

A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF WINNIPEG'S PLANNED SHOPPING CENTRES

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to conduct a case study of the development of planned shopping centres in the North American city and an analysis of selected characteristics of this new form of retail nucleation. The case study area is Winnipeg, Manitoba, a city of approximately 600,000 in Western Canada.¹ The planned shopping centres of this city are also used for an analysis of selected shopping centre characteristics.

Chapter 1 is the presentation of the "model" against which the development of Winnipeg's shopping centres can be compared. The first few pages of this chapter demonstrate the changes that have occurred in the urban fabric of the North American city as a whole, over the past fifty years. The remainder of the chapter is an account of the corresponding changes that have taken place in the intra-urban retail structure. Also discussed is the affect these changes have had on the central business districts (CBD's) of cities in North America.

General Changes in the Urban Fabric of the North American City

Researchers studying the internal structure of the North American city have identified many changes in the pattern of intra-urban land use over the past half century. An example of these changes is the progressive development and changes in the theories of urban land use. During the 1920's and 1930's

¹The estimated population of Metropolitan Winnipeg was 560,000 in June, 1973. This estimate was made by Statistics Canada.

the "concentric zone" theory was widely accepted as a model of land use in cities. Comparison of this model with the real world resulted in numerous incongruities. These incongruities were corrected to some extent in 1939 with the "sector" theory. By 1945, however, sufficient additional changes had occurred in the structure of intra-urban land use that the single nucleus theories such as the "concentric zone" and "sector" theories often failed to adequately represent the real world. As a result, the "multiple nuclei" theory was presented to overcome their deficiencies.²

The "concentric zone", "sector" and "multiple nuclei" theories of the structure of urban land use are now considered to be complimentary to each other. Their evolutionary development is indicative of the many changes that have taken place in the urban fabric and land use requirements for various activities. An example of these changes in land use requirements is in the

²The "concentric zone" theory was presented by Burgess in 1925 as a model of intra-urban land use and land use changes. The model was a series of concentric circles representing zones of land use. At the centre was the CBD which dominated the land use structure with its retail, office, service and civic functions. Next to the CBD was a zone of transition and mixed land use with factories, warehouses and residential deterioration. The working class residential zone was immediately beyond this zone and the progressively better off lived in successive circular zones outwards from the CBD. Hoyt's "sector" theory was presented in 1939 after he had observed that not all of the "better" residential areas were beyond the "working class zone" and that the "zones" were not always circular. In many cities, for example, there were pie-shaped higher income residential areas radiating out from the CBD. There were also identifiable middle and lower income sectors in many cities. The "multiple nuclei" theory was proposed by Harris and Ullman in 1945 after they had observed that the intra-urban land use pattern did not always grow from a single centre as had once been the case but that residential growth often occurred around several distinct nuclei. These nuclei might be outlying retail areas, educational institutions, industrial sites or an airport, in addition to the CBD. These theories are presented in R. E. Park, E. W. Burgess and R. D. McKenzie, The City (Chicago, 1925), pp. 47-62; H. Hoyt, The Structure and Growth of Residential Areas in American Cities (Washington, 1939) and C. D. Harris and E. L. Ullman, "The Nature of Cities", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 242, 1945, pp. 7-17.

manufacturing and warehousing activities which are no longer solely concentrated in the "zone of transition" that surrounded the CBD as per the "concentric zone" theory. They are now situated according to contemporary site and location requirements.³ The location requirements of other elements of the urban fabric have also changed. These changes have been particularly noticeable in the intra-urban retail structure.

The Dominant CBD

The CBD has long dominated the retailing scene in the cities of North America. The highest order goods and services available in any one area were offered here. This was the point of greatest accessibility in the city. It took only a few minutes for most consumers to walk to a bus or streetcar stop and ride downtown for less frequently purchased goods. Everyday food, drug and variety items were available, however, in small neighbourhood oriented retail nucleations that were distributed throughout the residential areas.

