

Hedge Cities: Gambling on Regional Futures

By

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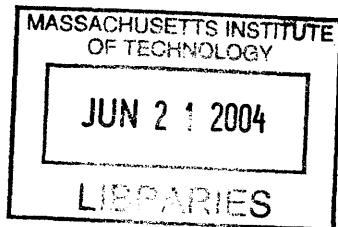
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Abstract

Environmental degradation, automobile dependence, anticipated rapid population growth and spatial inequity have combined to form the basis for recent North American regional plans advocating a physical alternative to diffuse, uncoordinated development. To provide a physical place in which development can be re-channeled, a number of regions have promoted a network of sub-regional centers in designated locations along existing or planned rapid transit lines. These centers are the urban embodiment of an ecologically sustainable, economically diverse, pedestrian-oriented region in which a variety of housing types is available, jobs are located close to population centers, and social groups are less stratified in enclaves dominated by a single form of development. This paper critically assesses the planning, design and development of designated regional centers in North America during the past two decades, focusing specifically on the promotion of regional centers for Metropolitan Portland, Oregon and Greater Vancouver, British Columbia. Through case studies, comparative analysis, and assessment of real estate trends and urban design, the paper provides a window into the initial success of intentional centers in both regions. Design and development outcomes across the centers of both regions vary dramatically, but a number of consistent themes emerged from the research: the number and size of sub-regional centers planned for both regions appears far too ambitious; a lack of market analysis prior to the designation of centers can presage their failure; limited local and regional support in curtailing traditional suburban forms of development that compete with centers has reduced their attraction; and the consistency of local planning approaches – both to centers and other parts of the region – appears to influence the success of centers. The paper argues that a more refined approach balancing multiple growth forecasts, aggressive coordination of transportation and land use, the unique geometries of individual places and political considerations must be taken to the formulation and implementation of plans for centers if they are to truly emerge as the new nuclei for economic and cultural activities in the suburbs of North American regions. Future directions for research suggested by this paper include closer analysis of the viability of various plan-making processes, the relationship between different modes of public transit, land use regulations and transit-oriented development, and the role of local morphologies in supporting or impeding the implementation of regional planning objectives.

Advisor: Terry Szold, Associate Professor of Land Use Planning

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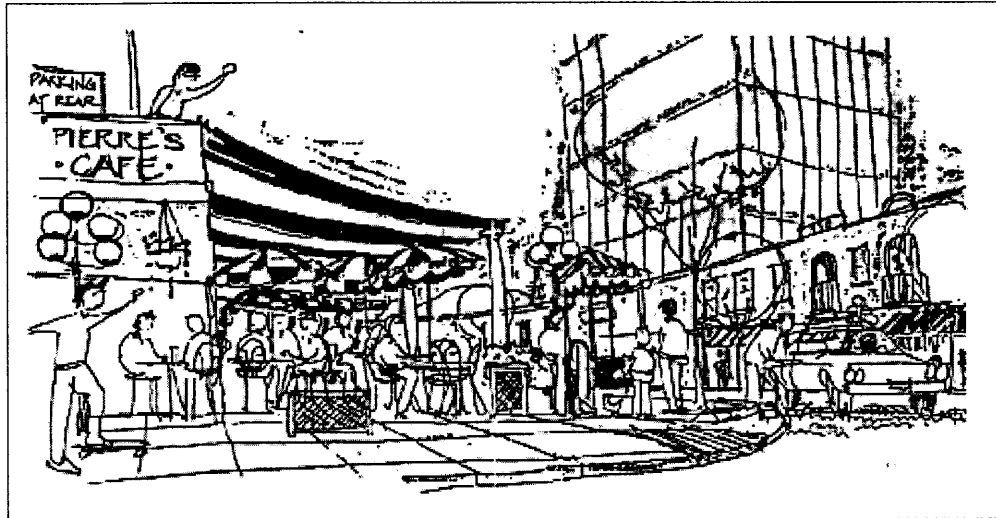
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Chapter One: Defining an Approach to Regional Form

1.1 Searching for a 'Second Downtown'

The sketch describes a vibrant urban scene: a man waves to an acquaintance from a rooftop, popcorn is sold to a mother and son from a curbside vending cart, a passenger steps into a car idling on a traffic-calmed street, and the patrons of Pierre's Café converse beneath umbrellas. Life on the street is framed by first-floor local retailers animating the sidewalk with carts and second floor residential spaces gesturing casually into the public realm with brief balconies and cornices. In the near distance, a rectangular office building rises to an indeterminate height beyond the edge of the paper, hinting at a robust local economic base.

Drawn by the consulting firm of former City of Vancouver planning director Ray Spaxman, this sketch embodies one regional and municipal vision for a 'second downtown' for Greater Vancouver, Canada in the suburban city of Surrey. Since the mid 1970's, regional plans produced by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) have advocated the dispersal of office space, transportation infrastructure and cultural activities to the southern portion of the region to serve its rapidly growing population (GVRD 1975, GVRD 1980, GVRD 1996). As in much of North America, the contrast between the development patterns of Vancouver's urban core

and its outer suburbs was stark during the two and a half decades following the end of World War II. While the region's core experienced a surplus of employment growth relative to population, its edges were pushed ever outward by a fragmented landscape of low-density single family housing tracts and strip shopping centers (Smith and Associates 1976). Suburban municipal zoning codes perpetuated this trend by specifying large minimum lot sizes, limiting the intensity of commercial development, and separating land uses. The combination of restrictive zoning and centrifugal economic forces led to a severe deficit of jobs relative to population in Surrey and its neighboring cities by the early 1970s.

The 1970s was a time of political upheaval in Greater Vancouver marked by a successful highway revolt, renewed interest in the region's downtown core and growing environmentalism. The continuation of a diffuse development pattern of segregated uses along the region's periphery was viewed by an emergent group of planners and politicians as a threat to the long-term economic, social and ecological viability of the region. Through regional land use and transportation policy, this increasingly popular element sought to shape the region into a 'livable' network of unique pedestrian-scale urban centers linked by rapid transit and buffered by protected green space. In this 'livable region' of the future, affirmed in a 1975 policy plan for Greater Vancouver, downtown Vancouver would remain the regional nexus for economic and cultural activity, but outward development would be shifted into Regional Town Centres providing jobs, local services and entertainment to surrounding sub-regions (GVRD 1975). This vision attempted to capitalize on a growing trend throughout North America toward polycentric regions with multiple concentrations of employment and commerce by proposing to coordinate outward expansion in a coherent network providing economic, social and cultural benefits to each sub-area of the region. The intent of this dispersal strategy was not simply to produce numerical equity across the region, but to facilitate the creation of vibrant urban centers inspiring greater civic and sub-regional identities (GVRD 1971). Similar to the downtowns of small cities, four initial Regional Town Centres would be legible places "small enough so that it is possible to know and be known by local merchants, but large enough to provide libraries, health clinics, theatres and perhaps a community college" (GVRD 1975). Four smaller scale Municipal Town Centers would serve a similar function for areas of the region slated for slower rates of growth.

In the struggle to transplant jobs and urbanity into politically conservative bedroom suburbs, Surrey and the southern portion of Greater Vancouver represented the greatest and most critical challenge. Measured in size, Surrey is the largest city in Greater Vancouver at 117 square miles, nearly triple the size of the more populous City of Vancouver. The combined land area of Surrey and the neighboring municipalities that make up the sub-region of Greater Vancouver south of

the Fraser River comprises nearly half of the region's total. Vacant land zoned for low-density residential and commercial development abounds in each city. Surrey's population increased by 49% between 1971 and 1981, then by 66% from 1981 to 1991 – making it among Canada's fastest growing cities. With the exception of a several block historic main street in the southeast corner of the city, no identifiable civic center existed in Surrey or neighboring cities. To provide a focal point for the explosive growth in this part of the region, a series of GVRD regional plans beginning in 1975 called for an intensive Regional Town Centre in Surrey. This new downtown would be located near the northern edge of the city so that it could be connected to a regional mass transit network and remain accessible to workers from the region's urban core. The success of the regional planning framework proposed in the 1970s and carried forth in later decades hinged on the concentration of future employment, cultural activities and high-density residential development into Surrey's Regional Town Centre. Although the two Regional Town Centres closest to the City of Vancouver were expected to experience the earliest intensive development, the region's growth concept did not contain any contingency plan if an urban center for the region's southern sub-region failed to materialize.

Surrey politicians and planners supported the region's vision for its Regional Town Centre by zoning an area significantly larger than Vancouver's Central Business District for medium to high density commercial and residential use. At the time, this massive zoning district was occupied by strip commercial development, low and moderate income residential communities and numerous large vacant parcels. The scale of the city's initial vision for redevelopment proved far too ambitious. After a decade and a half of sparse building activity and limited interest from developers, the city decided to create a new strategy focusing higher density development around the final three stops of an elevated light rail line linking downtown Vancouver, the region's two inner Regional Town Centres, and Surrey's embryonic downtown.

The 1992 Whalley Town Centre Plan for downtown Surrey prepared by Ray Spaxman and Surrey planning officials in 1992 called for three distinct zoning and development districts radiating from each stop along the light rail line. The anticipated development yield remained significant: net increases of 1-1.4 million square feet of new office space, 350,000 square feet of retail space and 1500-2000 housing units by 2001, with more rapid increases between 2001 and 2011 (City of Surrey 1992). The plan's strategy for achieving these objectives was fine-grained, incorporating a well-defined pedestrian circulation network, detailed development concept plans for each of the three sub-areas, tailored zoning recommendations for each sub-area, design and dimensional guidelines, and street typologies including a commercial High Street beneath the concrete light rail alignment. The plan cited a variety of factors for the projected success of the newly titled

Whalley Town Centre, including its unique position as the only planned Regional Town Centre in the southern portion of the region; growing demand for office and residential space south of the Fraser River; a plentiful supply of assembled, developable land; and strong public support for the plan's vision (Ibid.) A 1990 analysis of the growth potential of the district by a prominent real estate consultancy projected a small amount of demand for additional retail space in the town centre, and only minimal demand for office development (Colliers 1990). These considerations were not seriously addressed in the 1992 plan.

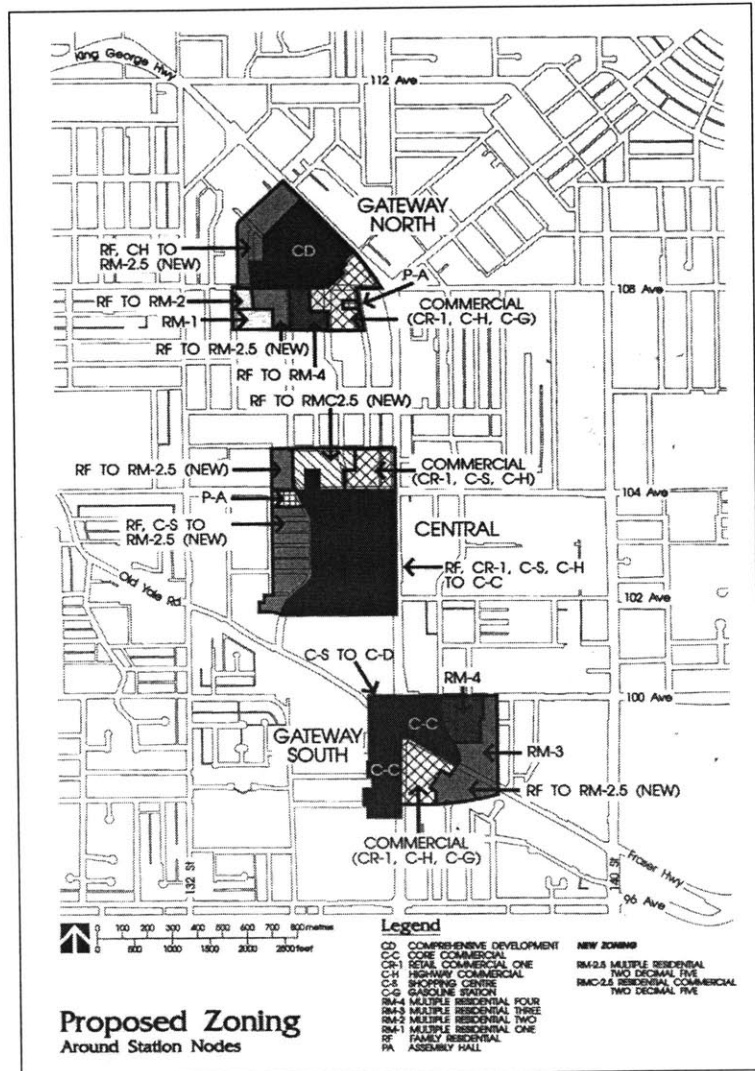


Fig. 1.2 1992 Whalley Town Centre Plan Proposed Zoning (City of Surrey 1992)

Surrey City Centre today bears no resemblance to Ray Spaxman's sketch. Along the planned High Street, Pierre's Café is replaced by an open air drug market, a vacant music store, an indoor roller skating rink and several small retailers. Parcels earmarked for office and residential towers are occupied by fast food restaurants, a grocery store, a discount store and a mall parking lot. Life on the street is defined by a watchful eye, commuters rushing from the light rail station to make a bus connection, and a general lack of interest in creating, observing or participating in the kind of urban scene envisioned in the plan. An architecturally acclaimed one million square foot office tower sits half empty at the terminus of the planned High Street, occupied almost exclusively by government tenants. Vacant lots abound in each of the three station areas, completely dominating the landscape of one. Vacancy for Class A office space in the district climbed above 60% by the end of 2003, nearly triple the rate for the region as a



Fig. 1.3 Surrey City Centre today. (Shorett)

whole. Beyond the immediate vicinity of each Skytrain station, automobile-oriented retail and fast food outlets with deep setbacks typify new development. The image of the area's residential neighborhoods has been damaged by a rash of home invasions and the well-publicized conversion of numerous houses to illegal drug

dens.

1.2 The Broader Context: Planning for a Polycentric Region

By itself, the fate of Surrey City Centre between the mid 1970s and today is unremarkable. The planning and development of the center shares qualities with many failed redevelopment schemes: overzealous local zoning, high levels of government subsidy, and a general ignorance of real estate considerations. Judging by statistics alone, the center has not performed as poorly as might appear. Many of the development benchmarks outlined in the Whalley Town Centre Plan have been achieved, albeit in a more dispersed and automobile-oriented manner than originally envisioned, perhaps due in part to only partial adoption of its recommendations.

The broader importance of Surrey City Centre is found in its centrality to a regional model for ecologically sustainable, socially vibrant, and economically diverse urban form. Since as early as the mid-1960's, the intellectual basis for coordinated regional growth in Greater Vancouver has derived from a vision of a sequence of urban centers arrayed along transit lines, surrounded by ample green space. Despite expression in two regional plans, the viability of this vision remains unknown after two and a half decades of limited commercial development in Regional Town Centres, the concentration of new employment in remote office parks accessible only by automobile, and the continued growth of retail and entertainment complexes in similarly remote settings. Intervening factors, including the temporary removal of regional planning during

the mid-1980's, may have hampered the coordination of Regional Town Centre development. However, the original and current vision for Vancouver's town centres is predicated upon municipal implementation rather than regional edict. The recent actions of Surrey planners and city councillors illustrate the ongoing tension between short-term local priorities and long-range regional strategies. In an effort to strengthen its non-residential property tax base, Surrey adopted a zoning ordinance in 2002 permitting low-density office parks in virtually every commercial and industrial area of the city provided that minimal performance standards are met (City of Surrey 2002). The technical report by Surrey planning staff preceding the ordinance projected more than 26 million square feet of new office space outside of Surrey City Centre between 2002 and 2021 – roughly equivalent to the total current floorspace of Vancouver's central business district (City of Surrey 2003). The overwhelming political benefit of this anticipated influx of office space would be reduced reliance upon residential property taxes to fund the needs of a rapidly growing city projected to reach 658,000 inhabitants by 2031.

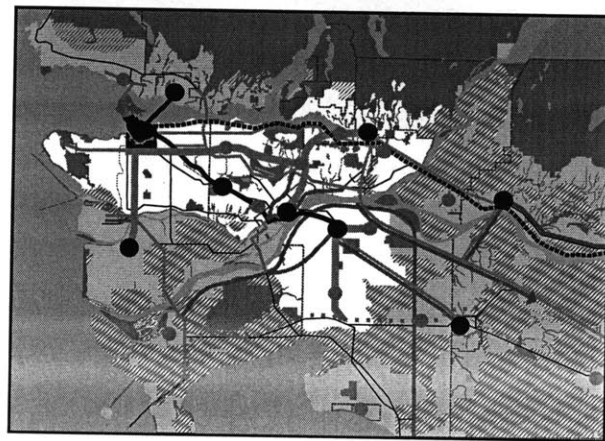
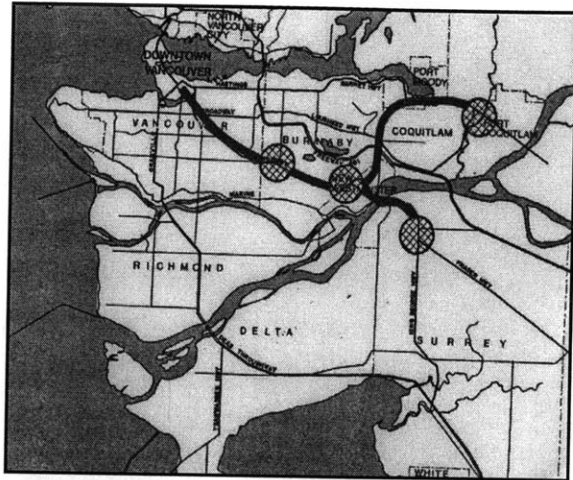


Fig. 1.4-1.5. 1976 Livable Region Plan (top); 1996 Livable Region Strategic Plan (bottom) (GVRD 1975, GVRD 1996)

The emergence of Regional Town Centres was expected to achieve or help accomplish numerous social, economic and ecological objectives outlined in regional plans for Greater Vancouver. Through the consolidation of employment, medium to high density housing, cultural activities, and services into a network of urban centers, the region could preserve green space, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, limit traffic congestion, provide a wider variety of housing opportunities, and create civic centers for areas of the region lacking public spaces. The uneven implementation of the region's polycentric growth management model has led local officials and planners to question its viability in its long-term viability. Increasingly frustrated by the unwillingness of local governments such as Surrey to implement politically challenging policies

supportive of regional objectives, a number of GVRD planners and administrators have begun to seek additional planning powers from the province of British Columbia. Confidence in the capacity of local governments to work cooperatively to implement regional planning policies has declined, fueling speculation about the fundamental approach to planning and governance in the region.

1.3 Evaluating the Polycentric Region

The conceptual model embodied by Vancouver's Livable Region strategy – a series of *intentional* mixed-use centers *intended to serve sub-regions*, bolstered by supportive local zoning, and linked by rapid transit - has grown increasingly popular in North America. Portland, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, Denver and Seattle are among the American regions for which plans featuring policies to direct future growth into a series of dispersed, mixed-use regional centers have been formulated or adopted. The similarity between the conceptual long-range growth plans for the first three regions is remarkable: a handful of ½ mile regional centers radiate from stops along an existing or planned light rail line, with additional regional and smaller scale centers located along potential future transit routes. This similarity continues in policy statements advocating: a) a greater balance of employment and population in various parts of the region; b) preservation of a protected (whether through state law or local cooperation) band of green space; and c) the concentration of future population growth into mixed-use nodes arrayed along transit lines – all of which were central features in earlier plans for Greater Vancouver.

Polycentric growth management is an attempt to shape the future form of an *existing* region by identifying and promoting specific physical locations outside of central business districts for intensive development intended to serve surrounding sub-regions in an efficient, geographically compact manner. The variant of this model that has emerged recently in North America responds to both longstanding and contemporary concerns about traffic congestion, air pollution, regional economic inequality, vanishing open space and a lack of memorable places. Each general policy proposed by the model responds directly to the negative aspects of the uncoordinated Euclidean planning formula it attempts to remedy. Unlike more abstract growth policies promoting compact development, transportation choice and sustainability, the polycentric model gives a physical face to growth management in the form of *regional centers*. The ideal regional center is not merely an instrument for achieving a more sustainable or livable region, but a place with a unique identity that evolves organically out of the web of daily human interactions created by higher densities and a greater mixture of economic, cultural, recreational and residential activities. In the emerging polycentric region, development that would otherwise spread thinly into deep setbacks along arterials lacking pedestrian amenities concentrates along the human-scaled

streets of regional centers. The regional center provides a visual and tangible basis for policies often articulated in relatively technical language such as ‘concurrency,’ ‘reduced emissions,’ and ‘contiguous development.’ The regional center is capable of garnering public support for growth management because it allows citizens and officials to imagine explicitly what kinds of places they can enjoy and leave as their legacy if they make the sacrifice required to participate in effective regional land use and transportation planning.

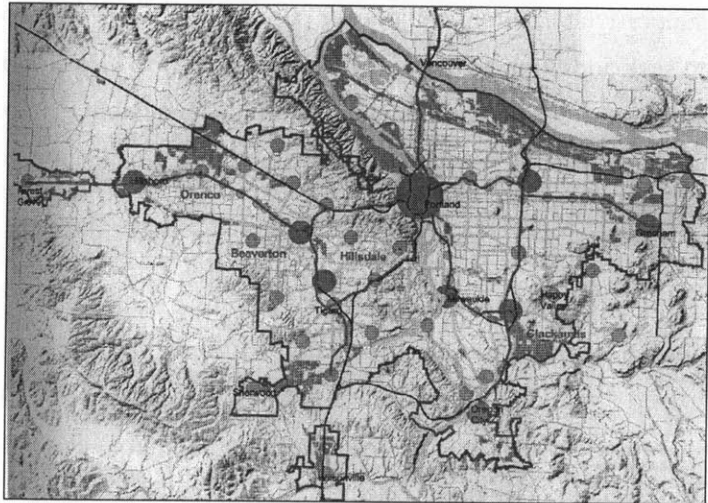


Fig. 1.6 1994 Portland Metro Growth Concept (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001)

Envisioning an ecologically sustainable, economically equitable polycentric region may be assisted by images of mixed-use centers, but this vision ultimately emerges from thinking at a regional scale about growth, ecological systems and transportation. The processes leading to the creation of plans for Seattle, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Portland involved extensive negotiations between local, and in some cases regional, politicians and planners to distribute projected population and employment growth into physical locations across the region. During these visioning exercises, local planners and politicians were forced to consider the ramifications of local decisions on regional development trends. The relatively high levels of consensus emerging from these processes may reflect mutual recognition of the need for a new direction for regional growth, but also may be linked to the voluntary nature of the exercises. By relating the achievement of a broad range of objectives to the growth of multiple regional centers, polycentric growth management plans pin their success on the emergence of a speculative, largely unproven form of urban growth. The level of risk associated with this approach depends on the ability of local governments to *simultaneously* promote regional centers and permit traditional automobile-oriented development outside of centers. Municipalities that plan for both intensive urban centers and peripheral low-density commercial development maintain multiple options for economic development, while municipalities that attempt to promote development solely inside of regional centers face much greater risk.

With the exception of Metropolitan Portland, binding plans directly affecting local land

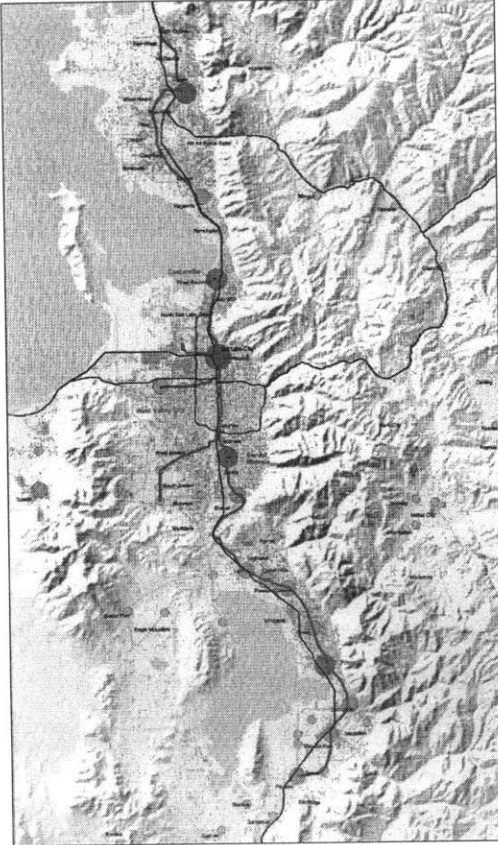


Fig. 1.7. Envision Utah preferred growth concept. (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001)

use regulations have not been adopted in any of the regions pursuing recent polycentric growth management strategies. Even in the case of Portland, local planning policies are only required to be broadly consistent with regional goals. A review of municipal land use policies reveals that many communities in which Regional Centers have been designated continue to allow substantial amounts of remote office park and mall development – both of which help build a municipal tax base without placing an extra burden on residents. This trend is consistent with Greater Vancouver, where even those municipalities slated for Regional Town Centres have tended to permit office parks and ‘big box’ commercial development in locations accessible only by automobile.

In the absence of fully centralized regional planning, the realization of a polycentric region in which growth concentrates into regional centers instead of diffusing across a region’s major intersections and highway interchanges requires the convergence of

several often conflicting conditions:

- 1) High levels of cooperation from local governments in implementing land use regulations that both promote regional centers and limit the development of uses critical to the success of centers (i.e. offices, region-serving retail, and high-density housing) in peripheral locations.
- 2) Substantial investment in regional centers by the development industry.
- 3) Support by senior levels of government through the location of offices, transportation infrastructure, and other investments in centers.

If any of these three conditions are not met, growth management plans reliant upon municipal cooperation to achieve a network of regional centers face several serious impediments to success. First, in a system of voluntary compliance, local planning strategies and permitting decisions may not conform with regional objectives supported in principal by local governments, particularly if

these objectives do not provide immediate economic benefits visible to citizens and politicians. Second, municipal cooperation may be closely linked to real estate investment trends, because a lack of private investment in centers reduces the financial benefit of promoting these sites for local governments. Attracting real estate investment to centers requires careful site selection that may conflict with local political forces. Designating centers at equal intervals across a region does little to insure a more even distribution of growth or the emergence of sub-regional ‘places;’ real estate investors may respond completely differently to two centers in the same region based upon location, existing land uses, maximum allowed densities and ease of land assembly. Finally, even with high levels of cooperation between local governments, regional objectives can be compromised by investment by senior levels of government in infrastructure that helps direct growth away from designated centers.

Academic research during the past two decades on efforts to concentrate development into mixed-use nodes around transit stations has identified mixed success, dependent primarily upon the factors described above. Analysis of the initial success of regional centers in Portland indicates that they are generally viewed poorly by commercial developers, while little new development has taken place in many of the new centers designated by the Vision 2020 plan for metropolitan Seattle. Despite the lack of evidence supporting the viability of polycentric regional growth management in the absence of centralized regional planning, its principles have become widely accepted by many planners and advocates of the New Urbanism. The Charter of the Congress of the New Urbanism envisions a region of “multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges” where noncontiguous development is “organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.” In addition, “[t]he physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives” (Congress of the New Urbanism 2004).

It is worth exploring why an urban typology that remains inchoate in North America – the transit-oriented regional center – has gained such prominence in recent efforts to distribute growth in support of broader goals. Despite its conceptual consistency with the other objectives of sustainable regional development and smart growth - including reduced automobile use, increased human interaction, improved access to employment, a wider variety of housing types and an enhanced mixture of land uses - the model may not represent the best vehicle for accomplishing these objectives in regions where land use planning is conducted locally. If a polycentric region shaped by local government policy is an unrealistic approach to growth management in these settings, the regional center carries limited value as a place-making tool or instrument for achieving broader objectives. If the regional center does not appear to be an effective model in

regions without centralized planning, several related questions arise. Does a more promising model exist for accomplishing sustainable regional development in a metropolitan area without centralized planning? Is the polycentric model for growth management an effective method for achieving broad objectives, but simply difficult to achieve in system of fragmented local planning? Given centralized regional planning powers, would the regional centers model likely produce its intended results, or would it create unintended economic and social consequences? Resolving these questions is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to introduce them as underlying considerations that inform analysis of efforts to produce successful regional networks of distributed centers.

1.4 Theoretical Approach

This paper investigates the development and viability of polycentric regional growth management plans, focusing specifically on Vancouver, Canada and Portland, Oregon. By tracing the model's history, examining its application through six case studies, and considering other possibilities for managing regional growth, the paper critically assesses the formulation and practical application of an emerging concept. Portland and Vancouver are both governed by a regional board responsible for coordinating growth management efforts between local governments. While Portland's Metro government exercises more extensive regulatory control than the Greater Vancouver Regional District, Greater Vancouver has experienced stronger historic municipal support for regional planning policies. Growth management plans for both Portland and Greater Vancouver attempt to distribute future growth into an urban boundary punctuated by one primary urban center, seven to eight sub-regional urban centers and a series of smaller community-serving centers. In both regions, the location of urban centers is typically related to planned or existing rapid transit lines, although examples of automobile-oriented centers resulting from political compromise exist in both regions. Relative to other North American regions pursuing recently adopted plans for polycentric growth management, Portland and Vancouver appear to provide the greatest opportunity for success due to the following factors: a) coordination of regional land use and transportation planning; b) some formalized requirement by senior levels of government for local support of regional centers; c) stable to positive economic conditions; and d) intense local interest in regional planning and ecological preservation.

Research Questions

Through case studies, comparative research, and land use, urban design, and market analysis, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent have designated sub-regional centers in Greater Vancouver and Metropolitan Portland begun to develop into the commercial, residential and civic spaces envisioned in

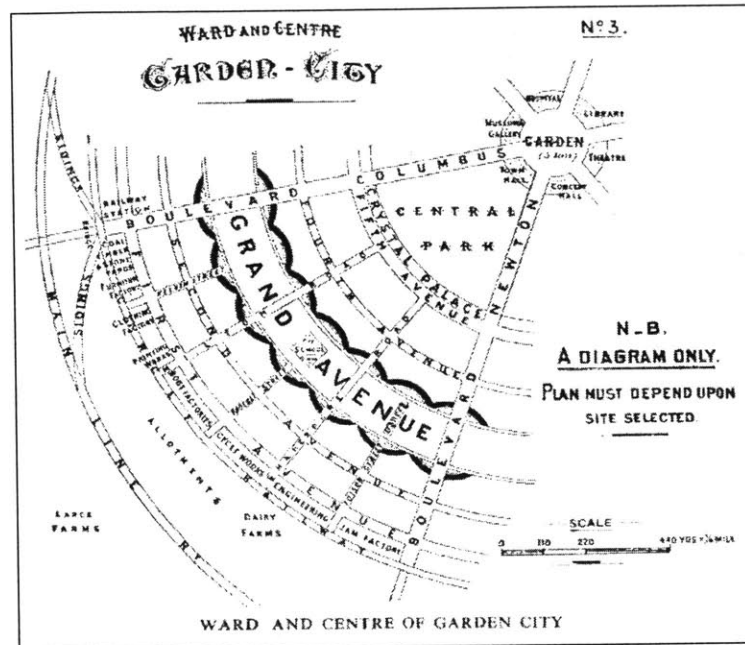
regional and local plans?

