Corbusier has placed no cathedral or civic monument there. The center serves people going somewhere else —”(p.191).

The park that envelops the city is the place for people. It is strictly a leisure environment. It is not entangled with the daily functions of life. Its purpose, presumably, is for Sunday afternoon picnics – a seemingly limited use for 95% of the ground plane. Le Corbusier,

unfortunately, seemed not to understand the making of space. Although the public realm was ubiquitous in his proposal, it was designed only as negative space, as the undifferentiated background to his towers in the sky. The belief in machine order and efficiency overrides any real investigation of the making of social space. His fascination with technology blinded him to the human need for complexity and unpredictability.

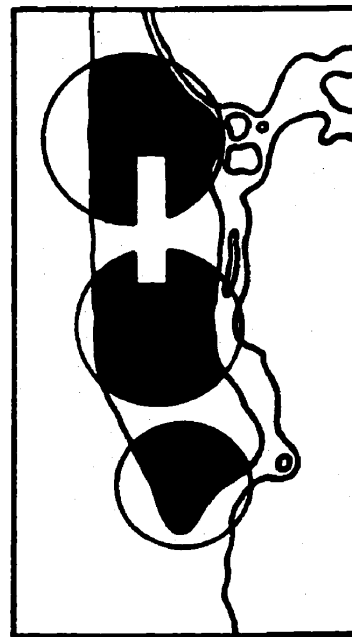
“The result of repetition is a *standard*, the perfect form”(p.183). The aesthetic is the sublime. In the hands of an architectural master, it could be a very powerful urban image. Incomplete imitations are another matter. The City of Tomorrow does not lend itself to partial implementation – the high-rises without the parks, density without transportation, slum clearance without social reform. Yet these are exactly the type of solutions that were imposed on countless inner city neighborhoods in Britain and America.

replacement of urban form...

During the period of the Second World War, Eliel Saarinen observed crowding and deteriorated housing stock in large poverty-stricken neighborhoods of New York. He foresaw only two options – mass slum clearance, or the overwhelming of the city by the expansion of slum areas. He described his strategy as ‘organic decentralization’.

By relocating people and land-uses to more ‘open and sunny’ spaces, the worst areas of the city could be transformed into protective⁸ green belts. This was consistent with the position of the New York City Planning Commission Land Use Masterplan (except they imply a more gradual approach). Saarinen wrote, “The process of rebuilding is therefore expected to take place not lot by lot as in the past, but whole blocks and groups of blocks at a time.”(p.229). The result would be a Manhattan comprised of three low or mid-density neighborhoods, encircled by public open space.

The removal of these so-called slum areas found its way to the civic agendas of most American cities a decade after Saarinen’s prophetic vision. Sadly, green belts seldom did. Corbusier’s towers among parks had been reduced to towers among parking. Modern housing



Saarinen's Manhattan
(1943)

⁸ It is not clear what is meant by the term ‘protective’. What does it protect against – pollution, poverty, urbanism?

projects suffered from their lack of integration with the urban environment, as well as their depersonalizing scale. Author Hans Blumenfeld, in *The Modern Metropolis* (1967) wrote,

...large areas, comprising scores and sometimes hundreds of acres, have been expropriated at tremendous cost to the taxpayer. Thousands of families and scores of small businesses have been uprooted. (p.76)

Looking back today, we know that existing blocks and streets *could* have been retained. There was nothing inherently wrong with centuries' old urban patterns. Rapid growth was one condition that led to rapid mass rebuilding. Sennett draws a connection between the periods of widespread hardship surrounding the Great Depression the types of solutions that were advocated.

Economic cataclysm prompted the desire for sleek, perfect things as relief. The architect and the unemployed, both driven, if for different reasons, by a desire for transcendence, shared the dream of a city of chrome. (p.170)

Roger Trancik, in his book *Finding Lost Space* (1986), acknowledged that modernism made economic sense from the perspective of cheaper mass production, but at the same time he lamented the eradication of detail and ornament, without which we miss out on layers of culture and meaning.

Reflecting on the great masterplans of the modernist era, one is compelled to ask, can modern technology do anything to make cities better or is it inextricably bent on ripping cities apart? Charles, Prince of Wales, has been extremely outspoken against modern architecture, suggesting that the post-war rebuilding did more damage to the cities of Britain than the war itself (Scully 1994). David Rusk (1999) shared the belief that cities were made worse, not better, through the efforts of modernism. He wrote: "Many of the most vital downtown areas of the 1990s are those that had the good sense or good luck to escape the federal bulldozer of the 1960s."(p.90). Winnipeg is one such city. Due in part to its characteristic slow growth (Leo and Brown 1998), we do not suffer the effects of cataclysmic freeway projects or high-rise ghettos. However, caution is in order. Although the sixties had very few radical impacts on our city, popular urban patterns borrowed from other cities continue to move us toward the same effect.

2.4 The Suburban Magnet

Los Angeles is often seen as the prototypical suburban city. However, there are suburban precedents that predate the growth of LA. History does repeat itself: friction between economic classes, inner city riots, out-migration of the well to do. This was the scenario of

Manchester, England in the 1820s and 30s (Fishman 1987). It is a common misconception that the suburb was a byproduct of the automobile. In fact, original horse power was similarly effective.

cultural context...

Suburbs evolved from the weekend villa, which dates back to the Renaissance (Fishman 1987). The emergence of Anglican Puritan family values in the eighteenth century led to the notion of the home as a cultural institution. Where the home at one time had been inseparable from work, this arrangement was seen as mixing the sacred and the profane. Making the country home the permanent residence was viewed as a good and appropriate move. This was the foundation for Clapham Common, established two hundred years ago five miles outside of London.

As the name suggests, Clapham Common was arranged around a public open space. Private outdoor spaces were loosely defined and overlapping. Subsequent villa neighborhoods such as Victoria Park in Manchester defined territory more stringently by creating completely fenced yards. Squatter settlements of the urban poor were located around the periphery of expanding cities. There was some concern about their proximity to the villas, especially in the absence of territorial cues.

process of expansion...

By the 1850s, developers were erecting quick and cheap 'mini-villas', which offered hardly more space or quality than a townhouse in the city. Crowding and inflated land prices in the city center were major triggers that led more people to choose a suburban alternative. Land was typically divided to be sold in large lots, but if and when these did not sell fast enough, they could be further split into smaller lots. According to Fishman, this development strategy is really what opened up the suburbs to the middle-class.

The aesthetic vision that characterized these new neighborhoods was based on the philosophy of Andrew Jackson Downing, author of *Cottage Residences*. The prescription amounted to gothic ecclesiastic at a humble domestic scale. Natural looking gardens would 'uplift the soul' and soften the built form. Fishman calls it an emotional style: "true authenticity is irrelevant"(p.124). Drawing much inspiration from British landscape gardener John Nash and writer J.C. Loudon, Downing introduced suburban design to America. Given the lineage of Downing's ideas, Fishman challenged the popular notion that the suburban villa was an American cultural entity.

[The suburb] did not, I believe, emerge from an indigenous Jeffersonian tradition of domestic architecture and antiurbanism that had somehow lain dormant in the American urban soul. The success of the suburban

ideal in mid nineteenth century America came from a group of publicists who successfully presented – some might say marketed – the English suburban villa as the ideal American dwelling. (Fishman 1987, p.121)

The first new development to capitalize on the American picturesque suburban movement was Llewellyn Park (1857), sited across the Hudson River from Manhattan. It set itself apart from its English predecessors with its bold integration of a dynamic natural landscape. Perched on a mountain slope, winding around fifty acres of lush greenery, its villas receded into an indigenous environment – an achievement seldom repeated in later suburbs.

Olmstead's contribution to the suburban movement came in the form of Riverside, Illinois, in 1868. Inspired in part by Baron Haussmann's grand boulevards of Paris, its wide streets were intended as an environment for the social life of the community. Large unfenced yards⁹ resulted from a generous setback requirement. Thus the private outdoor space augmented the perceived scale of the public boulevards. Although Olmstead believed in the social importance of public life, he was faced with the reality of the nineteenth century city. He saw an antidote to the unlivable urban condition in landscapes of green. The ubiquitous lawns of North American suburbia have their origin in his public parks and suburban developments (Fishman 1987).

railway suburbs...

Rail transit sparked a boom in suburban expansion. Most cities were still growing rapidly, but this development allowed expansion outward, relieving the center of the continued intensification. For the first time since the industrial revolution began, the pressures of urban centralization were subsiding. Hans Blumenfeld (1967) remarked how, inevitably, *intraurban* transportation caught up with the expanding markets of the commercial city.

The densely crowded agglomeration of the nineteenth century with its concomitant, the fantastic skyrocketing of urban land values, turns out to have been a short-lived passing phenomenon... it was bound to disappear forever; and few will regret its passing. (p.43)

Urban historians look back at the brief period of railway suburbs as the high watermark of good urban form. There was strong pedestrian orientation. Tree-lined sidewalks were the lifeline between the home and the transit artery. Neighborhood shops and services grew up in nodes at the stops. Apartments complemented the mix at these suburban hubs. Kunstler (1993) wrote,

It is not necessary to hop in the car to get an ice cream cone or a bottle of aspirin. You walk to the store – enjoying the felicities of the street as you go – and you are able to see other people along the way. You may

⁹ This was a deliberate reaction against the type of 'walled villas' epitomized by Victoria Park of thirty years earlier.

even have a conversation with a stranger. This is called meeting people, the quintessential urban pleasure. (p.127)

Unlike the introverted layout of the early villa communities or the modern gated communities, the streetcar suburb was open and networked to the greater metropolitan area. The street grid maximized freedom of movement both within these neighborhoods and to adjacent city areas (Pope 1996).

Joel Garreau (1991) refuted the superiority of the rail-based suburb. Regarding the early railways, he wrote, “those robber baron institutions which moved people where, when, with what frequency and at what price corporations chose.”(p.107). Although the streetcars were run as private companies, their license to lay track on city streets was conditional on keeping fares set at a publicly agreed rate. Kunstler cited other reasons for their demise. In fact, the government regulation of these railway companies made it quite difficult for them to earn a real profit, especially in light of upcoming competition. Of course, after the First World War, the automobile was an incredible novelty, soon to be mass-produced for middle-class America. Suddenly, the streetcar system was old technology.

automobile suburbs...

The original streetcar systems were not subsidized by the government. Neither were automobiles per se, but the public network on which they depended was. Kunstler observed the repercussions of shadow government in the works of New York’s Bridge and Tunnel Authority, headed by Robert Moses. He described it as a “quasigovernmental body that operated like a private corporation”(p.98).

Moses’ limited-access parkways were models for the modern freeway (Fishman 1987). By moving high volumes of automobiles, the authority was able to raise incredible amounts of money with its tolls. This freed it from having to request funding. The expansion of its ‘public’ works was motivated by two factors. One was the excitement over a new modernist landscape – one of great speed and super-human structure. The other was financial success, and the power and independence that came with it. Nineteenth century railway systems did not fit to either of these goals. One of Moses’ former aides recently described the prevailing attitude. “Mass transit does not produce a profit. It is a social good, but a financial loser”(Kunstler 1993, p.100).

At the same time, General Motors, through a number of subsidiary companies, was enacting its own changes to urban transportation. It bought out electric railway systems in cities all over North America to replace them with modern, more flexible buses. However, this did not effect an improvement in the quality of transit service. Mass transit was quickly becoming the transport mode of the under-privileged. Kunstler asserted that the ulterior motive in making

transit as undesirable as possible was a strategy to increase auto sales – “to replace public transportation with private transportation”(p.92).

The appeal and proliferation of the car requires very little explanation. This development more than any other, according to Garreau, was able to “accommodate the logic of our lives”(p.106). It illustrates what we value. Mobility and choice are obviously cherished commodities (Owens 1992). In the mid-1920s, the choice was put to city of Los Angeles: whether to invest in a subway/light rail system or to substantially expand the road and highway system. The decision decided its fate. There were obviously a number of reasons, a principal one was that private transportation promised direct point A to point B movement.

Widespread automobile ownership sparked a second wave of suburban expansion, this time filling in areas between the earlier streetcar lines. These new car-oriented suburbs were substantially different in their form than their predecessors. Unlike the streetcar suburbs, which had to be designed to accommodate pedestrian movement, these would instead be configured to maximize automobile access. Sidewalks have disappeared, but streets are wide enough and corners radiused enough to allow cars to maneuver with ease.

There is no clear explanation why sidewalks are not incorporated. One reason may be that these new neighborhoods have no mixed-use hubs that can be reached by foot. Since automobile ownership has become a prerequisite to living in these communities, commercial centers have no reason to be close. Secondly, walking *on* the street is possible because the cul-de-sac hierarchy of suburban streets excludes most traffic flow. The theory put forth by Kunstler describes the value placed on public amenities. The cost of laying sidewalk across a single frontage would be equivalent to that of a backyard pool. For what it’s worth, they would rather just have the pool.

government endorsement...

The Great Depression and the tools forged to deal with it had a permanent effect on suburban development. In America, the Federal Housing Administration was established to bring together building trades, lending institutions, and prospective homebuyers. Before FHA assistance, buying a home often involved multiple mortgages at 12-15% interest. The New Deal introduced the long-term amortized mortgage. It also reduced the required down payment from upwards of 30% down to 10%. These changes single-handedly opened up homeownership to the majority of the workforce. There were a couple of profound limitations. Only *new* homes qualified. This enshrined the attitude that it was better to build anew than to maintain the old. Secondly, new houses in old neighborhoods could also be excluded from the program through a

form of redlining. Clearly, new growth was the primary goal. It was simply not politically popular to dwell on old run-down areas in light of tremendous pressures for growth.

The terms on which loans were insured included a detailed set of codes that shaped the way suburbs were laid out. In order to guarantee the value of its collateral, the government specified characteristics intended to ensure the value and quality of the built product (Bressi 1994). City planning departments continued the process of establishing standards in order to simplify their approval process. Zoning was devised to segregate 'non-conforming' land uses. The size, the orientation, and the position of the house on its lot were regulated. Access streets were scaled to accommodate emergency vehicles and to ensure safe and fluid movement for the daily commuter. The building industry welcomed this prescriptive method of development.

Today, innovative community planners have a difficult time overcoming regulations that have become entrenched with age, in spite of the fact that so many are highly arbitrary and increasingly outdated. Since most local codes were replicated from one region to another, so too could suburban designs be used and reused from one location to another without any consideration of local conditions.

decentralized cities...

As the central city lost more and more people to suburbia, even its role as a central business district came into question. The conveniences offered by the mall and the strip quickly began to out-compete the old downtown. In the seventies, as record numbers of women began to seek work outside the home, a wide range of businesses and industry began to realize the advantages of locating at the suburban fringe.

Corporate and commercial hubs have materialized miles from the traditional center. The classical density gradient from center to fringe has given way to a multi-centered model. It has been argued that these new clusters represent an antidote to urban congestion (Fishman 1987, Garreau 1991). This is because of its low-rise profile, its ample free parking, and its use of a green buffer – strips of turf along roadsides and parking lots punctuated by the occasional tree. While these elements do create a certain perception of openness, their actual value is questionable. It is doubtful that they even combat the problems of congestion. It is rare that the area of the city where a person lives coincides with where they work. The suburb-to-suburb commute is becoming the dominant transportation pattern. Fishman described the advanced condition of LA: "Los Angeles, which had set out to eliminate the congestion of the older industrial city, would up creating its own novel form: decentralized congestion"(p.157).

basis of appeal...

Despite their shortcomings, the popularity of suburbs and edge communities has never been stronger. They continue to be aggressively marketed, as they have been since their early days. An entire economy has evolved to give them momentum. Yet these conditions alone do not guarantee their success. Consumers will make critical decisions about an environment based on how it measures up to their needs and lifestyles. Quiet low-flow streets will give the perception of safety, particularly where young children are involved. Young families will be inclined to congregate together in an area, so their kids can find friends close to home.

At the beginning of their life cycle, suburbs have the appearance of perfect maintenance. People want their buying-dollar to get them tangible value. Whether they spend \$50 000, \$100 000, or \$200 000, people want to be able to see exactly what is theirs. From the ground up, the landscape, the built form, even the view all comprise identity and autonomy. The freedom to shape one's world is encapsulated within the bounds of a property line.

prevalence...

The proliferation of suburbia since World War II has precluded any other residential arrangements. While it is clear (and will be further expanded on in the next section) that there were strong forces that led to the popular decision to move from the central cities to the suburbs in the first place, it is less clear today the reasons people chose to live outside of the centers. Of course, all the characteristics listed in the introduction amount to an environment that contrasts sharply with the accepted image of a residential neighborhood (Rapoport 1982). However, paradoxically, those characteristics can be attributed to the absence of population. Acknowledging this situation, it has been suggested that people do not reside in suburbia by choice, but rather, by default. In 'Urban compaction: feasible and acceptable?' (1997), Michael Breheny discussed this position.

...consumer demand is not an expression of choices, but is heavily constrained. Thus, for example, the lack of investment in inner cities makes them an unattractive alternative, while subsidies and mortgage rules induce the purchase of suburban houses. (p.211)

Peter Calthorpe (1993) believed that the contemporary pattern of growth, to a large extent, results from "public policy and subsidies, outdated regulations, environmental forces, technology, and simple inertia" (p.10). Yet it is the mainstay for many key industries – home construction, civil engineering, automakers, along with the whole range of spin-off industries such as home security, lawn and garden supplies, gasoline companies, and mortgage providers. These all have a vested interest in the status quo.

homogeneity...

“In suburbia, there is only one available lifestyle: to own a car and to need it for everything.”(Duany, *et al.* 2000, p.25). The suburbs have become synonymous with a particular lifestyle and culture. Critics often draw an allegory between the behavioral patterns that typify suburbanites and the cookie-cutter houses and layouts of suburbia. The 1990 motion picture *Edward Scissorhands* captures this bizarre predictability in an opening shot. Brightly colored houses lining a suburban street belie an uncanny sameness in their design. The mechanical exactness of this reality is exemplified by the perfect synchronization of cars leaving their homes at the commencement of the morning commute.