Early Decentralization of Intra-Urban Retail Activity

The trend toward the decentralization of retail activity began with the significant shift of the population of large North American cities such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago to the suburbs during the 1920's and 1930's. This early suburbanization was based on intra-urban mass transportation systems.⁴

³R. B. Short, "The Wholesale Function in Winnipeg", unpublished Master's dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Manitoba, 1973.

⁴M. J. Proudfoot, "The Outlying Business Centres of Chicago" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1936) and Inez K. Rolph, "The Population Pattern in Relation to Retail Buying", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 38, 1932, pp. 368-376.

Most of these suburbanites were well-to-do executives and professionals. They moved to residential developments around commuter train stations where they had easy access to their downtown work places but away from the problems of the inner-city. Clusters of stores were opened next to these stations in order to take advantage of this new concentration of wealth. These retail clusters were usually located at seven to twelve mile distances from the CBD. It was more economical for the suburbanite to shop at this new intermediate level of retail nucleation than to go downtown for all but the highest level of goods and services. The range of goods offered and the size and number of stores in these outlying retail nucleations was smaller than in the downtown area but the morphology and internal distribution of stores was similar to that of the CBD. These clusters of stores did not seriously undermine the supremacy of the CBD but they were the forerunners of outlying retail nucleations that would do so. A new level of retail nucleations had been superimposed on the CBD - corner store system.

The Emergence of Planned Shopping Centres

During the post-World War II years of the 1940's the automobile became an increasingly important mode of intra-urban transportation. There was a corresponding decline in the use of public transportation for trips to work and to the store. It was soon discovered, however, that the existing street systems were not designed with the requirements of the automobile in mind and the relationship that had once existed between the shop and the street broke down when the prospective customer was driving his car.⁵ The downtown became an unpleasant place to be as the narrow streets became more congested, parking

⁵James S. Hornbeck (ed.), Stores and Shopping Centres (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Incorporated, 1962), pp. 103.

space became scarce and the noise level increased.

Retailers endeavoured to overcome these problems. In an effort to better relate to the automobile driving consumer, they spread their establishments along major arteries. Here they hoped to attract him on his way to and from work as they had been able to do at the mass transportation transfer points or terminals. This change did not serve the customer much better as these streets also became congested and parking was still inadequate.

There were additional factors that contributed to impending major changes in the intra-urban retail structure. During the 1940's there was a significant growth in consumer buying power. This growth was a function of a large increase in the population of urban areas, number of wage earners, average hourly wage and average disposable income, as housing costs dropped. Also, while the proportion of very high income families became smaller, there was a marked increase in the proportion of middle income families. Buying power grew as retailers were able to keep the prices of their goods from rising by introducing economies of scale and changes in their operations which resulted in reduced labour costs. These economies are exemplified by what took place in the food retailing industry. During the 1940's the average food store size increased while the actual number of outlets of many chains decreased. This reduction in store numbers also brought about cuts in labour costs which had already dropped as a result of the introduction of the self-service concept during the depression of the 1930's.⁶ Many improvements were made but an effective way of relating to the car driving customer had yet to be implemented on a large scale.

Sears Roebuck was the first major American retailer to cater to the car driving public in an effective way. During the 1940's this department

⁶G. Baker and B. Funaro, Shopping Centres: Design and Operation (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1951), pp. 4-5.

store chain began to establish new outlets away from other existing department stores and the congested downtown area. Each new store was surrounded by spacious parking lots. The target was the new suburbanite who was tired of congested streets, the lack of car parking space and the long trip from his home to the CBD. He was one of millions of North Americans who had migrated away from the older city to the new subdivisions that began to mushroom in the urban fringes after the mid-1930's. This second great migration away from the city-centre was based on the automobile and septic tanks rather than the commuter train and other means of mass transportation that had enabled the first, smaller scale exodus to take place. While mass transportation oriented retail nucleations had met the needs of those who composed the first migration, they were not adequate to serve this new market because they lacked convenient parking space.