2) What specific factors appear to influence the realization of the physical and civic development outlined in plans for the centers of both regions?

3) What alternative approaches might local and regional governments use to more effectively plan and promote sub-regional centers?

Organization

This section is followed by a chapter tracing the intellectual and institutional history of polycentric regional growth management from Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* through ambitious mid 20th Century plans for Toronto and Washington, D.C. to the more recent model inspired in part by the work of Peter Calthorpe and apparent in plans for Salt Lake City, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Portland. The third chapter provides an analysis of the origins of polycentric regional growth management in Greater Vancouver, followed by three case studies from the first of its Regional Town Centres. Chapter four follows a similar course for Metropolitan Portland's Regional Centers, illuminating the initial experience of three of the region's seven centers. Chapter five synthesizes the findings of the previous two chapters into a broader discussion of the viability of the polycentric model for regional growth management. The chapter concludes with an argument for a refined approach to planning and promoting sub-regional centers, followed by promising directions for further investigation.



Chapter Two: Tracing Polycentric Regional Growth Management

2.1 The Origins of Polycentric Regional Planning

The concept of a polycentric region of multiple urban centers can be traced to Leonardo Da Vinci, who proposed a ring of cities around Milan to relieve the congestion and disease afflicting the city in the late 15th Century. Da Vinci's metropolis of distributed centers was never built, but the model for physical growth driving much of 20th Century European and North American regionalism had been established (Mumford 1938.) In the late 19th and early 20th Century, the Garden City movement forwarded a more comprehensive approach to distributed regional development. Responding to disease, crime and a perceived social malaise in industrial Victorian cities, a group of social reformers and professionals joined the call for a dispersed form of urban settlement bringing 'town' and 'country' into harmony.

The Garden City movement was propelled by Ebenezer Howard, a London court recorder who was inspired to explore town planning as a means of addressing the housing, social and economic problems of his

era. Howard's 1898 *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* envisioned a ring of pastoral towns growing outward in concentric circles linked by rapid transit. Each garden city would be separated from other communities on all sides by a green belt, bringing nature within walking distance of every resident of the region. As a polycentric region, a network of Garden Cities promised the physical and social antithesis of the late 19th Century English slum, replete with ample air, sunlight, recreation and – perhaps most importantly – community control of land and production. Unlike many British and American reformists of the era that called for improved housing and education for members of the working class, Howard sought an outright transformation of the social, economic and spatial relationships that he viewed as the source of concentrated poverty. Although philanthropy would enable acquisition of land for Garden Cities, each community would eventually come under the collective ownership of its predominantly working class residents. The planning principles for the Garden City region included a community population limit of 32,000 and an agricultural and open space reserve providing productive capacity and recreational space for each community (Howard 1898). While self-sufficient, the individual Garden City community could not capture the full benefits of Howard's vision outside the context of a region of similar communities linked in a web of open space, economic diversity and transportation access.

It is not surprising that the polycentric Garden Cities model of regional growth has been applied with limited success in the United Kingdom and North America. As Lewis Mumford noted, it is “the native form only for a co-operative and socially planned society” in which land is owned collectively and agriculture and industry exist in parity (Mumford 1938: 401). In the United Kingdom, the Garden Cities model has influenced the placement and design of individual cities, but has not provided the clear basis for regional planning. In North America, parallels can be drawn between the nodal, interconnected form of outward development proposed in regional plans and the spatial planning principles introduced in *Garden Cities*. The potentially dangerous assumption made by many town and regional town planners is that Howard's vision was physical in nature. The Garden City was not motivated chiefly by a desire for a greater balance of land uses, as one New Urbanist has recently claimed (Taecker 2002). Urban design was principally a means to an end for Howard, which is reflected in the diagrammatic character of the urban fabric portrayed in his book. Howard's famous diagram of the Garden City region is careful to note that actual plans must respond to the unique character of individual sites. This point is critical, because it should have cautioned designers against attempting to mimic the Newtonian Garden City, with its discrete separation of uses, in physical design alone. In capitalist societies lacking the collective enterprise and risk aversion required to assemble, develop and inhabit entirely new urban regions, it is worth considering the scale at which the Garden City model can be translated

of any regional vision would rely heavily upon support from local officials in the scores of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut cities and counties within the metropolitan area.

The plan anticipated the dominance of auto travel, viewing the accommodation of cars as central to orderly, economically viable regional growth. Five fundamental social, economic, and design principles were established to guide the development of a physical plan: Per capita health, comfort and safety standards should be raised above current levels; Streets should provide rapid circulation with minimum interruption; Ample parking should be built in business centers; Employment and residential districts should be separated to enhance the quality of neighborhoods and allow the clustering of industry, but located within sufficient proximity to reduce unnecessary travel; Building bulk should be limited to a size required for commercial and industrial efficiency, leaving ample open space for both the “health” of citizens and automobile traffic circulation; and Land use, transportation and communications should be developed as comprehensive, interconnected networks (NYRPA 1929).

The Regional Plan proposed the distribution of population, employment and industry into a coordinated network of nodes linked by both roadways and railroads. Rather than simply promoting decentralization – which is described in the plan as a “misnomer” since all agglomerations involve some form of centralization – the authors called for the “diffused recentralization” of industry to reduce the density of existing “congested” centers and create new hubs of activity. A compact form of residential development was proposed, located in reasonable proximity to new industrial districts to reduce travel demand. Architect Clarence Perry provided a model of the ideal residential district – a one quarter mile by one quarter mile area with an internal circulation network centered on public green space and a school. Commercial businesses, meanwhile, were to be “sub-centralized” in the plan to nodes mixed into new residential districts. The plan projected the land requirements for industry and identified specific locations throughout the region for different kinds and scales of industrial and residential districts (Ibid.).

Many of the commercial and industrial nodes identified in the plan reflected existing population and employment centers, but the prospect of creating completely new environments free from the perceived detritus of 19th and early 20th century urban development drove the identification of numerous “diffused” and “recentralized” nodes. As the authors argued, “[T]he full benefits of planning can be obtained only in those areas where it is possible to prevent the beginning of bad conditions. This is true... because it is easier to impose restraints in advance against something being done that will be injurious to the community than it is to get rid of the injury

after it is done” (Ibid.: 131).

The polycentric character of the plan was driven not only by a desire for blank urban slates, but also by political considerations. Members of the Regional Plan Association recognized that urban expansion was likely to take place due to both real estate pressure and the impossibility of creating a single agency for planning an area encompassing portions of three states. Because “misplanning of vacant land is a primary cause of the evils of congestion and indiscriminate building which make later planning and zoning ineffective,” it would have been unwise to ignore the potential for nodal development at the periphery of the region (Ibid.). The influence of Howard’s Garden Cities is evident in the plan’s emphasis on creating new spaces purged of urban ills, the radial quality of the physical form proposed, its emphasis on separating land uses into discreet, yet closely located, districts, and its promotion of protected green spaces.

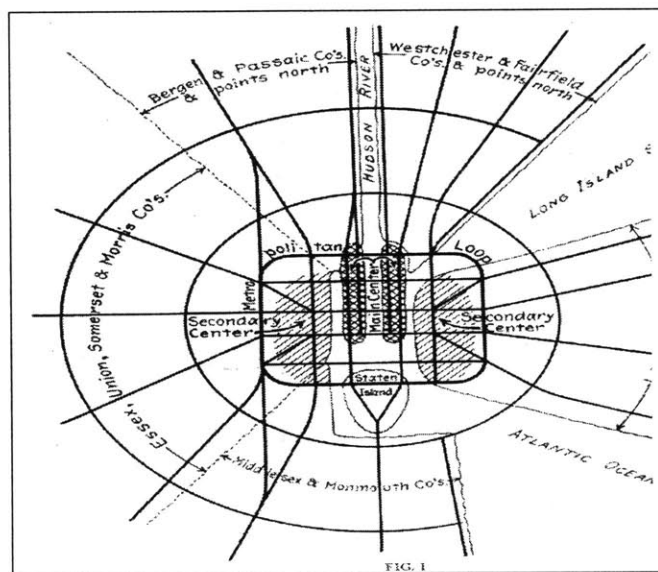
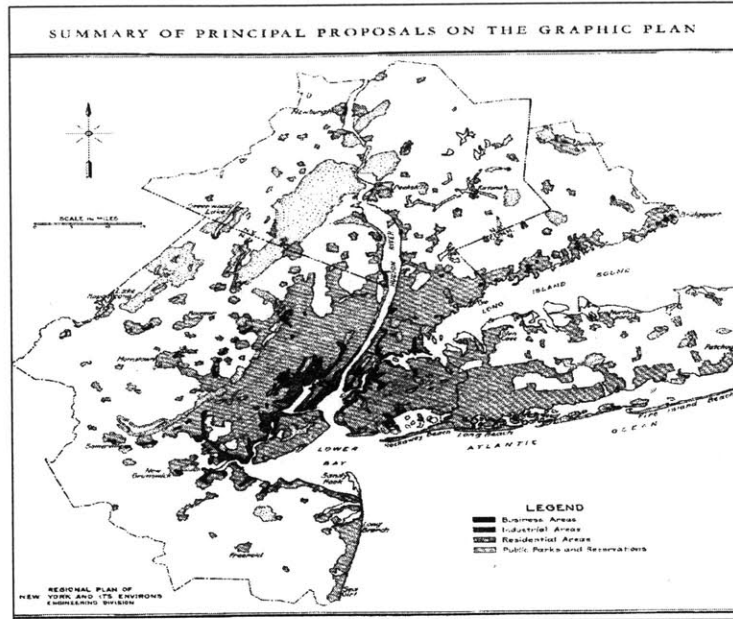


Fig. 2.3-2.4. 1929 New York Regional Plan illustrating proposed centers (2.3) and spatial hierarchy (2.4) (NYRPA 1929)

The region of distributed nodes envisioned in the 1929 Regional Plan was implemented with some success, particularly for a solely voluntary plan. Consultation with local governments and an expectation of automobile dominance informed many of the plan’s proposals, leading to a conservative but potentially more realistic spatial strategy than a plan drawn from the perspective of a single regional interest. The plan is premised on the need for orderly, centrally organized but locally implemented growth controls. Paradoxically, the most strikingly realized element of the

plan – a network of highways, suburban railroads, and recreation areas - were orchestrated by special regional and state agencies such as the Triborough Commission and Port Authority. As in the vast majority of North America, suburban development in the region following World War II did not achieve proximate location of industry, population and commerce. Although Perry's neighborhood concept provided the building block for many local land use plans and master-planned developments, the civic spaces integral to its quality were often missing in its implementation (Johnson 1996). A 1968 updated Regional Plan called for the completion of a suburban rail network to serve a series of suburban satellites that would provide an alternative to diffuse residential and commercial development (Yaro and Hiss 1996). While the plan arguably influenced the construction of additional rail networks, suburban development throughout the 1970s and 1980s continued to spread outward in an automobile oriented fabric (Ibid.).

2.2 The Re-Emergence of North American Polycentric Regional Plans: 1960-1980

The 1950s, 1960s and 1970s saw a revival of broad regional plans in North America. A combination of federal funding, uncoordinated suburban growth, vanishing open space, and the rise of regional planning organizations provided momentum to polycentric regional plans for Metropolitan Toronto, Washington and San Francisco. Although a number of other county and regional plans were created during this period, this paper considers examples of plans explicitly promoting the concentration of future development into a network of designated urban nodes linked by rapid transit. Critical to the ambition of the plans considered below was the expectation or presence of a single regional agency with the authority to shape transportation and land use. The group of plans considered here represents a variety of approaches ranging from the centralized regional vision of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Commission, to the ambitious regionalism of the National Capital Regional Planning Commission and the cautious strategic approach taken by the Association of Bay Area Governments.

The 1959 Official Plan of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area

The Province of Ontario created a Metropolitan Toronto Planning Commission charged with creating a long range comprehensive plan for the region in 1953, setting the stage for the first statutory regional plan in North America. The Metropolitan Toronto Act required the commission to prepare an official regional plan for the twelve newly designated municipalities in the inner region, as well as a vast area extending beyond the metropolitan area. The plan was required to create policies for land uses, ways of communication, sanitation, green belts and park areas, and transportation. Developed through physical and statistical studies, the plan represents a more technocratic, less parochial and consultative, model for regional planning than more recent regional plans. Without the precedent of a prior North American statutory regional plan,

Metropolitan Planning staff studied models of regional form employed by European planning authorities, including the British scheme of satellite cities distributed around a central core, the Danish 'finger' model in which the region extends outward in balanced urban units, and the 'ribbon' scheme of infinitely expanding urban units arrayed along a single spine, reminiscent of Spanish engineer Arturo Soria's Lineal City and utilized in the Soviet Union (MTPC 1959).

The regional form proposed in the deceptively titled 1959 *Official Plan of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area* is a "broad urban ribbon" adapting qualities of the satellite and finger schemes to the geography and morphology of Metropolitan Toronto. The contours of the ribbon extend beyond the boundaries of the planning area to Oshawa and Hamilton, defined at its Southern edge by a linear park along Lake Ontario and to the north by a rural preserve bounding an urban corridor. The ribbon is intersected by parks following the path of stream valleys feeding into Lake Ontario. The plan provided a numerical distribution of population, employment, population density, jobs to resident ratios, and industry throughout the region's sub-areas until 1980. The acreage of each of the region's sixteen planning areas is divided between eight land use designations - residential, industrial, commercial, open space, industrial, utilities, transportation, and vacant land. According to the plan, the basis for managing growth in this fashion is reducing the costs of extending sewerage, preserving farmland and open space, limiting flood hazard, bringing jobs and housing together in a rational manner, and creating parkland (Ibid.).

The proposed form of the region is defined by intensive development around a historic Central Business District, the development of several outlying subcenters, and the establishment of urban centers serving areas beyond the urban growth area to maintain their physical and economic separation. Located at major shopping center locations along planned rapid transit routes, Subcenters are expected to serve areas of approximately 500,000 residents. High density adjacent residential development and a mixture of employment, retail and cultural amenities will allow subcenters to supplement the region's core. The location, scale and specific mixture of uses intended for each subcenter are not identified in the plan (Ibid.).

Although the province of Ontario could have ignored local concerns and adopted the plan by itself, political considerations led to a requirement that the plan be adopted by the region's municipalities. Through several reorganizations of the region's governance structure - including the amalgamation of numerous localities into regional councils in 1966 and - no official regional plan was ever passed by the local governments of metropolitan Toronto. In the absence of an official plan, the 1959 regional plan provided the basis for a good deal of local planning in the

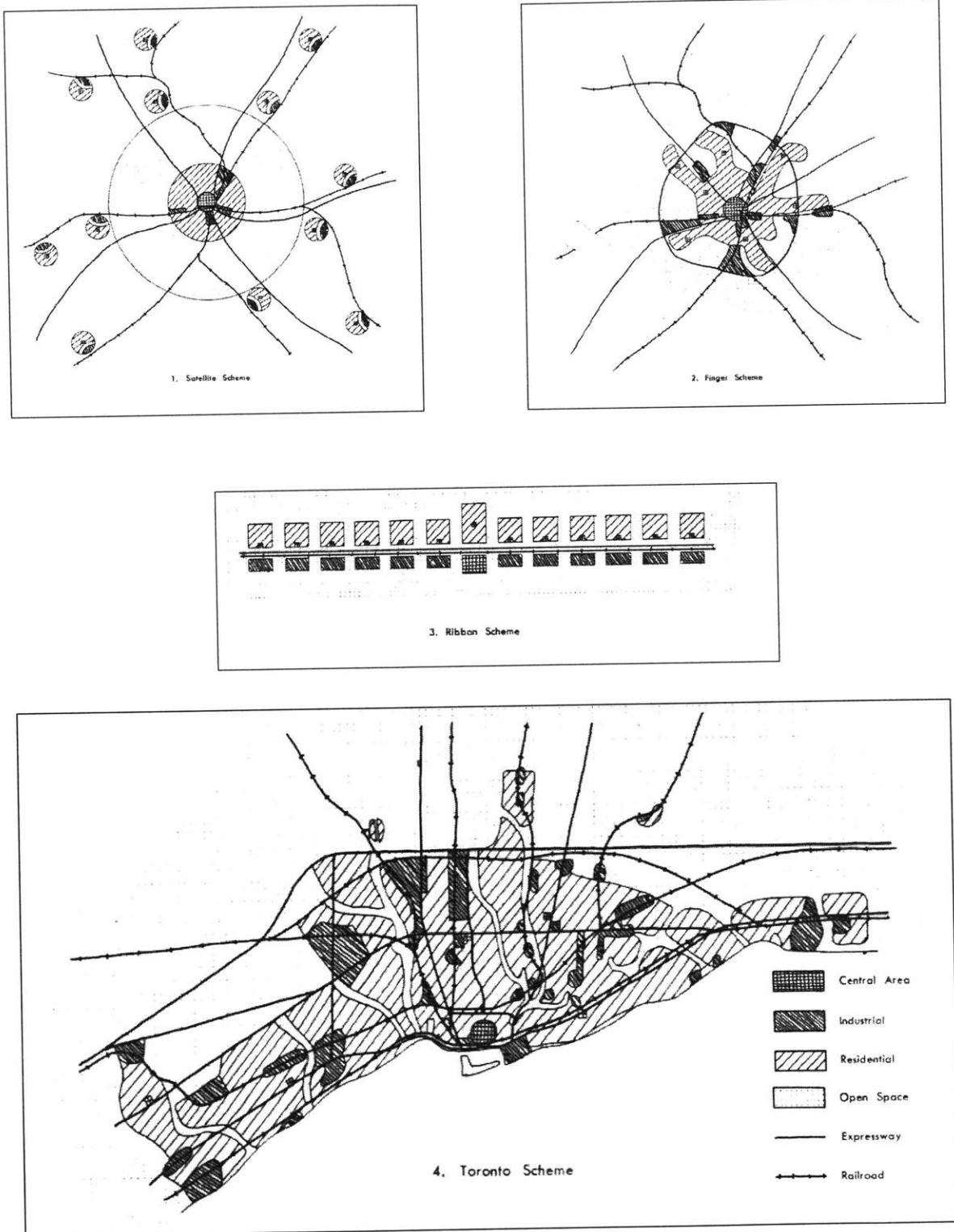


Fig. 2.5-2.8. Theoretical approach to regional form culminating in 1959 Toronto Regional Plan (MTPC 1959)

region. By chance, influence and anticipation alike, the plan provided a relatively accurate projection of the future form of the region. The complete vision for a linked sequence of subcenters, however, was curtailed by political tensions between the central city and suburban municipalities, as well as a lack of strong provincial support for rapid transit and regional planning (Friskin 2001). The rapid transit network proposed in the 1959 plan and reinforced in subsequent plans, which would have linked proposed subcenters both to each other and the center of the region, remains incomplete. In the 1980s and 1990s, the region began to display symptoms similar to other North American cities - low density sprawl, declining transit ridership relative to total travel and a concentration of poverty in core areas (Ibid).

Perhaps above all other North American regions, Toronto's development over the past four decades has been associated with the emergence of dense subcenters located along rapid transit lines. The image of mid and high rise buildings clustering around the stations of the region's north-south subway line inspired planners in other regions to believe that such a pattern could be replicated.¹

The 1961 Policies Plan for Metropolitan Washington, DC

In 1952, the United States Congress created a National Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) to prepare a conceptual plan for the long-range development of Metropolitan Washington, DC, and facilitate cooperation between the region's planning agencies. Working with the planning agency responsible for the federal district of Washington, the NRPC developed a single long-range plan joining regional objectives with goals for the district. Presaging subsequent American regional plans, the 1961 *Policies Plan* cites anticipated rapid population and economic growth and an increasingly diffuse development pattern as the basis for coordinated regional land use and transportation planning. In contrast to highly fragmented regions such as New York and Boston, planning in metropolitan Washington was conducted by twelve major agencies and a handful of local bodies – enhancing the potential for regional cooperation. Nonetheless, the solitary efforts of local governments were widely viewed as insufficient to re-shape post World War II sprawl (NCPC 1961).

To reinforce the unique character of the capital region and promote efficient outward growth, the *Policies Plan* proposes to revitalize central Washington, DC while focusing new development in suburban development corridors, allowing the preservation of open country between these corridors. The plan's primary policies call for a compact suburban development pattern, expanded public transit, a limit on future highway expansion, the creation of permanent green belts, and the dispersal of two-thirds of new federal employment to suburban centers. These policies are intended to achieve a related set of objectives, including the creation of a broad

range of living environments and employment opportunities, efficient use of available land, rapid movement of people and goods, achievement of a healthy urban environment and realization of a visually satisfying regional form marked by a clear sense of place throughout the region (Ibid.).

The NRDC explored five models of regional growth – restricted growth, new independent cities, planned sprawl, dispersed autonomous cities, and a ring of cities - before arriving at a radial corridor plan. The regional form proposed by the radial corridor plan is defined an urbanized area extending in seven corridors along transit lines, establishing a contiguous band of development between the two metropolitan centers of Washington, DC and Baltimore, while concentrating future growth into new town centers along the transit spine of each corridor. Corridors are bounded by networks of controlled open space that follow the contours of rivers and other natural systems into the center of the region. The plan argues that this pattern of regional growth makes the most efficient use of transportation networks, increases access to a variety of employment opportunities, provides convenient entry to open space throughout the region, and expands the development potential of downtown Washington, DC by reducing conflicts between local and through traffic (Ibid.).

Three to five new town centers are identified along each corridor, potentially leading to approximately thirty such centers throughout the region. The general location and scale of each center is suggested on a conceptual map, while the character of the ideal center is described in detail. The new suburban community proposed in the plan would accommodate 75,000-125,000 residents at high densities in a wide variety of housing types located within convenient distance of transit stations and employment opportunities. The center of the community, served by a mass transit, would be devoted to a central business district of office and retail activity employing approximately 15,000 to 30,000 workers, surrounded by an arterial street network with highway access. Apartments occupy the second ring of development in new town centers, separated from progressively lower density residential districts by a network of greenways and open space. Expected residential densities decline from 80-100 units/acre for apartment districts, to 15-30 units/acre for medium-density residential areas and 2-4 units/acre and 0.5-2 units per acre for outlying low density residential districts. Commercial facilities would be distributed throughout the new town center, with intensive uses such as department stores clustering in the center and stores providing everyday conveniences mixing into the fabric of residential districts. Recreational and civic activities would be accommodated along greenways and open space networks connecting the community's districts along pleasant open country (Ibid.).

Members of the Washington Metropolitan Regional Council – a voluntary regional planning

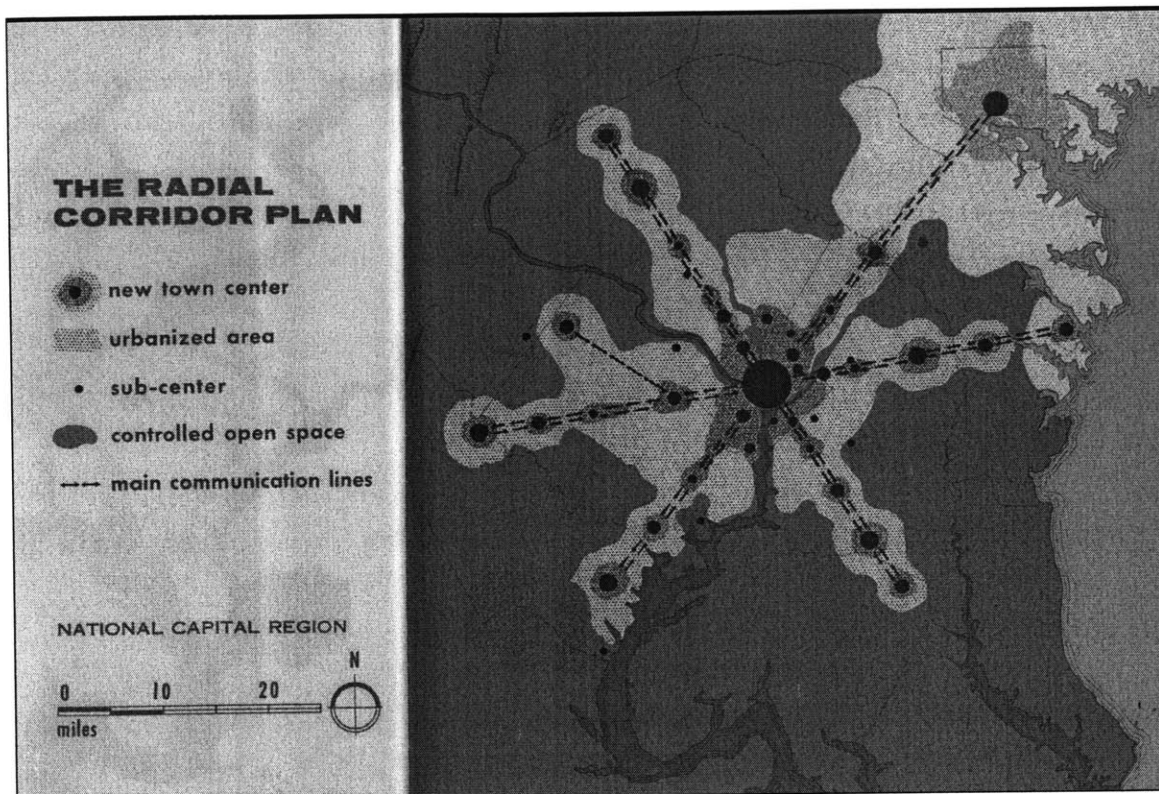


Fig. 2.9. Radial Corridor Plan for Metropolitan Washington, DC. (NCPC 1961)

organization representing the county and city agencies within the region – agreed to study the proposals contained in the plan and return to the Council with local recommendations for future development. The WMRC agreed to then create a comprehensive framework for land development policy for the region on the basis of these recommendations. In 1966, the NRPC adopted a *Regional Development Guide* synthesizing the plans and recommendations of local governments with the broad vision of the Policies Plan. In addition to adding specificity to the policies introduced in the 1961 plan – including the location, phasing, and scale of new urban centers, industrial tracts and parks - the guide proposed a new interstate regional planning agency with responsibility for initiating and planning major capital improvements supportive of regional objectives. The agency would be governed by a full-time board of directors appointed directly from the region’s local governments, whose budget and general policies would be approved by a conference of local, State and Federal officials representing the areas covered by the agency. The *Guide* argues that a single planning agency is required to effectively coordinate and regulate development in the region, but does not indicate exactly what form this entity should take (NCPC 1966).

While the text of the *Policies Plan* and *Guide* emphasize the need for a reversal of recent

approaches to land use planning and physical development in the region, both note that under existing conditions, the NRPC could not propose levels of regulatory control unacceptable to the region's communities. The detailed proposals for the regional location (fig.) and character (fig.) of new town centers introduced in the plan were strictly conceptual. The NRPC carried no legal authority to require the region's county and city planning agencies to implement the plan – making its realization completely dependent upon local cooperation. As a federal document, the plan is afforded the unique leverage of influencing the location of federal infrastructure and

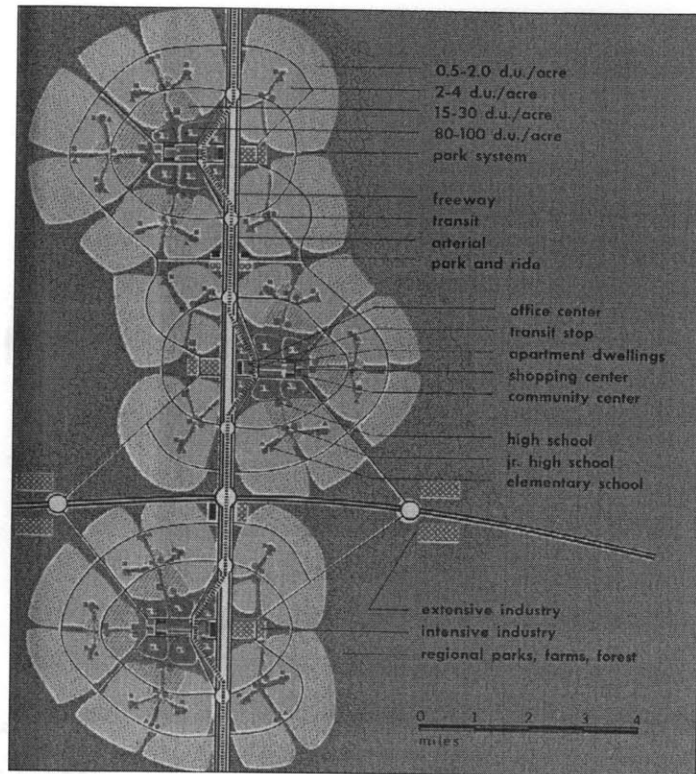


Fig. 2.10. Detailed density proposals defined the regional form proposed in the *Policies Plan*. (NCP 1961)

employment in the region, creating a potentially persuasive incentive structure for adopting local policies consistent with its objectives. Perhaps the strongest tool at the discretion of the federal government for shaping the region's growth was the National Capital Transportation Agency. Beginning in the 1970s, the agency built Metro - a series of rapid transit lines mirroring the growth corridors proposed in the *Policies Plan* and subsequent regional growth plans.