Today there is an increasing proportion of households that do not fit the classic norm. Single parents, childless couples, and young independent professionals are among a significant group of people who are finding themselves “miscast in suburbia” (Baldassare 1986, p.170).

3. Roots of a Solution

Author James Howard Kunstler remarked that we are now two generations removed from an urban culture of any quality and fears that its memory and the skills in creating it may be lost forever. Whether in spite of this or due to nostalgia, there is a longing for a return to ‘an architecture of community’ (Katz 1994). David Rusk, in *Inside Game Outside Game* (1999), cited the results of a recent survey. It polled 4500 individuals on visual preference and found an overwhelming affinity for traditional commercial streets over shopping malls, and for denser older neighborhoods over even upscale suburban development.

3.1 Where to Begin

residents first...

A new convention center, or sportsplex, or retail or corporate headquarters will not guarantee an invigorated downtown. Entertainment complexes and convention facilities may draw large numbers of people that could benefit the downtown through any number of economic spin-offs. However, more often, this has shown *not* to be the case. Rusk observed some degree of retail buoyancy offered by arenas, stadiums, and the like, but mainly users drive directly back to the suburbs after an event. The architectural typology of these complexes is typically an introverted box. Windows are not required, because the only desired interaction with the street is the comings and goings of visitors, many of whom will not exit to the street anyways, but rather to adjoining or underground parking facilities. CentreVenture's Elizabeth Sweatman has suggested that our arena should stay in the suburbs, that it could not do much to help the downtown¹⁰.

By itself, an arena would not do any harm to the downtown, and might even add to the rich mix of functions that comprise the city center. When we get too hung up on the creation of an *entertainment district*, we risk losing a balanced mix. The proliferation of downtown amusement centers for suburbanites threatens the traditional urban morphology and any hope of creating vital central neighborhoods. A suburbanized downtown, or worse, a downtown as a theme park for tourism and marketing creates highly artificial public spaces, if any at all. It is a common trap for cities to design a downtown for tourists to the at the cost of its own residents. The result would be a city center without *city*, in its truest sense.

In their essay, 'The Neighborhood, the District, and the Corridor' (1994), Duany and Plater-Zyberk wrote that "few pure districts are really justified" (p.xix). The identification of a district could add to a neighborhood's character, but it does not exempt the full array of functions – civic, cultural, recreational, as well as commercial – that constitute community life (Garland 1981).

The solution to the urban condition will not be found in any mega-project, but rather in every single resident who decides to stake a claim in the city center. The greatest return the city

¹⁰ personal communication April 3, 2000.

could hope for from investing in a downtown baseball stadium would be the number of people who might want to live near by.

the idea of center...

Residents, both suburban and inner city, need to feel that they have priority in their neighborhood. In the center, this means that drive-through users are to be regarded as guests. To what extent residents wish to accommodate these users should be at the discretion of the neighborhood, not the metropolitan majority.

At the same time we acknowledge that the downtown itself is not just another neighborhood area. It is a city's common ground, its shared history. The downtown is the city's showcase for visitors, where we express what makes us truly unique. How we live should be an integral part of that. Urban living should be demonstrated in the core in all its many forms, catering to every class of people. This is what will prevent the downtown from becoming a ghetto of old, unwanted buildings and dilapidated houses.

recalled urbanism...

Due in part to contemporary demographics, there has been a reawakening to the notion of urban culture and a demand for decent housing close to urban amenities and meeting places. Moshe Safdie, architect and author of *Beyond Habitat* (1970), recognized the spirit of this cultural shift.

That mixture of being in the busiest, most crowded urban meeting place and, at the same time, a hundred feet away, going through a door and being alone in your house, was an incredible experience. (p.12)

Of course, it is not expected that every city dweller shares this enthusiasm for proximity of urban amenities. The advantage of a diverse and complex urban organization is that there are limitless options. Duany, *et al.*, (2000) wrote,

One can live above the store, beside the store, five minutes from the store, or nowhere near the store, and it is easy to imagine the different age groups and personalities that would prefer each alternative. (p.25)

Living at urban densities not only brings one closer to other people, it also augments neighborhood buying power. An increase in the concentration of people creates a market for a greater diversity of attractions and services that can be close at hand. Architect Manfred J. May in his publication, *To Build the Compact Green City* (1993), stated that there are considerable cost savings that could be incurred through more compact development – less land used, less spread of services and infrastructure. This gain could be turned to make compact cities more livable through investment in better public amenities and public spaces.

The urban environment is truly one of the unique landscapes of the Earth. Its experience is as much about daily cultural discourse as it is about architectural expression. While we appreciate that landscapes change over time, the preservation of a living landscape is an important goal not only within landscape architecture but also for society as a whole. Cities traditionally grew naturally into their urbanity, and the foundation for the urban environment still exists in the old core. Today, other agendas have supplanted the working urban environment and a conscious effort will need to be made to recover the more humane landscape that fosters dynamic urbanism.

3.2 Theories & Principles

If the urban utopias from the first half of the century taught us one thing it was that no masterplan can replicate or replace the natural complexity of urban systems. Nonetheless, we still dream of a better city of tomorrow. Today we see design and planning principles rather than ideal visions. Urban design and landscape architecture offer numerous tools to maximize the potential of burgeoning neighborhoods in brownfield locations and to recover old neighborhoods that have seen decades of disinvestments.

CentrePlan...

In 1999, the City of Winnipeg released a 45-page report analyzing the character of downtown and outlining urban design concepts to improve its overall appeal. It deals broadly with urban neighborhoods, character areas, transportation, public places, and landscape qualities. No particular category is given priority over any other (though transportation is dealt with most heavily). However, there is recognition of the interrelationships between them.

CentrePlan affirms the role of the public realm as a pedestrian environment. Many of its recommendations are rooted in reinforcing the viability of a pedestrian downtown. It explores ways that art and landscape can come together to delight the senses and improve the popularity of streets and gathering spots. It looks at common comfort issues such as shade, splash and wind protection, and restroom facilities. There is recognition of the need for open space nodes and other outdoor features that punctuate pedestrian movement.

Important institutions such as the library and convention center are identified as vital magnets for downtown activity, and an increase in their capacity is anticipated. CentrePlan also makes note of several glaring pockets of underdeveloped land in the downtown. It refers to these

as future “landmark sites”. It is such amenities, the document states, that set the downtown apart from suburban development.

The way that the downtown is interconnected and the means for getting around is a subject of much discussion. Certain modes of transportation are more sensitive to the public realm and these are the focus of CentrePlan’s transportation review. It looks at setting up dedicated routes for alternatives to the automobile. The possibility is raised that vehicular lanes may need to be given over to other uses. A streetcar line is proposed; expansion of the water taxi is examined; new pedestrian-only routes are plotted. Multi-use right-of-ways could take form with shops suspended along a new bridge. With the acknowledgement that the downtown considerably larger than areas tackled by other cities with urban design aspirations, CentrePlan puts a great deal of emphasis on linking disjointed areas of our city center.

While on the one hand CentrePlan seeks to link areas together, it also celebrates the distinctions between various areas. It discusses cultural districts and character areas. Decorative signage and artistic markers may be an improvement over generic engineered street furniture, but the architectural and natural heritage that persists downtown gives genuine *placeness* to an area. Another of its strategies is the establishment of neighborhood boundaries and the highlighting of neighborhood entrances.

CentrePlan identifies existing and developing neighborhoods in the downtown area. Included in its recommendations is the promotion of new residential development and the conversion of historic structures to residential use. The need for neighborhood amenities such as schools and supermarkets is noted.

The organizational entity assigned to carry out the goals of CentrePlan is CentreVenture, an ‘arms-reach’ branch of city hall. Although it has only been around for two years, it draws much inspiration from the twenty-year-old Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation.

Weiming Lu, the CEO of the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation, recently addressed the University of Manitoba’s Faculty of Architecture¹¹. He emphasized the value of the vision plan. It was important that it be graphical as well as textual. It served to unite the public and the Corporation toward an end goal that was clear and tangible. The vision for Lowertown includes a mix of housing types, community services, shopping and entertainment, as well as an abundance of parks and open spaces. There is no stylistic preference associated with the Lowertown vision. They use guidelines cautiously and selectively. Of greater importance is

¹¹ March 23, 1999 presentation: Towards a Vibrant Downtown – Exploring the Potentials of Development Corporations

the way each project complements the others – whether all the parts are compatible and add up to a unified whole.

Lu described how the urban design process differs from project design. The latter typically has a set program, a geographical boundary, and a completion date. Urban design has none of these. The process is on-going; the corporation does not own the land it is planning; boundaries, if they exist, will shift over time; the program will be determined based on needs and opportunities.

climatic consideration...

In *Reshaping Winter Cities* (1985), Norman Pressman stressed the need for design to acknowledge and address the conditions of our northern climate, and explains how a compact urban settlement is the most appropriate morphology. For example, there is an economic gain in having a centralized heating system serve larger buildings or a group of buildings. More significantly, there are strategies available to make the outdoor environment more usable. There are times of the year when a trek outdoors is an excruciating experience. It seems that we relish the times we *can* enjoy the outdoors all the more because of this. Unfortunately, we seem to have evolved a system fixed on protecting us from ever having to go outdoors. We are transported from our attached garages to the parkade at work in environmental isolation. Increasing opportunities for leisure and functional outdoor experience would improve our quality of life. The outdoor season can be extended up to six weeks through the use of such devices as solar orientation, mitigation of wind, canopies and arcades, and even the use of building exhaust. Compact city centers also experience the urban heat-island effect, raising the ambient air temperature. These factors not only create a more enjoyable spring and autumn, they can also make our winters a little less harsh.

organic urban design ...

What should set the downtown apart, Colin Ward (1985) argued, is fine-grained, pedestrian-friendly development. A pedestrian downtown can only handle so many big-box attractions because in relation to their size, they provide very little interaction with the street and public realm. Compared with a traditional rhythm and proportion of buildings and entrances at semi-regular intervals along a city street, large, uniform buildings lack visual variety and opportunities for that interplay between the public and private.

“Piecemeal growth”, according to Christopher Alexander *et al.*, (1987) is one the primary ways to achieve organic wholeness. Piecemeal growth allows development to be

flavored by a variety of different *times* and interests. It provides an opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of previous components and adapt to minute variations in circumstance.

This type of urban reproduction does not imply sporadic, unorganized growth. It must be guided in such a way that it incrementally creates new *wholes* and *centers* at a variety of scales. David Engwicht (1993) further explains this concept.

If every street, every neighborhood becomes the city in microcosm, reflecting the full diversity of the city, then a richer range of exchange is facilitated. (p. 124)

It is impossible to plan for these emergent creations *carte blanche*, but designers must seek them in what has come before and foster them in new projects. The final form is unknown but can be envisioned in some fashion at every step.

Engwicht also subscribes to an *organic design* model. His key points for rebuilding healthy neighborhoods aim more towards the pragmatic than the theoretical. He states that neighborhoods need definition; they need a physical point of focus; they need as much diversity and self-sufficiency as possible at the neighborhood scale.

the public realm...

The neighborhood and its amenities require efficient barrier-free access to all regardless of whether they operate a motor vehicle. Engwicht endorses the use of density and mixed-use planning to bring people closer to one another and to the myriad of urban amenities. He also supports a system that assesses the direct and indirect costs of private automobile use on the city. The enjoyment of this common privilege should not come at the cost of other, more *exchange-friendly*, right-of-way uses. In fact, it should help pay for them.

The development and protection of public areas is identified as a priority. Community history and culture must find expression. Equally important, there needs to be a medium through which the community can come together to celebrate, commiserate, or take a stand, as local events affect the community. One such medium ought to be the public discourse of a street life.

Across the continent, city leaders and urban theorists pursue a vibrant street life as the elusive Holy Grail in downtown revival. Its broad appeal corresponds to the vagueness of the idea. Engwicht discusses street life as being a smaller scale version of an urban life that would play out in central nodes and gathering spaces. In either case, the urban elements must focus attention on the public right-of-way. The street space must achieve its own identity. It must be efficient in its primary role. If that happens to be the connection to vital services, it should connect as easily as possible. If it is a quieter space for children to play, then the design should facilitate play.

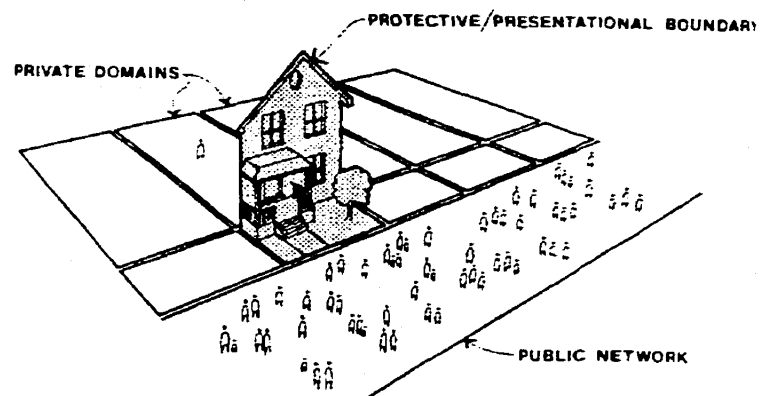
the private realm...

In Chermayeff and Alexander's *Community and Privacy* (1963), there is a review of the some essential but easily overlooked requirements for creating residential environments. Many remain valid considerations for ensuring successful neighborhoods. They touch on parking needs for visitors, as well as residents, and accommodation for loading and unloading furniture or heavy luggage. They call for the control of microclimate for comfort and safety (i.e. cover from rain, prevention of wind tunnels, snow accumulation). Boundaries between public, private, and semi-private domains need to be clear and logical. Noise is addressed as a serious threat to one's sense of privacy and well being in the home. The relationship between public event spaces and private dwellings must respect the need for acoustic separation. Similarly, heavy traffic and public works equipment can generate noise that denigrates the quality of neighborhood life, and must be brought under control.

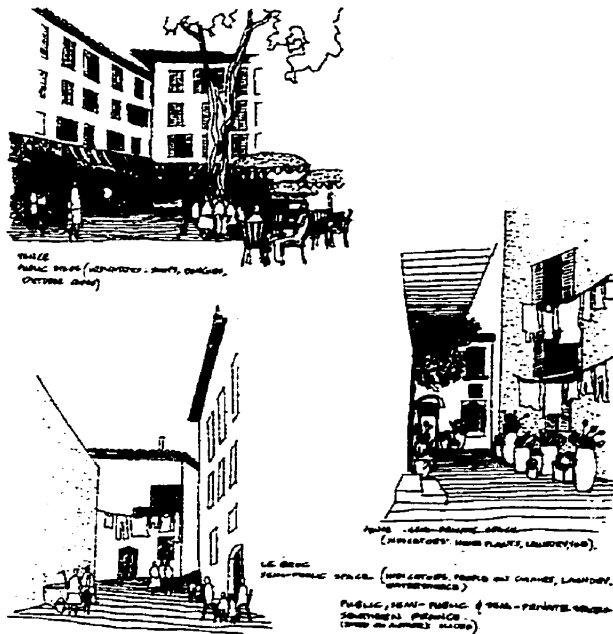
The architectural concern with neighboring and community is commendable, but privacy must be established before people will reach out into the community. (Marcus and Sarkissian 1986, p.67)

Marcus and Sarkissian described the use of 'transitional filters'. These intermediate stages between public and private space are "zones or filters that make them more and more aware that they are entering a private domain as they approach the dwelling." (p.78). Peter Smith, in his 1980 thesis, *Willow Park East Housing Cooperative*, illustrated the transitional role played by the front of a traditional dwelling. He credited the notion of a 'protective/ presentational boundary' to architect Steve Cohlmeyer. It showed how a portion of the private environment interacts with the public realm and at the same time serves to reinforce the sanctity of the home beyond the facade. (Rapoport 1982).

Territorial indicators communicate meaning about a space. Spatial discontinuities such as change in level, change



(Smith 1980)



Rapoport 1982

RAPPOPORT

in direction, or a more intimate scale can combine to indicate a semi-private space. Hedges, gateways, or other narrow openings suggest the nature of a space. Even the type of human activity occurring or represented in a space prescribes certain behavior of others.

safety...

Defensible Space is the term coined for an environment that has been designed with consideration of safety and security. This is a troublesome topic because it forces us to reconcile the fact that in every neighborhood there are individuals bent on damaging property and

accosting vulnerable citizens. Recognition of this fact has led to such radical solutions as secure gated communities as well as to the less radical introversion of civic buildings and spaces.

The term *defensible space* is used quite differently by different sources. It is commonly used to describe a delineated haven of safety – a private yard or common space that is explicitly non-public. Transitional filters, previously discussed, become critical cues for identifying territory. It has also been applied on a community-wide scale. (The intent is to achieve the effect of the gated communities, without the gates.) For its attempt to achieve maximum separation between public space and all other spaces, it has been criticized for turning its back on the public realm. Barry Goodchild (1997) observed that this strategy is heavily biased toward suburban development – the individual house surrounded by a private space buffer. He stated,

Thus it uses a familiar environmental image which, irrespective of its value as a crime prevention measure, is perceived as safe, respectable and is particularly well-suited to the rearing of children. (p.51)

This defensible space thesis, often attributed to Oscar Newman, can be shown to be in conflict with the natural surveillance technique, attributed to Jacobs. Her 'eyes-on-the-street' philosophy was based on the belief that there is strength in numbers – crimes are less likely to be committed when there are people present and occupied buildings overlook a space. This is accomplished through encouraging intensive pedestrian use of an area. It also favored the intermixing of public and private spaces. She did not address spaces equivalent to transitional

filters, nor for that matter, any inclusion of semi-private space. The approach is one of taming the public realm, making it useable as living space for adults and children, residents and strangers.