The first cluster of stores where adjacent parking space was provided was constructed in Baltimore, Md. in 1904. According to Simmons, this was the first retail development that could be called a planned shopping centre.⁷ Hoyt states, however, that the first such shopping centre was built in Kansas City in 1924.⁸ Despite this difference of opinion, these shopping centres were ahead of their time and exceptions to prevailing practice in retailing. Attempts were made to provide parking space behind the stores of the older, unplanned retail nucleations but this was found to be quite unsatisfactory as customers began to use the rear entrances that had been designed for deliveries

⁷James W. Simmons, The Changing Pattern of Retail Location, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 93 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 10.

⁸Homer Hoyt, "Classification and Significant Characteristics of Shopping Centres", Readings in Urban Geography, Edited by Harold M. Mayer and Clyde F. Kohn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 455.

and for the removal of garbage and space for parking was limited.

The planned shopping centre became popular during the 1940's. The aim of their developers was to tap the car driving market. Like Sears Roebuck, they wanted to gain access to the concentration of consumers in newly constructed residential areas. Conversely, homes in new subdivisions were sometimes sold on the basis of easy access to various amenities including a modern shopping centre.⁹

The primary consideration in the design of these planned shopping centres was to provide adequate parking space for customers' cars. There were other typical shopping centre characteristics. Most of the stores were accommodated under one roof. There was an integrated architecture and little variation in the floor area of the individual stores. In the first shopping centres, the stores were often arranged in a straight line that extended upwards to 2000 feet in length on occasion. As a variation to this theme and consequently reducing the walking distance between stores, they were sometimes arranged to form an L or U (see Figures 1 and 2). There was usually at least one principal tenant in a shopping centre such as a food store or, in larger centres, a junior department store or full-fledged department store. This tenant was often charged a preferential rent by virtue of the fact that his store would attract other businesses to locate in the shopping centre. These new planned shopping centres were an adjustment in the intra-urban retail structure as a result of the phenomenal increase in the pervasiveness of the automobile. Accessibility to the consumer is a primary concern of the retailer. Accessibility in the case of a large shopping centre meant locating along a major transportation route or at a major automobile traffic intersection in addition to providing parking space. Smaller neighbourhood oriented shopping centres were located in new

⁹B. Goodall, The Economics of Urban Areas (Oxford: Pergamon Press), p. 133.

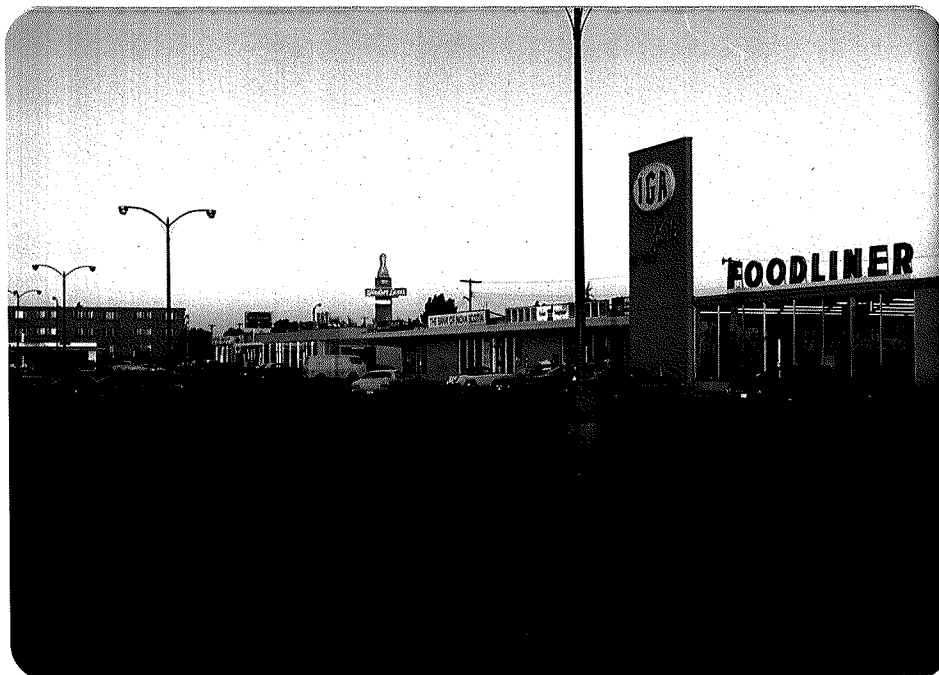


FIGURE 1. The Northgate and Windsor Park planned shopping centres. The Northgate is a U-shape shopping centre while the Windsor Park Shopping Centre has an I-plan. (top and bottom respectively)