Neither the regional infrastructure nor the regional planning agency proposed by the NRDC were ever created, leaving implementation of the regional land use policies adopted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments at the discretion of local agencies. A 1974 MWCOG review of the *Policies Plan* found that the goals and objectives articulated in the *Policies Plan* were not sufficiently specific to assist implementation and that local governments had not systematically applied the land use controls required to enable to form of compact, nodal growth proposed in the plan (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 1974). Already, new growth had begun to coalesce in a pattern more radial than the series of linear corridors proposed in the plan, a phenomenon explained in part by the completion of a high capacity beltway long before construction began on the region's mass transit network. Nonetheless, outward development in the region since the plan has been much more conducive to transit use,

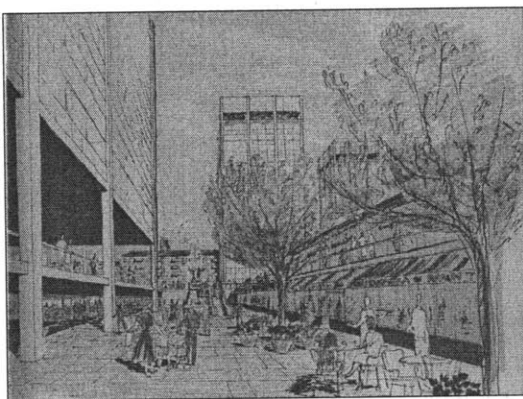
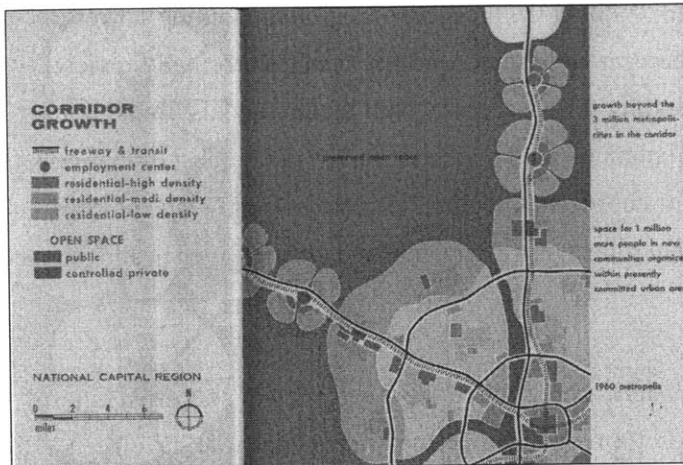


Fig. 2.11-2.12. Corridor concept plan from Policies Plan (2.11) and sketch of proposed new town centers (2.12). (NCPC 1961)

a variety of housing types, and a mixture of uses than in most other rapidly growing North American regions.

Regional Plan 1970:1990: A Voluntary Strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area *Regional Plan 1970 : 1990* offered a more cautionary, consultative

model for polycentric regional growth than plans for Toronto and metropolitan Washington. Initiated by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a voluntary regional planning organization, the plan introduced a City-Centered concept for future development in which the bulk of new population and employment growth is accommodated through the intensification of existing urban centers. Additional new development would take place in planned communities on land reserved in

advance for outward expansion. These new communities, each housing approximately 100,000 residents, would be located along mass transit lines and highways, and allow inhabitants to live, work and shop in the same place. In the process, surrounding areas would be preserved as open space and future development reserves. Regulation of development in new communities would promote densities sufficient to draw a broad array of activities while accommodating a level of employment consistent with the number resident workers. The physical form of new communities would radiate from a core featuring an intensive mixture of commercial, government, cultural, recreation, health and education services (ABAG 1970, ABAG 1980).

In comparison to the Toronto *Official Plan* and Metropolitan Washington *Policies Plan*, the *Regional Plan* provides few details regarding the location, physical design, or amount of new development expected to locate in subcenters. Unlike a traditional graphically rendered land use and transportation plan, the Bay Area regional plan presents a text-driven *strategy* of multiple policies and approaches that ABAG members can take to achieve the broader ecological, social

and economic objectives driving the plan. Without the prospect of regional planning powers, ABAG proposes to utilize its role as a coordinator of regional objectives to informally review local applications for state and federal funding for consistency with regional goals. In addition, the organization proposed to review local planning and policy actions at the request of member municipalities. To provide momentum for cooperative regional planning, ABAG signed memoranda of understanding with regional transit, environmental and utilities agencies to pursue programs consistent with the plan.

In practice, *Regional Plan 1970:1990* has done little to structure the growth of Bay Area cities. Despite agreeing to submit plans to ABAG for review, few communities appear to have been willing to take pursue development policies that may be politically unpopular at the local level to support regional objectives (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001).

2.3 The Reality of Polycentricity: subcenter formation following World War II

The urban form promoted by regional plans for Toronto, Washington and the Bay Area is premised on the notion that a region containing multiple, linked centers of commercial, social and cultural activity is superior to one dominated by a single central business district or a diffusion of uncoordinated centers. In contrast to the years preceding the *Regional Plan of New York*, in the 1950s and 1960s this notion was informed by the explosion of low-density suburban development following World War II. The North American region defined by a single commercial center away from which land values consistently declined was transformed by the construction of highway networks, widespread automobile ownership, advances in telecommunications, a shift from manufacturing to service sector employment, and rapid suburban population growth. The monocentric model for understanding the economy and physical form of regions, premised on a dominant center and progressively declining land values, reflected regional economies prior to these technological changes (Alonso 1964). Although full-fledged 'edge cities' did not appear in every region, the underpinnings of the monocentric city-region began to erode (Garreau 1991, Hall 1997). Across North America, a region of multiple centers took shape at highway interchanges, suburban transportation hubs, and greenfield sites throughout North America. In the case of metropolitan areas such as Washington-Baltimore and Seattle-Tacoma, historically distinct urban centers merged into a continuous region as the spaces in between were filled with predominantly low density, highway-oriented development.

Academic research during the past twenty years has verified the existence of sub-centers throughout North America (Cervero 1997, Cervero and Wu 1997, Garreau 1991, Giuliano and Small 1992, Gordon and Richardson 1996, Gordon et al 1986, McDonald and Prather 1994,

McMillen and McDonald 1998, McMillen and Smith 2003). The downward sloping density gradients proposed in the monocentric model flattened in industrialized cities during the 20th century, accelerating following the completion of highway networks and mass automobile ownership. While interpretation of the number of subcenters in different regions has varied based upon definitions of density, areal scope, and mixture of economic and social activities, the presence of multiple concentrations of commercial and employment activity, often mixed with medium to high density residential communities, is well established (McMillen and Smith 2003, Giuliano and Small 1991). Research suggests that subcenters do not typically replicate the function of central business districts (Cervero and Wu 1997, McMillen 1996), and may in fact act as individual complements to other segments of a regional space economy (Anas et. Al 1998). Subcenters are apparent in old and emerging regions alike, developing along existing commercial corridors, at highway interchanges, and in multimodal nodes (Anas et al. 1998). The continued dispersal of employment across broad regions such as Metropolitan Los Angeles is viewed by some authors as evidence of a growth patterns too diffuse to be labeled polycentric (Gordon and Richardson 1996).

Subcenters appear to emerge in response to population dispersion and commuting costs, both of which may lead employers to locate closer to growing suburban labor markets (McMillen and Smith 2003). In this context, multiple centers within a region have been advocated as a means of reducing commuting costs, wages and land costs, and of increasing the aggregate utility of a region's residents (McMillen and Smith 2003, Anas et al. 1998, Anas 1992). Government intervention can hasten the growth of centers that would otherwise be slow to emerge due to insufficient incentives or competition between landowners in potential centers (Henderson and Slade 1993, Anas et al. 1998). However, market forces still strongly influence the concentration or dispersion of economic activities in a city-region and administrative and political interventions that do not adequately consider the workings of the market may actually cause adverse results. For example, residents wanting to work "close to home" may not have the knowledge or skills needed for jobs in nearby sub-centers, forcing them to take jobs with long commutes (Giuliano 1989). Despite local and regional programs aimed at striking a balance between jobs and residents workers in sub-regions, laborers may be forced to spend more time commuting to nodes with jobs "matched" to their skill set, especially if there is a lack of reliable transportation infrastructure. Case studies of commuting patterns among workers, residents and shoppers suggest high rates of automobile travel both between different suburban sub-centers and sub-centers and central cities - even where high capacity public transit is available (Daniels 1981, Ley 1985, Cervero and Wu 1997).

Academic literature has not yet attempted to systematically identify *mixed-use* centers or assess the relationship between land use policies promoting a polycentric urban form and the location of subcenters. Clearly, many of the 'Edge Cities' described by Garreau displayed a wide spectrum of uses facilitated by land use and transportation policies - despite the author's emphasis on market forces (Garreau 1991). However, the relationship between the location of subcenters and local planning policies is not well understood. Some economists suggest that wealthier communities are less likely to permit intensive commercial development, making low to moderate income suburban municipalities with direct access to a regional road network ideal locations for 'Edge Cities' accommodating intensive commercial and employment growth (Wheaton 2003).

Despite a revival of many of North America's central cities in the 1990s, suburban subcenters continue to expand and emerge in a pattern responding to automobile access, proximity to labor pools, adjacent businesses and land values as opposed to a coordinated regional land use plan. Many regions have attempted to address the growth of uncoordinated subcenters by proposing a sequence of planned subcenters, often located along a rapid transit line. Research into population and employment growth around transit stations indicates that supportive local zoning is critical to the development of new transit-oriented centers, and that the speed and frequency of different modes of public transit service may heavily influence the intensity of development around stations (Cervero 1998, Pushkarev and Zupan 1977). However, attempts to evaluate the degree to which *intentional* subcenters identified in regional plans develop in accord with planning policies and goals have been limited to qualitative analysis (Tomalty 1997) and surveys of informally designated regional centers (Hutton and Davis 1985, Davis and Perkins 1992).

2.4 The New Polycentrists: Recent Visions of Distributed Regional Form

Interest among Canadian and American senior levels of government in issues of regional importance began to decline in the late 1970s and experienced a rapid fall the 1980s. During the Reagan years, nearly 100 regional councils were destroyed in line with a reduction of federal funding for regional programs. Canadian governments during this period were less likely to create regional organizations with equivalent powers to older organizations or amalgamate smaller cities (Friskin and Norris 2001). In the United States and Western Canada, expectations of coordinated regional land use and transportation planning were undermined by political shifts emphasizing small government and home rule.

A number of forces coincided in the early 1990s to revive interest in both regional planning in general and polycentric models for growth in particular. Rapid economic growth in Canada and many parts of the United States, coupled with anticipated demographic changes, created a

practical impetus for initiating long-range schemes for regional development. The passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA) by the US congress in 1991 created an opportunity for the synthesis of regional land use and transportation planning by requiring Metropolitan Planning Organizations to create long range transportation strategies. In tandem with regional planning bodies, these organizations could divert federal transportation funds to pay for mass transit and non-motorized transportation projects. The 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century built upon ISTEA by promoting better station area planning and enhancing funding opportunities for projects improving pedestrian and bicycle connections. The prospect of fulfilling part of a larger regional vision through transportation investment distributed throughout a metropolitan area enhanced the political and financial viability of planning for multiple mixed-use centers.

The introduction of sustainable development into planning discourse further emphasized the need for better long range regional planning. The credo of sustainable development - balancing the needs of future generations against current demands – is a clear call for more coordinated, environmentally sensitive, equitable development. Recognizing that natural, social and economic systems are regional in nature leads to the obvious, yet politically contentious, conclusion that a sustainable future is best planned at the regional scale. A region of multiple, transit-oriented centers with a wide array of activities can, in theory, accomplish numerous objectives of sustainable development simultaneously. By clustering development in locations well-served by transit, the polycentric region preserves open space and improves air quality while reducing automobile travel at the regional scale. At the scale of the neighborhood and street, the denser, better connected regional center creates the potential for greater human interaction and civic engagement.

The re-emergence of at least one broad intellectual model for regional growth during the 1990s helped inspire and influence plans calling for a polycentric pattern of metropolitan development. While the scope of the emergent New Urbanist movement has been broad, one consistent theme linking many of its members is a commitment to a region of multiple mixed-use centers. The Charter of the Congress of the New Urbanism envisions a region of “multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges” where noncontiguous development is “organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.” To link these urban centers, the overall “physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives” (Congress of the New Urbanism 2004).

Peter Calthorpe’s Regional City

The most extensive distillation of a New Urbanist vision for regional form is *The Regional City* by urban designer Peter Calthorpe and journalist William Fulton. Published in 2001, *The Regional City* originated in the professional work and writing of Calthorpe during the 1980s and 1990s. The authors pose a region of multiple, dispersed centers with a broad mixture of uses as a solution to the diffuse, disconnected, socially alienating development pattern that dominated North America during the second half of the 20th Century. The placeless 'Edge City' and inner-city deterioration are described as intertwined phenomenon that can only be addressed through a comprehensive approach to regional development and design. Rather than growing haphazardly, with space regulation determined largely by engineering standards, the region can and should be actively designed. In comparison to previous regional thinking, *The Regional City* provides a relatively detailed set of parameters for the physical organization of the region. The authors provide four basic elements to organize successful regional design: Preserves, Corridors, Districts and Centers.

Preserves are areas of the region protected from development. Agricultural uses, rural landscapes, ecologically sensitive areas, and land reserved for future development can form preserves. Together, preserves can both define the outer edges of a region and bring green and open space into the heart of urban centers. The approach to regional development proposed in *The Regional City* incorporates urban growth boundaries surrounded by natural preserves as an important organizing feature.

Corridors are natural and urban systems that flow through a region, creating physical contours, edges and paths that define remaining development.

Districts are single use areas outside of residential neighborhoods accommodating development that cannot be placed within residential and mixed use areas without severely disrupting the urban fabric. Airports, industrial areas, universities and 'big box' retail stores are offered as diverse examples of the uses that are best segregated into Districts. Notably, Districts are not considered appropriate locations for offices. The authors argue that bringing offices that have often fled to business parks back into a fabric of mixed urban uses is principally a design challenge that can be overcome through creative site planning and regulatory strategies.

Centers form the heart of the *Regional City* concept, serving as mixed-use destinations for surrounding areas. Each center serves as the focal point for a group of neighborhoods, accommodating the civic uses and common places shared by different members of a community. The fundamental building block for the urban centers envisioned by the authors is the *Pedestrian Pocket* concept explored by Calthorpe in the late 1980s - a half mile radius around a transit station

in which a fine grain of streets allows pedestrians to access a wide variety of civic, recreational, residential and employment opportunities (Calthorpe 1989). This model closely mirrors the Neighborhood Unit introduced by Clarence Perry as part of the 1929 *New York Regional Plan*, as well as many of fellow New Urbanist Andres Duany's Traditional Neighborhood Development concepts. By keeping development within this radius, all points in the community remain within a five minute walk of a public transit stop and a ten minute walk of each other, creating the potential for a region of similarly sized communities linked almost completely by public transportation. Another critical element in Calthorpe's approach to designing new urban centers is the notion that contemporary commercial development coalesces into nodes rather than along linear streets as it did in many parts of North America the early 20th Century. This assumption, based largely upon observations of suburban mall and 'edge city' development since World War II, informs the radial quality of many of Calthorpe's plans – a concentrated core of retail and office space is surrounded by predominantly residential streets (Calthorpe 1993).

The authors present a hierarchy of centers, each serving a different market area. Pedestrian access remains a primary influence on the center typologies presented in *The Regional City*. The Village Center is the most common, with local-serving retail and a market area of a one to one and a half mile radius, or five to ten thousand homes. The physical scale of Village Centers is defined by one to two story buildings with retail and offices on the first floor and affordable and senior housing above. The Town Center serves as a sub-regional employment center with a significant amount of housing and major civic spaces. The public realm of Town Centers is intimate, with building edges approaching the sidewalk and shared parking facilities located behind buildings. The intensity of retail activity in the town center is comparable to a 'community center' in the real estate industry, anchored by several large stores. Unlike the traditional community center strip mall, however, retail shop windows form the edges of the public realm and offices and residences sit above. Hotels, theatres and museums animate the town center during evenings and weekends. The transit village prototype utilized by Calthorpe in his professional practice – in which a rail stop anchors a local circulation and public space network - is cited as one example of a town center. Town centers are intended to serve as the second most common type of urban center, providing a focus for sub-regions. The Urban Center is the most intensive and least common urban center, serving as the cultural, economic and commercial nucleus of an entire region. The physical scale and intensity of uses in Urban Centers can vary dramatically based upon local conditions. However, successful Urban Centers must provide an attractive, animated setting, offer rapid transit connections, and feature a greater intensity and mixture of uses than smaller scale centers in the region. The authors do not provide much less detail about the Urban Center, reflecting its position as a unique setting shaped by the particular economic and geographic

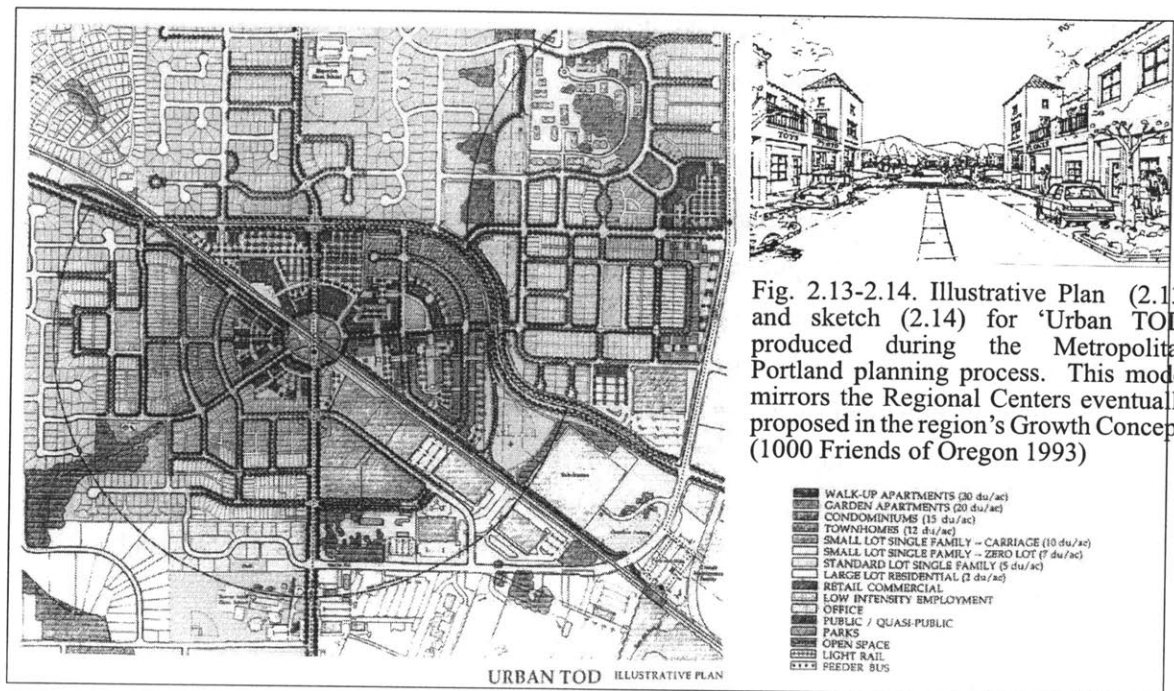


Fig. 2.13-2.14. Illustrative Plan (2.13) and sketch (2.14) for 'Urban TOD' produced during the Metropolitan Portland planning process. This model mirrors the Regional Centers eventually proposed in the region's Growth Concept. (1000 Friends of Oregon 1993)

conditions of a region.

The authors predict a new paradigm of growth for the United States in which a more holistic approach is taken to the growth and planning of regions. The first step toward this vision, they argue, is a broadly supported regional vision, supplemented by appropriate land use, transportation and open space policies. The iterative, consultative public processes leading to regional plans for Portland, Oregon and Salt Lake City, Utah – both of which were guided in part by Calthorpe – are cited as prime examples of the potential for building consensus around a more compact, polynodal urban form that promises desirable urban settings while preserving the natural qualities that help define the image of a region (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001).

Duany and Plater-Zybeck

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zybeck have joined Calthorpe in calling for greater regional coordination of physical development. As the most prominent New Urbanists, they have offered proposed few details on spatial organization of the region. *Suburban Nation*, among the most influential proposals for a new approach to American urbanism, does not forward a physical vision of ideal regional form. The authors argue, however, that nodal transit-oriented development should be conducted at the regional level. Through a consultative process involving residents and local leaders, regionally directed plans should provide the architectural details of proposed centers (Duany et al 2000).

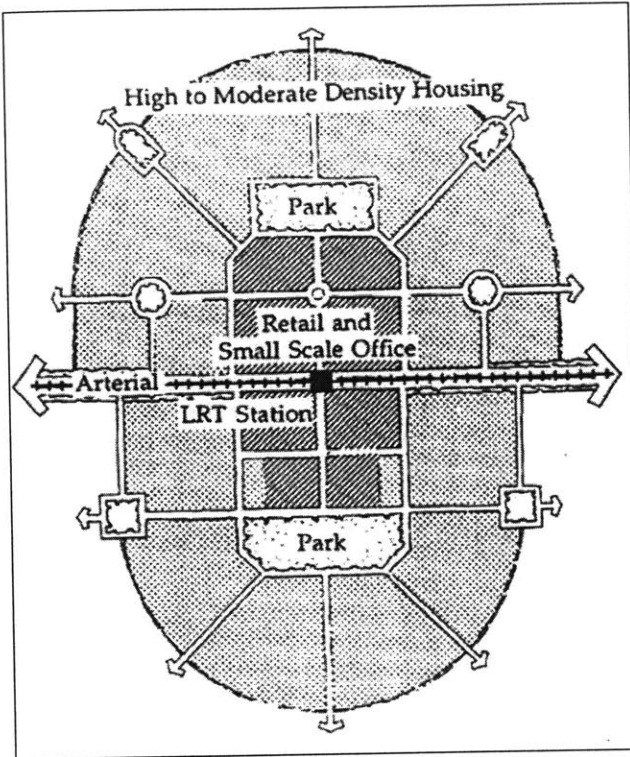


Fig. 2.15. Concept plan for Urban Transit-Oriented Development produced during Metropolitan Portland Planning Process. This model fuses the pedestrian pocket with the Town Center prototype proposed in *The Regional City*. (1000 Friends of Oregon 1993)

An Alternative Polycentric Vision: Moshe Safdie's New Cardo

Architect Moshe Safdie forwards a much more radical vision for the polycentric region of the future in *The City After the Automobile*. Unlike many New Urbanists, Safdie's model for regional growth is not an effort to progressively modify the physical design and social ecology of North American regions. Safdie proposes a complete departure from the current physical organization of most regions. Safdie's scheme has received little attention from planners and academics, but is considered here because it represents an alternative vision for a complete, polycentric region.

Drawing inspiration from the monumental

linear streets featured in plans by Alexander the Great, Safdie proposes a detailed design concept for regional subcenters. In the context of a region, Safdie envisions subcenters set amidst reserves of green space, providing the "best aspects of traditional cities" (Safdie and Kohn 1997: 151). The region of the future will be defined by dispersed residential communities, open land, and "a number of dense, intensive districts replete with culture; street life; diversified commerce, business and residential opportunities; and a multitude of services and entertainment" (Ibid.). The region's central business district and outlying subcenters would be linked by rapid rail, while subway and light rail systems would serve local areas.

Each intensive district, located at transfer points between rapid trains, would be a version of the "New Cardo," an adaptation of Alexander the Great's processional streets. At the outset, each linear Cardo would be one mile long with a major transit stop at either end, with capacity for future outward expansion in either direction. The character of the pedestrian-only street could be boulevard-like and tree-lined in some sections and enclosed and intimate in others, with visual continuity provided by a retractable canopy enabling comfortable strolling throughout the seasons. Horizontal shafts beneath the street would ferry patrons in 'conveyor cabs' along

the length of the Cardo at high speeds, operating on a fixed route with designated stops and call buttons. Three to four story commercial buildings would line the primary axis of the Cardo, with commercial towers rising above parallel alleys to the north of the Cardo and residential towers rising along alleys to the south. A network of primary and secondary streets would surround the axis, with major intersections marked by civic facilities (institutions, schools, public buildings), possibly opening up to parks, piazzas and natural features where possible.

Safdie identifies existing traditional city centers, existing suburban centers (Stamford, Connecticut is provided as an example), and sites with significant natural advantages or specialized facilities as ideal locations for intensive subcenters. Each center would accommodate approximately five to ten million square feet of office space, 20,000 to 40,000 employees, one million square feet of retail space, a an array of evening activities, major hotels, mid and low rise housing, specialized educational and cultural institutions, a hospital, a government service center, and possibly a public park. Zoning around each activity center node “would guide a wide spectrum of activities within each new development, encouraging developers to collaborate to their mutual benefit” (Ibid.: 153).

The regional subcenters proposed by Calthorpe and the majority of North American region plans are unitary – serving similar purposes at different points throughout the region to reduce the need for travel and enhance opportunities for a generally defined civic engagement. Safdie, in contrast, views a constellation of regional centers as an opportunity for significant urban variation and specialization, allowing the emergence of a series of uniquely attractive spaces likely to draw visitors from throughout the region rather than simply serving mathematically estimated catchment areas. “In a single urban region,” Safdie argues, “a variety of experiences undreamt of in the past will emerge, as the urban experience in its daily and weekly routine need no longer be limited to one district similar to many others, but can open itself to the diversity of places and opportunities” (Ibid).

2.5 A Return of North American Polycentric Regional Planning

Sparked by increasing concern about the environmental and social consequences of unplanned outward growth, several regions initiated comprehensive long-range planning processes in the 1990s. Linked to supportive transportation plans, long-range plans for Seattle, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver and Chicago all emphasized the emergence of multiple subcenters to accommodate future development. Unlike plans from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the ambition of recent polycentric regional plans has been scaled back in recognition of the fact that the vast majority of regional goals must be implemented by local governments. In comparison to regional

planning processes for Portland and Vancouver considered in Chapters 3 and 4, these plans were undeniably cautionary. Consensus and cooperation form the basis and implementation model for these efforts.

Metropolitan Seattle Vision 2020

Following a period of decade of intense growth marked by an influx of high technology investment and residential development in remote suburban sites, Metropolitan Seattle was poised for a long-range planning process in the early 1990s. In 1990, the State of Washington passed a Growth Management Act requiring local governments to adopt comprehensive long range plans. In the absence of a formal regional government, the Puget Sound Regional Council serves as a forum to assist the region's municipalities develop cooperative regional growth policies. The Vision 2020 process initiated in the late 1980s sought to accommodate an expected influx of 1.4 million people over the following three decades while protecting the region's natural resources and stemming outward expansion into open, agricultural and green space. The scope of the plan was ambitious: its more than 100 social, economic and environmental objectives ranged from increasing the number of family-wage jobs in the region to utilizing transportation demand management measures to reduce automobile trips.

By bringing together a transportation and land use strategy, the plan creates a vision for transit-oriented development converging on existing and planned nodes at major highway intersections and locations planned for medium to high capacity rapid transit. The broad framework linking this disparate set of objectives is the creation of an urban network in which homes, workplaces, and recreational spaces are linked by transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections, enhancing the economic viability of the region's urban centers. The urban form proposed in the strategy operates at multiple scales. First, an urban development area is created to reduce incursion into ecologically sensitive and open spaces. Unlike Portland, land outside of this area is not legally protected from development, but intended to serve as a guide for local land use plans. Second, twenty one regional growth centers are designated within the urban area. In contrast to many other regions, the growth centers of growth centers identified in Vision 2020 are not linked to an existing or planned rail network. Instead, centers are largely reflective of the existing morphology of the region, which has provided the partial basis for a subsequent regional transportation plan. The size of Seattle's growth centers ranges from 432 to 1,177 acres – creating a generic, relatively imprecise area in which intensive development is expected to concentrate.

The most intensive growth center, the Regional Center, is expected to accommodate a minimum gross density of 80 employees per acre, 20 households per acre and 300,000 employees. Served

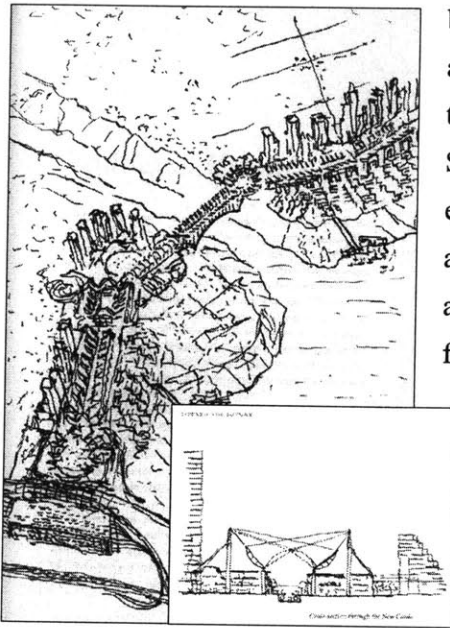


Fig. 2.16. Safdie's New Cardo (Safdie and Kohn 1997)

by frequent high capacity rapid transit, Regional Centers are identified in Seattle's Central Business District and two mixed-use districts on the outskirts of Downtown Seattle. The Regional Center provides the cultural and economic core for the region, strengthening Seattle's status as an international center for business activity. Evening activity enlivens the Regional Center, increasing its allure for both residents and workers. The second-most intensive urban typology, the Metropolitan Center, is intended to develop minimum densities of 50 employees and 15 households per acre, as well as 30,000 employees. Four Metropolitan Centers are identified in the central business districts of the region's medium-sized cities. Metropolitan Centers are marked by a blend of office, residential, entertainment and civic uses, as well as evening activity. The plan anticipates that through economic agglomeration, regional centers may

develop economic specializations allowing them to also emerge as clusters serving international markets. Fourteen Town Centers are identified throughout the region, accommodating densities of 15 employees per acre, 7 households per acre and 2,000 employees. Served by local bus, Metropolitan Centers are expected to intensify through mixed-use pedestrian scale development, establishing or reinforcing their position as foci of community activity. The plan also identifies nine Manufacturing/Industrial Centers intended to serve as clusters for economic activity that cannot be comfortably mixed with high density uses. Large retail and office uses are discouraged to reserve attractive locations for the region's industrial base.

Responsibility for implementation of urban center policy rests with the local governments of Metropolitan Seattle. While the Washington State Growth Management Act requires Regional approval of the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans, the location and character of urban centers is not specified in any statutory plans. To supplement state law, the Region's municipalities agreed to a voluntary process through which local comprehensive plans are certified by the Regional Council for consistency with regional objectives. In support of the development of regional centers, the region's transportation agency passed a 1996 plan calling for linking the centers by light rail, express bus, or commuter rail. Destination 2030, an update of Vision 2030, reiterates the first plan's urban growth center policies.