To some extent, it is possible to combine these two concepts. Marcus and Sarkissian included both in discussing defensible space. Newman's approach has received much criticism for jeopardizing the public realm. However, where the dense population base necessary to provide natural surveillance is absent, his approach can still be applied selectively. Goodchild listed among its aims, "the promotion of a sense of neighborliness that enables residents to identify anyone who does not belong"(p.51). Public space should be interspersed throughout a community, but private and semi-private space should be identifiably separate.

3.3 New Urbanism

Pedestrians are the catalyst which makes essential qualities of communities meaningful. They create place and time for casual encounters and practical integration of diverse places and people. Without the pedestrian, a community's common ground – its parks, sidewalks, squares, and plazas – become useless obstructions to the car. (Calthorpe 1993, p.17)

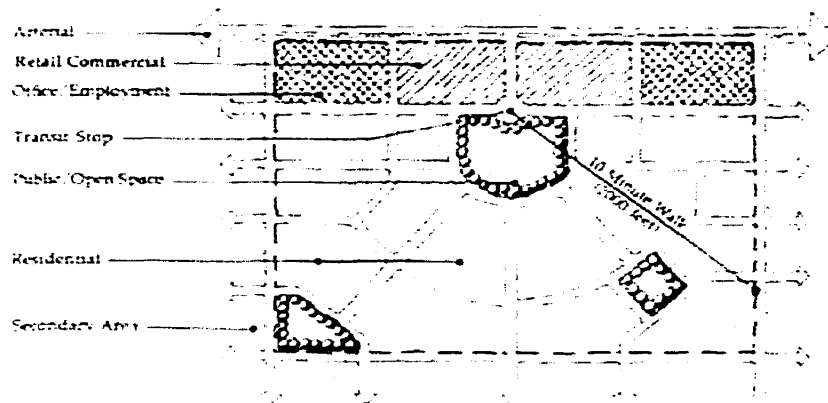
ideology...

While technology has both inspired and shaped contemporary urban form, human nature has not changed so very much. Beginning in the 1980s, a number of architects and planners began to react against the anti-social nature of modern community layouts. Leon Krier, in Europe, and Christopher Alexander, in America, were on the leading edge of counter-modern thinking in architecture. Alexander approached architecture through his 'pattern language' and 'organic design'. Krier wrote numerous manifestos on the evils of modern (typically American) urban development. He stressed the relationship of scale and proportion in good urban form to that of the human body. Using historical examples, he discussed the appropriate size and population for an urban center, and the need for a balance between monumental architecture and modest urban fabric in every *quartier* of a city.

Designers of the New Urbanist creed believe that there is a longing for a return to the qualities of the traditional town. Their use of century-old street patterns and building typologies has earned them a reputation for being *neo-traditional*. However, they have asserted that this is not a stylistic approach based on a nostalgic longing for a simpler time. The features of those historic communities evolved to express certain values, and to serve the needs of their residents.

At the end of the modernist era, it has been recognized that the past holds a wealth of lessons about how communities work. Contemporary lifestyles do not preclude the application of many of these lessons.

The key principle is the priority of public space. No longer are pocket parks and interstitial greens the extent of the public realm. In these newly designed communities, public open space is the fulcrum of the community layout. Neighborhoods have a recognizable center.



Calthorpe's transit-oriented community design
(Katz 1994)

They are imbued with meaning through the placement of public buildings and the patterns of movement through and around them. In Peter Calthorpe's basic model, streets radiate outwards from the community green. Office and commercial buildings align one side. Higher density townhouses typically flank the residential side.

As implied in the quote above, the provision of a strong public focus requires that there are people on foot to engage the space. When cars congregate *en masse*, it is called a traffic jam; when pedestrians mix in common space it is the essence of community life. Accommodating pedestrian movement throughout the community is a major aspect of the New Urbanist approach. Neighborhoods are organized to bring common places and amenities within a five or ten minute walk of all residences. The scale and proportion of streets and open spaces is carefully considered to make walking desirable. Texture and detail add interest and contribute to the overall feeling of comfort.

The grid of the pre-modern street layout has returned. Its value is that it is highly connective, shortening the walk between parts of the community. Its regular intersections provide a predictable rhythm to the streetscape. They also cause traffic to stop often, making the

streets safer. All the redundant streets that Le Corbusier and others saw as a waste actually disperse the flow of traffic into manageable quantities.

Transit is encouraged over individual auto use. In fact, Calthorpe's approach is known as Transit Oriented Development. With a light rail transit line at its heart, the pedestrian community is immediately connected to a larger region. At average densities over 10 units per acre (25/ha), there is enough of a passenger base to make the system viable. The most valuable attribute of public transit is that it makes travel a public event. It could be a much-needed exercise in today's road-rage culture for people to share the daily act of commuting in the same physical space with strangers.

Opportunities for casual interaction are designed into the patterns of the community. Waiting at a transit stop or walking the streets, neighbors can engage in conversation in a neutral space. These neutral spaces must be conducive to sharing a discussion or expressing a greeting. Scale is critical. The width of a street can determine whether or not two people on either side can exchange hellos. The volume of vehicular traffic comes into play as a major factor. As well, residences, through the use of a semi-public space, interact in a tangible way with the public realm.

The integration of public and commercial functions into a residential neighborhood has several advantages. Jane Jacobs illustrated how each provides ambient activity at different times of the day, preventing the diurnal abandonment of a neighborhood or district. Bringing these services closer together enables more daily functions to be accomplished on foot or by bike. By creating an urban morphology to be pedestrian friendly, it challenges corporations to break out of the typical chain-store homogeneity. The need for parking lots is alleviated when other forms of transportation are possible. When street parking can accommodate the daily volume of cars, asphalted lots that disrupt the continuity of the street wall are avoided and the urban fabric can remain cohesive.

obstacles...

Unfortunately, some New Urbanist communities have had difficulty getting commercial activity to locate in their mixed-use areas. Most businesses today depend on the steady flow of customers that tends to be associated with regional traffic arteries. These small, centralized communities have neither the population base nor the through traffic to make many businesses viable. Kentlands, a late eighties project by the team of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), suffered similar difficulty in trying to get a post office for their community. The postal service argued that the one in the neighboring town was intended to serve the entire area, and so, their public space lost out on its proposed signature building (Gunts 1991).

An important tool employed by DPZ are the codes that set the parameters for design work by others. Standard suburban bylaws were based on valid concerns about safety and quality of construction, but collectively they added up to a lifeless landscape. These *new* codes are conceived with the intent to establish a coherent townscape, and as such, they are graphic as much as they are numeric. They use both architectural codes that specify materials, fenestration, roof pitch, etc., and urban design codes that establish the layout, proportions, and widths of streets. Many could view this as the foundation of strict, and potentially arbitrary shadow government. In *The New Urbanism* (1994), Vincent Scully argued, "It is not 'fussy' or 'escapist' but essential,"(p.227). The intent is obviously to maintain a consistency and quality that might otherwise be left out for the sake of expediency or cost cutting. In fact, Scully suggested that the codes may not be strict enough. Many architects take design codes as a challenge for asserting their individuality. While signature buildings have their place, in excess or out of context, they can diminish the strength of the *community* image.

The majority of New Urbanist projects have been new growth at the periphery of cities or completely new towns. This has led to a perception that the design, as valuable as it may be, is clearly directed towards an elite clientele. They have responded to this by endorsing a variety of affordable housing options. Despite the lack of older dwelling stock in these new communities, which traditionally fills a low-income niche, their intended economic systems for affordable housing are not discussed.

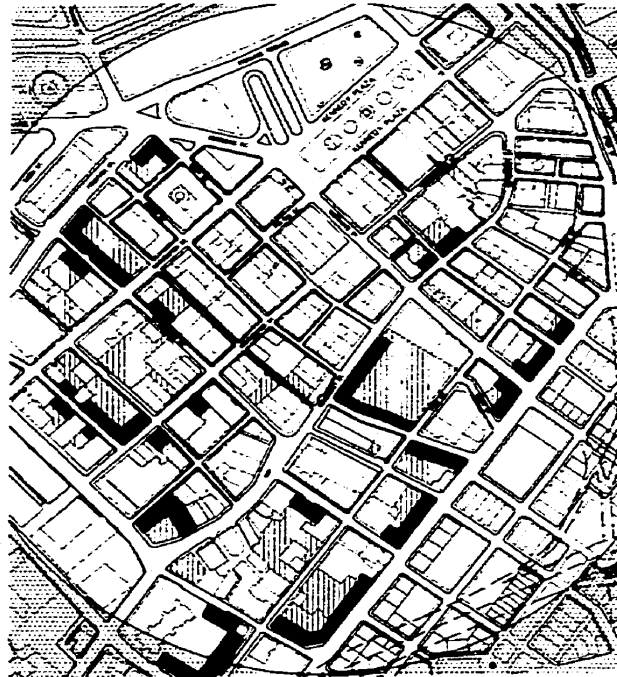
in the urban context...

The codes and planning principles on which the New Urbanist philosophy is founded work well when the context is essentially a clean slate, but what effect can these principles have on the problems of the existing metropolis if they are working outside of it? Katz's *The New Urbanism* (1994) covered a number of projects under the heading 'Restructuring the Urban Fabric'. Many of these apply New Urbanist features to streetscapes or old industrial sites. These, too, have limited impact on broader areas.

The Downcity masterplan for Providence, Rhode Island goes a little bit further. Focusing on the radius of a five minute walk from its center, the design team led by DPZ, identified land-use districts and street-use types to reinforce patterns of pedestrian use. No single 'big move' is proposed, but the intent is to set up a framework to focus the efforts of many small projects. One of the strategies illustrated attempts to mitigate the effects of parking lots without incurring the tremendous cost of constructing parkades. 'Liner buildings', occupying a narrow margin adjacent to the sidewalk, could enhance the pedestrian character of the street while leaving the majority of the site as parking. This pattern of site coverage may be the exact

opposite of traditional urban form, but it is a way to make a downtown both car and pedestrian friendly.

Another project that takes on a wider scope is the Downtown Los Angeles Strategic Plan released in 1993. Recognizing that the study area involves over eleven square kilometres of both private and publicly owned land, and that the process is geared toward long term redevelopment rather than short term remediation, the project team adopted a two-prong approach. A number of overall frameworks were plotted outlining major strategies for transit and open space, etc. At a smaller scale, sixteen 'catalytic projects' were designed for sites



**Hatching indicates surface parking;
black represents proposed liner buildings.**
(Katz 1994)

throughout the project areas. They were chosen for their ability to provide significant 'bang for the buck' at the initial phase of development. No singular vision directs the planning of projects. Each facet is seen as an incremental piece, seeding future public/private investment.

The Jackson Taylor redevelopment in San Jose is an example of New Urbanism applied to inner city working-class neighborhoods. As a rail-oriented industrial district gave way to redevelopment, it opened up an opportunity to knit together surrounding neighborhoods that were declining for their own lack of focus and appeal. By establishing a central hub and open space, designer Peter Calthorpe was able to unite two disparate neighborhoods. The occurrence of a rail line not only offers the potential for a future transit corridor, it justifies the breaking up of long through streets to mitigate automobile traffic.

3.4 Repopulated Downtowns

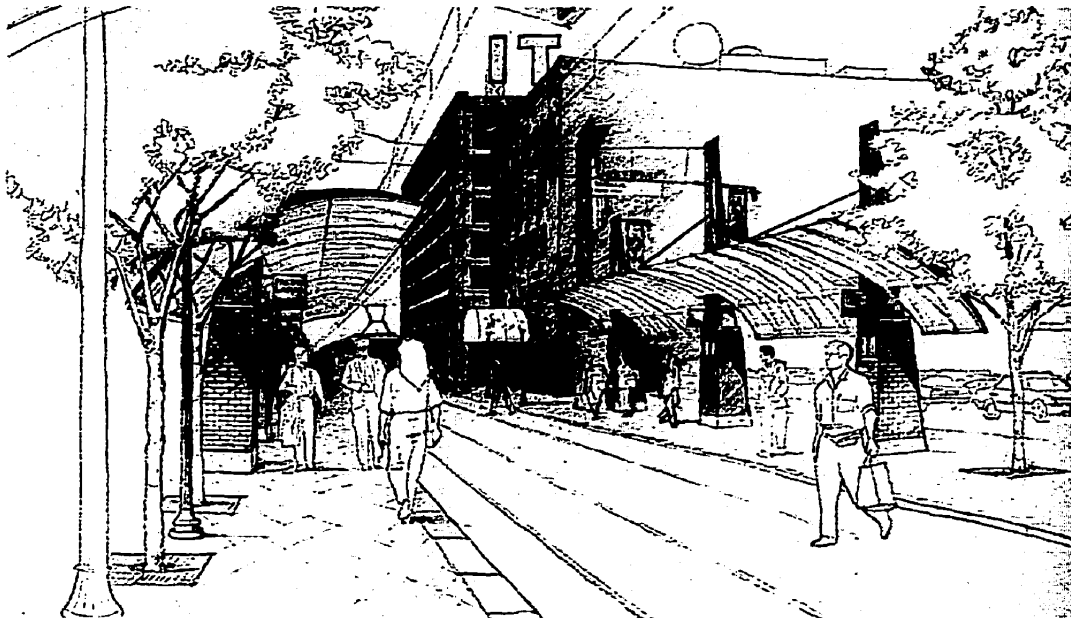
Many cities have battled with the question of how to implement downtown renewal. How does one generate an urban public life? Can residential infill alone catalyze renewal? Will

people move to central neighborhoods without major attraction in place first, or at least substantial improvement to the pedestrian and public space infrastructure?

a driven Dallas...

The City of Dallas, Texas makes an interesting case study. Well known as a prototypical southwest suburban metropolis, its downtown had been described as “bombed out and left for dead”(Dillon 1999, p.47). The 1990s began with a downtown office vacancy rate of 35 percent and landscape dominated by surface parking lots. A 1993 article in *Landscape Architecture* described the numerous obstacles facing their downtown including its then limited residential base: a single apartment complex housing 250 residents (Dillon 1993).

By contrast, Dallas today has seen vast improvement in its city center in a relatively short period of time. According to Alice Murray, writing for *Urban Land* (1998), one reason for redevelopment was the bottoming out of downtown real estate values. This combined with ambitious incentive programs offered by a mayor and city council that shared a strong vision of a more habitable downtown. Dillon also cited the “unexpected success of Dallas Area Rapid Transit...”(p.47). Born into controversy and political scandal in 1996, the light rail system was approved on a trial basis as second choice to an unaffordable subway project. Since ridership soared beyond the most optimistic projections, continuing expansion is extending the original starter line in three phases to 2003. Major civic attractions have since made a move to downtown



downtown transit hub concept by Sasaki & Associates
(Dillon 1993)

and others seem sure to follow. A new arena, a performing arts center, a sculpture garden, and a women's museum all have plans to join in the downtown revival.

With the addition of these new attractions, urban infill is bound to continue on its current course. In the last five years, the resident population of the downtown has risen from its isolated 250 individuals to a total of 1346 units that are either occupied or under construction¹². Unfortunately, these projects tend to be scattered throughout the downtown, and fall short of creating urban neighborhoods. There is also a lack of residential services such as grocery stores in close proximity. But with additional projects that are in the planning stage, the number of units is expected to more than double. As well, projects in areas adjacent to the downtown have boosted the central city population by nearly ten thousand units over the past decade. This will inevitably change the nature and function of the downtown.

Denver goes downtown...

The story of Denver, Colorado begins in a similar way. Rental and real estate values plummeted in the late eighties. Its downtown became notorious for abandonment and neglect – a



before and after: a vision for the residential conversion of the Flour Mills Building
(Weiss 1998)

¹² source: www.downtowndallas.com

civic embarrassment. A recently elected mayor with a passion for urban design helped to begin the turn-around. A designated historic preservation district was made a priority, stopping the leveling of urban fabric for the proliferation of parking. As building values were at their most affordable, there was suddenly a need to recycle them.

The first major residential conversion came in 1990 with the 40-unit Edbrooke Lofts. However, much of the foundation work toward urban renewal work began earlier. Denver's Urban Renewal Authority made a conscious decision not to put all their eggs in one basket. Residential development would be supported on a parallel course with retail, entertainment, and hotel / convention center projects with a focus on twenty-four hour activity.

Writer Nancy Holz declared in a 1998 article, "Public Projects Set the Stage"(p.55). The new convention center constructed in 1988 was the first major project. The following year a \$242 million bond was issued for the rebuilding of streets, parks, and public facilities in the downtown. By the mid-1990s, downtown Denver was home to a relocated amusement park, a new performing arts center, museum, central library, and baseball field. Coors Field was especially celebrated for integrating with the historical Lower Downtown neighborhood, both architecturally and economically. Its opening sparked a large number of bars and restaurants in the area.

For Denver, mass transit was a much smaller part of the picture. Following the opening of a five-mile starter line in 1994, a dedicated sales tax to fund its expansion was voted down. Michael Leccese's article in *Landscape Architecture* brings up the issue of design standards and public review. As development began to gain momentum, there was the risk of quick and cheap projects compromising the goals of renewal. Leccese quoted Tyler Gibbs, architect with Denver's planning department. "Ten years ago, we had no design review anywhere in the city other than in historic districts... We've now got nine design review districts outside of historic districts."¹³

The growth of the residential base in the Denver's core has been remarkable. In the past twenty years, the population has increased 66 percent to 4300. Neighborhoods immediately adjacent to downtown have also seen an increase in population and their collective total is currently 65,500. The City Center Housing Council is aiming to see an additional 45,000 households added in and around the downtown over the next twenty years¹⁴.

¹³ Leccese 1998, p.36

¹⁴ source: www.downtowndenver.com

challenges...