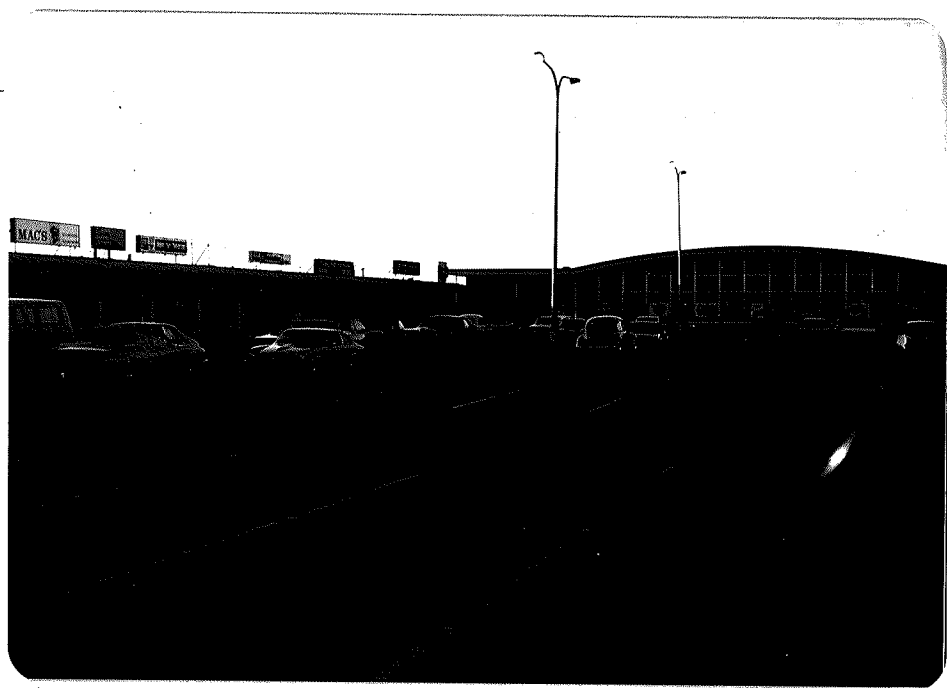


FIGURE 2. The Regent Park Shopping Centre was constructed in the L-pattern.

residential subdivisions. These were usually situated on an arterial street.

Despite efforts to meet the new needs of the suburban consumer, there were deficiencies in the design of the early planned shopping centres. Most were aesthetically unattractive and open to the parking lot. The customer was still exposed to the noise and hazards of the automobile while shopping. Even the first mall-type shopping centres were designed only to provide more and easier car parking. Their mall areas were dull and unpleasant and their display windows were still oriented to the parking lot.

Designers, developers and merchants gradually became aware, however, that the best shopping took place when people were on foot, away from the hazards and tensions of watching for cars and service vehicles and in an attractive environment. The consequence was that pedestrian areas were designed to be larger and better landscaped. Courts, plazas and arcades were developed. Where less favorable climatic conditions prevailed, pedestrian areas were covered, air conditioned and especially illuminated. The best store window displays faced the central mall area. These improvements took place, generally, in the largest, regional-type planned shopping centres (see Figure 3). In many cases facilities for other than retail activities were also provided. These facilities often included business and medical office space, hotels, auditoriums, exhibit areas, theatres, social meeting places, space for clubs and banquets and facilities for other cultural, recreational and civic activities.¹⁰ These large, new planned clusters of stores and community facilities became the meeting and market places for the car driving suburbanite.

By the 1950's the development of shopping centres of all sizes and plans was in full swing. In 1957 there were thirty-six planned regional

¹⁰Hornbeck, loc. cit., pp. 97-106.