Evaluating the success of Metropolitan Seattle's urban centers strategy is difficult because no significant transportation or other infrastructure investment has been made to spark their growth. In many cases, local zoning was unchanged by. Thus, their positive or negative growth is at best tenuously related to *Vision 2020*. During the 1990s, Regional Centers identified in the plan grew at rapid rates, while Metropolitan and Town Centers saw varying population growth, with many achieving minimal increases and several experiencing declines. Metropolitan Centers experienced mixed employment growth between 1995 and 2000, with one center achieving a nearly 40% increase while another saw a loss of 7.8%. Similar results were found for Town Centers. A 2002 implementation monitoring report by PSRC indicated that many cities in which urban centers have been designated have not been planned for the intensive development proposed in Vision 2020 – due in part to limited public knowledge of regional growth centers as well as confusion among city and county planners about the specific characteristics of regional centers relative to other plan designations. Several counties used divergent methods for identifying and designating regional growth centers – often at odds with regional objectives. The vast majority of growth centers did not come close to meeting minimum densities. This may be explained in part by local zoning policies, which in many cases reflected plans for intensive employment and limited housing in districts traditionally dominated by business. In general, employment growth in centers was much more consistent with plan objectives than population growth, with overall job growth in centers (PSRC 2002).

The 1994 Minneapolis St. Paul Regional Blueprint 2030

Along with Portland, Minneapolis-St. Paul is the only American metropolitan area with a regional government. However, unlike Portland, the Twin Cities Metro Council does not possess statutory regional planning powers. Its ability to coordinate regional growth is limited to creating mutually beneficial policies that local governments are required to accommodate through municipal land use plans. While the region did not anticipate the levels of population and employment growth of Metropolitan Seattle or Portland, local planners, politicians and community leaders sought to shape the region's future form through a coordinated strategy for compact growth. Following an extensive public involvement process, Metro Council established a series of broad objectives in for guiding regional planning: achieving greater synthesis of regional and local planning efforts; using the region's role as a provider of infrastructure such as sewage and roads to support compact regional growth; and committing regional funds to 'liveable communities' demonstration projects. Adopted by Metro Council in 1996, a subsequent Regional Blueprint developed a more refined set of long-range planning policies: Reinvest in older communities; invest in compact developing communities; focus growth and redevelopment in urban and rural centers and along corridors; provide greater transportation choices linked to development patterns and jobs; increase life cycle and affordable housing; preserve and protect natural resources; support rural communities and preserve agricultural lands.

Metro Council planning staff took members of the public and local officials through a visioning process in which a series of growth scenarios were considered, and one preferred scenario selected. The Urban Form proposed by the Blueprint is strikingly similar to the vision for Portland portrayed in the 2040 Growth Concept. On the map describing the Blueprint's growth strategy, a series of ½ mile circles radiate from planned or proposed transit stations to mark designated centers of varying scale. In the initial concept, regional centers – marked by the largest circles along the transit line- are targeted for the most intensive new growth, while other along transit communities are designated for medium density expansion. As a result of this more clustered development pattern, the plan contends, a preserve of green area can be protected from development along the periphery.

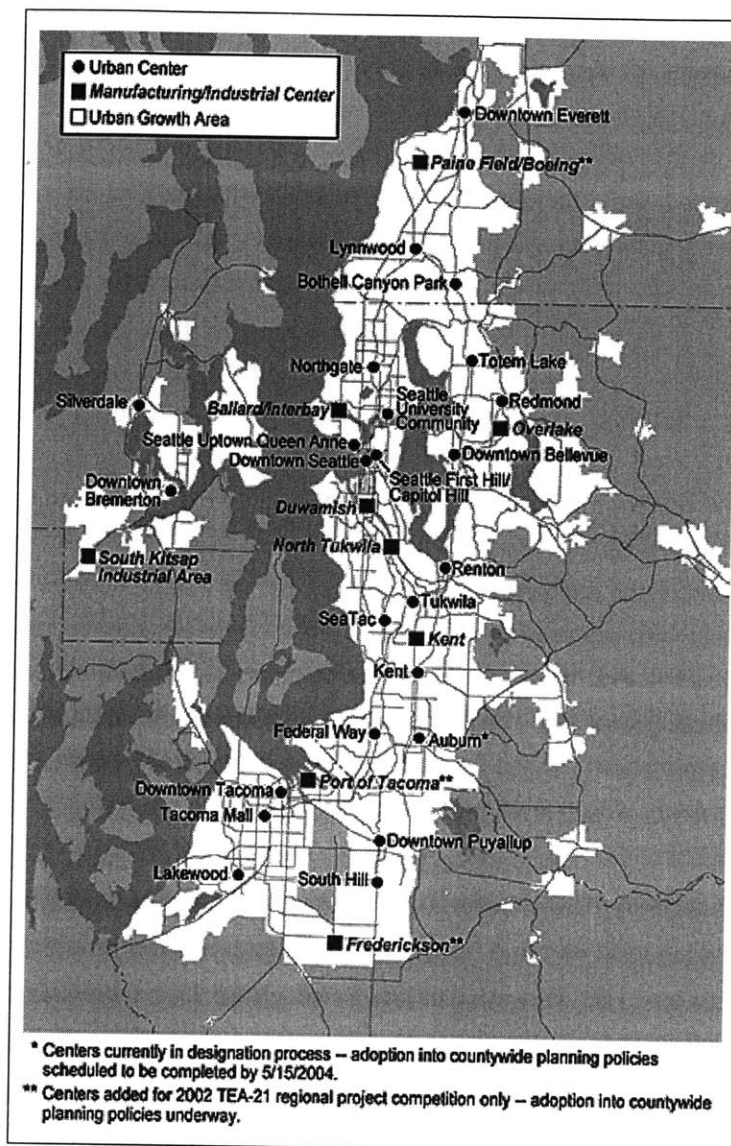


Fig. 2.17. Metropolitan Seattle Vision 2020 growth concept. (PSRC 2004)

Although the Blueprint 2030 concept map suggests locations for centers, these nodes were formally described in the initial text of the plan. Instead, a process for defining opportunity sites was initiated in which a number of locations along planned and proposed transit lines were assessed for development capacity. Following the election of a Republican governor in 2003, further work on the blueprint was halted so that a new regional policy could be developed. This process, the Regional Development Framework, is a thorough reevaluation of principles driving the formulation of a regional plan. Rather than attempt to

create an overarching growth concept for the region, the framework has worked to compile local comprehensive plans into a single document (Metropolitan Council 2004).

Envision Utah

Initiated in 1997 through a partnership of public officials, community leaders, and businesspeople, Envision Utah aimed to develop a Quality Growth Strategy with broad public approval to guide the development of Greater Wasatch Area Region up to the year 2020. Anticipating an additional 1 million residents by 2020 and another 2.3 million between 2020 and 2050, the leaders of a region marked by a history of political unity came together to forge a vision of common benefit. With a mountain range and lake forming natural barriers to the East and West, the region has dispersed to the north and south. In similar fashion to the Portland's 2040 Growth Concept and Greater Vancouver's Livable Region Strategy, Envision Utah began with an effort to identify the core values of the region's residents, followed by a public involvement process in which groups of citizens were brought together to select scenarios for distributing future growth in the region. From this process, six primary goals were identified for supporting the region's long-term growth: enhance transportation options and access; preserve critical open and green spaces; maintain and conserve water resources; provide a broad range of housing opportunities; utilize public and infrastructure investments to further the other objectives of the plan.

With the assistance of Calthorpe Associate, the State of Utah and the University of Utah, the organization created a set of iterative scenarios allowing residents to envision the outcomes of different distributions of population, employment and other activity in relation to the primary goals identified for the plan. Through community design workshops, Calthorpe Associates staff worked with citizens and businesspeople to create illustrative land use plans for the future intensification of several urban centers throughout the region. A preferred scenario, the Quality Growth Scenario, emerged in which future growth is concentrated into a series of mixed-use town centers distributed along the light rail network planned by the Utah Transit Authority. By taking advantage of transit improvements, bringing activities closer together, and offering a wider variety of housing, the concentration of growth into designated centers is projected to reduce pressure on green and open spaces, maintain air and water quality, and reduce automobile dependence. To support the preferred scenario that emerged from this process and the plan's six primary goals, Envision Utah's Quality Growth Strategy offers thirty-two general implementation strategies. The plan presents a series of illustrative design and policy interventions, creating a toolkit for local efforts to accommodate increased densities in attractive, pedestrian-friendly settings.

In 1999, the Governor of Utah worked with legislators and members of Envision Utah to create a Quality Growth Act establishing a Quality Growth Commission and creating incentives for communities to pursue objectives consistent with Quality Growth Scenarios for Wasatch and other regions. Under current legislation, implementation ultimately hinges upon cooperation between the region's 91 municipal and 10 county governments. However, the state has signaled that it utilize its financial leverage to promote more compact growth. The state Quality Growth Commission and Envision Utah have joined forces to fund six local quality growth demonstration projects including three transit-oriented developments.

Denver Metro Vision 2020

The Denver Metropolitan Area was projected to grow by an additional 900,000 residents between the mid-1990s and 2020. The potential for dramatic change and significant issues transcending municipal boundaries created an impetus in 1990 for a long-range regional planning initiative led by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) – a voluntary organization of the region's municipalities and counties. The process seeks to synthesize previously discrete development, transportation and air quality plans into a comprehensive guide for the region's future growth. A task force comprised of environmental, business and government leaders developed a series of six core principles for developing regional growth policy: limiting the extent of urban development to a total area of 700 square miles; creating an protected open space network; maintaining the distinct identity of communities at the periphery of the region; achieving a balanced multimodal transportation system with increase capacity for public transit; retaining and enhancing air and water quality; and creating pedestrian-oriented mixed use urban centers at a variety of scales to serve sub-regions.

Next, the task force considered a series of growth scenarios for accommodating future population increases in the region. The preferred scenario reduces the amount of new land required for future growth by concentrating development into a series of urban centers. Ranging in scale from Denver's Central Business District to small scale neighborhood market centers, the centers are the physical form capable of assisting the region in achieving each of its long-range planning objectives. Urban centers are described in the plan as compact pedestrian-oriented villages featuring a mixture of retail, business, civic, and service activities, as well as a diversity of residential opportunities.

Adopted in 1997, the plan does not attempt to identify the location or scale of individual centers, instead leaving the designation of centers to local governments based upon their perceived capacity for such development. To assist local governments in identifying and planning centers, the DRCOG Board of Director adopted a measure creating an urban center process. An ongoing

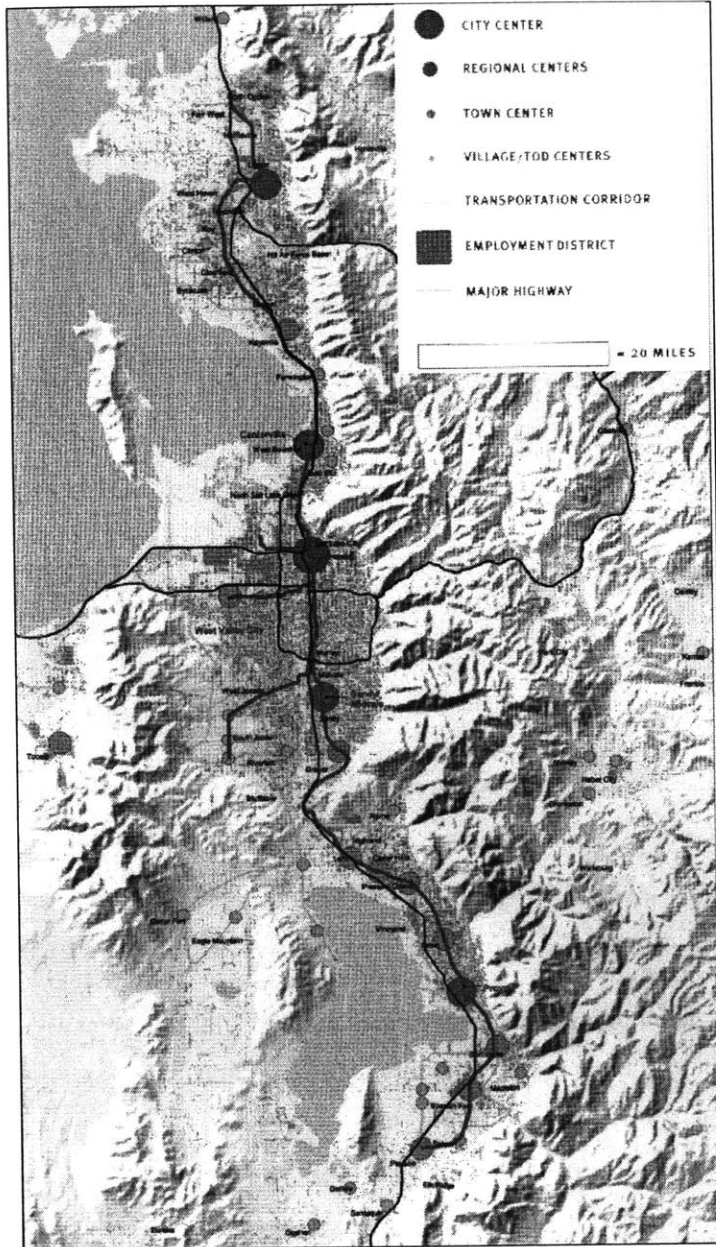
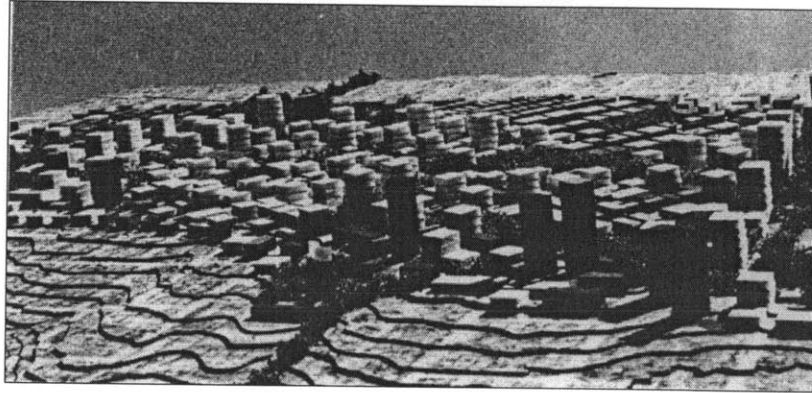


Fig. 2.18. Envision Utah growth concept. (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001).

process involving a variety of local stakeholders will clarify the image, scale and variety of centers to help communities envision and work toward the creation of centers. Local governments will identify potential urban center locations through a parallel process. Following these steps, urban center plans will be created incorporating the interests of property owners, developers, relevant regional agencies, residents, investors and developers.

Implementation of Metro Vision 2020 is entirely voluntary, calling upon local jurisdictions to commit themselves to acting in concert with its objectives without any prompting from the state government. The principles underlying the plan's implementation strategy are described as: voluntary, flexible, collaborative, and effective local

implementation. (DRCOG 1999.) Future steps toward plan realization include outreach to local communities, formulating staged growth boundaries, identifying regional open space and transportation networks, and identifying urban centers and assisting communities in committing to the development of centers.



Chapter Three: Greater Vancouver's Regional Town Centres

3.1 The Basis for Regional Planning in Greater Vancouver

Greater Vancouver's 1,271 square miles encompass 21 municipalities ranging in size from the 0.9 square miles of Lions Bay to Surrey's 117 square miles. The region includes five cities with populations greater than 100,000 and another eight with more than 40,000 residents.

Downtown Vancouver continues to serve as the cultural and economic nucleus of the region, while the inner suburbs of Richmond and Burnaby have developed the largest sub-regional concentrations of office and retail activity. Until World War II, the region's municipalities provided nearly all services independently. As in many parts of the North America, regional cooperation coalesced only around infrastructure systems that were by necessity provided at the intra-municipal level, such as water and sewer services. The Great Flood of 1948, which inundated the eastern part of the region and forced the evacuation of more than 16,000 residents, provided an initial impetus for regional planning in Greater Vancouver. In 1949, the province of British Columbia adopted legislation creating the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board to provide a forum for municipal planners and



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leaders from 28 municipalities to coordinate their local planning efforts. The LMRPB was solely a planning agency and did not possess the capacity to provide other services at the regional level.

In the mid-1960's, the province passed legislation dividing the Lower Mainland's municipalities and unincorporated areas into four regional districts. An area roughly equivalent to the Vancouver Metropolitan Census Area was designated the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). The GVRD was governed by a board composed of at least one representative from each of its 14 municipalities and 2 electoral districts. Policymaking in the GVRD is vested in a Board of Directors composed of directors selected by municipal councils from among their elected members. Each municipality is entitled to one vote for every 20,000 population, up to a maximum of five votes. To execute policies, the GVRD has a Chief Administrative Officer, a Deputy CAO, managers for functional departments, and professional and support staff. Unlike regional governments in other parts of North America, board members are first elected as municipal councilors or mayors and remain in local office even as they serve on the regional board.

Politically, the creation of the GVRD was viewed as a "gentle imposition" of the British Columbia provincial government on municipalities in the region that had a long tradition of jealously guarding their local autonomy (Tennant and Zirnhelt 1973). The principle argument used by the province in creating GVRD was that area-wide services like water, sewerage, transport, parks and solid waste disposal could best be managed by coordinated regional action. Still, to ease acceptance of the GVRD by local units the provincial legislation allowed municipalities to "opt out" of certain regional services. Up to the present, for example, the city of Abbotsford at the eastern edge of Greater Vancouver participates in GVRD Board deliberations only in relation to park functions although it is represented on the Regional District Board. Although the province was poised to impose certain functions if there was recalcitrance at the regional or local level, the GVRD's members assumed responsibility for a wide variety of regional services within five years (Ibid., Lash 1976). In addition to its initial regional function of hospital planning, the district's members agreed to add water and sewer systems, regional planning, social housing, regional parks, labor relations, capital planning and air pollution control.

A Particular Planning Vision

The regional planning arm of the GVRD inherited a particular vision of growth management from the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board. GVRD planning staff assumed responsibility for Metropolitan Vancouver's portion of a 1966 Official Regional Plan that called for the concentration of future development into a phased series of regional sub-centres including

a range of housing and employment opportunities. By pursuing compact forms of urban development, the plan attempted to protect vast areas of open space and natural habitat (LMRPB 1966). This vision for 'cities in a sea of green' inserts Garden Cities into an interconnected regional web reminiscent of 1950s plans for metropolitan Copenhagen and the Netherlands. The local basis for this model dated back to the post-World War II years, when it was deemed prudent by planners to separate cities by large open spaces so that they would be more difficult to attack than a contiguous urban area (LMRPB 1952). The 1966 plan did not anticipate the emphasis on non-motorized transportation and agricultural preservation that would mark later plans. Automobiles were assumed to be the primary mode of transportation, and the utilization of empty land was expected to be determined by chiefly economic considerations. What might now be described as an 'anti-sprawl' sentiment is apparent in the plan, but it was based upon the financial burden of extending services into greenfield sites rather than contemporary concerns about the environmental and social consequences of untamed growth. The plan carved the Lower Mainland's land base into four broad designations - Urban, Rural, Industrial, Park and Reserve. The urban category was further subdivided into five groups, the first of which allowed immediate subdivision and small-lot development while the other four required plan amendments prior to any form of intensive development. Although one of the plan's objectives was managing growth through the emergence of "Regional Towns" complementary to downtown Vancouver, no prospective locations for these sub-centres were identified, and no specific development standards were created for the plan's Urban zone.

When the GVRD assumed a planning function for its members in 1969, the board added a conceptual component to the predominantly technical character of previous planning efforts in the region. At a 1970 seminar, municipal politicians from the GVRD's Planning Committee identified "maintaining and improving the livability of the region" as the guiding principal for future planning (Lash 1976: 16). The emphasis on livability was part of a larger attempt to supplement the regulatory character of the Regional Plan with dynamic programs and plans intended to direct growth in a way that would improve quality of life in the region. As in many parts of North America, there was a shift in Greater Vancouver from viewing plans as fixed, technical documents prepared by experts to treating them as ongoing strategies developed in consultation with the public. The GVRD's Livable Region Program that emerged in the mid-1970s was crafted in a period of intense reaction to technocratic governance and modernist planning, providing an impetus for a new approach.

Internal exercises among GVRD staff in the first years of the 1970s further elaborated "livability" by developing a set of goals that the region could pursue to enhance its quality of life. Ideally,

achievement of these objectives would lead to the creation of a compact region linked by transportation in which open space was preserved and local centres provided for citizens' basic needs (GVRD 1971). A public process followed in which the GVRD planning department attempted to "find out from the public what livability means" (Lash 1976: 54). Through this process, policy reports and additional exercises with municipal politicians and planners, GVRD staff developed a set of actions that crystallized into the Livable Region Plan (LRP), adopted in 1975 by the regional board. The plan enumerated a series of shifts in board policies on transportation, land use, housing and agriculture toward an emphasis on growth management, enhanced regional economic cooperation, the provision of transportation to shape development, intervention in the housing market and broad efforts to preserve open space and parkland. Ten years before sustainability was introduced to the international community in the Bruntland Commission Report, Greater Vancouver's municipalities agreed to a growth concept that attempted to balance current needs with the quality of life of future generations.

Planning Policies for Livability

Five strategies were set forth to achieve a livable region: creating Regional Town Centres (RTCs), promoting a balance of jobs to population throughout the region, achieving residential growth targets in each part of the region, protecting and supplementing regional open space, and providing a transportation network linking residential areas, Regional Town Centres and concentrations of employment. The strategies were interrelated, with the success of each largely dependent upon the implementation of the other four. The Regional Town Centre provided the physical face for the growth management strategy set forth in the LRP. Distributed across the region, each RTC was to serve as a legible nexus for cultural and commercial activity, giving a center to a wide mesh of straggling urban fabric. Each center would be akin to a small, self-sufficient downtown for an area of 100,000-150,000 people and would feature significant cultural and civic facilities, at least 1,000,000 square feet of office space, nightlife, and a variety of retail establishments. Less quantifiable aspects of the ideal Regional Town Centre were pedestrian orientation, a mix of activities and a human scale. Suburban downtowns intended to serve a smaller market area through an increased intensity of uses were designated Municipal Town Centres (Ibid.).

The Livable Region Plan's population and employment targets, set for 1986, were based upon a scenario in which growth poured into Regional Town Centres and secondary Municipal Town Centres faster than anticipated rates of growth. Population increases in outlying areas would fall below expected trends under the scenario, while employment growth for these areas moved ahead of the trend. Four initial RTCs were designated in the suburban cities of New

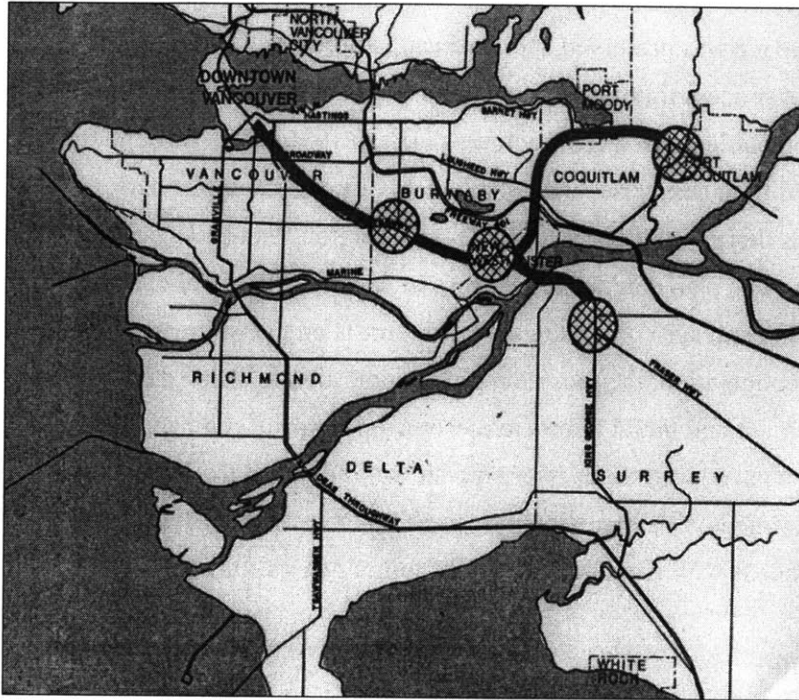


Fig. 3.2. 1976 Livable Region Plan illustrating four Regional Town Centres in Burnaby, New Westminister, Surrey and the Northeast Sector (Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam). Each center is linked to a proposed rapid transit network. (GVRD 1975)

Westminister, Burnaby and Surrey, with an additional center planned in either Coquitlam or Port Coquitlam. The transportation network proposed in the Livable Region Plan would include a light rapid transit connection between these four nodes and downtown Vancouver. Lower capacity improvements, including passenger ferries, suburban rail service and express bus service, were advocated to link RTCs to each other and outlying areas. The plan explicitly stated that development would need to be directed into the RTCs and discouraged elsewhere in order to make them the vibrant settings desired by the region's residents (Ibid.). Municipal Town Centres were identified in Richmond and the Lonsdale waterfront of North Vancouver City. At the time of the LRP, it was widely believed that the province and federal government would grant planners and administrators throughout the region the powers and resources necessary to reserve sites for development, acquire land, prevent speculation, influence the locational decisions of developers and control the timing and location of transit provision (Davis and Perkins 1992).

Political Support for Livable Region Policies

Unlike the 1966 Official Regional Plan, the Livable Region Plan did not impose any statutory requirements on municipalities. Instead, it brought board members to agreement around mutually beneficial planning objectives that would need to be implemented by formal and informal coordination. Vancouver agreed in principle to promote the Regional Town Centres by directing some office development away from its Central Business District, and its director of planning made a nominal, albeit short-lived, effort to require applicants for major office permits to explain why they had not chosen a site in a Regional Town Centre (Ibid.). The federal and provincial

government also assisted to varying degrees by making commitments to take regional town centre sites into consideration for future office expansion. In practice, however, few new provincial or federal office expansions were located in Regional Town Centres. Almost without exception, the Official Community Plans published by member municipalities in the years following the LRP elaborated upon its consistency with LRP objectives. The region's ability to preserve natural resources and direct growth into urban centres was strengthened by the creation of a provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in 1972. The province, working at varying levels of cooperation with municipalities, designated areas to be preserved for agricultural and rural uses. In order to change the designation of a plot of land, an applicant is required to appeal to an incipient Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) charged with safeguarding the reserve against unnecessary incursion. However, the combination of powers to reserve land, direct development and determine transit investments that were expected to be granted to local planners at the time of the LRP were not conveyed by the province to any local governments.

The 1980s saw a temporary halt to regional planning in Greater Vancouver. Shortly after the GVRD and the province reached a cost-sharing agreement for a regionally-controlled transit system, the region was reminded of its ultimately subordinate status. A conservative Social Credit cabinet challenged a decision by the GVRD board regarding a plot of agricultural land owned by a party supporter. When the board refused to revise its decision in 1982, the province revoked regional planning powers. The Official Regional Plan was repealed, the nascent regional transit agency disbanded, and GVRD's planning department cut to a fraction of its previous size. Land use policy was made at the municipal level without input from the few remaining regional planners.

The Resurrection of Regional Coordination

An effort to resurrect regional planning was initiated in late 1987 by the GVRD's Technical Advisory Committee, composed of planning directors from throughout the region. Rapid population and economic growth, as well as a recently elected provincial cabinet composed of long-time supporters of the LRP, led to a strong revival of interest in regional planning among politicians in Greater Vancouver in the early 1990s. With input from the public and members of the board, GVRD staff honed a vision reminiscent of the LRP: a compact region of mixed-use town centres in which future growth was concentrated into a geographical area well-served by transit and infrastructure (GVRD 1993a). This part of Greater Vancouver, called the Growth Concentration Area, enveloped the Burrard Peninsula and North Surrey, forming the core of a land use model entitled the Compact Metropolitan Region. Excluded from the Growth Concentration Area were Richmond, Delta, the North Shore, and the low-density municipalities

to the east that had joined GVRD in the intervening years between the LRP and the resurrection of regional planning. Richmond and North Vancouver had already been added as Regional Town Centres during the 1980s, both to recognize their development into viable centres and curry political support for the regional strategy.

The Livable Region Strategic Plan revolved around four broad objectives: Increase Transportation Choice, Protect the Green Zone, Build Complete Communities and Achieve a Compact Metropolitan Region (GVRD 1993b). The first two objectives were largely beyond the control of the region and its municipalities because both transit and the Agricultural Land Reserve were the responsibility of the province at the time. Policies in support of protecting the Green Zone attempted to bolster the ALR by creating an additional commitment to preserve and enhance local and regionally controlled parks, ecologically sensitive areas, and open space. Compact Metropolitan Region policies sought to achieve population and employment targets for regional sub-areas for 2006 and 2021, provide transportation services in support of these targets, giving priority to areas for which population was projected to grow at rates faster than existing trends, and achieve the population and employment densities necessary to support these transit services. Complete Community policies included achieving a better balance between jobs and labour force in different parts of the region, providing a variety of housing options, developing technology that would remove locational barriers to places of employment, and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources and services. Policies in support of regional centres were also included in this section of the plan, which called for “the development of a network of high-quality, mixed-use urban centres supported by an appropriate level of public transit and a range of community services and cultural facilities for residents and employees” (GVRD 1996). Other policies included promotion of business investment in centres and the provision of transportation supportive of local access to centres.