If a public realm with a vibrant street life is to be the main selling point for a city center, is there a target population figure that will ensure this is the case? Ruth Knack's 1998 *Planning* article discussed this point. "What works in New York or Chicago might not work in a less dense city,"(p.7). It can be difficult to forge an urban milieu from isolated infill projects. The approach described by one planner is to seek the creation of *neighborhood* or *urban village* in identifying priority sites for infill or conversion. One redevelopment agency interviewed by Knack felt the need for a different approach. Christopher Brown of Delray Beach Florida was quoted saying, "...I didn't think we could get housing down here without retail." And if they could, he wasn't convinced retail would follow in due course. "We created a consumer base for night-time activities. Now people want to live downtown because it's fun." (p.6).

As discussed earlier, one of the challenges of a downtown is to balance its role as a common center and regional gathering place with its tandem role of linking urban neighborhoods to amenities and employment opportunities. In his 1985 thesis entitled *The new urbanism as a way of life*, Barton Reid cautioned against local commercial districts using the popularity of their enhancements to cater to high-end clientele. Commercial gentrification can take place when common neighborhood services are replaced by the icons of conspicuous consumption.

So cafés replace drug stores and laundry establishments are replaced by boutiques, causing utilitarian land uses to give way to specialized upscale ones. ...liveability means something different to an individual whose primary concern is survival and another thing if it means a more aesthetically pleasing environment. (p.66)

The issue of gentrification has been a matter of significance in cities like Toronto and Vancouver. Post-industrial waterfront sites have been an incredible draw for condominium living. A large stable business economy has kept much high-end employment in the city center. Both have also seen a large influx of foreign immigration over the past twenty years, putting significant pressure on infill development (Bourne 1997).

In Winnipeg, entrenched perceptions of the inner city as being run-down and plagued with social problems form a major deterrent to core redevelopment. In light of the inner city housing lost to dereliction, abandonment, and arson, gentrification has played an insignificant role in the loss of affordable housing (Reid 1985, Whyte 1988). Reid discussed the bias investors have had toward working in Winnipeg's inner city.

...four of the city's largest developers stated that they would be unwilling to redevelop the North of Portage unless the Mall Hotel and the bus depot were relocated. These two buildings are key entry points for Winnipeg's native community so the reluctance of developers to

invest in areas frequented by the underclass certainly shows that they constitute a barrier to investment... (p.39)

According to David Rusk, luring the middle-class to live and work in the inner city is the only long-term solution to the downward social and economic spiral of these neighborhoods. He identified five key points that must be addressed in order to draw other income groups to the urban core.

- ▶ quality design features and amenities (architectural/landscape), and convenient services
- ▶ high-quality jobs centrally located
- ▶ affordability
- ▶ schools that are safe, uncrowded, and properly equipped (As the median income of families in its catchment area improves, so would the quality of education. However, improvements to inner city schools must come first if progress is to be made.)
- ▶ crime control, safety (also closely tied to the ratio of income groups living in the area)

The idea of a vibrant pedestrian realm depends to a large extent on getting people *walking* outdoors for whatever purpose, including no particular purpose at all. But in this age of convenience, will people walk? Actually, people will do a significant amount of walking once inside of a mall. This is a conscious intent of mall developers. The shopper is delighted and distracted by the visual variety. Long view lines are regularly broken. Frequent benches avert fatigue. Ten hectares of retail space are easily covered without ever having to use the car. These same principles also apply to open-air urban settings. Pedestrians will walk up to a quarter mile (400 m) when you maximize physical comfort and visual interest, but in a desolate asphalt landscape, people simply will not walk between destinations. They will vie for the closest parking space to the building entrance, which Joel Garreau (1991) observed must never be more than six hundred feet (200 m). If it is more, it will be out-competed by a suburban mall where the most remote parking stall is typically three hundred feet (100 m) from the building.

The issue of parking tends to be a double-edged sword. Its attendant shops and offices could not exist without it, or so it would seem. What's more, Murray has written, "Without contiguous, secure parking, housing in this market is virtually doomed to failure." (p.81), and then has gone on to describe accommodation for parking as "the single most expensive redevelopment component..." (p.82). Ironically, for the glutinous space it requires, it is a principally inactive land use, and it works against creating walkable neighborhoods. As the spaces between buildings increased, fewer destinations were within walking range of a single parking space, so the number of parking spaces needed to be duplicated for every destination.

Even if urban living could eliminate the need for commuting by car, those who can afford to will still opt to *own* a car for other uses. However, an important point to observe, in

downtowns that are nearing a saturation of parking, is that if an office building is converted to residential use, it actually requires about quarter the existing amount of parking. While an office building often has a density of one worker per 250 square feet¹⁵ (23 m²), a residential building might have an average density of about one living unit per 1000 square feet (93 m²). Of course, parking in the downtown does not take up any more room than it does in suburban neighborhoods, in fact, arguably less. The challenge remains the amount of land it does takes up, roughly 400 square feet (37 m²) per vehicle, and finding the least obtrusive place to put it.

3.5 Regional Planning

Even the best efforts toward core redevelopment will be defeated if they are not part of a broader metropolitan or regional agenda. City center, edge, and region are all part of an interacting system. It is insufficient to say that one component is more productive or more profitable or more sustainable. In the right proportions, with the right controls in place, they can co-exist. However, at present, this system is out of balance. The region's systems have not been planned as a whole.

green belts versus urban limits...

The previous section introduced Saarinen's city districts connected and surrounded by green belts. The separation between city and nature is highly artificial and denies the ecological processes common to both. Cities also have to deal with watersheds, wildlife, and climate. Van der Ryn and Calthorpe were critical of planning that sees nature as strictly separate from the city. In *Sustainable Cities* (1986), they cautioned against attempts to encapsulate nature in a "large outdoor museum" (p.xvi). Looking back, one wonders why open green spaces were not configured as the centers of Saarinen's city districts rather than the borders.

Ward, in *Welcome Thinner City* (1989), discussed another shortfall of urban green belts. He pointed out how they can aggravate economic segregation.

The rich can buy their way into the green belt, the commuting middle classes can leapfrog over it into new settlements or old country towns and villages beyond it. But the poor are trapped for lack of mortgage-worthiness. (p.30)

¹⁵ Garreau 1991

Urban growth boundaries differ from green belts in a number of ways. They are not associated with recreational space. (They can preserve natural amenities incidentally if they happen to occur at the urban fringe.) A stiff policy structure is required to make them work. They exist, not as an *edge feature*, but rather as an entity that redirects resources back inside the city where they are needed most.

imits versus sprawl...

Growth boundaries were conceived as an antidote for suburban sprawl. Sprawl has precisely the effect of income segregation that Ward observed. When there is unlimited land available for development, the value of all land in the city is diminished. Another subdivision can always be added and it will be priced according to the amenities the developer includes. The amount of area occupied and its distance from existing services are disregarded. The city then inherits an incredible burden. Scattered suburbs put increased demand on roadways and contribute to environmental degradation.

Myron Orfield's political research in Minneapolis-St. Paul revealed the fact that central city areas subsidize new growth areas. He began his investigation with a cost analysis of urban infrastructure¹⁶. He found that "central cities pay over \$6 million more in fees each year than they incur in costs"(Leo and Shaw 1998, p.27). Civic politicians in Winnipeg and elsewhere anxiously lend their approval for new residential developments, hungry for an expanded tax base at the developer's cost (Leo and Brown 1998). The long-term responsibility for that tax base, however, remains a burden on the city. Garreau found that for every dollar gained in tax revenue from new development, \$1.22 is required to provide public services. It is a cost borne by all taxpayers, whether inner city or edge city, apartment dweller or homeowner.

The establishment of an urban limit changes how land is used. Area and distance have a hard value attached to them due to supply and demand forces. The value of real estate increases in edge areas as well as in degraded inner city areas. This adds an incentive to redevelop older urban sites. David Rusk looked at the downtown Portland neighborhood of Albina.

...since 1986 government agencies had committed at least \$145 million to programs designed to move low-income residents into jobs, homes, or business ownership in Albina. A red-hot real estate market, however, had pumped eight times as much value into Albina's homes and stores.
(p.166)

There has, of course, been opposition to Portland's legislated changes to the housing market. Some see the growth boundary as an artificial constraint that unnecessarily inflates land

¹⁶ In Winnipeg, streets and public works account for approximately \$240 million (26%) of this year's budget. (source: www.city.winnipeg.mb.ca)

prices. It is cited as an affront to affordable housing. And true enough, during the nineties, Portland's affordability ranking suffered. In fact, the average cost for a single-family home more than doubled in less than a decade.

This might be cause to question the overall benefit of an urban growth boundary, except the boundary had been in place since the seventies, and housing in Portland remained consistently among the most affordable in the nation until the nineties. Other economic forces have clearly been at work. In the last decade, Portland has emerged as a major digital technology center, attracting industry and expertise from other parts of the country, including California's Silicon Valley. Unemployment has dropped to record lows and the in-migration that has occurred to complement the burgeoning economy has put tremendous pressure on housing markets. Prior to this boom, average subdivision lot sizes dropped by only about 30% to meet the density targets imposed by Metro council. This also brought home prices down accordingly.

It is a common misconception that a growth boundary represents the limit of the urban jurisdiction. It might even be presumed that sprawl could be mitigated by maintaining or shrinking the city limit line. However, the management of sprawl requires the marrying of city and region. Rusk found that while urban growth boundaries are extremely beneficial, 'elasticity' is the first step cities need to take. Under growth conditions, cities need to annex adjacent lands to be able to control and plan for new areas that will, in effect, be adjuncts to the existing city.

capturing the outer cities...

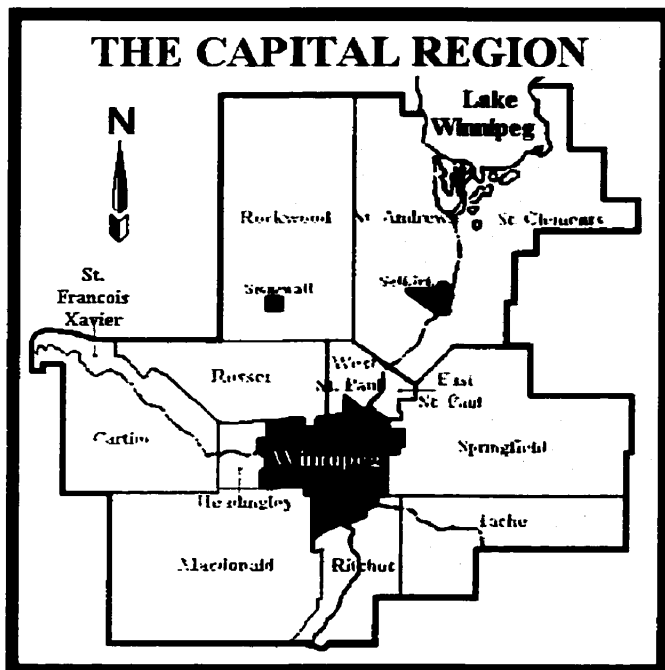
The City of Winnipeg has in the past subsumed new growth, most notably through the unicity amalgamation of 1972. The benefits of unified metropolitan government are threefold:

- ▶ It can reduce disparity between neighborhoods through revenue equalization.
- ▶ Affordable housing can be made mandatory in all new developments. Breaking down economic segregation includes increasing middle-class occupation in the inner city as well as including low-income housing in new suburbs¹⁷. A mixed income environment helps working-class families escape the culture of poverty that tends to persist from one generation to the next. (In Montgomery County, Maryland, all new residential developments must include 15-20% affordable housing.)
- ▶ It can better deal with sprawl through regional land use and traffic planning, as well as planning for the viability of mass transit.

¹⁷ Rusk identifies the critical threshold for a city-suburb income ratio as 70%. Above this level, inner cities generate all the problems associated with economic disparity.

Portland's Metro *Regional* government has both the power and the directive to address such issues. Unfortunately, Winnipeg's civic leaders have not capitalized on a limited-time opportunity to achieve its own regional authority. The city is again breaching its boundaries. Winnipeg's suburban edge-cities (e.g. airport-Polo Park, St. Vital, Regent-Lagimodiere) have largely replaced the traditional core and their catchment area reaches far into the rural municipalities. Census data shows that while the city has not seen any significant growth during the last ten years, neighboring municipalities have seen a 46% increase in their collective population. Leo and Brown (1998) wrote,

With exurban migration under way, City Council has lost much of the control it once might have exercised over new development. Developers now have alternatives: if the city is not sufficiently generous in dealing with residential subdivision proposals or commercial developments, it is becoming easy for them to find a parcel of land for a similar development in an adjacent municipality. (p.9)



(from: www.gov.mb.ca/cr/crpresentation.html)

The twelve municipalities immediately surrounding the City of Winnipeg are represented through the recently appointed Capital Region Review Board, which reports to the government of Manitoba. It will research issues surrounding sustainability, land use planning, and coordinated marketing. The purpose of the board is to gather views and information from leaders of the various jurisdictions and make a number of recommendations. Because it is the province that is instigating this, it remains possible that something resembling Portland's Metro might eventually emerge to bring some order and direction to the region's development.

Susan Owens, geography professor at the University of Cambridge wrote about the theory of a sustainable urban form: "arguably a contradiction in terms. By definition, urban

areas require the resources of a wider region for their survival.”¹⁸ (p.79). However, she went on to state, “Energy and land use are related”(p.80). The gross density of settlement is inversely proportional to the amount of infrastructure necessary to sustain it – highways, power, waste and water, snow clearance, police and fire protection, and so on.

A lack of diversity in our planning also means we are particularly susceptible to major disruption, completely at the mercy of the supply and control of petroleum. Author/theorist James Howard Kunstler feared a grim scenario in his critical work, *Geography of Nowhere* (1993), “America has now squandered its national wealth erecting a human habitat that, in all likelihood, will not be usable very much longer,”(p.114).

3.6 Key Points Summary

The problem posed at the beginning has been traced to cultural values, technological change, fiscal anomaly, and the momentum of circumstance. Some will obviously be more difficult to change than others. It is not the intent of this study to convince the reader that there is an urban design recipe for creating sustained vitality. Jane Jacobs (1961) wrote that cities were systems of ‘organized complexity’, like the workings of quantum mechanics. In fact, she expressed serious doubt about how much design a city could have imposed on it without endangering the evolved complexity that already existed. However, after fifty years of modernization and suburbanization, there is clearly a need to reexamine every aspect of the physical urban environment.

a ‘neighborhoods’ approach...

This document has thus far explored the difference between urban and suburban environments and explored the value of a core residential base. At the same time, many of the authors covered have discussed the *neighborhood*, many taking for granted that that is where people generally live. Some of the New Urbanist models describe neighborhoods as though they were islands that could float anywhere. We have seen the examples of urban infill in the two case studies. Ruth Knack observed the shortcomings of isolated infill that falls short of creating neighborhoods. Residential areas need different support services than commercial, office or civic districts. Those services and amenities, in turn, require that a sufficient population base

¹⁸from her essay, ‘Energy, Environmental Sustainability and Land-Use Planning’(1992)

exist. The question then is how a city can marry the textbook roles and qualities of *the neighborhood* to an existing downtown and its adjacent core neighborhoods.

The term *neighborhood* has any number of preconceived notions. In the design of some of the earliest suburbs, the neighborhood was the mass of residences necessary to support a school, which would serve as its flagship and focal point. Contemporary developers remain keenly aware of this relationship, and subdivisions are scaled accordingly. Being able to market their suburb as a neighborhood depends on having an elementary school. The New Urbanist concept of neighborhood is more closely tied to the traditional village, where the school was but one component of the neighborhood, not its reason for being. Here, the post office and the corner store complement the village square as the neighborhood's focal point. Jacob's *Great American Cities* had a different notion again. In her ideal model, neighborhoods were interwoven with all the principal functions of a city center. Mixed-use streets serve as the focus. There is no center and few neighborhood boundaries because the neighborhoods overlap and form a seamless agglomeration.

Both the Jane Jacobs model and the New Urbanist model fit the description of an *urban neighborhood*. Therefore the definition of *neighborhood*, as used in the remainder of this study, will represent some combination of the two. The points to follow attempt to further define what a neighborhood is and what makes one successful, based on the discussion in the three preceding sections. The key points fit generally under six headings – 1) Focus-Attractions-Vision, 2) Diversity, 3) Pedestrian Activity, 4) Size/Density, 5) Parking, and 6) Integration of the Private.

1. Focus – Attractions – Vision

So many residential areas that grew after streetcar access was replaced by auto access are characterized by endless repetition of houses on endless blocks. These city areas may have names, but it is difficult to associate a spatial image with their names. These districts have no center, and their limits are arbitrary lines drawn on a map.

Calthorpe sought to remedy this condition directly in the Jackson-Taylor redevelopment by redefining the neighborhood around a new center. A **central public open space** is representative of New Urbanist neighborhood planning. Public buildings are often situated adjacent to the open space create a focus of activity.

CentrePlan discusses the importance of **landmark sites** and buildings such as the library and Convention Center. The example of Dallas described the importance of major attractions and entertainment sites in drawing attention and interest to the city center. These help maintain an energetic feel to a downtown. They provide an impetus for residential infill.

The notion of a **vision plan** for a district or neighborhood was an important part of Lowertown's redevelopment. This was reiterated by the other case studies. The vision may be as simple as a more pedestrian friendly environment, or as intensive as DPZ's neighborhood design codes. Christopher Alexander focused on the creation of a *whole*, a neighborhood that was more than simply a part of a city. Engwicht picked up on the same idea, comparing the neighborhood to a *city in microcosm*.

The neighborhood is a distinct entity. It is characterized by an architecture, a landscape, a culture, or a history. These are things that tie a neighborhood together in the eyes of its residents and help establish a **neighborhood identity**. Shared experiences, rituals, ethnic backgrounds, or even knowing when a neighborhood was built and how it got its name gives residents a common bond along with the sense that the neighborhood is theirs, and *they* belong. As an example, the Waddel fountain in Central Park, erected in 1914 is purported to have been a stipulation in Mrs. Emily Waddel's will.

The story goes that should her widower choose to remarry, \$10,000 from their estate would be dedicated to a public fountain in Central Park, a few blocks from their Sargent Avenue home¹⁹. Such neighborhood legends can be fostered through narrative landscape design and public education. Designers and civic leaders are looking at what makes each area unique, how it is defined physically. Evolution of successful neighborhoods may be slow, and it is important that each subsequent project understands the long-term goals of the neighborhood and its role in the greater city.



the Waddell Fountain in Central Park

2. Diversity

One of the goals of diversity is to create a **24 hour presence** and an ambient level of activity throughout the day and into the evening. Jacobs (1961) painted a picture of a

¹⁹ from Esqueda, Arden. (1999) 'The Waddell Legacy', *West Central STREETS*, Sept/Oct.

neighborhood where residences overlooked public spaces to enhance safety. Restaurants and shops kept people coming and going late into the evening so the streets were never deserted. The resulting directive was to encourage infill that would animate the streets whenever they were least active, whether that meant residential development in a business district, or commercial development in residential neighborhoods.

Through mixed-use planning, a neighborhood can strive toward a degree of **self-sufficiency**. Achieving a level of *urban life* means accommodating many of life's daily needs within close (walkable) proximity of where people live. Duany and Plater-Zyberk (1994) pointed out that in most neighborhoods, a car is a necessity for every member of the family – children require to be chauffeured around while teens usually find they need their own car for access to extra-curricular pursuits. Access to essential services should not *require* automobile ownership. The integration of community services, shopping, and entertainment within the neighborhood is therefore more than an issue of convenience. It provides equal access for those who do not drive as existed for those who do. CentrePlan mentioned schools and supermarkets as two of the most basic amenities. Without these, a neighborhood is a more dormitory and suited to a very narrow demographic of people.

Diversity also needs to occur within particular land-use functions. Large retail centers offer the most variety and can serve as a neighborhood anchor, but small retail shops provide street-corner convenience or a niche for specialized products and services. The **mix of large and small** buildings helps maintain a dynamic streetscape – larger centers tend to handle the necessities, smaller shops are optimal for more leisure window-shopping (Alexander et al 1987).

A **combination of housing typologies**, from apartments to townhouses to single-family homes, accommodates a variety of individual tastes and different lifestyles. This flexibility allows a resident to find appropriate housing through the various stages of one's life, the bachelor apartment, the house with a yard, the empty-nester condominium, the seniors' full service suite. As well, mature neighborhoods benefit from having a mix of old and new buildings. Not only is this a source of architectural variety, older buildings fulfill a critical role in housing lower income families. That balance is critical. Without new buildings, a neighborhood can turn into a ghetto of low-income residences. Without old buildings, a neighborhood is an elite enclave, effectively walling out the economically disadvantaged.

3. Pedestrian Activity

The public realm is a matrix that connects each place to every other place. In the urban environment this consists of streets and sidewalks, pedestrian nodes, pocket parks, and major

gathering spaces. Even a ramblas or transit mall, as discovered in Dallas, can be a popular pedestrian environment. There should be spaces conducive to resting, reading, socializing, children's play, and every other conceivable use according to Chermayeff and Alexander (1963). This is the stage upon which **urban street life** takes place. The organization of attractions and amenities with pedestrian routes should maximize ease and value²⁰ of pedestrian movement. Having sufficient pedestrian amenities to foster street life is a priority that needs to be balanced with the goal of *focusing* activity to maximize opportunities for casual interaction commercial services. A major open space off the beaten path may generate less urban activity than a much smaller space near a neighborhood hub. Jacobs even suggested that extraneous, badly located greenspaces can attract crime and deter legitimate pedestrian use. Engwicht describes a method for fostering street life based on the organization of buildings and landscape design. We know that some buildings focus on the street while other focus on parking lots; still other focus inward



pedestrian walkway landscape detailing on the Main Street *Bridge of the Old Forts*

and interact very little with the public realm. Similarly a streetscape design may allow a pedestrian to comfortably stop and hold a conversation, or conversely may discourage any activity other than directed movement.

Attracting pedestrian use is also highly dependent on **safety, comfort, convenience, and delight**. On a beautiful day, does the pedestrian environment make walking as enjoyable as driving a car? Pedestrian networks need to be barrier-free, well lit, and clear of the noise and threat of high-speed traffic. This means that automobile traffic cannot be allowed to make alternatives hazardous or difficult. There is no clear evidence that creating car-free areas improves urban vitality. However, other options need to be equally viable and attractive. Personal alternatives, such as bicycles and rollerblades,

²⁰ Popular pedestrian routes create a market for secondary attractions as in the case near Denver's Coors Field

are valuable for their miniscule impact on the landscape compared with cars. Landscape elements such as texture, scale, and delineation of space can contribute to the psychological comfort of the user (Kemble 1989). Consideration of microclimate can enhance the physical comfort of space. One could use the shopping mall as a model. Are there places to stop and rest? Does the view change often and hold ones interest? Joel Garreau (1991) wrote that the average American will walk up to 5 minutes ('1500 feet') in a pedestrian environment *if* that environment highly caters to the needs and comfort of the pedestrian. Otherwise, the user will find another alternative.

Public art and creative landscapes help make a journey an attraction unto itself. The *green* factor, particularly, has a significant impact on the perception of the urban environment. Planting has the effect of softening the built landscape. At a certain threshold, it provides habitat for butterflies, birds and squirrels. It can cast a park-like atmosphere over an entire district. This is obviously a major draw for the suburbs and could be equally so for the city center. Moule and Polyzoides called this "...artifacts from man's historical contact with nature..."²¹. According to Garreau, visual appeal makes all the difference in drawing people. "Little else is more important than Nice. Nice is more important than money."(p.93).

Increased **connectivity** makes the pedestrian realm more usable. CentrePlan identifies key landmarks and amenities and looks at ways of improving urban coherence and solidifying connections between them. Duany, *et al.*, (2000) made the observation that a pedestrian-oriented development will not get many people walking if there are not *meaningful destinations* in place. Does the neighborhood include a place for getting groceries and doing banking? Do nearby amenities attract residents on a repeat basis? Such amenities and attraction may need to be put in place where there is a lack of impetus for pedestrian use of the streets. Where these things do exist, streetscaping devices such as carrying the rhythm and material of the sidewalk across intersections, or adding a mid-block street (Jacobs 1961) help of forge pedestrian connections. Sometimes infill is necessary to reinforce the definition of the street. Alexander and Chermayeff wrote that, for a pedestrian realm to be used, it must be "safe and pleasant... without dangerous or confusing discontinuities..."(p.156) As discussed by Garreau, distance may be a secondary consideration in one's choice to walk, after what he calls *friction factor*. Although he uses the concept to compare automobile commutes, the same can be said of pedestrian links. If one route is impeded by heavy traffic, or lacks a sense of enclosure or any elements of comfort, then an alternative route may be chosen even if it is further.

²¹ from 'The Street, the Block, and the Building' in Katz (ed.) *The New Urbanism* (1994), p.xxiii

4. Density/Size

Just as neighborhoods require a center, by logical extension, they must also have an edge, according to Leon Krier (1980) and his New Urbanist followers. The nature of that edge may vary, but it is largely a result of the maximum distance one will walk to reach the amenities at the neighborhood's center. The optimal distance is typically described as a five or ten minutes' walk. (Moshe Safdie's theoretical radius extends to a fifteen minutes walk.) Thus, in the absence of a physical boundary, we can loosely delineate a **neighborhood's extents**, based on pedestrian access. If neighborhoods can have more than one key amenity or attraction then it is possible that adjacent neighborhoods may overlap. Jacobs proposed that the perception of where a neighborhood begins and ends is individually conceived and varies from person to person depending one's routine and point of origin. The added value of *physical* boundary is the enhanced feeling of place associated with entering a delineated space. This was explored by CentrePlan in its investigation of districts and gateways.

Density is arguably the defining characteristic of traditional urban centers. The advantage of greater density is a visual and social richness that cannot be replicated in a low-density environment. Idealists may look at it as a way to bring people closer together. Whether or not the residents see that as an advantage is another matter. As a factor of economics, density allows more things to be conveniently close to more people. As they take advantage of that convenience, a secondary benefit is the emergence of a sustained street life that is simply impossible at low densities. Servicing a neighborhood of higher density is naturally more efficient in everything from infrastructure to policing to mail delivery.

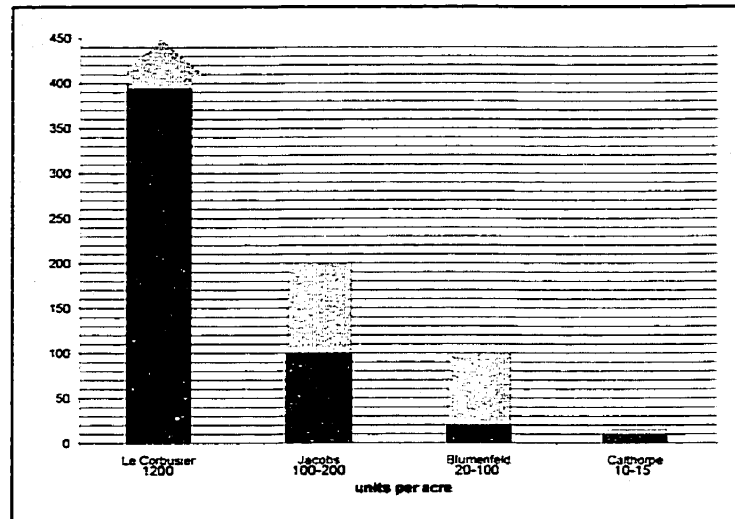
The North American stigma against density is one reason the majority of people rule out city center living. Density is frequently associated with apartments, parking difficulties, and lack of green space. However, medium densities can be achieved through minor modifications to the suburban morphology, and high densities can be achieved with low-rise buildings that still provide private entrances and outdoor space.

So what exactly is urban density? For Le Corbusier, this meant 1200 units to the acre (3000/ha). Jane Jacobs, while a major proponent of increasing densities, was critical of such extreme levels, which would require monotonous standardization. She believed that between 100 and 200 units per acre (250-500/ha), social and economic spin-offs would create livable cities. Below 100 units per acre²², she argued, neighborhoods face the disadvantages of city

²² This value is an *average* density. She stated that maximum variety is desirable – from high-rise elevator buildings to single family dwellings.

living and few of the advantages.

Calthorpe pointed out that above ten units per acre (25/ha), mass transit becomes viable, which can result in less automobile use. Hans Blumenfeld also claimed to know the ideal density – between 20 and 100 units per acre (50-250/ha). In this range, a community could support a school, shops, and other basic services within a walkable 800 metre range, based on his research in 1967.



Marcus and Sarkissian (1986) suggested, “There is no simple relationship between density and satisfaction”(p.33). Barry Goodchild (1994) expressed concern that open space would suffer under the practice of compact development, where in fact, the inverse is more likely – low-density development results in underused and neglected public spaces. Michael Breheny (1997) felt that urban infill implied smaller dwellings without garden space. By most standards of urban density, there is certainly a much higher proportion of mid-rise and high-rise dwellings, however, high densities can be achieved with a mix of residential typologies (as discussed on page 60).

6. Parking

William Whyte (1988) and others have described the difficulty of creating a vibrant urban center in a landscape broken up by surface parking. This is the case in many downtowns including Winnipeg. It would seem to be a strange irony that, at the same time, one of the key complaints about downtown is a perceived **lack of parking**. Logically, however, it is not that strange. In a landscape that attempts to cater to the automobile, walking or public transit is generally less appealing, not because driving and parking are innately more desirable, but because at a certain threshold cars and parking overwhelm the pedestrian. Therefore, increased parking capacity lures more people to drive, which in turn puts increased pressure on available parking. In the long term, one hopes that alternative modes of transportation could become more viable. Improvements to public transit (which could be prompted in part by more higher density living) would close the gap in comfort and convenience that transit now suffers.

Many urban centers during the fifties and sixties instigated minimum parking requirements for new development. In the nineties, centers like Portland, Oregon, have placed

limits on new parking spaces downtown to encourage compact development and transit usage. Through what Jane Jacobs called 'attrition of automobiles', driving and parking becomes less convenient at the same time that pedestrian-oriented uses become more convenient and desirable.

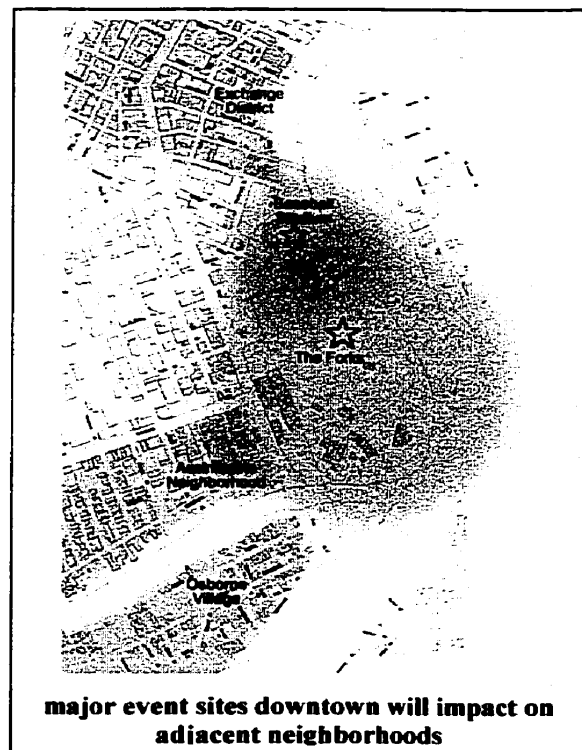
Alice Murray, writing about Dallas, points out that **residential infill** is an impossibility without dedicated parking. Especially if one is concerned about encouraging upper-income occupation in the city center, accommodation for cars is a must. Consideration for loading and unloading near the entrance is another important consideration identified by Alexander and Chermayeff, as is visitor parking. Much of the downtown labor force will also continue to demand parking at their place of work and trying to change that would be a slow and gradual process.

New Urbanists and other designers are seeking ways to **accommodate parking** in such a way as to ameliorate its potentially disintegrating effect on the pedestrian realm. Designers in Providence have looked at organizing new construction downtown to screen parking lots from the street behind narrow buildings. A more common approach is the construction of parkades. Although incredibly expensive, they serve to consolidate sprawling parking lots into smaller sites that can support the physical continuity of the street. Better yet, parkades can be incorporated with commercial space or buried out of site altogether.

5. Integration of the Private

The city is comprised of both private and public space. Each performs specific functions. What creates *city* is how the two mutually support one another. It is important that private space be unambiguous and completely private. A home needs to be a retreat from the public aspect of our lives.

Downtowns are host to numerous regional celebration and **major public events**. These have the potential to conflict with needs of neighborhood residents. The most pervasive impact is noise. The sounds of an outdoor concert can be heard for hundreds of metres. Secondary effects include competition for street parking. Excess traffic through residential neighborhoods can be resented.



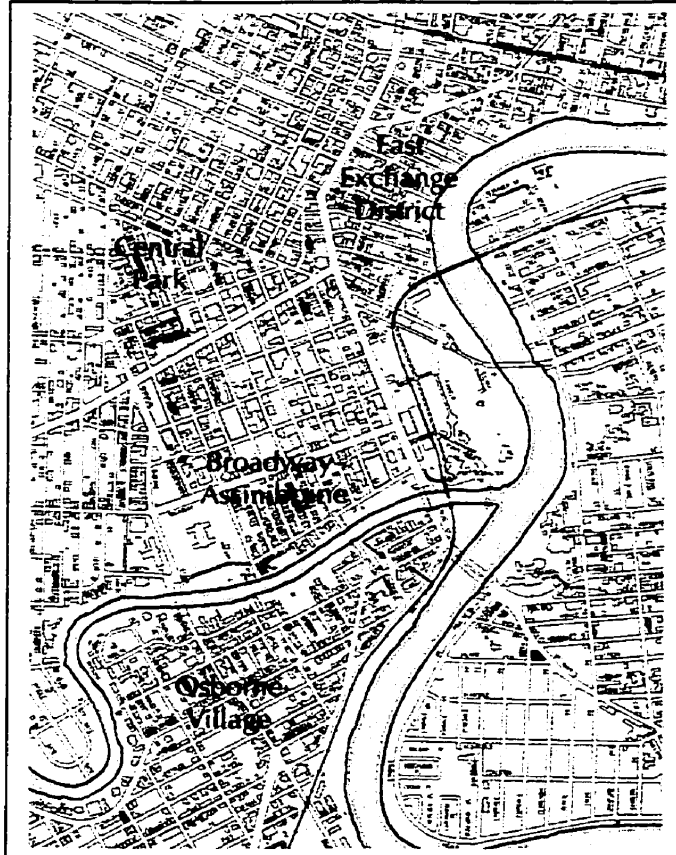
Even the presence of a large number of strangers walking around a neighborhood generates fear and discomfort. Residents may worry about litter, or worse, an increased likelihood of vandalism or property crime.

Goodchild (1997) discussed two contrary approaches for creating more **defensible spaces**. One involves making streets and parks very public, highly visible, adjacent to land uses that provide casual surveillance throughout the day. The other approach takes neighborhood homes and parks and separates them from publicly accessible areas in such a way that a non-resident would have no reason to come into proximity with them. Marcus and Sarkissian looked at how details can mitigate the interface between the public and private realms.

There are clearly two scales at which design for the protection of privacy must take place. The transition between public right-of-way and the private realm must be given due consideration, as discussed by Marcus and Sarkissian. The solutions will depend on the degree of public use affecting the residential area. For example, a residential complex on a major artery may require a broader buffer zone than one on a more intimately scaled side street. At the urban design scale, one can encourage the development of event sites where they will be most beneficial to existing commercial activity and least irksome to residential neighborhoods. By the same token, residential infill can be encouraged where it will have the best chance of success, where there would be little potential conflict with existing event sites.

4. Application of Principles to Downtown Winnipeg

This final section tests the key points distilled from the literature against neighborhoods in Winnipeg's city center. These are organized with the same six general headings as the previous section – focus-attraction, diversity, pedestrian activity, size-density, parking, and the private realm. The analysis involves four distinct areas in and around the downtown. The way the four areas compare under each category will gauge validity of the key points and imply a method for dealing with neighborhoods in Winnipeg that fall short of their potential.