Reinstitution of Regional Planning Powers

As the details of the Livable Region Strategic Plan were being refined, a progressive New Democratic Party provincial cabinet began work on legislation to reinstate regional planning powers. The Growth Strategies Act was a collaborative effort between provincial officials, GVRD's manager of policy and planning, individuals from organizations representing municipalities across the province and the development industry. Adopted by the province in 1995, the Act restored planning powers to regional districts, while providing greater flexibility and municipal autonomy than the legislation that had existed prior to 1983. Instead of generating restrictive Official Plans that defined land use in broad categories, the province's most urbanized regional districts were directed to create “strategies” providing a policy framework for their

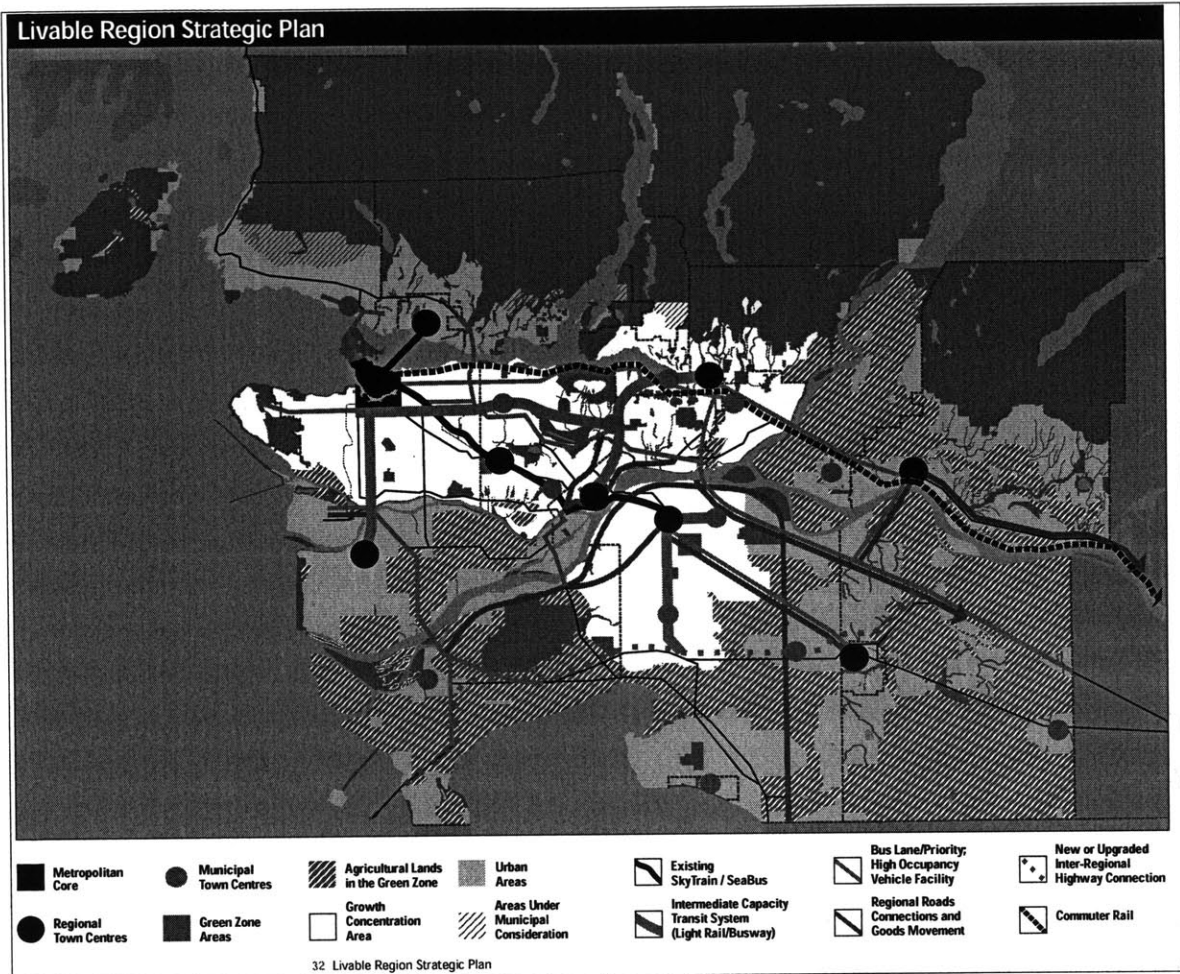


Fig. 3.3. 1996 Livable Region Strategic Plan growth concept, incorporating an expanded transit network and four additional Regional Town Centres. (GVRD 1996)

growth. Each strategy must address 14 general social, economic and environmental objectives, such as curbing sprawl and promoting affordable housing. Regional districts report annually on progress toward the achievement of a strategy, and undertake a more rigorous review every five years. The requirement that local land use by-laws be linked directly to an Official Regional Plan was not revisited. In its place, an innovative mechanism for attempting to insure consistency between regional and local plans was created - the Regional Context Statement. Regional Context Statements are documents that each member of a regional district must prepare after the passage of a regional strategy, as well as every five years thereafter. Each statement explains the relationship between a municipality's Official Community Plan and the regional growth strategy, specifying how the OCP will become consistent with the regional strategy over time. Each member of the GVRD was required to submit population and employment projections demonstrating coherence with the LRSP. Unlike the previous regulatory approach, which proved politically destructive, municipalities are required only to allude to the policies expressed in their

Official Community Plans. A municipality's by-laws, plans and services are legally required to be consistent with its OCP, but in practice there are few levers available to insure that this is the case. The Growth Strategies Act contains dispute resolution clauses that allow the province's Minister of Municipal Affairs to intervene if a regional district and municipality cannot reach agreement about a difference over the regional strategy or Regional Context Statement.

3.2 Urban Centers in the Livable Region Strategic Plan

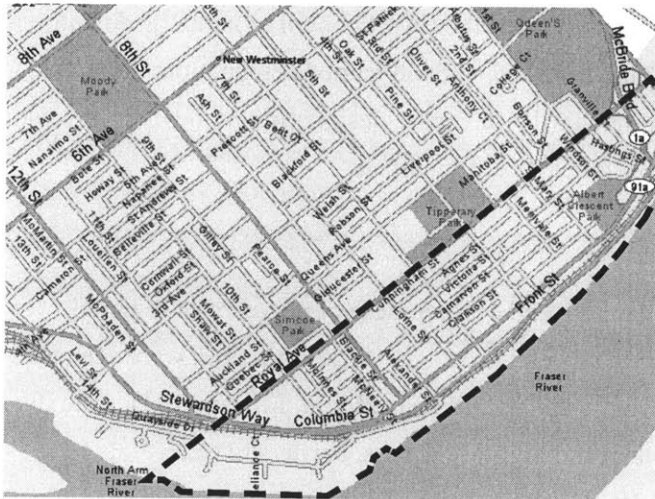
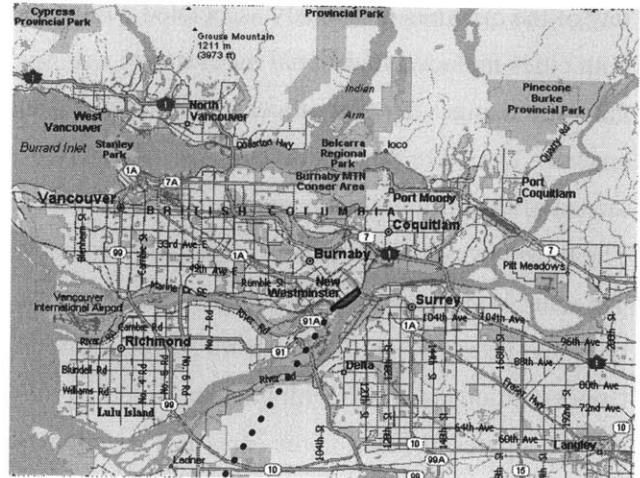
Regional Town Centre policies are much more subtle in the LRSP than in previous plans. Absent from the new strategy are the specific guidelines for RTCs included in the LRP. In the LRSP, the Regional Town Centre remains a focus for high intensity development and transit investment, but its size and character become more oblique. With the exception of Surrey City Centre, described in the plan as an eventual "second downtown" for the region, suburban centres are intended to complement, rather than compete with, downtown Vancouver. Eleven Municipal Town Centres were identified in the plan, including the three areas outside of Metrotown designated as Town Centres in Burnaby's Official Community Plan and Surrey's three Neighborhood Centres. The importance of Regional Town Centre designation is also diluted by the designation of four new RTCs. As noted above, Richmond and Lonsdale had been added to the four original centres prior to the Choosing Our Future process. These additions were made by the manager of Development Services during the 1980s to little fanfare, largely because the designation carried minimal weight as a legal or policy tool at the time. The downtowns of both cities were ahead of Coquitlam and Surrey in fulfilling the benchmarks set for Regional Town Centres in the LRP. Fifteen years after the publication of the LRP, the population densities of the downtown areas of Richmond and North Vancouver were significantly higher than those of Surrey City Centre or Coquitlam's Regional Town Centre, and they had attracted more office space. It is impossible to determine whether this was the result of planning or market and geographical forces, because each municipality promoted medium and high-density mixed use development in its town centre area. North Vancouver had a historically dense urban core in Lonsdale, while both it and Richmond had more limited land bases than Coquitlam and Surrey. Richmond and North Vancouver also benefited from closer proximity to downtown Vancouver and wealthier surrounding areas than Surrey or Coquitlam. Whatever the source of their success, by the early 1990s Richmond and North Vancouver had already attracted the type of urban development planned in Coquitlam and Surrey.

During the process leading up to the passage of the LRSP, two more Regional Town Centres were added in Langley City and Maple Ridge - municipalities that had joined the GVRD since the publication of the LRP. Both cities were near the eastern boundary of the region, and possessed

few of the qualities previously associated with Regional Town Centres. The downtowns of both cities included traditional main streets with specialty retail shops, a smattering of multi-family housing, very few offices, low transit ridership and limited potential for commercial growth. The 1996 population densities of Langley and Maple Ridge Town Centres were the lowest of the regional town centres at 7.3 persons per acre and 4 persons per acre respectively. The third lowest density among regional town centres was Surrey City Centre at 12 persons per acre. Lonsdale Town Centre, by comparison, had a density of 30 persons per acre during the same year (GVRD 2002). Both Maple Ridge and Langley City were outside of the Growth Concentration Area. The impetus for including these distant downtowns was Langley City council's determination in the early 1990s to be recognized as a Regional Town Centre. GVRD staff protested on the basis that the municipality did not display the characteristics of a Regional Town Centre and that it would be against regional interests to promote any portion of the city as a growth center. When Langley City's mayor convinced the GVRD board to name its downtown a Regional Town Centre in 1995, Maple Ridge followed suit and gained designation. Together, these concessions significantly weakened Regional Town Centre designation in the eyes of senior government officials, developers and many regional board members.

3.3 Regional Town Centre Case Studies

To enable a more detailed analysis of the planning and development of polycentric regional centers in Greater Vancouver, the first three town centres designated in the region were selected as case studies. Downtown New Westminster is the first urban center in the region. Despite its relatively central location and excellent transit and highway access, barriers to redevelopment following a rapid decline in the 1960s and 1970s have led city and provincial agencies to attempt to reinvent the center. Metrotown is the most centrally located Regional Town Centre in Greater Vancouver, supported by consistent local and regional planning policies conceiving of the center as a region-serving destination. Surrey City Centre is the anticipated 'second downtown' for the portion of Greater Vancouver south of the Fraser River, located at the terminus of the region's Skytrain line near the northern edge of Surrey. These cases were selected because they have been planned as urban centers for at least two decades and have passed through numerous development cycles, permitting a more comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of planning policies and development outcomes. Each Regional Town Center is considered for its morphology, land use and urban design policy, short-term development outcomes, and apparent future development potential. The planning and promotion of each center is critically assessed in relation to larger economic and land use policies of its local government.



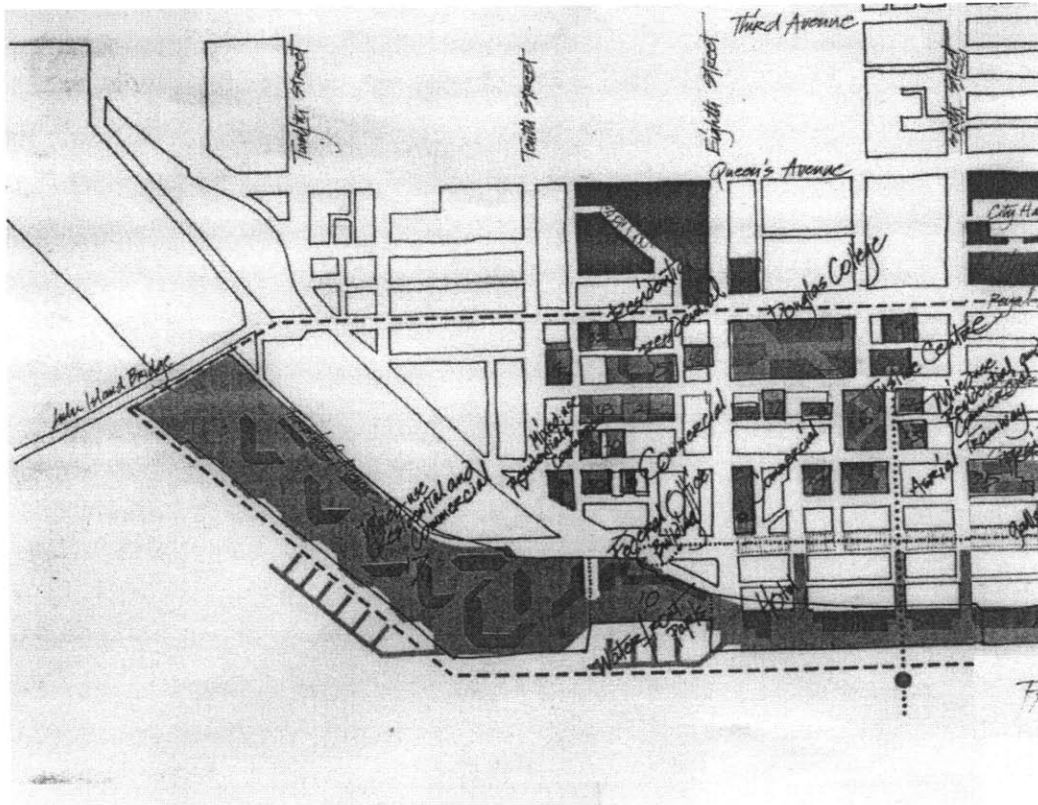
3.4 Case Study One: New Westminister

Located near the fork of the Fraser River along one of the earliest European trade routes into British Columbia, New Westminister is the first significant urban center built by Europeans in Greater Vancouver. Between 1859 and 1870, the city served as the capital of British Columbia and headquarters for numerous trading and expedition companies. As the economy of the province grew around natural resource production and export, the New Westminister riverfront attracted a concentration of trans-shipping facilities. As the city's population grew to 14,000 in the early years of the 20th century, an urban downtown developed around Columbia Street replete with department stores, local retailers, grocers, community-serving professional offices, and a handful of corporate offices. Streetcars linked the waterfront and Columbia Street to middle class residential districts straddling a steep hillside, giving the community a unique physical and visual appeal. Despite the loss of its autonomy to an increasingly regional economy, downtown New

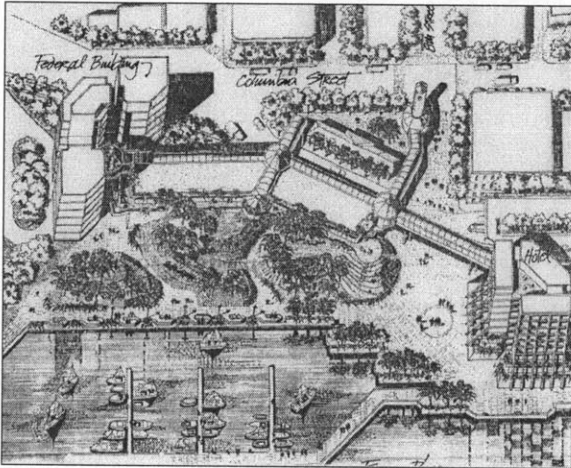
Westminster maintained a distinct economic and civic identity into the decades after World War II. However, the Columbia Street retail district fell into a steep decline following the introduction of regional malls in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Within the city, government services and retail development began to concentrate in the Uptown district to the north of downtown, further reducing its allure. Coupled with the decline of the industrial operations along the riverfront docks, the loss of downtown street life gave New Westminster the appearance of many struggling post-industrial urban centers in North America. While the residential communities of New Westminster maintained a middle and upper-middle class reputation, downtown languished. (New Westminster Public Library 2004).

The designation of downtown New Westminster as a Regional Town Centre was received by municipal officials as an opportunity to revive its historic prominence. As one of the first two Regional Town Centres proposed by the 1975 Livable Region Plan, downtown stood to garner significant investment from the provincial and regional governments to stimulate economic activity. The city prepared a 1977 Action Plan for the downtown area calling for a continuous pedestrian environment throughout Columbia Street and the waterfront to revive investment in the downtown. The plan emphasized the public realm and did not contain specific proposals for the form and composition of new physical development in the area, except

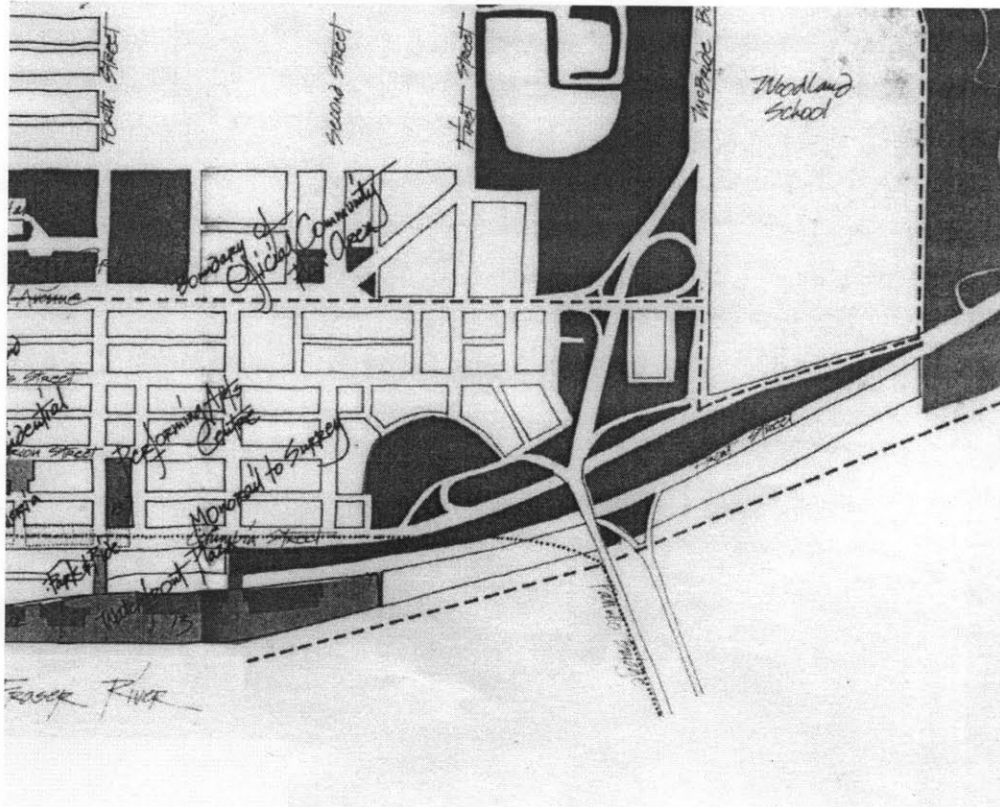
Fig. 3.4-3.5. First Capital City Development Corporation vision for the New Westminster waterfront. (FCC 1982)



to note that it would become regional in scale (City of New Westminster 1977). To activate the redevelopment of downtown, the province created a quasi-public development corporation – First Capital City (FCC) – for the specific purpose of intensifying the redevelopment of the New Westminster riverfront in 1979. As a component of the British Columbia Development Corporation (BCDC), First Capital City could utilize eminent domain and financial leverage to operate downtown as a redevelopment site, superseding local controls. During the passage of the act creating the development corporation, a leading Social Credit Party MLA articulated the high expectations for downtown New Westminster held by the province. “New Westminster will take



on an image of a city where some of the largest, most innovative developments in Canada are taking place,” he said, “and will lose its time-worn image as a place of slow growth. I am advised that aggressive international promotion has already catalysed firm commitments on the part of the development industry. A great deal of interest is being expressed, and we certainly feel that through this mechanism it can become a reality for the city of New Westminster”



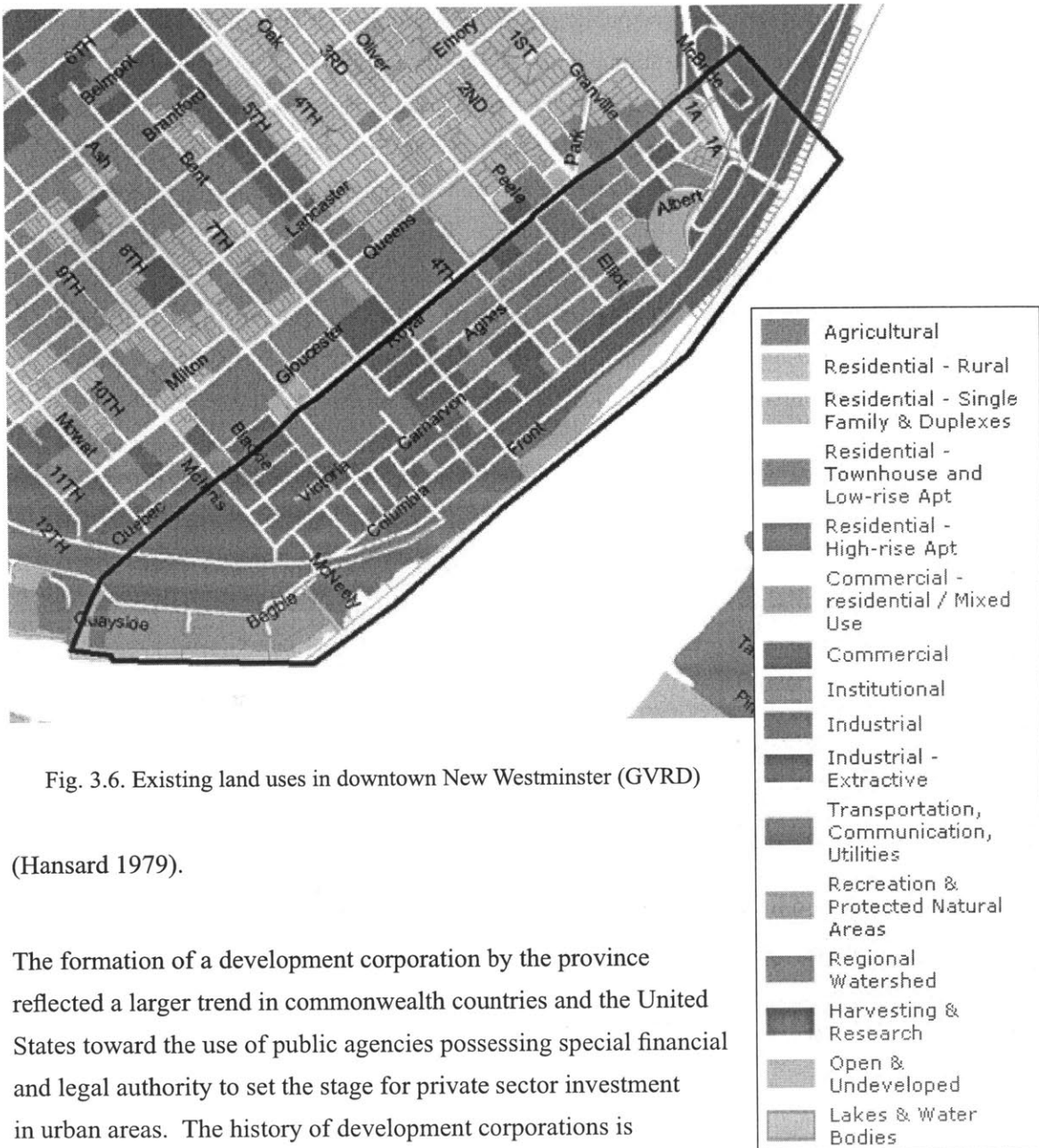


Fig. 3.6. Existing land uses in downtown New Westminster (GVRD)

(Hansard 1979).

The formation of a development corporation by the province reflected a larger trend in commonwealth countries and the United States toward the use of public agencies possessing special financial and legal authority to set the stage for private sector investment in urban areas. The history of development corporations is checkered, particularly in England - where agencies such as the London Docklands Development Corporation have played central roles in some of the most notorious public planning and investment strategies in recent history. For New Westminster, with a planning staff of six lacking the capacity to devote a full-time position to downtown, the corporation was a welcome addition.

Through market analysis, land assembly and limited development ventures, First Capital City sought to spur the private-sector led development of a mixed-use downtown of condominiums and small offices anchored by cultural attractions. Despite an emphasis on private sector

investment, the scale of the proposed public sector interventions was ambitious. *A First Capital City*, the 1981 development corporation plan for the area, describes the conversion of a vacant industrial parcel to a public market, the introduction of a funicular connection to uptown New Westminster to the north and the City of Surrey across the Fraser River to the south, the construction of a riverfront promenade and the addition of a community college, as well as three rapid transit stops linked to Vancouver and other Regional Town Centres. Together, this combination of major attractions and improved access was expected to draw shoppers, sightseers and tourists into the area. Figure 3.4 illustrates the conceptual vision guiding FCC in its plan to create a distinct sub-regional economic and civic niche for New Westminster. This 'niche' strategy was consistent with the Livable Region Plan, which proposed that each Regional Town Centre serve the immediate needs of a sub-region while also developing a unique character capable of attracting visitors from other parts of the region.

In addition to the city's 1977 *Action Plan* and 1982 *Official Community Plan*, *A First Capital City* served as the ad hoc planning strategy for downtown New Westminster throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Zoning policies during this period could be superseded by development corporation projects without local approval. Development in downtown in the first decade after the LRP was dominated by the assembly and redevelopment of the area's western waterfront, led by the First Capital City development corporation. Because this area had the largest available parcels and closest proximity to the water, it provided the best opportunity for quickly realizing a portion the development corporation's vision for the area. When the trans-shipping companies located along the waterfront began to fade into obsolescence, the development corporation assembled a continuous strip of land and utilized its financial leverage to hold the parcels until attractive redevelopment proposals emerged in the mid 1980s. The first phase of a 1300 unit residential project was joined along the river's edge in the late 1980s by a 66,000 square foot office building, a 126 room hotel and 69,000 square feet of public market space, connected by a continuous promenade.

While the first phase of development corporation projects promised an influx of residents, tourists, workers and shoppers into the waterfront, the redeveloped waterfront remained isolated from the rest of downtown. Westminster Quay, a two level public market accommodating small vendors, restaurants and specialty shops, was linked to downtown by an unpopular metal pedestrian overpass leading directly to its second-floor entrance. Westminster Landing, the large scale residential project along the northwestern edge of the riverfront, was connected to an area of downtown dominated by vacant lots by an overpass accommodating both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The development's cloistered setting, marked by artificial canals, fountains and other water features, as well as its lack of any retail or non-residential space, added to its sense

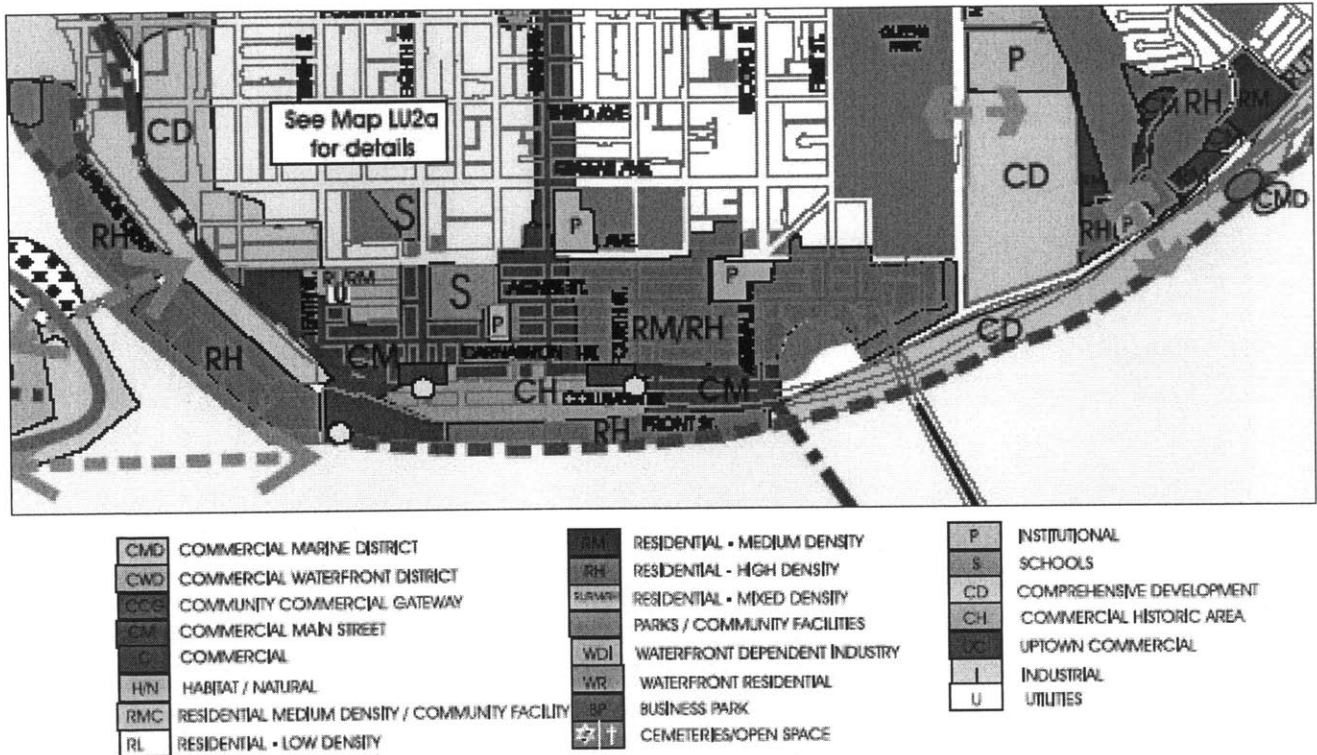


Fig. 3.7. 2002 Official Community Plan element for Downtown New Westminster. (City of New Westminster 2002)

of autonomy and isolation from downtown. Despite the addition of three Skytrain stations along Columbia Street in 1987, no clear link was forged between the stations and the waterfront. The 203 residential units, community college, renovated court house, 20,000 square feet of retail, and 108,000 square feet of office development elsewhere in downtown during the first ten years after the LRP were not functionally or spatially related to activity along the waterfront, taking place in relatively isolated locations. Two of these developments – the community college and a government office – further realized the development corporation's plan for downtown. The seamless public realm envisioned in *A First Capital City* was more difficult to implement: completed pedestrian improvements such as the repaving of Columbia Street, the creation of several public squares, and the extension of a waterfront promenade were not legibly connected through signage or other methods.