4.1 The Analysis

Four separate neighborhoods were looked at over the course of this project. The information presented in the descriptions to follow was gathered from several sources. Various mapping was used to determine where neighborhoods are situated in relation to other neighborhoods and important attractions. Size, distance, and types of land use were also determined. City of Winnipeg traffic counts described vehicular volumes through and adjacent to neighborhoods. Census Canada records were a source of population and density information. Renter's guides helped in getting a sense of rental rates in a neighborhood. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, a great deal of time was spent walking around each of the areas, observing the scale and comfort of streets and spaces, the level of maintenance, the number of people out at different times, etc.

Of the four areas, each exhibits a different degree of neighborhood success in the order in which they are presented, beginning with the most successful (the last example falling short of being able to be called a neighborhood). The indicators of success used to make this determination include the overall feel/appeal of the area, intensity of use by pedestrians, intensity of land use, frequency of vacant buildings, and evidence of renewal such as construction or renovation. These indicators have not been numerically measured, but between any of the sampled areas, the presence or absence of these factors make it possible to say if one area is more, or less, successful than another.

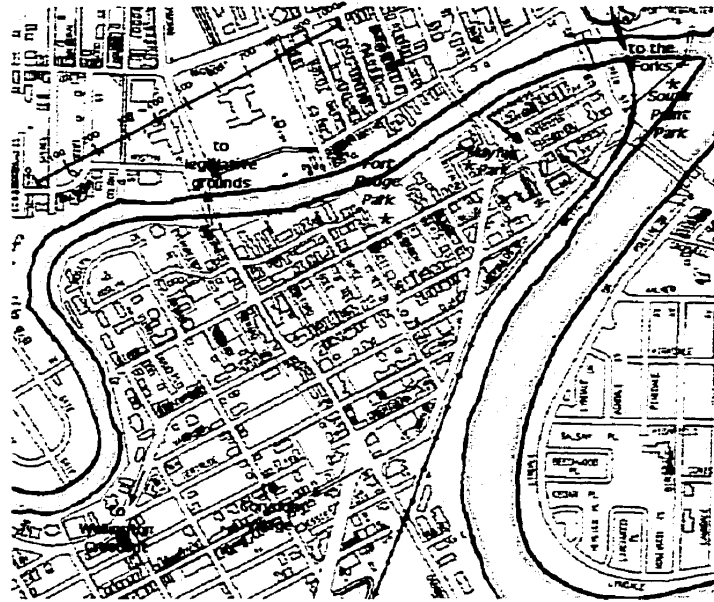
The analysis of each district or neighborhood uses the following twelve points, which fall under the six main *key points* from the previous section:

1	focus/center	(yes or no)
	attractions	secondary anchors (rivers, parks, commercial hub), landmarks
2	residential diversity	typologies (house, apartment, condominium), age and cost
	mixed-use	residential, office/commercial, restaurants/bars
	self-sufficiency	school, grocery store, bank, entertainment
3	comfort and appeal	ease of movement, auto traffic, built fabric, street furniture
	connections	links to adjacent areas, important destinations
4	extents/boundaries	hard vs. soft, maximum/minimum neighborhood diameter
	density	(units per acre or hectare)
	population	number of people / number of units
5	parking	how accommodated (streets/lots/parkades), cost/availability
6	private realm	through-traffic, proximity to major events sites

4.2 The Neighborhoods

Osborne Village...

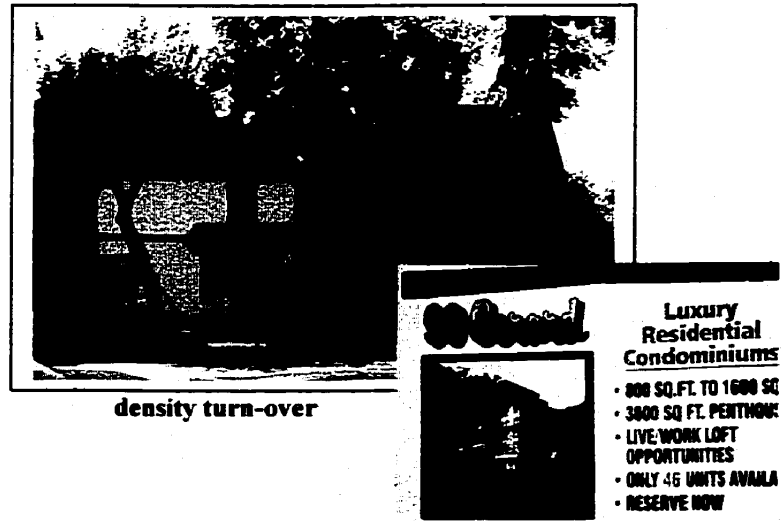
The first example, while not actually downtown, is often thought of as the quintessential urban village in Winnipeg. It is renowned for its bustling shops and its colorful mix of people. A visual richness and variety of day and nighttime activities animates Osborne. Behind the strip, a large residential base provides an on-going presence and stability.



1. a) **focus/center** – Osborne Street is the anchor for this neighborhood. It is the location of its many essential services. It also draws leisure pedestrian use for window-shopping or people-watching. While there is no major park or plaza acting as a center, the entire village strip serves as a high street anchor.
- b) **attractions** – The Village is best known for its boutiques and eateries. There are no major landmarks, aside from some old churches and other historic buildings along the strip (the McKim Courtyard, for example). Although the river wraps the Village, virtually none of it is public access. Still, as in the previous neighborhood example, the river has been a major attraction for high-end residential development, which does benefit the neighborhood.
2. a) **residential diversity** – The Village contains a broad array of housing options for different income levels. There is a small proportion of single-family dwellings, a great many low-rise apartments, high-rise luxury suites and new low-rise condominiums.
- b) **mixed-use** – Daytime activity is fairly constant both on weekdays and on the weekends with the many shops and commercial spaces. An abundance of bars and restaurants, open late, maintain the street-life well into the evenings. The large population base nearby allows a large number of the strip's users to walk to and from their destinations.

- c) **self-sufficiency** – The major supermarket at the center of the Village serves a vital role allowing neighborhood self-sufficiency. It provides the sense that anything available in the suburbs is available here. The large supermarket has not preempted smaller corner stores, which are found along residential streets. Although the Bank of Montreal left its prominent location in the Village, other financial services have remained. Sources of entertainment include a notorious nightclub and the Gas Station Theater. There are two elementary schools, and high schools nearby in Crescentwood and Riverview.
3. a) **comfort and appeal** – Two small pocket parks are located along River Avenue that are visible enough from traffic routes to feel safe. The focus of street life, however, is Osborne Street. The only real open space along the strip is a small plaza at River Avenue, primarily used by teenagers. Smaller nodes with benches have recently been added at a number of spots further south. So have several planters and a bell tower / fountain. Although this tower competes in the skyline with the larger cellular phone tower, it serves as a neighborhood icon. Overall, the neighborhood has a good degree of visual coherence. Even the curve of Osborne Street contributes, offers changing view lines. It also slows down traffic. The vehicular lanes, while heavily used, are of minimum width to restrict speeding, and the street is well-proportioned to the surrounding buildings.
- b) **connections** – In spite of a great deal of through-traffic on its east-west streets, Osborne Village is quite attractive for pedestrians. North across the Osborne Bridge, one can access the legislative grounds and Memorial Park. Although Donald Street is rather intimidating to the pedestrian, it does not divide the Village. River Avenue, at its east most extent, terminates at Main Street across from South Point Park and the Forks. At its west end, it links to Wellington Crescent, which is a popular bicycle route following the river to Assiniboine Park.
4. a) **extents/boundaries** – The neighborhood is defined on two sides by the rivers. The Osborne Street Bridge serves as an entrance to the Village from the north. At the south end of the Village, The Pembina-Corydon Interchange (Confusion Corner) serves traffic movement at the expense of pedestrian activity. It fails to act as a gateway to the Village. Immense traffic and discontinuity of the building fabric currently prevent any leisure pedestrian movement in this area. This is reflected in the number of commercial vacancies south of Stradbrook Avenue. To the west, there is no distinguishable limit. *Corydon Village* has its own unique identity, but the neighborhood surrounding Corydon overlaps with Osborne Village. The distance to Osborne Street from its eastern most limit is over a kilometre. The distance in the north-south direction is only about 700 metres.

b) **density** – The gross density of Osborne Village is 17 units per acre (43/ha). However, subtracting the river, the railway, and other non-residential land-uses (residential land use outlined on map above), one arrives at a net density of approximately 30 units per acre (75/ha), making it the third densest neighborhood in the city. This is indicative of the wide variety of housing typologies that include single-family dwellings along side the tallest residential buildings in Winnipeg. There are a very small number of undeveloped lots that will accommodate some future infill as the market demands. There is also pressure for single-family houses to be replaced by higher density buildings at key locations.



b) **population** – The total number of people in east and west census tracts combined is 11,039, occupying 6880 dwelling units. Recent construction suggests this number will rise for the next census.

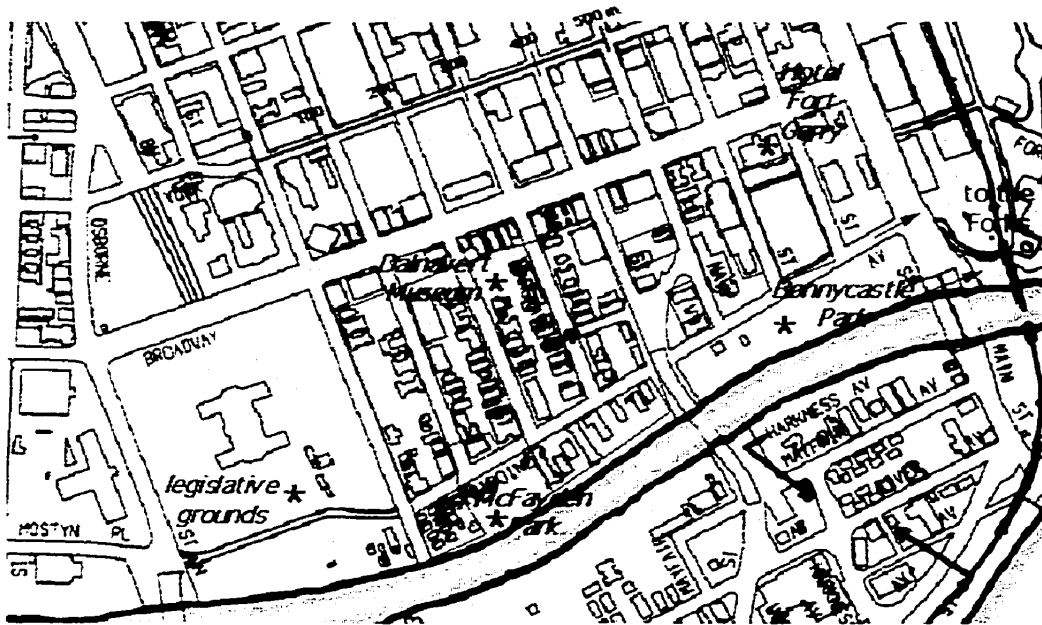
5. a) **parking** – There is one significant parking lot that is located at River and Osborne and spills over to the Safeway. It is short-term parking and sees a great deal of activity, both the coming and going of cars and of pedestrians cutting across it. It acts more as an urban open space than as the lifeless void that one might expect of surface parking. The new drug store serves as a good model for dealing with customer parking. It puts a parking lot at the back and allows access from both the front and back of the building. After-hours street parking helps buffer the pedestrian realm from moving vehicles. Most of the residences have adjacent or underground parking, and generally parking is less a constraint here than in the other areas looked at.

6. a) **through-traffic** – Many of the riverfront apartments are on bays or cul-de-sacs that separate them from the street grid and passer-by circulation. Most, however, are not and are subject to a great deal of through-traffic. Osborne Village has treed boulevards that help screen residential buildings from traffic.

- b) **event sites** – The east end of the neighborhood is in close proximity with the Forks and occasionally sounds from events carry across. Parking pressure and traffic also increase during major functions there.

Broadway-Assiniboine...

This second neighborhood example is a small dense enclave along the river in the southern most part of downtown. It has a strong visual coherence, enhanced by a clean, well-kept appearance. The neighborhood has become *the* place for those choosing to live downtown.



1. a) **focus/center** – No particular site serves as the neighborhood’s main center of activity.
- b) **attractions** – Well known landmarks in the neighborhood include the Hotel Fort Garry, Dalnavert House, and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The neighborhood is anchored by the Assiniboine River, the legislative grounds, and by Broadway with its stately colonnade of elms and its sidewalk vendors. Only about half of the riverfront is publicly accessible. Rather than being an anchor based on its use, the river provides views from nearby high-rises and the status associated with being in close proximity to it. The legislative grounds are also not a typical public use area. It more often draws people for rallies or protests, activities that might conflict with adjacent apartments. However, on a day-to-day basis, it serves as a broad open space adorned with faithfully manicured gardens, which does serve as a valuable selling point for adjacent residences. Broadway serves as a popular pedestrian promenade weekdays during the warmer months. Because

the buildings along it are predominantly office space, activity drops off sharply at the end of the workday.

2. a) **residential diversity** – There are a mix of old and new buildings that cater to a range of needs and budgets, though the majority are clearly newer, larger, and cater to higher-income residents. There are no single-family dwellings within the neighborhood – only low-rise and high-rise apartments and condominiums.
 - b) **mixed-use** – The north part of the neighborhood (Broadway to York Avenue) is dominated by office buildings, reducing evening activity. The south part is dominated by residential use, but there is an abundance of corner shops along with a popular restaurant and a coffee house.
 - c) **self-sufficiency** – This neighborhood has two small supermarkets, sufficient to meet most needs, both on the main floor of high rise apartments. Although one of the banks recently closed up, others do remain. No real sources of organized entertainment exist here. There are no schools in the Broadway-Assiniboine neighborhood. The closest is just across the river in Osborne Village.
3. a) **comfort and appeal** – The neighborhood has quiet walkable streets. Even Broadway's six lanes do not impede pedestrian crossing. Planters and benches for casual seating are shaded by the continuous canopy of mature elms. Although there is a dominance of modern office towers, there is a good degree of visual variety and few parking lots



street planting along Assiniboine Avenue

breaking the continuity of the street. In the tradition of the turn-of-the-century City Beautiful movement, Broadway ends with a Beaux Art landmark, the Union Station, symmetrically poised to close the view east. Art in the landscape can be found at Memorial Park and the legislative grounds, with several monuments to the war effort. The neighborhood has a number of access points to the riverwalk that are marked by a prominent gateway.

- b) connections** – The riverwalk is invaluable in connecting the Broadway-Assiniboine neighborhood to surrounding areas. As elsewhere in the city, the river can act as an uninterrupted, continuous link between sites along its bank. The Assiniboine Riverwalk crosses under the Main Street Bridge to the Forks, forging an important link to Winnipeg's key urban attraction. In the other direction, it connects to the legislature and Osborne. Both Broadway and Assiniboine Avenue also facilitate pedestrian movement in these directions. A proposed pedestrian connection through the Union Station to the Forks could eventually strengthen pedestrian activity. Links north through the central business district are less successful despite the numerous north-south connecting streets. Parking ramps at the library and Convention Centre sever pedestrian continuity. Street blocks of asphalt parking make for a weak and uninteresting streetscape.
- 4. a) extents/boundaries** – The neighborhood is bounded on the west by the legislative grounds and the law courts district. The river provides a hard geographical boundary to the south. The east is bounded by a major thoroughfare and the CNR main line running along it. The northern extents are more vague. The census tract includes everything to York Avenue. Aside from a few isolated high rises, the residential neighborhood is common perceived to extend no further than the north side of Broadway. The length of the neighborhood is under a kilometer (under ten minutes walking); its width is less than half that.
- b) density** – According to Census²³, Broadway-Assiniboine has a gross density of 24 units per acre (60/ha). However, two-thirds of the land area within the census tract is comprised of greenspace, or other non-residential land use. The net density can therefore be estimated at triple the gross density in this case – 71 units per acre (178/ha).
- c) population** – The total population within the census tract is 5917 people or 3940 units.
- 5. a) parking** – South of Broadway there is free short-term street parking (time limited during peak hours). Many of the older apartments have little or no resident parking. Many of the

²³ all gross density and population numbers from Census Canada 1996

newer buildings have built-in parkades. Due to the expense of constructing parkades and the demand put on available parking by other buildings in this neighborhood, the cost of owning a vehicle here is much higher than average. Parking lots are only a dominant physical feature around the offices, especially north of Broadway.

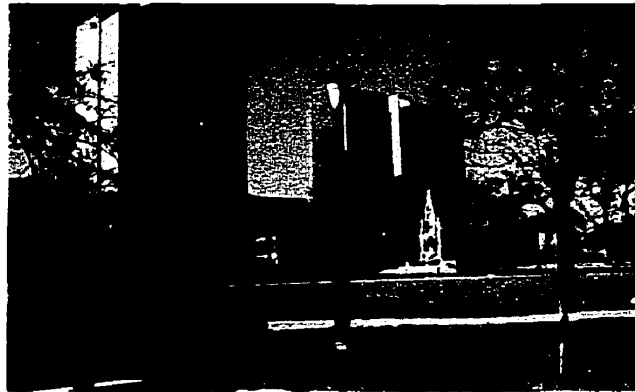
6. a) **through-traffic** – Most of the north-south streets in the neighborhood terminate at the river. As well, Assiniboine Avenue does not exit to Osborne Street. These factors virtually eliminate through-traffic and make for very calm streets. The right-of-way includes a treed boulevard, further screening the apartments from traffic.
- b) **event sites** – The neighborhood is located between the legislative grounds / Memorial Park, which see the rare event, and the Forks, which is a frequent site for urban events. The berm beneath the railway at the Forks deflects much of the sounds of minor events, but major events are heard throughout the neighborhood. In fact, residents of Fort Garry Place can be seen taking in concerts and festivities from their balconies.