With the election of a new provincial government in 1989, the First Capital City Corporation was eliminated. For political expediency, parcels still held by the corporation were quickly sold off. In the view of one long-time New Westminster planner, this turn of events has contributed to the persistence of highly visible vacant parcels in the fabric of the city's downtown (Interview NW-1). Several of these parcels now sit empty at the foot of the first Skytrain station in the city's downtown, creating a poor sense of arrival into downtown from its northern edge. The

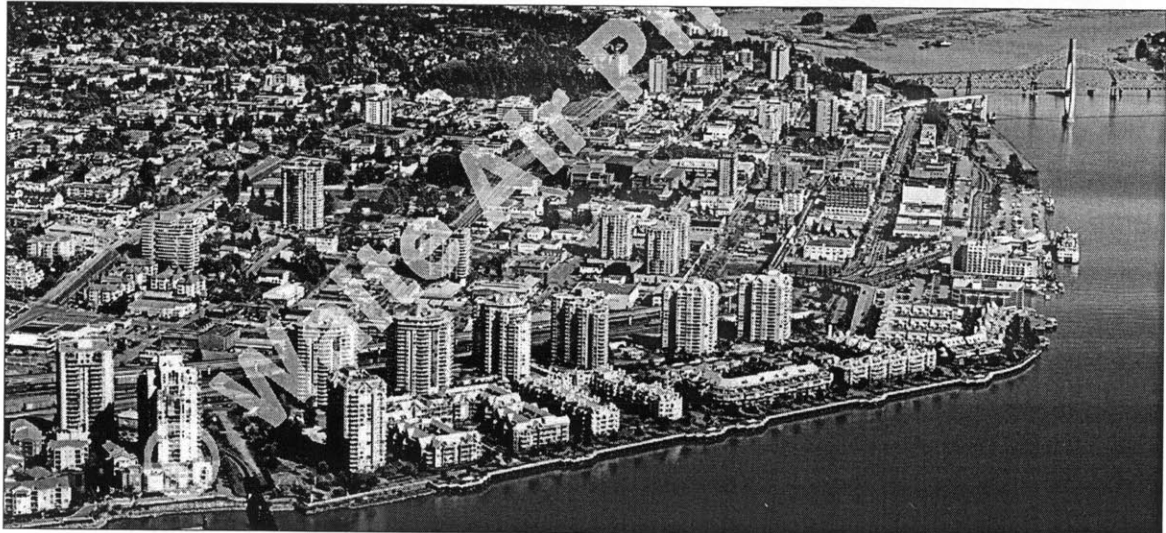
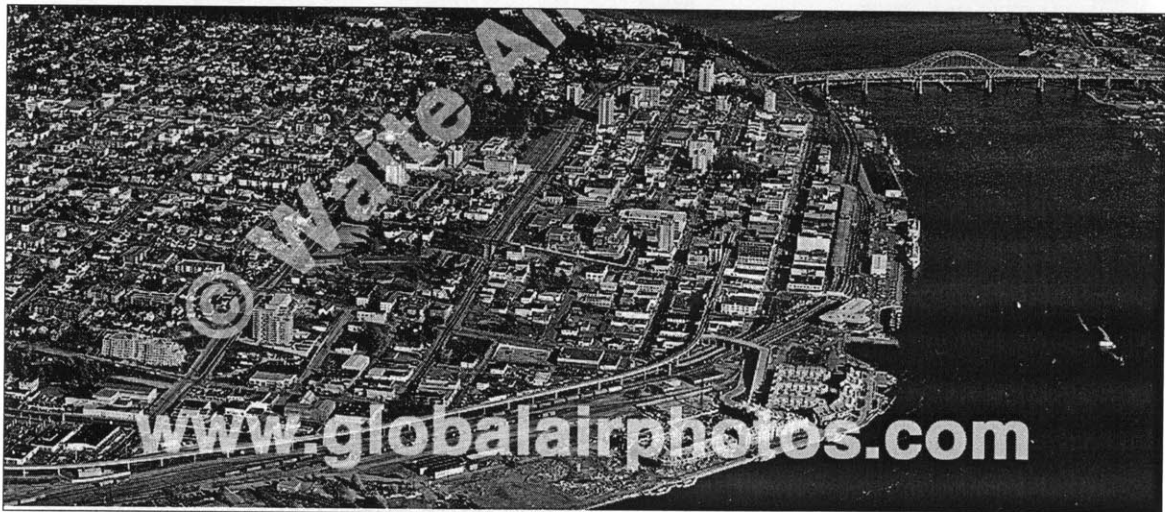


Fig. 3.8-3.10. View of downtown New Westminster, looking from the southwest in 1982 (3.8), 1986 (3.9) and 2004 (3.10). Fig. 3.9 shows the site immediately after the completion of Skytrain. (Waite Air Photos)

vast development powers invested in the FCC were shifted to the City of New Westminster, giving it almost unprecedented ability to shape its downtown. However, the political risks and financial requirements associated with land assembly and real estate development have sharply limited the city's interest in utilizing these powers (Interview NW-1, Interview NW-3). The city's zoning policy for the downtown, which limited the possibility of residential development while promoting intensive office and commercial uses, remained virtually unchanged throughout this period and into the 1990s. The second decade after the LRP (1986 – 1996), a period without any formal regional planning, saw another 1,000 units of residential development along the waterfront, as well as 66,000 square feet of office space and a riverboat casino attached to the public market. An additional 254,000 square feet of retail space, 550 residential units, and 38,000 square feet of office space was added to the remainder of downtown during this period. As in the 1980s, development in the first half of the 1990s took place in primarily discrete locations with only limited connection to their surroundings. The dominant development form continued to be the residential point tower, as large waterfront residential project begun in the 1980s moved further toward completion. A 182,000 square foot automobile-oriented community shopping center located at the western edge to the town center accounted for the vast majority of the new retail space during this period, while a 45,000 square foot retail space located within a Skytrain station added to the total.

The adoption of the LRSP did not spur any changes in the New Westminster's regulatory approach to its downtown. The designation of the waterfront as a Regional Town Centre affirmed longstanding planning policies and was not met with any of the anticipation surrounding the 1976 LRP. In the seven years since the adoption of the LRSP, 137 new residential units, 6,000 square feet of retail space, 11,000 square feet of institutional space, and 19,000 square feet of entertainment space have been completed in downtown New Westminster, with the bulk of new development comprised of continued waterfront residential development and vertical mixed-use projects featuring ground floor retail beneath a residential tower. In comparison with earlier development, recent mixed-use projects have created a greater presence along the sidewalk, helping to define downtown blocks. Conversion of early 20th century office and commercial buildings, many with heritage status, has also become increasingly common. While no new office space has been completed, existing space has been increasingly transferred from bank and professional services firms closing due to consolidation to non-traditional users such as a massage school and an English as a Second Language training center. In the late 1990s, the city explored strategies for attracting high technology firms, viewing the distinctive architecture, transit access, and comparably low rents of downtown as potentially magnetic forces. One high technology firm took over a former provincial office building in the downtown, but was not joined by similar firms.

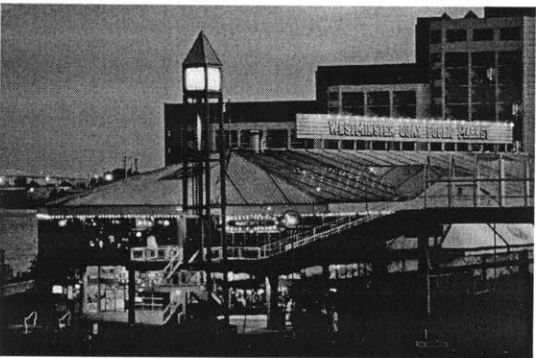
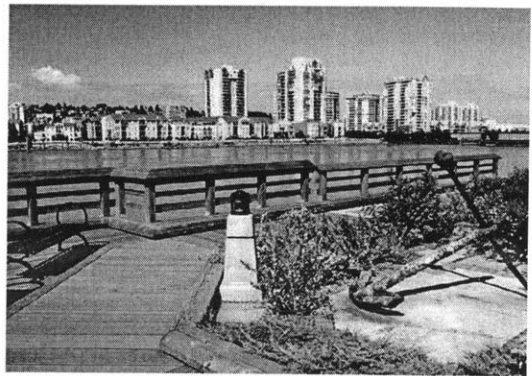
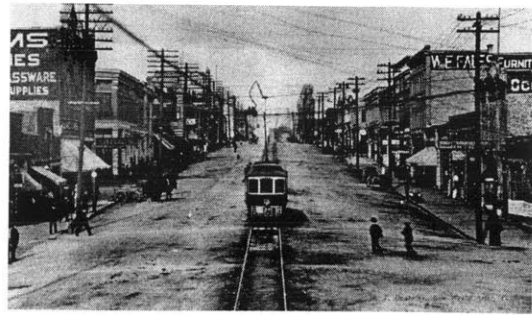
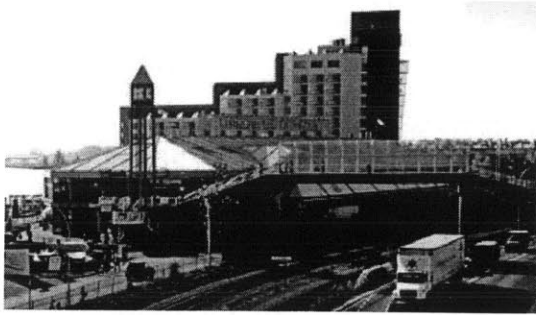


Fig. 3.11-3.15. Clockwise from top left: Downtown at the turn of the century (3.11), waterfront residential development (3.12), the Westminister Quay provides a portion of the tourist hub envisioned by First Capital City (3.13), the hotel intended to complete another piece of this vision (3.14), a walkway disconnecting the waterfront from the remainder of downtown.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

After two and a half decades of redevelopment, downtown New Westminister has emerged as principally an attractive location for transit-oriented residential development. The district has not achieved the spatially continuous critical mass of office, residential or entertainment activity envisioned in plans for downtown since the mid 1970s, and still suffers from an image problem stemming from a perceived concentration of drug addiction, poor housing conditions and violence along Columbia and adjacent streets. Described by its planning director as a “one-tenth scale model of Vancouver,” New Westminister experiences a distinctly urban set of opportunities and constraints relative to other Regional Town Centres in Greater Vancouver. Demand for new office space has reached a standstill, while the area has grown increasingly attractive for developers of mixed-use mid and high rise residential projects served by convenience retail on the ground floor. Small parcel sizes, a history of stalled developments and a negative image make downtown New Westminister an uncertain location for office development, despite its central location in the region (Royal LePage 2002). Vacancy for class B office space in New Westminister, much of it located in

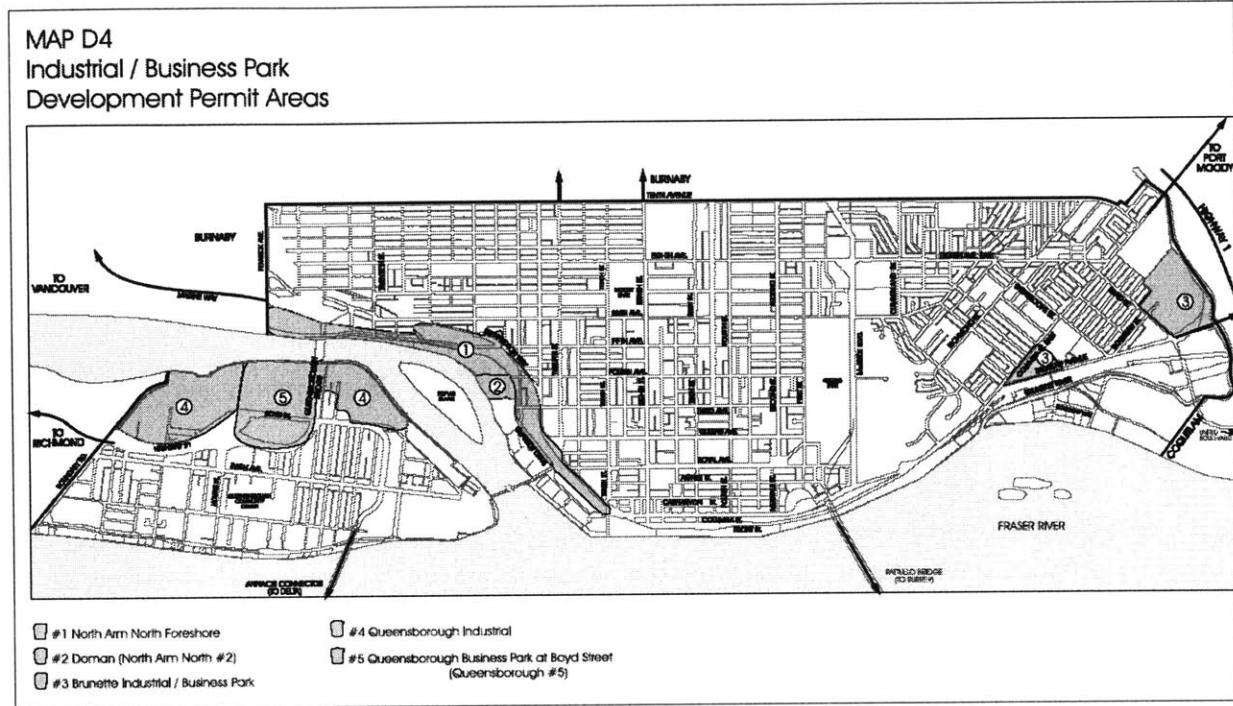


Fig. 3.16. Areas designated for business and industrial parks in the 2002 New Westminister Official Community Plan. (City of New Westminister 2002)

downtown, has remained around 18% in recent years, well above the regional average of 13.2% (Colliers 2004). The waterfront remains an attractive potential location for casino operators, whose ability to operate hinges largely upon provincial politics. A proposed 600,000 square foot casino and entertainment complex near the Western edge of downtown has been placed on hold for several year pending provincial issuance of a gaming license. Completion of this project could renew interest among both retail and office developers in downtown (Royal LePage 2002).

Since the adoption of the LRSP, all of the projects permitted by the city within the Regional Town Centre have supported both the city's vision for downtown and the plan's broad objectives for urban centres. Approvals since adoption of the plan have reflected policies attempting to create opportunities for varying forms of multi-family housing, adaptive reuse of buildings in close proximity to Skytrain stations, and a continuous first floor streetscape of shop windows.

Barriers to implementation

Two current and one former New Westminister planners cited the following as primary barriers to achieving an attractive, mixed-use Regional Town Centre in downtown. A broader discussion of barriers to implementation in both New Westminister and other Regional Town Centres and Regional Centers is included in Chapter Five.

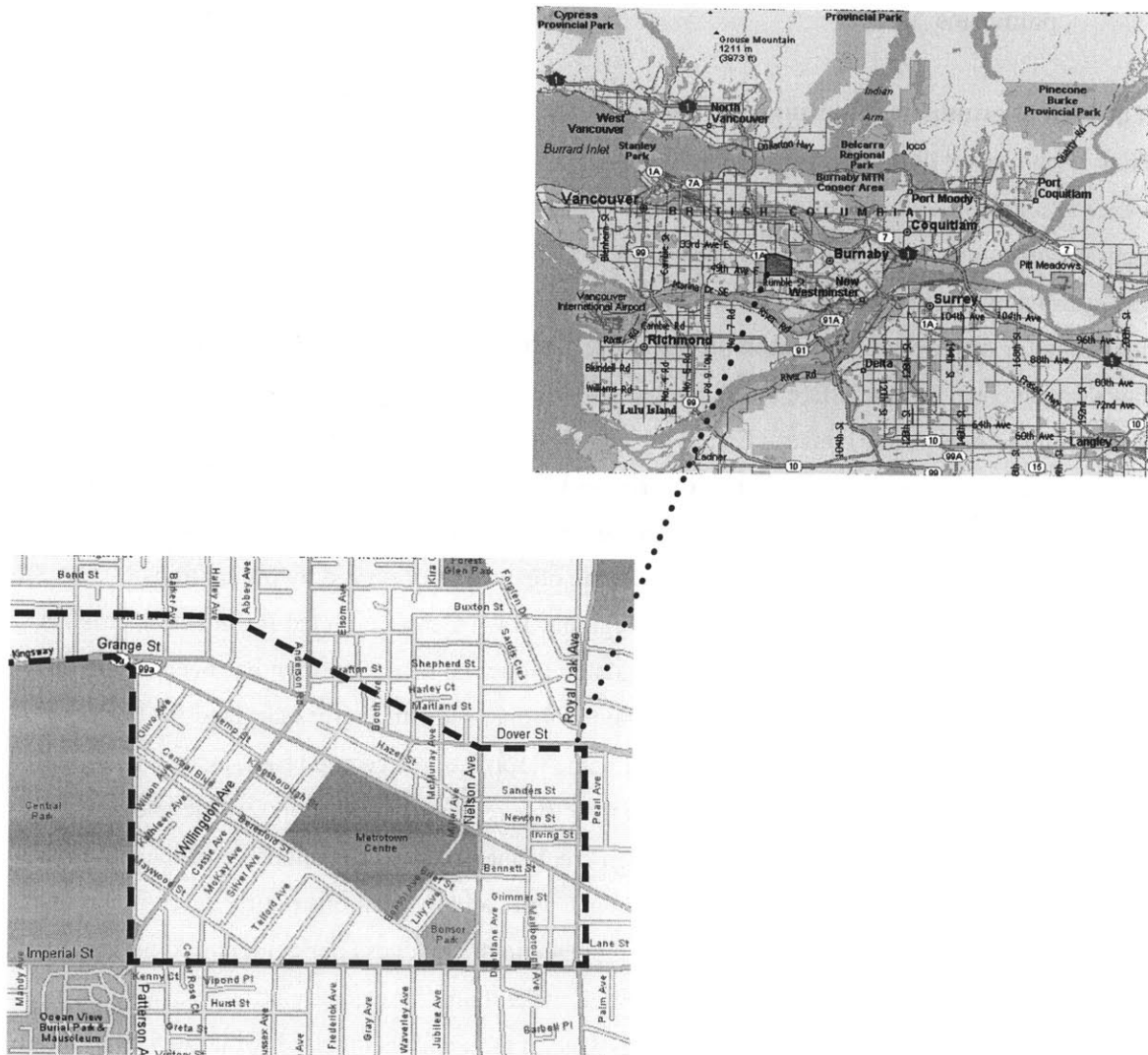
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- A lingering image problem linked to media coverage of drug sales and violence in the vicinity of Columbia Street.
 - A limited capacity among the small retail storefronts along Columbia Street to attract destination retail and shoppers.
 - Hesitance by City Council to rezone downtown for mixed use creates the need for rezoning on a case by case basis for most new projects, adding uncertainty and reducing interest among developers.
 - Inconsistent support from the Province for the area's redevelopment. The radically different approaches to downtown taken by various provincial governments has given an unreliable, schizophrenic character to its development. In addition to rejecting the 600,000 square foot casino and entertainment project, the province delayed construction of a Skytrain route linking New Westminster to the growing population center in the northeast sector of the region in favor of the controversial millennium line – a potentially dramatic reduction in the number of visitors to the town centre.
 - A combination of high land values and conservative property owners reduces the speed of redevelopment and exacerbates the city's image problems, reducing the confidence of developers in the area.
 - Permissive industrial lands policies by other municipalities, particularly Burnaby and Richmond, have allowed office parks to concentrate in inexpensive greenfield sites, dramatically reducing potential demand for space in downtown New Westminster, as well as other Regional Town Centres. One planner predicted that Surrey's promotion of business parks throughout the city would lead to "a Silicon Valley disaster" for the region's planning objectives and transportation network.
 - Allowance of retail development in sites accessible only to automobile, particularly by Burnaby, has further reduced the potential for retail in downtown.
 - The inability of the GVRD to enforce its planning policies limits cooperation with its objectives. The agency's lack of delivery reduces the seriousness with which municipalities pursue regional planning policies. In addition, the agency often fails to 'sell' the local benefits of politically challenging regional goals to planners and

politicians.

The New Westminster Contingency Plan

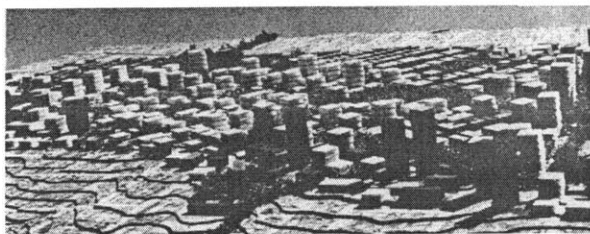
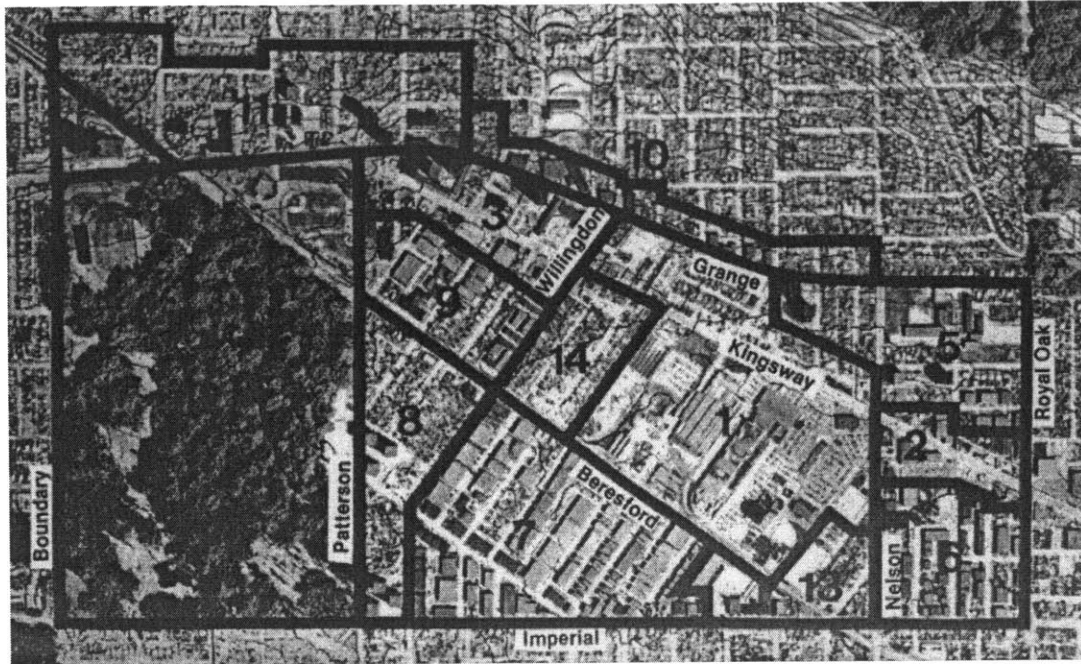
New Westminster planners indicate that the city is comfortable with the ongoing conversion of office and industrial space into condominium units, as well as the possibility that the downtown may become almost exclusively residential, with first floor local-serving retail comprising the area's new commercial development. Other areas of the city have proven more attractive locations for office development in recent years. Uptown, located six blocks north of downtown, has drawn scores of new office buildings and new office space over the past two decades, including the only office construction in the city over the past five years. In its 2002 Official Community Plan, the city shifted its industrial strategy by permitting extensive business park development in two targeted areas and three larger industrial tracts. Two of the areas are adjacent to recently completed Skytrain stations, while the others are not served by public transit. The vast majority of the districts outside of the Regional Town Centre targeted for business parks is either vacant or occupied by increasingly outdated industrial uses. Uptown has been historically zoned for office and retail development, while the former industrial areas targeted for business parks were recently rezoned to accommodate large floorplate office and retail, as well as limited residential activity. Together, the changes to the city's regulatory and economic development strategies in its 2001 Official Community Plan create the potential for intensive office and retail development both outside of the Regional Town Centre and in locations poorly served by transit. Although no new office construction has taken place in the business parks identified by the city, the central location of these sites is likely to make them increasingly attractive as space in Burnaby's best office park sites are absorbed. One of the districts targeted for large format retail, offices and residential development has recently attracted a proposal from Wal-Mart to construct a supercenter (City of New Westminster 2002).

The Livable Region Strategic Plan's vision for downtown New Westminster as a sub-regional hub for employment diverges from city's tentative promotion of the district as one of numerous opportunities for intensive commercial development in the city. Despite the emphasis placed by its planners on the permissive policies of other cities, New Westminster has adopted policies that create competition with downtown in the office and retail markets in its immediate vicinity. The city has effectively adopted a contingency plan for commercial development, refusing to expose itself to the risk associated with promoting a single urban space for generating non-residential, non-industrial taxes. New Westminster has adopted a hedge strategy for economic and physical development, relegating its downtown to a cautionary Hedge City that may or may not provide the economic engine required for a robust municipal tax base.



3.5 Case Study Two: Burnaby Metrotown

Located across the Eastern border of Vancouver, the City of Burnaby is the region's third largest municipality. Burnaby emerged as a working and middle class inner suburb in the early 20th Century as the medium-density neighborhood grid of Vancouver's East Side spilled across Boundary Road. Development along Vancouver's primary east-west streets - Hastings, Broadway, and Kingsway - continued into Burnaby, defining the city's commercial and industrial corridors. Burnaby is bounded to the north by the Burrard Inlet and to the South by the Fraser River. Along its southeastern edge, the city links with the urban grid of New Westminster, while Lougheed Highway – the widened adaptation of Broadway – connects to the post World War II suburban development of Coquitlam to the northeast. In 1965, the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 1) was completed through the sparsely developed center of the city, giving Burnaby excellent access to trucking routes, Vancouver International Airport, and high capacity regional



- 1 Core
- 2 Secondary Mixed-Use
- 3 Secondary Mixed-Use
- 4 B.C. Telephone Office Development
- 5 Residential/School Site
- 6 Residential
- 7 Residential
- 8 Residential
- 9 Residential
- 10 Residential
- 11 Residential/Mixed-Use
- 12 Central Park
- 13 Bonsor Park/School Site
- 14 Public Assembly and Development

Fig. 3.17-3.19. Development Concept articulated in 1977 Metrotown guideplan. Note the relatively fine grain of buildings and open spaces proposed. (City of Burnaby 1977)



roadways. Prior to the 1970s, no civic center had emerged in Burnaby. The city was effectively an eastward extension of Vancouver, attracting a smattering of manufacturing plants, wholesale warehouses, automobile dealers, and small retailers along Kingsway and Lougheed Highway. Three to four story multi-family apartments extended on either side of Kingsway near Boundary Road, while much of the rest of the city developed into single family neighborhoods along a grid network. Burnaby's residential population tripled between 1941 to 1961, growing from 30,000 to more than 100,000.

Increasing development pressure on the city's single family neighborhoods sparked a citywide planning process in the 1960s aimed at creating a framework for shaping anticipated growth while protecting the city's existing neighborhoods. In 1969, the city completed an extensive public consultation process leading to the designation of four town centres in which high intensity residential, retail and office development would be permitted and promoted. One center was allocated to each of the city's four quadrants both to serve local needs and potentially develop a unique economic cluster. No staging process was initially created for the centers; each was expected to develop at the pace of market demand and city capacity to create guide plans. In reducing development pressures on single family neighborhoods, the plan promised to create a network of civic centers providing the commercial conveniences and public spaces that were lacking throughout the city. The town center allocated to the city's southwest quadrant, Metrotown, was occupied by several large shipping and manufacturing firms, as well as a Sears department store and a number of strip commercial centers. Defined by a former regional tram right of way to the south, the city of Vancouver to the west and Kingsway, a six lane regional roadway, to the north, Kingsway-Sussex was dominated in the early 1970s by four story apartment buildings and a fragmented mixture of industrial and retail uses. At 735 acres, the town centre is three times larger than downtown New Westminster, and 60 percent as large as Surrey City Centre.

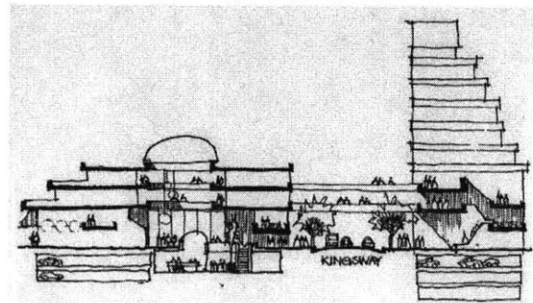
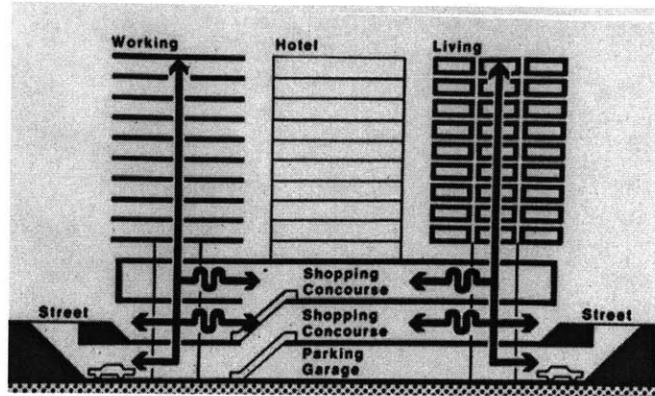


Fig. 3.20-3.21. Sections through the form of mixed-use development envisioned in the Metrotown guideplan. (Ibid.)

Unlike many other municipalities, Burnaby does not rely primarily upon numerical zoning controls, instead creating guide plans to lead negotiations between the city and prospective developers. Approvals of the vast majority of projects in the city's town centres are made on the basis of comprehensive development agreements between the city and a developer. Each agreement is recorded through the rezoning process as a unique, legally binding zone. Although an underlying zone applies to all of the city's parcels, developers typically approach Burnaby planners to initiate discussions about a potential project (Interview BU-1). To simplify the process, the city often permits developers with attractive proposals to utilize the highest underlying density for the entire project if it will take place on parcels with multiple underlying zones. Comprehensive development proposals are judged based upon their consistency with the scale, massing and mixture of uses envisioned for individual sites in guide plans. In the case of large projects, developers have often provided amenities such as a daycare center to obtain density bonuses.

The designation of Kingsway-Sussex as a regional town center in the 1975 Livable Region Plan created an impetus to accelerate the planning of the area and elevate its status among the city's town centers to a region-serving destination. The city's 1977 guide plan for the town centre, re-named Metrotown following its designation as a Regional Town Centre, divided the planning district into four areas. The first, a primary core extending from Kingsway to the north to the railroad right of way to the south was targeted for large scale mixed use development incorporating retail, office space, a hotel and high rise residential towers. The second, the Kingsway commercial corridor, was projected as an intensification of the existing strip commercial development along this major arterial. A public development area adjacent to the primary core was slated for a library and community center. A large apartment-oriented district extending from the edges of each of these districts was intended to accommodate the high density residential development anticipated for the town centre. The underlying zoning requirements for each area of the site were altered to reflect these expectations, although projects would be considered primarily for their consistency with the plan's broader objectives. Projected Floor Area Ratios ranged from 0.6 along the periphery of the site to 2.2 for the core (City of Burnaby 1977).

From the outset, pedestrian circulation and urban design presented the greatest challenges to creating a truly urban center in Metrotown. Numerous large parcels occupied by industrial and low intensity commercial uses created the opportunity for large redevelopment projects in the area. On the other hand, the size of these parcels contributed to a limited pedestrian circulation network impeded by long, unbroken blocks, dead-end streets and buildings with

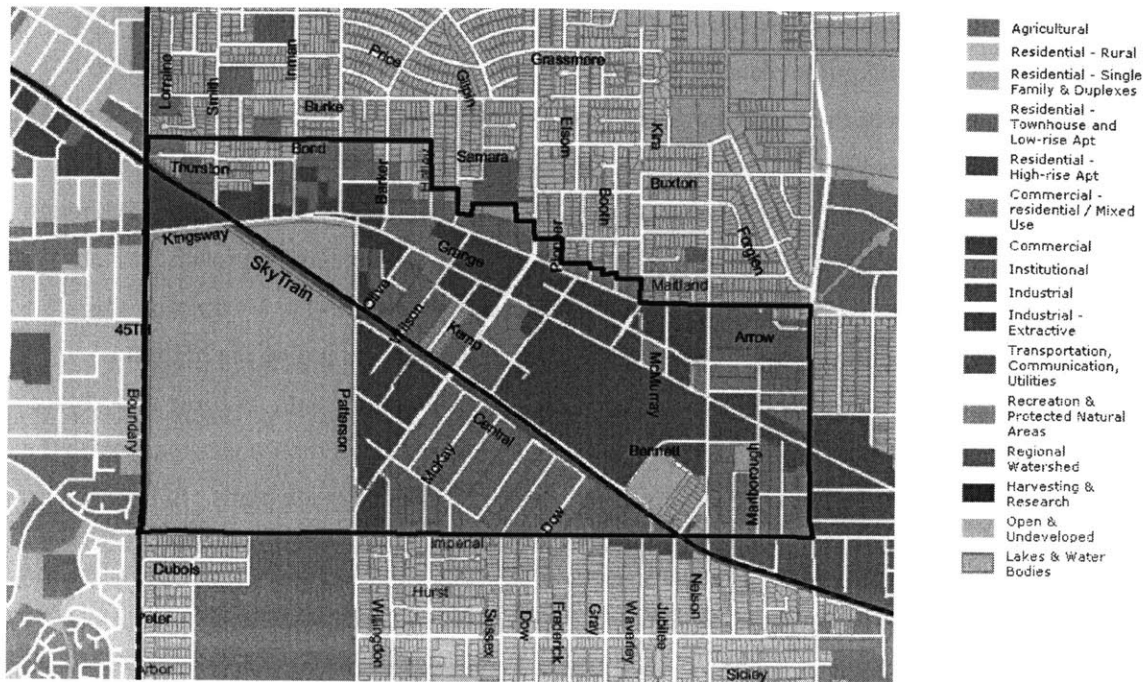


Fig. 3.22. Existing land use in Metrotown.

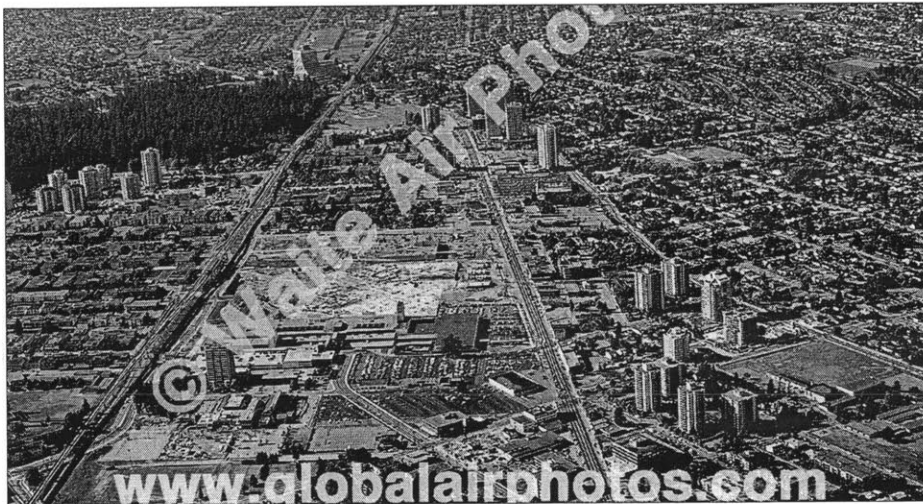
deep setbacks and little relationship to the sidewalk or street. The urban fabric envisioned in the guide plan is fine grained, with passages meandering around a series of compact buildings, creating a labyrinthine sequence of open spaces, pedestrian-only retail corridors and major streets. Circulation would take place at multiple levels, with pedestrians transitioning between sidewalk, internal shopping corridor and private building plaza as they moved through the site. The historic commercial core of the site, Kingsway, appears to have been treated as an obstacle to pedestrians rather than an opportunity – an approach suggested by the plan's depiction of a skybridge linking two internal pedestrian realms across the street. Automobile circulation would be relegated to the edges of the center, flowing at relatively high capacities along Kingsway, Willingdon Avenue and Central Boulevard. Although vertical mixed-use was an explicit objective for the primary core of the center, no urban design guidelines were included addressing setbacks, façade articulation, or connectivity between different development projects (Ibid.).

To reserve land within the town centre for intensive future development, the city assembled 14 acres in the primary core of the centre and purchased scattered parcels facing short-term pressure for single family development. In addition, the city purchased land at the southeastern and southwestern edges of the site for future use as recreation and community centers.

Among the Regional Town Centres identified in the 1975 Livable Region Plan, Metrotown



Fig. 3.23-3.25. Aerial view of Metrotown from the east in 1982 (3.23), 1992 (3.24) and 2003 (3.25). Metropolis shopping complex is located in the center of the image, with Kingsway forming a commercial strip to the right. Note the dominance of the 'point tower' form of residential construction throughout the entire period, as well as the limited amount of infill development along Kingsway (Waite Air Photos)



experienced the most rapid commercial and residential development. Momentum for redevelopment in the area began to gather shortly after Burnaby designated the area a town center. Two shopping malls comprising a total of 139,000 square feet were completed in 1973 at the western edge of the primary core of the town centre, followed by an adjacent 84,000 square foot mall in 1976. In the first ten years of the LRP, a total of 859,000 square feet of office space, 434,000 square feet of retail space, and 1,956 residential units were completed in Metrotown. Development proceeded at a much faster pace in Metrotown than in other Regional Town Centres, but these figures were viewed as somewhat disappointing by some planners and scholars in the region given its central location in the region. All of the new office space was created by the relocation of the provincial telephone corporation and the GVRD to Metrotown, the latter in part to support the LRP (Ley 1985). The telephone company's 17 story, terraced office building was located at the eastern edge of the town centre adjacent to the Vancouver border in an area designated 'Apartment Oriented' in the 1977 guideplan, while the 12 story tower constructed for the GVRD was set along the Kingsway Corridor to the northeast of the primary core. Retail development during this period concentrated along the eastern edge of the Kingsway commercial corridor. The lack of development in the commercial core led some councillors to grow skeptical with the potential of the area as a region-serving destination. However, the city remained steadfast in its support of Metrotown as the primary nucleus for intensive commercial activity in Burnaby, rejecting a proposal by the West Edmonton Mall corporation for a billion dollar mixed-use mega-project development in an automobile-oriented location outside of the city's town centres. This difficult political decision gained the city a great deal of respect in the eyes of developers and planners alike by affirming the long-term integrity of both its overall planning framework for the city and its guideplans.

The completion of Skytrain in 1986 coincided with a rapid influx of development in Metrotown. In the second decade after the LRP, the town center attracted 906,000 square feet of office space, 2.7 million square feet of retail space, and 2,595 residential units – the vast majority in high rise condominiums. The bulk of this new development took place in the primary core of the site, where a series of developers built two office towers above three large regional malls that were recently joined into a single retail venue under one owner. A skybridge joined this nascent Edge City with a rapid transit station, creating a continuous, elevated pedestrian environment that soon became a popular after school destination for the region's teens. Together, the malls included in the development formed the largest retail center in British Columbia. Office space was occupied by the corporate headquarters of a telecommunications company as well as the back offices of a number of financial and professional services companies. Through a flexible shared parking agreement, businesses in the primary core were allowed to meet the vast majority of their

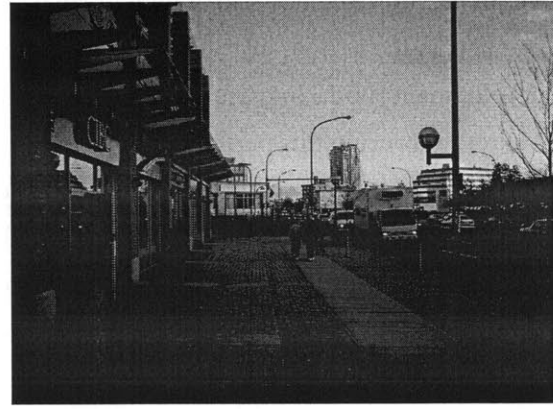


Fig. 3.26-3.31. Views of Metrotown today. Clockwise from the upper right hand corner, a typical residential street (3.26), the new streetscape formed by redevelopment along Kingsway (3.27), the continued presence of automobile oriented uses along Kingsway (3.28), a recently completed mixed-use structure with a residential side (facing) and a commercial side (other edge) (3.29), mixed-use along a residential street (3.30), and Metropolis Mall at Metrotown (3.31). (Shorett)

requirements in a subterranean garage beneath the mall. Outside of the district's primary core, residential development was typified by circular towers surrounded by landscaped setbacks while additional retail coalesced along the edges of the new malls as well as the sidewalks of Kingsway.

The external public realm was largely neglected in the redevelopment of the town centre throughout the first two decades of its redevelopment, with circulation internally focused in most new developments and no clear pedestrian paths or hierarchy of public spaces established. One Burnaby long-range planner argued that the poor urban design of the site was the consequence of the pace of development surrounding the completion of Skytrain in the late 1980s (Interview BU-1). In addition, the city had not anticipated the emergence of the site as among the largest retail magnets in the region, instead expecting a greater balance of office, retail and vertical mixed-use development (Ibid., Interview BU-3). The city imposed a brief moratorium on development in Metrotown during this period to allow staff to rigorously review proposals and insure that new buildings fulfilled the city's plan for the centre. Without officially altering the guideplan for Metrotown, the city adjusted its approach to the site by demanding that new projects in both the core and along Kingsway provide a greater street presence by building to the sidewalk, creating permeable, articulated facades, and insuring comfortable pedestrian connections to surrounding streets and paths. Planners apply similar standards to development along Central Boulevard – a wide street facing the skytrain alignment that is currently separated from the mall entrance from a deep landscaped setback, but could form part of a continuous public realm over the long term (Ibid.). A lack of attention to accessibility needs in initial negotiations with developers led to limited or nonexistent access in some of the developments in the mid-1980s, which was reversed only through required improvements during subsequent additions to these developments. As a result of a public input, the city also made a commitment to requiring community amenities such as a daycare and community meeting rooms in the Metrotown core through mall expansion or future Comprehensive Development agreements.

The adoption of the LRSP had no immediate impact on the planning or development of Metrotown. The 1977 guideplan for the district remains in place today with only minor alteration. Between 1996 and 2003, 708,100 square feet of office space, 645,000 square feet of retail space and 1,023 residential units were completed in Metrotown. Several notable mixed-use projects have been built along Kingsway featuring street-oriented residential podiums below 12-24 story office and residential towers. The office developments are particularly significant given the lag in demand for urban office space in Greater Vancouver during this period. Kingsway is one of the few commercial streets to attract numerous office structures in the years following the adoption of the LRSP. One of these structures was built to an initial height of ten stories to

better reflect current demand, with an additional seven stories permitted for future development when sufficient demand arises. The primary core was further filled out through the completion of a unique mixed-use project to the immediate northeast of the mall incorporating 210,000 square feet of retail space, 298,000 square feet of office space, 238 hotel rooms and 90 residential condominium units on a single block. The Kingsway face of the project provides first floor retail, and a four story office building, while the side facing the mall is dominated by a Hilton and a residential tower. The interior of the block features a circular, two story retail mall that cuts a diagonal path through the site. The street frontage of both this and other mixed use projects in the Metrotown core and along Kingsway reflect an increased emphasis on street presence and pedestrian amenity. However, new developments providing ample sidewalks and approximately 20 foot setbacks create visual conflicts with the shorter sidewalks and approximately ten foot setbacks of older buildings along Kingsway.

Residential projects in the apartment oriented areas at the edges of the centre continue to feature relatively deep setbacks and ample landscaping around point towers, reflecting the city's vision for these areas. Several exceptions have incorporated first floor community-serving retail at the edge of apartment-oriented areas, creating a physical and visual edge to these predominantly residential streets. A number of recent mixed-use developments straddling commercial and residential streets have successfully addressed both conditions by creating a sidewalk-fronting commercial face on one edge and a recessed residential entrance on the other. As in the case of commercial projects, virtually all parking for new residential development in Metrotown is underground.

In recent years, Burnaby has been successful at garnering social amenities from developers through the comprehensive development process. In addition to creating a day care center and community room through the expansion of the Metropolis Mall, the city has created rent free office space for community organizations. The city has completed a public library and square with its own funds, filling the 'public development area' identified in the guide plan with an attractive space capable of hosting public events while providing the only outdoor public seating in the centre the remainder of the year.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

Metrotown has emerged over the past two and half decades as among the strongest retail locations in the region, as well as an increasingly attractive residential environment. Transit access and a central regional location have helped the site become a focal point for the region's shoppers and many residential developers. The ability of the centre to attract office development remains

in question. Several towers approved for construction more than a decade ago remain unbuilt due to a lack of demand. Rents in excess of office parks and relatively expensive land reduce the attraction of the site for many tenants and developers (Royal LePage 2002). The developments permitted in Metrotown have been generally consistent with the city's 1977 guideplan for the town centre. With few exceptions, the mixture of uses prescribed for various city sub-areas in the plan have come to fruition, including an intensive, region-serving primary core of retail, office, and entertainment uses; high density apartment districts at the periphery of the center; and public parks and a library adjacent to the primary core. The Kingsway corridor has had more difficulty developing, as recent mixed-use office and residential buildings with retail podiums

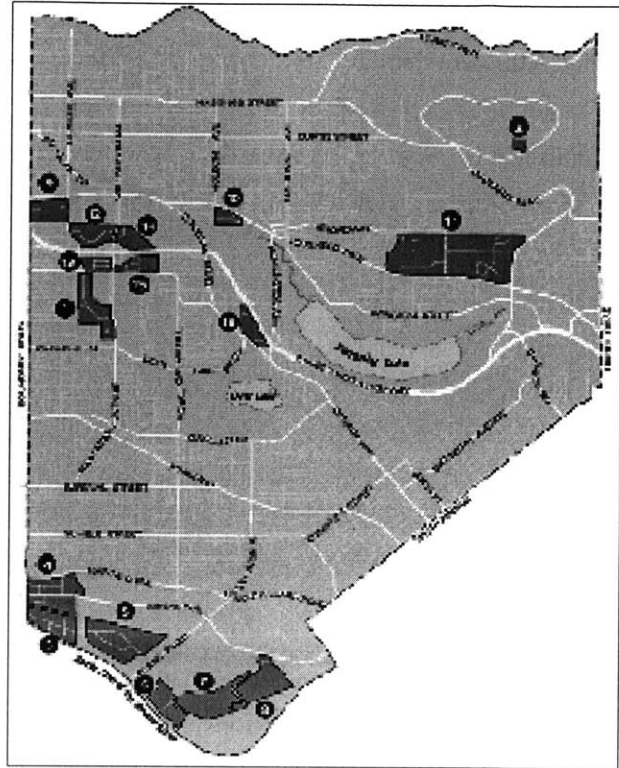


Fig. 3.32. Business parks promoted by the City of Burnaby. Note the absence of Town Centres and Metrotown on the map. (City of Burnaby)

and underground parking site beside vacant lots and squat 1950s commercial structures. The several hundred foot setback of the mall in the primary core has limited the emergence of this section of Kingsway as a visual corridor. The general consistency of physical development with guide plan objectives is linked to the lack of specificity in the original plan, which utilized bubble diagrams and suggestive block sections to illustrate desired outcomes. Very little attention was paid to the scale and grain of public space in the district; thus, while Metrotown's external public realm is widely viewed as inadequate, this is not necessarily at odds with the vision for the area described in the 1977 guide plan. The internal pedestrian experience is relatively legible, with clear connections between underground parking, shopping mall concourses, a public square atop the mall, and an elevated rapid transit station. Recent developer interest has come primarily from residential companies looking to take advantage of the site's increasing attraction to condominium buyers. Three large office towers surrounding the mall have remained in the pre-leasing phase since the 1990s.

Barriers to Implementation

Four City of Burnaby planners – including the planning director, the director of current planning,

and two long range planners - were interviewed to identify challenges to implementing city policies for Metrotown. The following emerged during the interviews as primary barriers:

- The urban design of Metrotown was negatively affected by the speed with which the primary core was developed. The excitement around the completion of Skytrain provided little time to critically assess the total physical environment that would result from developments proposed at the time.
- Fluctuations in the economy have reduced interest in the kind of Class A office space suitable for Metrotown, which typically require professional services and corporate headquarters.
- The city's other town centres have competed with Metrotown for office space, particularly during the past five to ten years, as they become more fully developed.
- Attempting to accommodate street-front retail, meet parking requirements, and reduce the visual and audible impact of vehicle traffic has proven difficult. Compromising between the big box concept and urban design is an ongoing challenge.

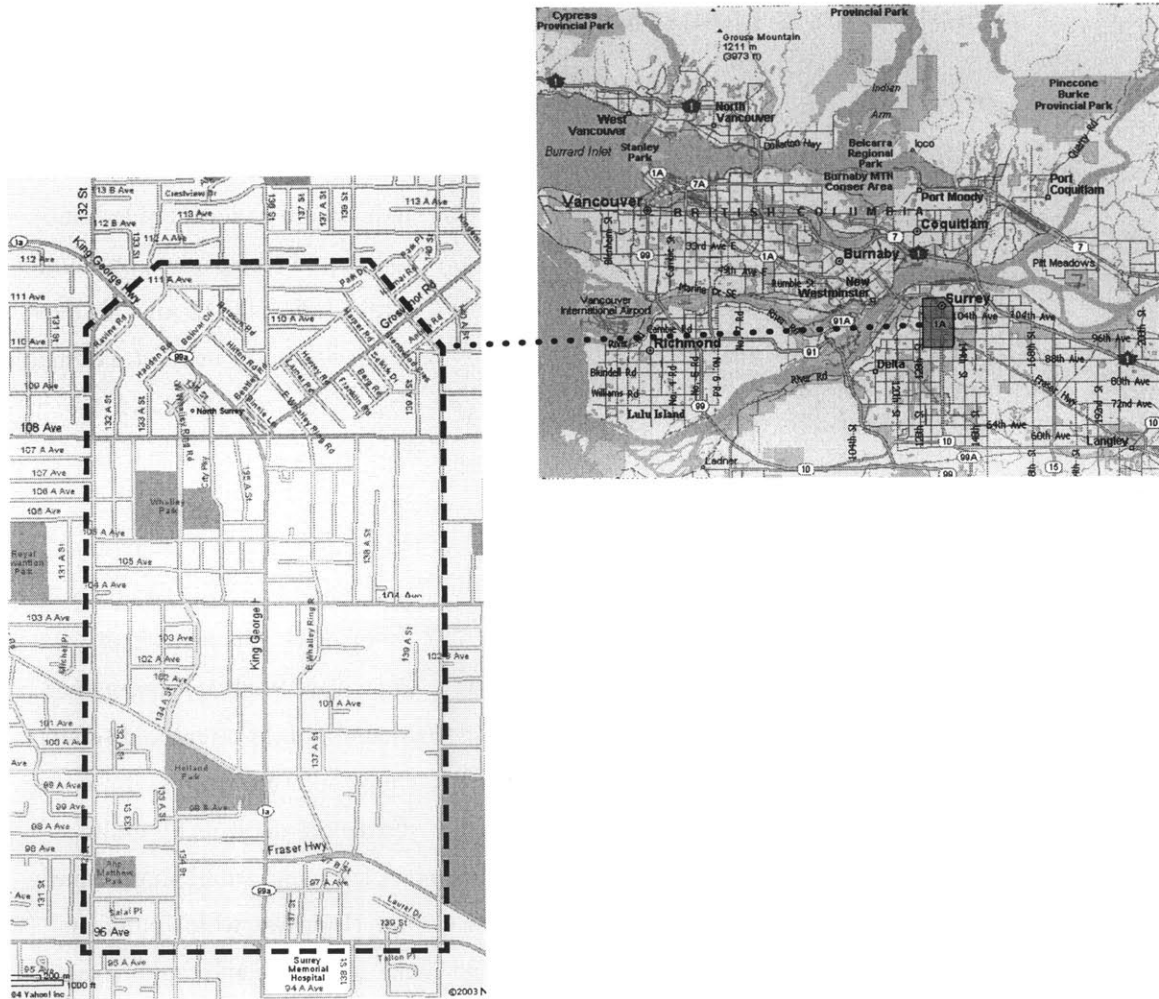
The Burnaby Contingency Plan

If planning success is measured strictly in terms of development outcomes relative to planning objectives, Burnaby may be one of the most successfully planned suburban cities in North America over the past three decades. Each of its four town centres have developed into either a vertical or horizontal mixture of uses, and remain attractive to developers relative to most other regional and municipal town centres in Greater Vancouver. The City of Burnaby describes its four town centres as "high order commercial and residential growth opportunities" that "form an organizing framework for the Burnaby Official Community Plan" (City of Burnaby 2004.) However, the city pursues a parallel strategy for attracting office and light industrial development through the active promotion of sixteen business centres. Ranging in size from 8 to 400 acres, these predominantly greenfield sites have proven more attractive to office developers than Metrotown in recent years due to lower land prices and the ability to create customized, 'built to suit' corporate environments. Until recently, none of the city's business centers were served by rapid transit, and many were not even on a bus route. Following the completion of the Millennium Line in 2003, four of the centers are located within walking distance of Skytrain Stations.

The city's 1998 Official Community plan projects that half of all new office development will take place in its town centres (City of Burnaby 1998). This would represent a dramatic reversal

of trends over the past two decades, and would also mean that town centres were developed for office use while some land in the city's business centres remained vacant. In contrast to the Burnaby Official Community Plan, a projection of office development from 2001 to 2021 by a Vancouver real estate firm predicts that business centres will account for 67% of new office development in both Burnaby and New Westminster, with the vast majority of new business park space presumably built on the ample available land in Burnaby's business centres. Consistent with city objectives, Burnaby's business centers have developed as low-density, landscaped single use campus environments. During the 1990s, 3.1 million square feet of office space was constructed in the city's business centers, while only 940,000 square feet was built in all its town centres combined. Burnaby planners contend that these sites attract office users that would not locate in Metrotown, and would find a home in one of the City of Richmond's business parks if similar development was not permitted by Burnaby. Indeed, high technology and manufacturing firms are much more likely to locate in the city's business centers than any of the region's RTCs. However, the presence of these firms has made the business park an attractive environment for an array of professional services firms that might otherwise locate in more urban environments.

Unlike Surrey and New Westminster, the city of Burnaby's contingency plan has been in place for many years and has coincided with the city's support for regional planning objectives such as reduced automobile travel, increased air quality, and the emergence of urban centres mixing work, play and residence. The city even featured its promotion of business centres in its Regional Context Statement as an example of concentrating employment in the central part of the region. Clearly, promoting business centres is inconsistent with reducing auto travel and achieving a mixed use environment in urban centres. However, the financial and political benefit of promoting business parks in previously vacant or industrial land with little impact on surrounding communities is tremendous. The non-residential tax base of the City of Burnaby exceeds its residential tax base, allowing it provide high-quality public services without substantial tax increases. The city has created a viable municipal finance framework by creating a number of 'hedges' for economic development – none of which require a major reshuffling of municipal land use policy. The question that remains unanswered is how Metrotown and the region's other Regional Town Centres might look if Burnaby had not permitted more than four million square feet of office space in its business centres since the adoption of the 1975 Livable Region Plan – a period in which less than three million square feet was built in all of the region's town centres combined.



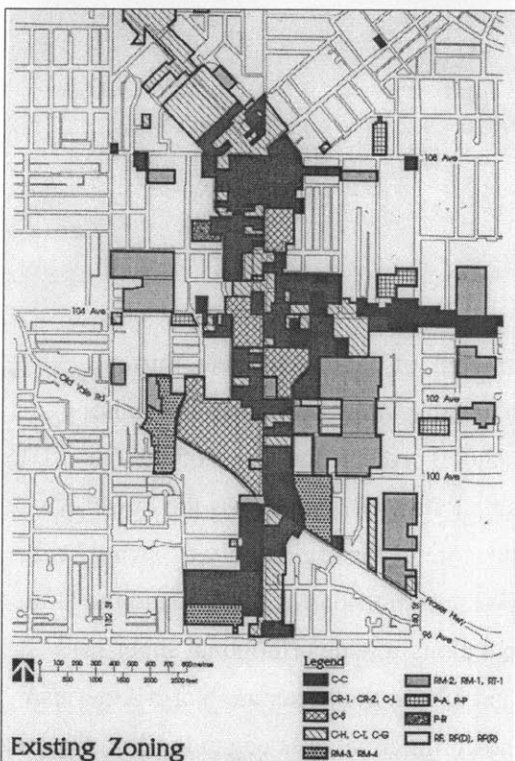
3.6 Case Study Three: Surrey City Centre

Stretching from the United States border to the southern bank of the Fraser River, Surrey occupies nearly twice as much land as any other city in Greater Vancouver. Surrey is among Canada's fastest growing cities, with a population of 365,000 projected to reach 658,000 by 2035 (GVRD 2004). Prior to the completion of the steel frame Patullo Bridge across the Fraser River in 1937, Surrey was sparsely populated, connected to the core of the region only by swing bridge. In similar fashion to many unincorporated areas in the Western portions of Canada and the United States, the vast majority of Surrey was originally laid out along a wide orthogonal super-grid of arterials spaced at one mile intervals. In the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant North American suburban development pattern of discrete residential and commercial uses began to fill in the area between arterials as owners subdivided their land (UBC 2002). Commercial retail strips set back from the street and subdivisions oriented toward internal circulation defined Surrey as a low-density, highly Euclidean community providing affordable single family homes for working and



middle class families. Combined with the city's peripheral location in the region, local zoning policies restraining commercial and industrial development led Surrey to become a bedroom community with a ratio of 0.42 jobs for every resident laborer in 1971, compared to 1.08 in Vancouver and 0.74 in Burnaby (GVRD 2004).

The area described as Surrey City Centre in the Livable Region Strategic Plan is historically known as Whalley - a sequence of automobile-oriented discount shops buffered from surrounding residential districts by multi-



family housing complexes and small single family homes. King George Highway, which connects directly to provincial highways and major roads leading to Vancouver, cuts through the center of the area, providing a focus for automobile-oriented development. Located in a relatively flat area south of the brow of a hill leading to the industrial area along the southern banks of the Fraser River, Whalley has long been considered among the least attractive business and residential environment in Surrey. A 1962 study by the District of Surrey planner described a tangle of land uses that reduced the area's potential as a shopping district. "The commercial development extends in patchwork fashion all along the highway," the study stated, "continually interspersed with vacant land, homes and motels. In general, the area is most unattractive. Overhead wiring, inappropriate signs

Fig. 3.33-3.34. Whalley in 1985 (3.33) and zoning in the town centre prior to the 1992 plan (3.34). (Waite Air Photos, City of Surrey 1992)

and discontinuous storefronts occur throughout, adding to the appearance of confusion... Outside these [commercial] concentrations a large number of stores are lacking in maintenance and are consequently in poor or only fair condition. . . The existing commercial development then is unattractive, inconvenient and confusing to the potential shopper, who may be then lost to other centres (District of Surrey 1963: 12). Pedestrian connections in the area were almost nonexistent; nearly all trips originated in a motor vehicle. When pedestrians did attempt to venture along the area's commercial core of King George Highway, they encountered serious barriers: "A lack of sidewalks adjacent to the Highway hinders pedestrian activity greatly. A serious situation is created when cars are parked along the Highway, often forcing pedestrians to pass these parked vehicles on the highway side" (Ibid: 48). Identifying a regulatory issue that would plague the area for the next four decades, the planner noted that "[s]ome over-zoning is usual in business centres, but in Whalley it is found that the area zoned commercial is 62 times the area used, resulting in considerable uncertainty about the location of the future business center, much vacant land and little development" (Ibid.: 29).

During the 1970s, Whalley attracted larger discount stores along King George Highway as well as a regional mall, Surrey City Centre, near the intersection of King George and 98th Avenue. Although the district contained a wider variety of uses than other parts of the city, Euclidean zoning policies and dominant development practices led to a discrete separation of commercial, residential, industrial and recreational uses. Typical block sizes along King George Highway of greater than 1000 feet made navigation on foot inconvenient, leading the residents of the relatively dense surrounding community to create informal routes through private parking lots and vacant properties.

A 1985 aerial photo of Whalley (fig. 3.33) illustrates the Euclidean suburban identity of the area at that time: well-fertilized baseball fields sit beside a neighborhood of single family homes with similarly green lawns; well-used parking lots serve large format retailers along King George Highway; multi-family housing structures form a separate neighborhood; and a community nucleus appears at the top of the picture around the Surrey Centre Mall and adjacent community center that includes a library, ice rink, and pool. In the view of many Surrey residents and local politicians, there was nothing wrong with Whalley as it existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s - except for perhaps a slightly rough image. The area had developed into a contemporary center scaled to the densities of the surrounding community, lacking urbanity but serving the needs of nearby residents.