Central Park...

Hidden behind Portage Place, this neighborhood is not familiar to most Winnipeggers. Despite intensive redevelopment in the eighties, it lacks the vibrancy and pride of the previous examples. It is burdened with rotating vacancies, empty lots, and under-used warehouses



1. a) **focus/center** – The neighborhood revolves around a five acre green-space with a swimming pool. The historic Wadell Fountain lies in the center of the park as an intrepid neighborhood icon. However, the fountain, the park, and a number of other sites around the neighborhood are visibly in need of work.



high-rise apartments surround Central Park

b) **attractions** – Unlike the previous examples, Central Park is not endowed with a riverway. Portage Place Shopping Center is the only major attraction that is contiguous with the neighborhood. Other nearby landmarks include Calvary Temple and the Walker Theatre.

2. a) **residential diversity** – The majority of residential units are in high-rise apartments built in the eighties as part of a north-of-Portage renewal effort. It also includes a number of older walk-up buildings and a handful of Victorian houses. There is no indication of any *luxury* suites in this neighborhood

b) **mixed-use** – The neighborhood has a great deal of office and commercial space. Several theaters in the mall and east of the neighborhood would potentially generate street life after hours. A number of corner stores can be found near the park and the residential towers.

c) **self-sufficiency** – There are no supermarkets in close proximity to Central Park. There are one or two financial services around the mall. The aforementioned theaters including the Walker offer some entertainment options. The shopping mall itself can be a leisure destination, but its shops close daily at six. There is one elementary school within the neighborhood and another just north on Bannatyne, in the Centennial Neighborhood.

3. a) **comfort and appeal** – There are no other pedestrian amenities within the neighborhood. There is some mature street planting, but it is not continuous. While the most of the streets are calm enough to accommodate pedestrian use, little consideration has been given to the design of the pedestrian realm (paving, planting, street furniture) to entice the casual user. The sidewalks are the utilitarian minimum. The streetscape surrounding the park is visually dynamic and provides a sense of closure. Elsewhere, surface parking, under-utilized and boarded up buildings diminish pedestrian appeal.

b) **connections** – Bounded by Portage Place Shopping Center, the neighborhood is in close proximity to the skywalk system. There is, unfortunately, a lack of meaningful destinations around the neighborhood that one can reach by foot, with the possible exception of the West Exchange District. Although only a few minutes walk from Central Park, to reach its shops, coffee houses, or Old Market Square Park, one would have to zigzag the awkward street grid past the parking lots and industrial buildings that lie between these two districts.

4. a) **extents/boundaries** – The mall and the commercial Portage Avenue streetfront form a south boundary to the neighborhood. Balmoral Street is a heavily trafficked artery and creates a perceptual west boundary. The one-way pairs Notre Dame-Cumberland Avenue and Donald-Smith Street are also main traffic routes, but neither constitutes a boundary to the neighborhood. The residential portion of the neighborhood extends at most two blocks from the Park. The neighborhood could easily double in size and still be at its extent within a five minute walk of the Park.

b) **density** – The gross density of the census tract bounded by Portage Avenue, Balmoral Street, and Notre Dame Avenue is 20 units per acre (50/ha). However, if one excludes the park and other non-residential land uses, the actual residential area of the neighborhood is only a quarter of its tract, about half a square kilometre. Net density is therefore approximately 80 units per acre (200/ha).

b) **population** – Despite the high density, this neighborhood has a population of only 4565 and a total of 2505 dwelling units .

5. a) **parking** – The streets around Central Park have a combination of meter parking and short term free parking during the day. There is one monolithic parkade at the north edge of the community, which is strange because many sites now sit vacant even during the working day. Some of the apartments have parkades incorporated.



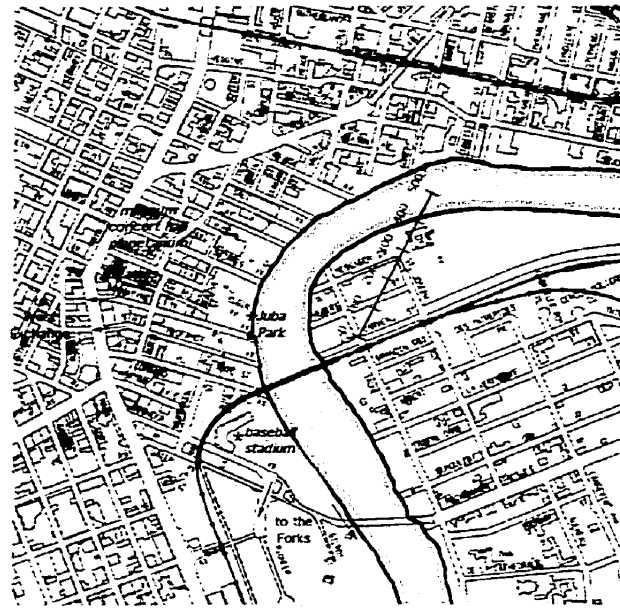
asphalt lots result in a void between Central Park and the Exchange District

While the design of one built-in parkade made accommodation for commercial space on the main level, much of the commercial space sits vacant.

6. a) **through-traffic** – The park and the mall interrupt many of the streets and so through-traffic occurs only on the primary arteries. The modern buildings are set back from the street. Some have a casual sitting area set apart in front of the entrance. Most of the older buildings come right up to the sidewalk.
- b) **event sites** – None exist in proximity of the neighborhood.

East Exchange District...

This area is not a residential neighborhood like the previous examples. However, its potential and current metamorphosis speak to the changing role of urban land. Like the Forks twenty years before, this area is an industrial waterfront. While much of the industry has disappeared, it remains a part of the character of the area. Many of the Victorian warehouses of the historic Exchange District have been cleaned and retrofitted in recent years and their newfound popularity adds incredible appeal to the area.



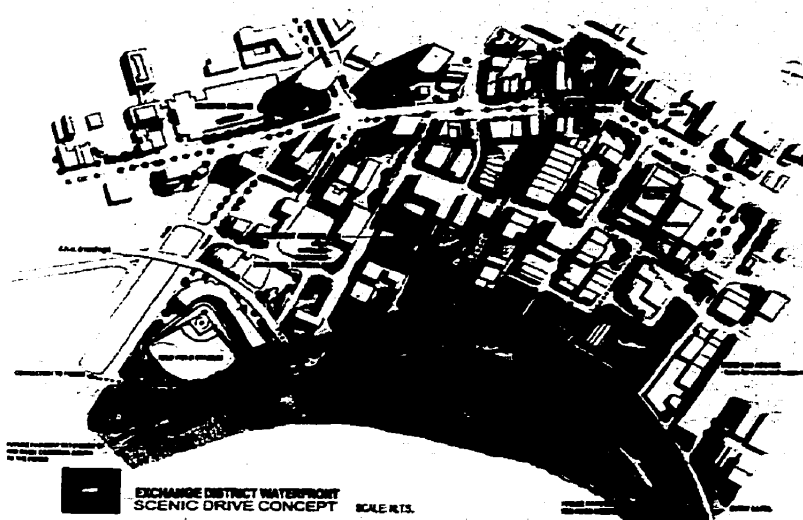
1. a) **focus/center** – Juba Park along the Red River serves as the principal attraction. It consists mainly of walking/biking trails. A river-taxi dock has recently been erected on its shore that may increase the level of activity in the vicinity. A planned riverside drive is also expected to boost activity in the area.
 - b) **attractions** – Many of the downtown's cultural institutions are found in this district, including the museum, concert hall, planetarium and theatres. The baseball stadium has proven to be a popular addition. The East Exchange is also home to a number of popular night spots and restaurants.
2. a) **residential diversity** - Residential occupation to date consists of high-end warehouse loft condominiums, long-term hotel guests, and some anomalous single-family houses.
 - b) **mixed-use** – The dominant land-use is office space. Further north there is some manufacturing. Many cultural attraction attractions are present that can see evening and

weekend activity. Evenings, especially Fridays and Saturdays, see the most pedestrian activity, resulting from the bars and restaurants. There is little in the way of commercial activity or residential occupation.

c) **self-sufficiency** – This district currently has no grocery service. Banking service is available in abundance along main street. There are many sources of entertainment as previously alluded to. Argyle High School is within the neighborhood off the Disraeli Freeway, and Victoria Albert Elementary School is across Main in the Centennial Neighborhood.

3. a) **comfort and appeal** – The scale of the streets in the Exchange are well-suited to pedestrian use. The turn-of-the-century architecture adds a distinct charm to the area. Some street blocks have a cohesive presence; others have been given over to surface parking. Tree planting both in the park and along some of the streets is reaching maturity and mitigates the hardness of the brick buildings and the barrenness of the parking lots.

b) **connections** – Frequent crossings along Main Street link well to amenities and attractions in the West Exchange, including Old Market Square. The much-talked-about river drive linking the East Exchange to the Forks promises to forge a positive association between the old warehouse district and the successful markets and greenspaces to the south. Linkages north will be difficult. First of all, there are no desirable destinations to link to. The new road will pass from the Exchange District into an industrial area and red light district.



**potential for development
along Juba Park**
(from Winnipeg Free Press
June 14, 1999)

4. a) **extents/boundaries** – The south limits of this district are the CNR line and the office high rises around Portage Avenue East. The river forms a hard boundary to the east and Main Street serves as a perceptual boundary to the west. The north boundary is also perceptual. It could be the freeway or the CPR line, which would make the length of the neighborhood equal to that of Osborne Village. More likely, neighborhood development would stay further south than that, closer to existing amenities and attractions.
- b) **density** – Within the one square kilometre census tract extending from Portage Avenue East to Main Street and the CPR line, the gross residential density is slightly below one unit per acre (2/ha). Net density is difficult to calculate because residents are scattered in a few isolated buildings, but using the areas outlined on the map, one arrives at a figure approaching 27 units per acre (68/ha).
- c) **population** – 605 was the number of residents in 1996. The 200 dwelling units identified in the last census have recently been complemented by new loft condominium development. With proper planning and a commitment from the city, one could envision a neighborhood about the size of Central Park or Assiniboine-Broadway developing here, particularly along the incipient riverfront land, over the next twenty years.
5. a) **parking** – There is one parkade at the south end of this neighborhood, and underground parking at the museum / concert hall complex. The majority of parking is in surface lots, and this constitutes a predominant land use throughout the district. There is a remarkable range from high-priced monthly lots in the south to free parking on several streets further north. Acres of gravel parking lots currently flank the length of the riverfront, and the persistence of several bulky abandoned and obsolete buildings imply that a lot of development can happen before the pressures on real estate and parking reach the levels of other parts of downtown.
6. a) **through-traffic** - Like Broadway-Assiniboine, the majority of streets through this area terminate at the river. Thus through-traffic is minimized. The existing buildings all meet the sidewalk, preempting the ability to buffer between street activity and residential conversions. Most future units, however, are likely to be new construction, giving designers the opportunity to create transitional space between movement along the riverside drive and the residential environment.
- b) **event sites** – Proximity to the Forks and the ball diamonds may result in some unwanted noise during functions. The CNR line is a regular source of noise, but potentially so regular that one gets used to it. Less tolerable is the impact of the many nightclubs – the

nightly 2 a.m. ritual of cars revving, and drunken yelling – sounds that reverberate nicely in narrow streets lined with large masonry buildings.

4.3 Implications

The neighborhood examples illustrate the relationships between the different design factors. Sometimes the importance of one preempts the need for another; in other cases we find the very opposite of to what the literature would suggest.

focus/center...

Of the four areas examined, the one with the clearest center was Central Park. Meanwhile, other neighborhoods generated more urban life. By contrast, the more successful Broadway-Assiniboine had no center at all. Clearly, neighborhood anchors are important, but it is not necessary that they be located in the center.

attractions...

A diversity of amenities appears to be a significant advantage. This was most lacking in Central Park, and not much better in the East Exchange. When there are multiple anchors, not all of them need to be public use. Some amenities, like the rivers, can attract higher density and higher-income residents. Rivers and landmarks may attract residents for other reasons such as views or status. These residents, investing in prime living space, put their stake in the neighborhood and contribute to its stability. They are often in a higher-income bracket and so impact on neighborhood buying-power. Because such sites are difficult to come by, those that acquire them are likely to reside there for a long time.

Having public open space is less a factor than how casual and purpose-oriented users occupy a space. Osborne Village demonstrates that even without dedicated gathering spaces, people will interact using only the public right-of-way if necessary. The ambient activity is generated by having a number of linked amenities, like Osborne's shops and eateries. Central Park with its one and only anchor cannot support pedestrian street life. Additional amenities should be considered to tie the Park to other uses or attractions. Similarly, in the Exchange District, a major anchor needs to be put in place north of the ballpark to punctuate the proposed riverside promenade. Otherwise both pedestrian and vehicular traffic will just pass through the Exchange as efficiently as possible on route to the Forks.

Major landmarks or regional attractions are not present in Osborne Village nor are there plans for any, suggesting that this is not a neighborhood requirement. The strength of this neighborhood rests in its cohesiveness and multiplicity of uses. The example of Broadway-Assiniboine suggests that certain landmarks add some prestige to a neighborhood, but a 'big box' like a convention center or arena would not offer the same picturesque view or prestige as legislative gardens or a chateau-esque hotel. Unless large-scale projects are designed to promote transit and other pedestrian-friendly means of access, the only increased activity will be traffic.

residential diversity...

Looking at a comparison between Broadway-Assiniboine and Central Park, we see a clear example of how a greater proportion of high-end residential units benefits a neighborhood. Greater spending power increases the viability of nearby commercial services. Luxury units have a higher design and maintenance standard and this increases the curb-appeal of the neighborhood. Central Park is a neighborhood that would benefit from some upper-end housing. Having a component of *lower priced dwellings* in a neighborhood is not a factor that contributes to 'success' as defined on page 68. It does, however, succeed in preventing lower-income residents from being segregated into ghettos. The East Exchange should have a policy for converting older buildings into moderately priced housing, since new construction typically has higher capital costs. Similarly, having a mix of dwelling typologies prevents homogenous enclaves from evolving (homogenous both in streetscape appearance and in resident demographics).

mixed-use...

All the neighborhoods analyzed, with the exception of the East Exchange, which has too few residents, have sufficient diversity to sustain pedestrian activity through the day and into the evening. The case of Central Park demonstrates that mixed-use alone is not enough. Its theatres enjoy evening activity, but users are diverted *around* the neighborhood by the circulation pattern. Thus, having non-residential activity only on the periphery of the area, defeats the goal of perpetual street life. Future growth needs to increase after-hours uses and/or modify circulation to encourage use of neighborhood streets (eg. change one-ways, priority flow, etc.)

self-sufficiency...

Only Osborne Village contains all the core services on the checklist. Although Broadway-Assiniboine has access to a school immediately across the river, not having one *in* the neighborhood limits its residential demographics. Everyone, however, needs groceries, and the

lack of this service in the other two neighborhoods challenges their viability. Because commercial services require a minimum user base to stay profitable, these neighborhoods would require either government subsidized food service, or a significant increase in their population.

pedestrian comfort and appeal...

The issue of traffic has more facets than was evident in the literature. Broad arterial routes risk severing pedestrian movement. That is why such routes usually signify an edge to a neighborhood, such as Main Street at the east end of Osborne Village and Broadway-Assiniboine. If they do not make pedestrian movement exceedingly difficult, cars *can* add to the theatre of urban space in moderate numbers at moderate speed. It takes a variety of elements to animate urban space – people driving, people walking, people waiting for a bus, people on bikes. The best approach is designing the right-of-way for the best mix of cars and people, rather than for maximum vehicular speed and volume.

Pedestrian-oriented street detailing was notably absent around Central Park and in the Exchange north of Market Avenue. Such amenities should be used to encourage pedestrian use of these areas.

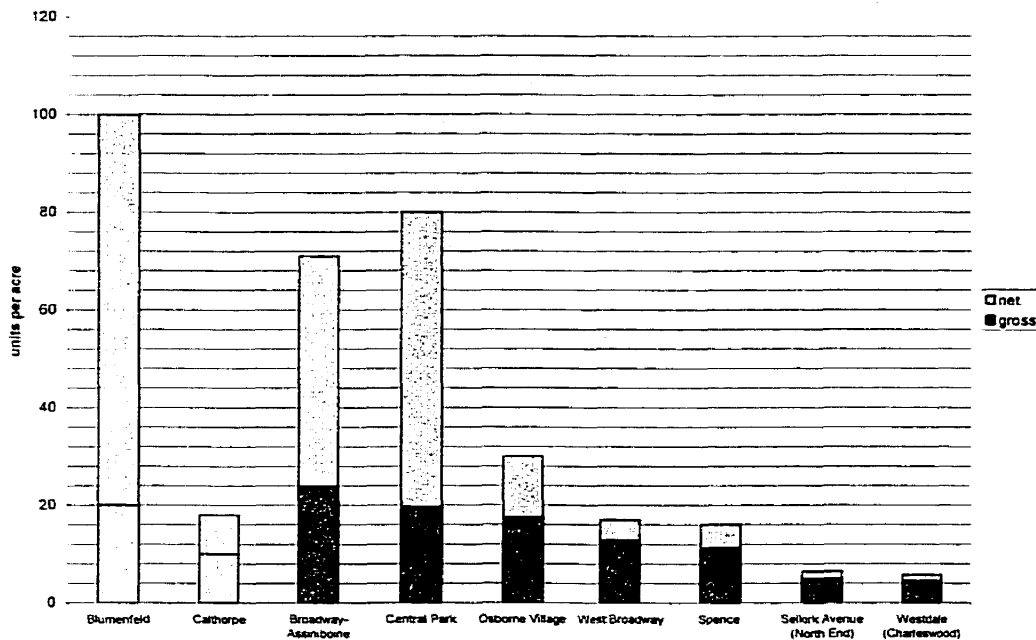
Continuity of building fabric was a quality shared by Osborne Village and Broadway-Assiniboine. It was absent in the East Exchange and the outskirts of the Central Park neighborhood. As a result, pleasant views and quality spaces were too few and suffered too many obstacles between them. This suggests that an aggressive infill plan will be necessary in these areas to upgrade the quality of the street environment.

connections...

Of all four neighborhood areas, Central Park has the least pedestrian connections to other areas and attractions. Compared with the two or three links at each of the other neighborhoods, Central Park's one and only uninterrupted link closes after mall hours. To improve the viability of this neighborhood, either new attractions will have to be located in its vicinity, or else new pedestrian links will have to be forged to increase visibility and access to existing sites in the nearby Exchange District. The Exchange offers pubs, dance clubs, coffee shops, and the new college campus all within an easy ten minute walk from the Park. Connecting them may involve choosing a particular route for pedestrian detailing, adding a mid-block crossing to overcome the awkward street geometry, or giving certain sites priority (incentives) for commercial infill.

density...

The more successful areas had densities in a broad range from 30 units per acre in Osborne Village to 71 units per acre in Broadway-Assiniboine. The Density in Central Park was similar to the latter at 80 units per acre. This suggests there is not an independent correlation between density and success. (However, see *population* below.)



Blumenfeld's (1967) and Calthorpe's (1993) density recommendations compared with various neighborhoods in Winnipeg

population...

Out of all the neighborhood areas analyzed, the largest appears to be the most successful. Although Osborne Village is not as dense as the two other neighborhoods, its total population is, by far, the greatest. Its success is largely due to its **critical mass**, which supports its diversity of services. Broadway-Assiniboine, while still considered successful, has little more than half the population of Osborne Village. Lacking a school and large supermarket, its population places it at a different threshold of neighborhood success. Central Park also has a high density, but over such a small area that its total population reaches only 4565. This is below the minimum required population for a successful urban neighborhood. This accounts for the fact that it has convenience stores, but no supermarket. Hans Blumenfeld's (1967) recommendation of a 5000 to 10,000 population base appears to be valid in contemporary Winnipeg. Central Park and the East Exchange must seek new residential development to reach these levels.

extents/boundaries...

Each of the neighborhoods, except for Osborne Village, has the potential to grow beyond its current limits and still be within a five minute walk of its center or principal amenities. The example of Osborne Village illustrates how additional amenities like rivers and parks can extend the neighborhoods limits to over a kilometre from its center, toward South Point Park and the Forks, in this case.

When natural features like a river or forest delineate a neighborhood's extents, the neighborhood benefits because these things are amenities in and of themselves. A fuzzy boundary where two neighborhoods meet is also advantageous as in the case where Osborne Village meets Corydon Village. Residents in between enjoy the benefits of both; users can easily move from one to the other. This appears to outweigh the benefits of having clearly delineated character areas.

Perceptual barriers such as an industrial zone or a heavy traffic artery provide no benefit and are associated with signs of abandonment and decay in all four study areas. The remedy would be either to remove the disturbance (e.g. modify the street design, or bring mixed-use to the industrial areas) or to put a buffer in place (e.g. a greenspace) to signify a neighborhood edge.

parking...

The availability of free parking is a major draw for visitors and customers in Osborne Village, and to a lesser extent, in Broadway-Assiniboine. At the same time, most of the parking is accommodated on the street, and therefore does not have a dominant visual presence. Street parking, and even short-term lots of modest size, can enhance the dynamic of the street. By contrast, both Central Park and the East Exchange have an overwhelming abundance of surface parking, as well as freestanding parkades. This has degraded the quality of the landscape to the point where additional buildings have been abandoned or torn down, but the sites have no value as parking lots. This tells us that the success of an urban neighborhood depends on keeping surface parking below a certain threshold.

Osborne's balanced parking strategy may well be a product of its lower density, however, it is notable that a large percentage of its user base does not require parking. This confirms the point that a large population base needs to be well connected to a neighborhood's business center and attractions. In denser environments, concealed parking, such as underground parkades, is the best solution. Their greater cost is justified by the quality of the environment. People will pay for parking if the reward of their destination is worth it.

protection of the private realm...

The most successful neighborhood, Osborne Village had the most through-traffic, partly because it improves the viability of neighborhood shops and services. It also provides casual surveillance, which makes the streets more active and thereby safer. As a general rule then, streets should be designed to usable routes by both cars and pedestrians. Central Park and the East Exchange currently experience the least through-traffic. Siphoning some movement along a speed and volume controlled route will be necessary to sustain street life. This is already planned for the Exchange and should be considered for Central Park (changing one-ways, or priority flow, for example).

Event sites do not appear to hinder neighborhood success. For many, proximity of these sites is a draw to living where they do. They tend to heighten street activity. If viable, more such sites should be planned, especially in proximity to Central Park.

Numerous nightclubs on the same block as residential loft in the Exchange District have created a great deal of friction in the form of noise from the bars letting out at the end of the night. This is not likely to improve as the resident population increases. The ability to establish a residential neighborhood here will likely depend on being able to relocate much of this club district elsewhere.

4.4 Conclusions

What makes urban design so difficult and prone to failure is that it has so many interrelated factors and any one of them can jeopardize the success of an urban neighborhood. Furthermore, so many of the factors are mutually dependent on other factors, resulting in the *chicken and the egg* conundrum.

- Amenities and services require a resident population to justify their investment, but without services already in place, people will not take up residency in a neighborhood.
- Ambient street life adds appeal to urban neighborhoods, attracting new residents, however, that urban life cannot be sustained until a critical population mass has already been reached.

- Some amount of street activity and entertainment uses are necessary to encourage use of the pedestrian realm, however, residents also require their dwelling and its immediate vicinity to be a withdrawal from excess noise and traffic.

It is difficult to give certain factors priority in the list. Without the others in place, no one solution will improve a neighborhood. Each factor must be implemented with a view to achieving the others. However, there is a certain amount of give and take. One factor can trade-off in importance with another factor.

- Lower density may make parking easier, but critical population mass close to the center makes parking less necessary by bringing residents closer to services and amenities.
- Without parking lots, buildings can be closer together and adjacent to the sidewalk, making walking more attractive.
- A *center* can be a strong neighborhood identifier, however a series of linked anchors generates more pedestrian activity.
- Anchors/attractions, mix of uses, and essential community services are not necessarily separate neighborhood elements. As in the case in Osborne Village, a particular cluster of buildings can fulfill all these roles.
- Calthorpe promotes a neighborhood with a 2000 foot (600 m) radius at 18 units per acre²⁴ (45/ha). A neighborhood may extend a five minute walk, a ten minute walk, or more from its center. The smaller its radius, however, the higher its density needs to be to reach a critical mass of over 5000 people.
- Jane Jacobs observed successful low-income, high-density neighborhoods. It makes sense that her density recommendation is so high, because it compensates for lower per capita spending power.

²⁴ at that size and density, a perfectly circular neighborhood would comprise 5200 residents.

other factors...

Whatever intervention we choose to make in the urban environment to meet the key points discussed, its success will still be ultimately dependent on the two factors below – how it responds to the local user, and how design and maintenance standards will ensure a long-lasting benefit.

- Primary consideration should always be made for those who will be most affected by any proposal – those who live in the immediate vicinity. This should be a case where majority does *not* rule. In the long run, nobody gains if we allow popular behavior to overrun and deteriorate neighborhoods.

Planning questions to be asked include: Does it improve accessibility or cause inconvenience for pedestrians and cyclists? Does the change represent an enhancement or an eyesore from the local perspective? Does it respond to the needs of residents?

Residents in Osborne Village have battled against their supermarket's plans for a large-scale redevelopment that would result in the creation of a regional center with parking to accommodate distant users. One concern is that its size will be out of scale for the neighborhood. The affect of a larger parking lot on the landscape is also a point of consideration. The underlying message is that this store is a *neighborhood service* and residents would like to keep it that way.

- Nothing seems more tragic than the completion a costly new project that, in the end, actually brings down the value and appeal of a neighborhood. It is clear that design codes have their limitations. Many published theories on urban design identify the importance of private built design on public space. This does not mean that every building needs to be an architectural masterpiece. Not all buildings must exude charm – background buildings are equally valuable when designed well. Sometimes, in an attempt to make the public realm resistant to vandalism and squatting, designers eliminate comfort and dispense with design 'extras'. Unfortunately, this approach is counter-productive. Elizabeth Sweatman of CentreVenture acknowledged, "You have to make them [buildings, parks] beautiful..."²⁵ While cities cannot legislate good architecture, they can require design reviews and set standards to help shape the urban environment.

²⁵ personal communication April 3, 2000.

On-going maintenance is equally critical. Without it, even the best designs can succumb to disorder and abhorrence. Lack of maintenance in the public realm can generate a fear that an area is out of control (Rapoport 1982). The management of public space must therefore demonstrate a respect and commitment to the neighborhood, in order for those spaces to be treated with respect.

This document has, as much as possible, avoided dealing with economic theory and social policy. Although these factors can have just as much an impact on the success of neighborhoods as design and physical planning, they are complex issues that deserve a separate investigation. The two points below begin to suggest how these factors come into play in the neighborhoods reviewed.

- The economic status of residents in a neighborhood has a strong effect on the viability of shops and services. It also has an unfortunate correlation to crime rate. Of course, the correlation is ambiguous. Does a neighborhood's lack of design appeal cause it to be deserted by those who can afford to live elsewhere, or does evidence of poverty or crime cause neighborhood disinvestments? The answer certainly lies somewhere in between. Banks must protect their investments and will decline mortgages in problem areas. Government organizations like Canadian Mortgage and Housing can impact on the composition of a neighborhood by analyzing how much subsidized-unit housing should be established in one location.
- The real estate market can either catalyze or inhibit private development in urban neighborhoods. The examples of Dallas and Denver illustrate how a rock bottom market can trigger redevelopment. This is a product of both the economy in general and local trends in property values. Development in the Exchange District takes advantage of the post-industrial nature of the waterfront. In such cases, timing is of the essence. Although major parts of the waterfront have very little current appeal, designers can see what key elements are necessary to alter the areas image. Those who make the first significant investment (whether private or public initiative) take advantage of the low real estate value and benefit from the spin-offs of future development.

recommendations...

The Exchange is already beginning to show evidence of a transformation. A number of sites have been identified along the new promenade for redevelopment. Intensification of uses along the river may prompt residents to see the area's potential as a neighborhood. Masterplans for the East Exchange must seek to accommodate in excess of 5000 future residents.

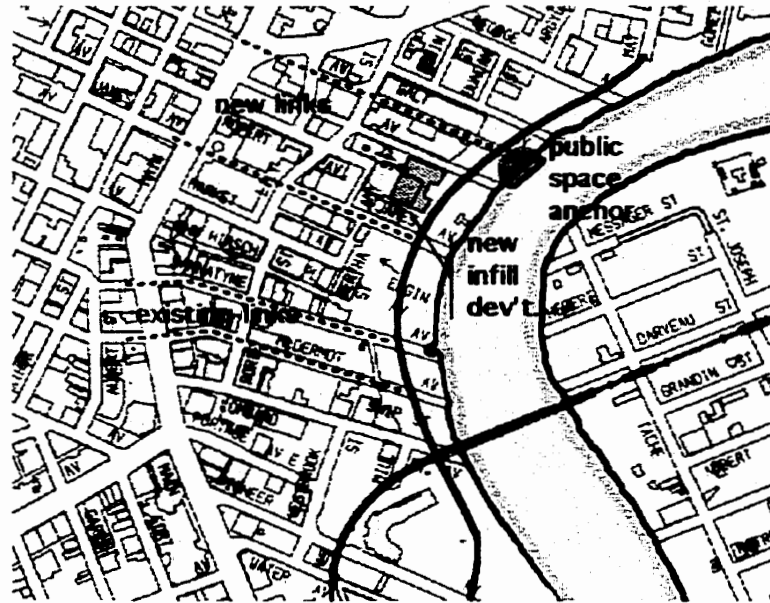
- The new promenade will increase through-movement and allow commercial activity along the way.
- The Alexander Docks should be developed as a marina park. A major anchor is necessary to punctuate the linear through-movement of the promenade, the river and the Juba Park walking trails. A riverside destination at the end of Juba Park would set up a balance in activity and movement between the Forks and the Exchange. The relocation of the River Rouge boats and buses has the potential to create a dramatic riverscape. As a potential tourist attraction, it should make the highest and best use of the site.



Alexander Docks - potential tourist hub

- The steam plant is a five-storey vacant building that occupies a very large site and creates a perceptual boundary between the Alexander Docks and the more intensely developed south end of the Exchange. It looms over the riverfront advertising its abandonment and decay. This site should be given priority for a signature mix-use development. This will remove a barrier to northward development and establish a hub of activity between this site and the Docks.

- Connections across Main Street need to be enhanced and increased to avoid disinvestments in areas some distance from the river.



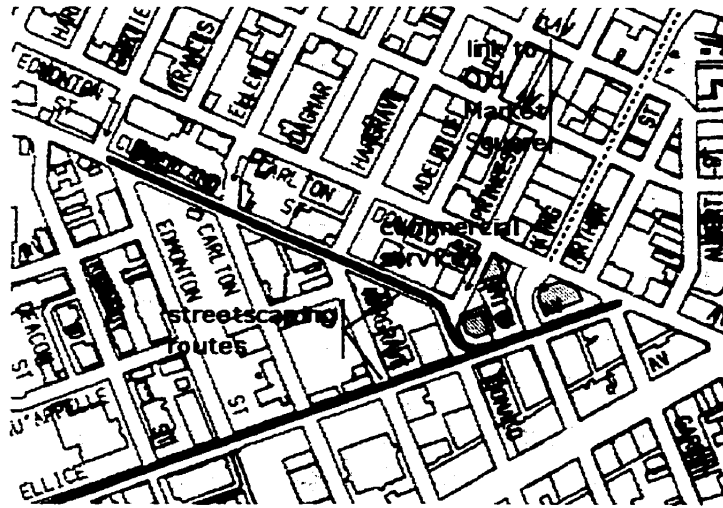
Central Park misses on many of the key points discussed, and a number of general recommendations have been mentioned. Some are more difficult to implement than others. Connections, for example, primarily result from a neighborhood's relation to the surrounding city, and are not easy to change. Through-traffic cannot be reinstated as long as the Park and the mall remain. As in the East Exchange, the focus of future development in Central Park needs to be encouraging increased residential occupation.

- Additional attractions are necessary to increase appeal of the neighborhood. A secondary neighborhood hub should be established and located to serve as a stepping-stone between the park and Old Market Square in the heart of the West Exchange.
- A new hub should include common neighborhood services such as a grocer, drug store, video store, etc.



**Cumberland Avenue
– potential pedestrian promenade**

- A new hub should have an expanded pedestrian right-of-way to allow for planting, sitting areas and other street furniture. Traffic-calming can reduce the intimidation by cars at the intersection.
- Ellice Avenue and Cumberland Avenue should also use pedestrian detailing to express a distinct identity and address issues of comfort and appeal between the existing residential area and the new hub.



The Broadway-Assiniboine neighborhood can also improve upon its limited success by increasing its population. Prime sites overlooking the legislative grounds or Bonnycastle Park and the river are currently being held for parking. Such sites should not require incentives for development. A slight improvement in the economy married with a positive downtown image would create an impetus for reuse of these sites. An additional thousand or so residents would trigger additional services that would most likely occur along Smith Street, Donald Street, or Broadway where numerous vacant sites are available and through-traffic can augment the customer base.

Osborne Village is weakest toward the Pembina-Corydon Interchange. The most ambitious solution would be the reorganization of traffic to accommodate a better south terminus to the pedestrian-oriented portion of Osborne. This might take the form of a unique transit station with public washrooms, ticket sales, and other commercial spin-offs. The short-term solution for Osborne will be finding uses for its vacant buildings that either do not require much passer-by patronage or are so unique and popular that they generate their own pedestrian activity. A new building being erected near Stradbrook Avenue hopes to do just that, however, it cannot help any sites that lies further south than itself.

in closing...

The issue of downtown decay and renewal is far too often assessed and dealt with from point of view of driving down Portage Avenue. Those who drive through it, or contend with it during the working day do not necessarily see it as a landscape of habitation. 15,000 people live downtown, and 36,000 more live in adjacent neighborhoods²⁶. It is these people that give a city center its twenty-four hour presence, not sports, concerts, or big name stores. Urban life occurs on the sidewalks and pedestrian ways, not indoors or in automobiles.

Earlier the question was asked, is the downtown too large or too small? As a business/office park it may be too large. However, as an agglomeration of urban neighborhoods, a downtown could be any size. The type of metropolitan center that Jane Jacobs talked about in the 1960s, has today become extinct in mid-sized cities like Winnipeg. The era in which *everything* was downtown, from shopping to employment to every other essential service, is gone. Now urban residential development huddles around specific amenities and attractions, and vanishes from the numerous border vacuums in between.

This new downtown morphology, one with arterials, districts, and neighborhoods, inherits a valuable legacy. It possesses mature tree cover, a diverse architectural heritage, dramatic spaces, historical narratives, and a highly connective, pedestrian-oriented street system. These qualities come together to create highly desirable living environments. Despite these qualities, it will not be a universal appeal. With urban living, one gives up the private yard, the autonomy and independence of the private entrance from the street, a means of personal expression, and the sense of silence and solitude found in more rural surrounds.

Those that *do* choose an urban living experience will, by doing so, effect positive change on the environment. The city as a whole will benefit because intensification will preempt sprawling suburban development, and reduce infrastructure expansion and maintenance costs. Core area revitalization will also benefit many who are currently prisoners of depressed neighborhoods. And if more people choose to live, work, or spend time downtown, then it also achieves a safer, livelier, dynamic environment. Urban residents may even rediscover the value of a public realm as both a means of access to the outdoors and a generator of free urban culture.

²⁶ source: Statistics Canada 1996 census

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note: all photographs and diagrams are the work of the author unless noted otherwise.

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