However, Surrey was a city of greater than 200,000 residents without an identifiable civic



Fig. 3.40-3.41. Aerial photo and existing land uses in Surrey City Centre (GVRD)

core. Transforming Whalley into a ‘second downtown’ for Greater Vancouver had been an ambition of a handful of Surrey planners and councilors since the initial development of Livable Region policies. Beginning in the late 1970s, plans for the area called for an internal retail and residential environment similar in scale and density to Pentagon City, Virginia or downtown Bellevue, Washington, extending to the South along King George Highway and connecting to the East along a 3.5 mile corridor of 108th Avenue with Guildford – a second town centre anchored by a regional mall. Both the town centre areas and connecting corridor were zoned for office and retail development with Floor Area Ratios of 1.5 to 4.0. ‘Buffer zones’ of high and medium density residential radiated from the high density commercial zones, providing a transition into existing single family areas. Aside from one residential high rise along the 104th Avenue corridor, virtually no new development materialized in the area in the 1980s, with several speculative projects stopping short of completion. The city’s vision for two nodes connected by a high rise corridor attracted



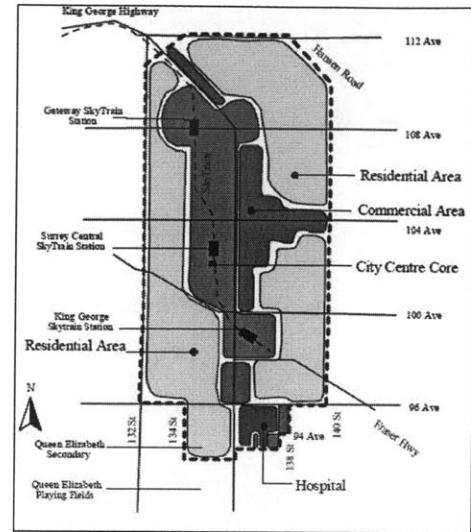
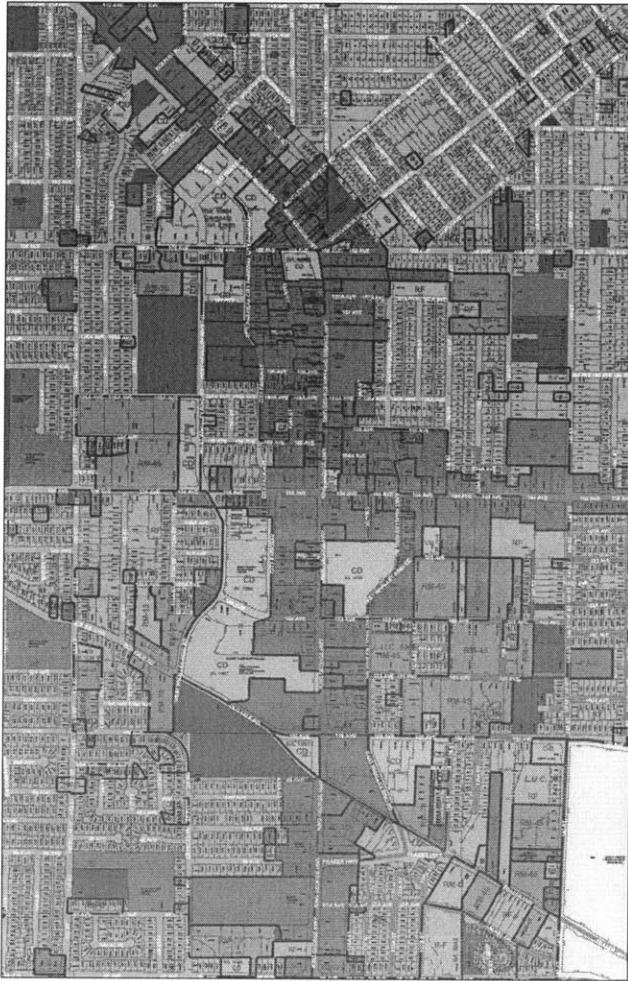


Fig. 3.42-3.43. Current zoning approach to Surrey City Centre (3.42) and concept plan included in Surrey's 2002 Official Community Plan. Note the large areas of basic commercial (red) and residential (yellow) zoning. (City of Surrey 2002)

some initial interest, but the economics of high rise development - particularly obtaining project financing - proved impractical in North Surrey.

The announcement that the region's Skytrain line would be extended along an alignment one block west of King George Highway sparked a temporary jump in interest for real estate along the route. The location of stops in the area was influenced both by local considerations and the ambitions of developers. Two major acquisitions at the northern and southernmost edges of Whalley fueled speculation that the area would finally become the civic and commercial center for the Southern portion of the region promised in so many prior plans. Each developer agreed to pay as much as \$6 million for a station to be located on their land. City Council frustration at the lack of development in the city's expansive high density zones provided an additional impetus for a new vision for the location and character of Surrey's Regional Town Centre (Interview S-2).

The 1991 Whalley Town Centre plan, a City of Surrey vision for the area, attempted to mold this anticipation to the city's advantage by proposing a detailed network of urban spaces connected

by a public realm of animated streets and pedestrian walkways. The design team hired to lead the plan, Spaxman Associates, proposed three distinct zoning districts in close proximity to each transit stop in the area, dramatically reducing the amount of land that could be developed at high density in North Surrey. The city's previous concept of two nodes connected by a corridor along 104th Avenue was eliminated, replaced with a much more focused approach to intensifying development in the area. Each node would be scaled to reflect a different set of surrounding uses: a park-like office and residential campus at the 108th Street station along the area's northern edge; a vibrant high street with restaurants, cafes and ample street life directly beneath the alignment of the Skytrain in the center of the area; and a medium density retail and residential development around the 100th Street stop at the area's southern edge. King George Highway, the historic economic engine of the area, would become more pedestrian friendly and permeable through the addition of new streets and pathways providing frequent connections to High Street and other surrounding streets. The plan anticipated net increases of 1-1.4 million square feet of new office space, 350,000 square feet of retail space and 1500-2000 housing units by 2001, with an additional 1.5-2 million square feet of office space, 400,000 square feet of retail space, and 4,000-4,500 residences in the following ten years as a critical mass of activity accelerated development in the center.

Surrey city council adopted the new plan, but did not implement many of its detailed zoning recommendations. While the city reduced the area in which medium and high density commercial development was permitted, it did not create the contextual zones proposed by the Whalley Town Centre Plan around each transit station. A maximum Floor Area Ratio of 2.5 was permitted in the downtown, with densities as high as 7.0 allowed around transit stations. To promote mixed use, an FAR of 3.5 was allowed for projects incorporating multiple functions. It was assumed that the image and character of the two mega-projects proposed at the northern and southern edges of the centre would be determined primarily by the private developers that had already assembled land and proceeded with rezoning. To spur redevelopment of the newly delineated City Centre, the city lowered development cost charges while widening and repaving sidewalks along King George Highway and Central Boulevard.

The 20 acre site at the northern edge of the town centre, purchased by major Canadian developer Intrawest, was planned for 1.2 million square feet of commercial floorspace in five high-rise office buildings and 1.4 million square feet of residential space (approximately 1400 units) in eleven towers, flanked by landscaped fields and paths to create a campus environment. In the early 1990s, the developer built 223,500 square feet of office space in one tower overlooking the Skytrain Station and two residential towers including 405 units. The additional fifteen towers

the building – suggesting a possible alternative market for the space to the traditional corporate back offices and professional services firms originally expected to generate demand for office space in Surrey City Centre.

In the decade following the Whalley Town Centre Plan, 1.1 million square feet of office space, 24,944 square feet of retail space and 1,830 residential units were completed in the much larger area eventually included in the city's Surrey City Centre planning area. In the past two years, an additional 970,000 square feet of office space, more than 300 residential units and several thousand square feet of retail space have been completed. With the exception of retail space, development outcomes in the center are relatively consistent with the projections set in the plan. However, the vast majority of new office development was not driven by real estate market interest, and the residential increase reflects the vast included in the Surrey's City Centre planning district – an area much larger than the district targeted by the plan. The twenty-four percent population increase in the district during this period is only half the 48 percent growth in the City of Surrey, despite the substantial number of large vacant parcels prepared for development in the centre. Population density remains low at 12.5 residents, or 5.6 units, per acre. The pattern of new development and public improvements in Surrey City Centre has not begun to create a civic nucleus capable of serving a wide sub-region. The completion of the Surrey City Centre tower introduces a potential catalyst for enhanced public realm. The base of the tower extends the retail concourse of Surrey Place Mall into a dramatic foyer, connecting the mall and the outdoor public realm continuing toward the Surrey Central Skytrain station. The quality of urban design in the remainder of the town centre has remained low, reducing the opportunity for an iterative process of streetscape enhancement. Design standards along King George Highway requiring landscaped buffers and 25 foot building setbacks have insured that new development along what has remained the area's commercial core is not easily accessed by pedestrians. Despite the clear desire for mixed uses articulated in the 1991 plan for the centre, the city still does not permit mixed-use along King George Highway and in many other parts of the district – further reducing the potential for the critical mass of activity required for the an active 'downtown' public realm.

The image of 135th Street, envisioned as a commercial High Street, has suffered from an almost complete absence of private investment. Although the city widened the sidewalks, planted trees and repaved this 135th, no formal pedestrian connection was ever established through the 1,100 foot long block separating this street from King George Highway. Pedestrians have responded to this lack of recognition of their desired paths by cutting holes in mid-block fences to avoid walking nearly a quarter mile for the opportunity to cross the 500 foot wide block between King George Highway and 135th Street. Residential development in the district since the plan has not



Fig. 3.44-3.46. Aerial view of Surrey City Centre from the southeast in 1985 (3.44), 1992 (3.45) after the completion of Skytrain and 2003 (3.46). Note the limited amount of redevelopment along King George Highway in the center of the images and the persistence of vacant lots. (Waite Air Photos)



been oriented toward the street, separated in one instance by a gate and in others by landscaped setbacks. There is simply no continuous urban streetscape in Whalley – due in part to a lack of real estate interest, but also to city requirements insuring a weak relationship between buildings and sidewalks, streets and public spaces.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

Thirteen years after the adoption of the Whalley Town Centre plan, Surrey City Centre is widely considered an uncertain site for commercial development and an increasingly attractive location for medium density condominiums. The 'second downtown' visualized in the both this plan and the Livable Region Strategic Plan has clearly not materialized. The introduction of the Surrey City Centre office building sent vacancy for Class A office space in the town centre to 60 percent during the third quarter of 2003, nearly triple the regional total and more than double the second-highest vacancy rate among Greater Vancouver sub-markets. Even by the estimation of Surrey planners, the district is unlikely to attract additional commercial beyond limited first floor retail in the near future (Interview S-1, Interview S-2). In the past two years, numerous developers have expressed interest in mid-rise and high rise condominium projects throughout the centre, targeted primarily to moderate income buyers seeking transit access. With the exception of a small circulation network between Surrey Central skytrain station, urban design of Surrey City Centre has remained poor. Developments permitted in the past thirteen years have been generally consistent with the city's zoning policies, but in some cases inconsistent with the vision for Surrey City Centre articulated in both city and regional plans. In addition, the city has not built any new public facilities or made a comprehensive effort to improve the public realm of the centre. The city's regulatory approach is viewed by some developers and planners as unstable and subject to political manipulation (Interview D1, Interview D2, Interview GV-6). No clear vision for the centre has been clearly communicated by the city, which may contribute to its limited attraction to developers.

Barriers to Implementation

Four City of Surrey planners, including the planning director, two long range planners, and one current planner, were interviewed to identify challenges to implementing city policies for Surrey City Centre. The following emerged as primary barriers:

- The size of the area envisioned for Surrey City Centre may have been too ambitious, even after it was scaled back in the 1980s. The center is similar in size to downtown Vancouver, which took 40 to 50 years to mature into an urban center.

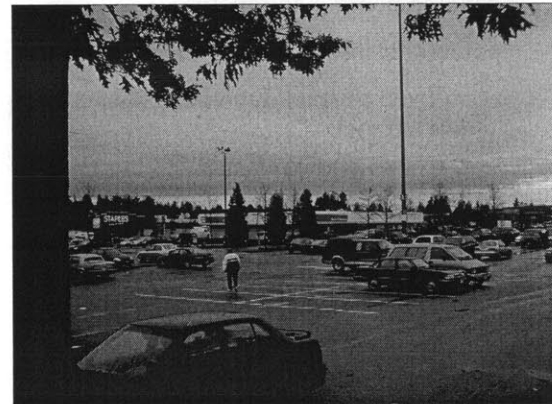
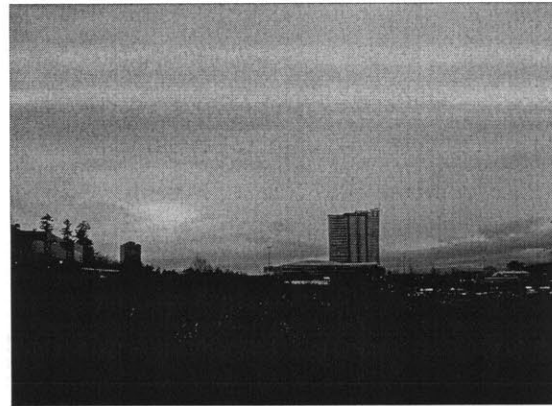
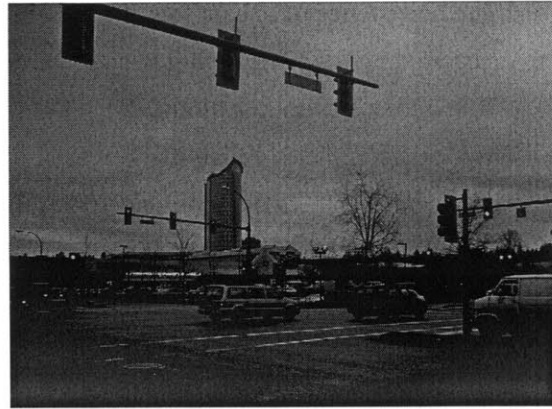


Fig. 3.47-3.53. Surrey City Centre today. Clockwise from the top right, the dominance of automobile-oriented retail at a strategically important corner (3.47), the vacant lot surrounding the King George station at the southern edge of the centre (3.48), a pedestrian cuts through the parking lot of a large block between King George Highway and 135 Street (3.49), police officers perform an investigation beneath the Surrey City Centre skytrain station (3.50), street improvements along 135 Street (3.51), the southern tip of 135 Street envisioned as a vibrant center in the 1992 plan (3.52), a large vacant lot sits in front of the four towers completed by developer Intrawest at the northern edge of Surrey City centre (3.53). (Shorett)

- The persistence of vacant lots surrounding the King George and 108th Street Skytrain stations, as well as a half-completed Asian market just outside of the town center along 104th Street, have damaged the image of the area as a real estate investment opportunity. Concerns regarding crime have contributed to this image problem.

- With the possible exception of Intrawest's incomplete development around the 108th Street Skytrain station, the center has not enjoyed the benefit of a major developer willing to assemble a large amount of land and lead the way for subsequent development by completing potentially risky residential and commercial projects. The vast majority of the site is comprised of small land holdings, creating the need for parcel assembly prior to any major development project.

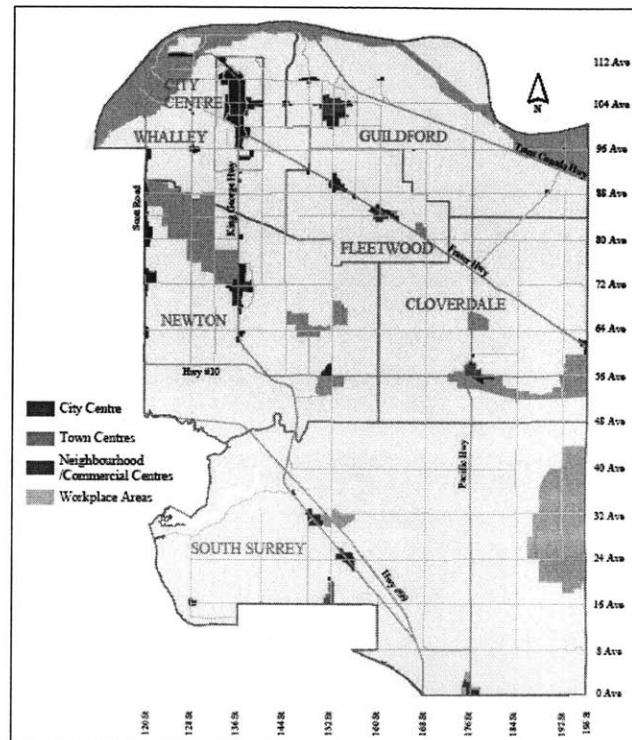


Fig. 3.54. Employment centres defined in the 2002 Surrey Official Community Plan. (City of Surrey 2002)

- The rezoning of the City Centre and the arrival of Skytrain in the early 1990s led to dramatic increases in land values, which create an additional barrier to redevelopment.
- The generally low level of transit service between the City Centre and other areas south of the Fraser River, particularly Surrey's Neighborhood Centres, has limited its ability to draw customers and workers from other parts of the sub-region.
- Industrial and business parks in other cities in the region, particularly Langley and Richmond, have reduced Surrey City Centre's ability to attract employers to fill potential office space, light industrial and business park space. The absence of a coordinated regional policy for directing new employment away from the region's primary employment centers – Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond – makes it difficult to create a new employment center.

- The city has never used its resources to fully support the emergence of City Centre. The city has not completed any new civic facilities in the town centre, and has not considered locating its City Hall in the centre. In addition, Surrey has not pursued a recruitment strategy for attracting investors and employers to its City Centre. The decision to permit office development in a wide variety of locations outside of the town centre in the city's 2002 Official Community Plan again reduces its ability to attract office development and the critical mass of employment necessary for its success.
- The LRSP fails to recognize the importance of maintaining a strong non-residential tax base, which may lead to less compact forms of development if this is what the office and retail market dictates. Creating a balance of jobs to workers across the region – one of the plan's policies – may require dispersal rather than concentration of commercial activities.
- The region's objective of creating a City Centre in North Surrey may be at odds with the primary local goal of building a vital non-residential tax base throughout the city. Many objectives that intellectually sound at the regional level are difficult to implement locally because the contexts are different. The lifestyle preferences assumed in the densities called for in the regional plan are inconsistent with the quality of life expected by many Surrey residents.

The Surrey Contingency Plan

In contrast to Burnaby's consistent, relatively successful long-range vision for the urban form of its city, Surrey has consistently vacillated between different community development and regulatory strategies, often in response to apparent economic trends.

After placing a tremendous amount of faith in the urbanization of its City Centre in the 1990s, the city has begun to look elsewhere for sources of economic development. According to a Surrey planner that has focused on Whalley since the 1980s, "We were depending on the area becoming a second downtown. We went through the exercise of Surrey being the second downtown next to Vancouver and felt that all the residential growth was going to happen south of the river. When you look at the regional context in the lower mainland, growth will be accommodated on the south side of the river. We have two-thirds of the land mass and one-third of the population. Growth is happening south of the river, but from a community point of view, we don't have enough jobs" (Interview S-2). Following this logic was an assumption that commercial development would coalesce in Surrey City Centre, the only area of the city targeted for truly intensive employment growth.

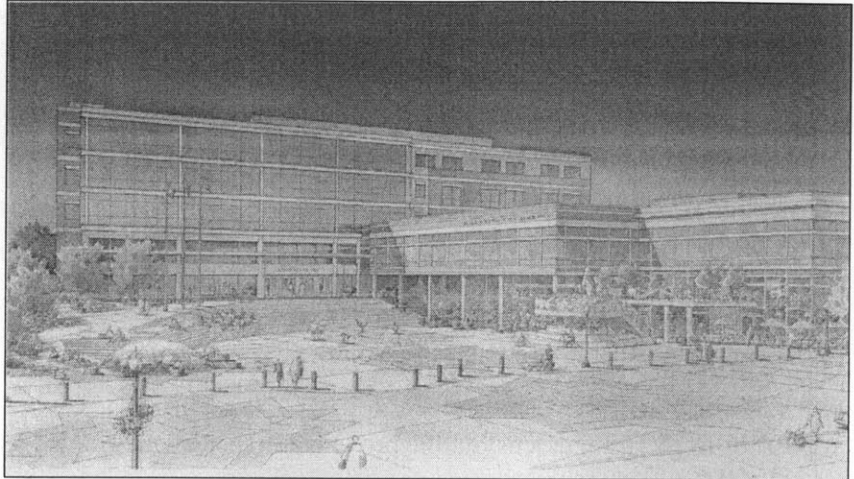
Despite regional transportation investment, the site's designation as a 'second downtown' in regional plans, and real estate investor interest, the city centre has not materialized – leading city councilors and planners to question the value of attempting to support the region's vision for the district. In an effort to strengthen its non-residential property tax base, Surrey adopted a zoning ordinance in 2002 permitting low-density office parks in virtually every commercial and industrial area of the city pending satisfaction of minimal 'performance standards.' According to the Surrey's planning director, the LRSP and other regional objectives were taken into consideration when drafting the revised ordinance. In his view, the region and its member municipalities had not given Surrey enough of an incentive to pursue policies consistent with the regional plan. Because it did not provide the anticipated direct economic benefit, the city centre has been relegated to a potential long range opportunity while the city promotes business parks as the primary engines of economic growth. Surrey joins other cities in creating a series of hedges to provide economic development if its Regional Town Centre – the expected catalyst for infusing civic and commercial life into a subregion – fails to succeed.

The technical report preceding the ordinance projected more than 26 million square feet of new office space outside of Surrey City Centre between 2002 and 2021 – roughly equivalent to the total floorspace of Vancouver's central business district (City of Surrey 2003). According to a planner from a neighboring municipality, this policy shift was sparked by the publication of a report commissioned by the GVRD showing that office parks had captured the lion's share of office development in the region during the 1990s, depleting demand for space in Regional Town Centres (Royal LePage 2002). In a full page advertisement placed in the *Vancouver Sun* in 2002, the city advertised its ample capacity for business parks. Nearly all of the sites that the city has pre-planned for low-density office development are virtually inaccessible by transit, located along provincial and regional highways in the southern and eastern sectors of the city. The city has also pursued the possibility of transforming its industrial waterfront along the Fraser River into a horizontally mixed-use district of condominiums, public promenades, large format retail and business parks. The actual viability of any of these sites is questionable. Developers and real estate analysts expressed skepticism about the potential for business park development in Surrey due to its remote location and the continued availability of relatively inexpensive land in more central, highway-oriented locations within Burnaby and Richmond.

planned for the site have never been completed, leaving a largely vacant parcel as a result of limited demand and low land values. The site at the southern edge of the centre along King George Avenue, permitted for one million square feet of retail space and 10 to 12 residential towers by an offshore East Asian development firm, was never developed due to an almost complete absence of demand. The city planned to use its large holdings around the Skytrain station in the middle of the town centre to collaborate with a developer in the construction of an office tower featuring cultural facilities such as a library and opera on the ground floor. The owner of the Surrey Place Mall was expected to intensify development on the site into a high density node. The city's lack of financial resources halted its plans for an office tower above the Skytrain station, while plans for an additional office tower and technical university on land donated by the city at the southern end of High Street were delayed when the province decided not to cancel expansion of the technical university.

As part of its Skytrain extension, the provincial transit agency added a major bus transfer point to the south of the ice rink and community center. A hardscaped plaza was built between the community center and the transfer station, creating possibly the first truly public space in Surrey. Commuters, teenagers, and residents cross the plaza on their way to a variety of locations. This area, originally envisioned as an office tower in the Whalley Town Centre plan, has become the most vibrant public space in the town centre. The rapid volume of pedestrians has attracted drug dealers offering a variety of substances to the plaza, further damaging the area's image. Nonetheless, this area provides the only continuous pedestrian environment in the district.

The adoption of the LRSP in 1996 did not alter the city's approach to developing its Regional Town Centre. According to two Surrey planners, planning staff have discussed reducing the size of the higher density downtown zoning district to focus on the area around Surrey Central Skytrain Station and permit interim uses in the northern and southern areas of the centre (Interview S-2, Interview S-3). However, no formal efforts have been made to alter the regulatory scheme for the City Centre through alterations to bulk, density and height requirements, or through financial incentives. In the opinion of the Surrey planner responsible for long-range planning in the area, the stalled developments around the Skytrain stations at the north and south entries to the site dealt a crushing blow to real estate industry perceptions of the area (Interview S-2). Since the adoption of the LRSP, only two significant developments have been completed in the Regional Town Centre: an architecturally acclaimed 957,000 square foot office tower - Surrey City Centre - at the foot of the planned 135th Street, and a 4 story, 265 unit townhouse complex on the Intrawest property at the northern edge of the centre. The office tower, financed primarily by the province, sits largely vacant. A satellite university campus and call center will soon move into



Chapter Four: Metropolitan Portland's Regional Centers

4.1 The Basis for Regional Planning in Metropolitan Portland

Metropolitan Portland is home to 1,3 million people living in 24 municipalities and the unincorporated areas of 4 counties. Portland remains the region's largest city with a population of 529,000 while only two other Oregon cities in the region have greater than 50,000 residents, and Vancouver, Washington has a population of 143,000. Downtown Portland provides the historic and contemporary economic and cultural core of the region. Major hubs of commercial activity have emerged in suburbs in the region's Westside, as well as along the Willamette River to the south and Clackamas County to the east. The entire region covers 369 square miles, stretching along the banks of the Willamette River and Interstate 5 from north to south and regional roadways from east to west. Prior to the early 1970s, planning in the region was performed at the municipal level, with limited influence from the State of Oregon. As Metropolitan Portland experienced rapid growth in the decades following World War II, the negative influences of largely unplanned outward growth – increased pollution, shrinking green space and farmland, and costly extension of infrastructure to

serve peripheral residential development – formed the basis for a political movement calling for ecological preservation and greater regional coordination. A coalition of agricultural and environmental organizations lobbied the state to transform local land use policy to insure the preservation of natural resources and limit development in areas without basic services.

Oregon has been viewed as a national leader in progressive regional planning since the passage of America's first state growth management legislation in 1973. The Oregon Land Use Act requires every state and county to enact a long range plan consistent with statewide environmental and land use objectives. Each local comprehensive plan is required to include an urban growth boundary, provisions for wise use of urban land, and the protection of natural resources. The act established a Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) to develop statewide goals, created a Department of Land Conservation (DLC) to monitor local consistency with these goals, and put in place an appeals process through which the state could challenge local decisions inconsistent with state goals. This measure supplemented less rigorous 1969 legislation driven by environmental and fiscal concerns requiring cities and counties to produce comprehensive land use plans.

In its first three years, the LCDC formulated 19 general statewide goals addressing topics ranging from coastal land management to public involvement. The commission adopted a series of guidelines to assist local governments in creating regulations consistent with state standards. Compliance with broad statewide planning goals is compulsory, while the commission's guidelines are merely suggestive. Local governments are required to submit comprehensive plans to the commission for approval. As an incentive for local compliance, the legislation allows the state to withhold grants and aid to local governments that refuse to bring comprehensive plans into line with state objectives. A review of state planning history did not reveal any instances in which this power was exercised.

The Early Years of Regional Planning

The Land Use Act provided a generic template against which cities and governments created comprehensive plans. In similar fashion to the Official Regional Plans for Greater Vancouver during the 1960s and 1970s, Oregon state guidelines did not attempt to shape the specific form of development within urban boundaries. Absent from the Land Use Act was language indicating precisely which local government entity would take responsibility for drawing an urban growth boundary and securing state approval. Initially, the Columbia Regional Association of Governments (CRAG) – a voluntary organization incorporating the cities of Metropolitan Portland – took the lead in attempting to draw an urban growth boundary. The organization was

unable in the six years following the adoption of the act to gain consensus around the location of an urban growth boundary for the region.

In 1978, voters in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties passed a ballot measure creating the nation's first elected regional government in the form of Metro. This measure granted Metro responsibility for coordinating the land use plans of the region's municipalities and adopting binding policies affecting development. Metro was also given responsibility for other issues of vaguely defined "regional significance." Since its inception, Metro has been governed by seven locally elected councilors and a regionally elected executive officer. At first, Metro was not charged with creating a formal growth management plan, but rather expected to serve as an intermediary between local governments to facilitate cooperative regional policymaking. Following a year of consultation with local governments to estimate anticipated growth over a 20 year period, Metro Council adopted an urban growth boundary around the entire region. The boundary provided more land than needed to absorb Metro's 20 year growth projections for the region, creating controversy and spurring opposition from the influential environmental organization 1000 Friends of Oregon. A compromise was drawn between environmentalists, the Oregon LCDC, local governments and citizens groups to designate areas inside the UGB that extend beyond the projected 20 year boundary as large lot reserves restricted from short-term urban development (Leo 1998). To add specificity to its land use guidelines and help insure that multi-family housing could be produced throughout the state, the LCDC required local governments to designate residential zones within urban growth boundaries for 6, 8 or 10 units per acre.

Beyond protecting rural and agricultural lands beyond the UGB from urban development and providing population and employment growth projections, Metro provided little direct guidance for local planning in the region during the 1980s. LCDC guidelines pushed local governments to permit greater housing densities than would otherwise have likely been allowed, but suburban municipalities were ultimately able to preserve zoning policies requiring the physical separation of land uses and sharply limiting the intensity of commercial development. The allure of business parks led many localities to permit additional office development, but this was permitted in primarily remote locations at low densities. Despite the presence of a 20 year urban growth boundary, residential and commercial development in Metropolitan Portland during the 1980s was marked by low-density outward expansion. Despite 19 percent growth within the City of Portland, suburban cities such as Beaverton and Hillsboro experienced much faster rates of growth, comprising the vast majority of new development during this period. Offices increasingly located in office parks near suburban highway interchanges or in self-

contained corporate campuses such as the Nike World Campus in Beaverton and Hillsboro's Intel headquarters. Following national trends, retail continued to concentrate in suburban malls. Although demand for downtown office space softened, central Portland continued its renaissance as a vibrant urban setting during the 1980s through a combination of street beautification initiatives and creative planning, design and economic development policies.

Downtown revitalization was linked to a broader vision for a more transit accessible region through the planning and construction of MAX – a regional light rail system. Traveling along both city streets and fixed guideways, MAX animates downtown Portland and suburban centers while providing a reliable alternative to automobile commuting to residents of many of the region's eastern and western suburbs. Since the 1960s, Metropolitan Portland's entire public transit network has been operated by Tri-Met – the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District. Assisted by the broad influence of U.S. Senator Tom Hatfield, Tri-Met secured funding for the first leg of MAX from downtown Portland to its Eastern suburbs, which began operation in 1986. An extension through the Westside of the region was approved in the early 1990s as an alternative to a planned highway. Westside Max began operation in 1998. An additional line traveling to Portland International Airport was completed in 2001. Funding for each of these lines was supplied primarily from federal sources and none were approved by voters. Ballot measures to construct a north-south line from Clackamas Regional Center to either Vancouver, Washington or an area of Oregon adjacent to Vancouver were defeated three times – once by voters in the Vancouver Area and twice by voters in Metropolitan Portland. Despite a lack of voter support, the line is currently in the design phase. Funding will come from local, state and federal sources, with completion targeted for 2008 at the earliest.

The Expansion of Metro's Regional Planning Powers

Dissatisfied with the limited scope of growth management in the region, voters in greater Portland passed a home rule charter in 1992 directing Metro to adopt a Future Vision articulating the region's long-term goals and values, to be followed by a statutory Regional Framework Plan insuring consistency between local land use policies and regional objectives. Under the charter, the framework plan was required to address regional land use, transportation, water quality, and natural areas, as well as related systems. The charter effectively made regional growth management the primary mission of Metro, expanding its scope and affirming its responsibility for directing the region's future growth.

The charter gave Metro five years from 1992 to pass a framework plan. Shortly after the charter's passage, Metro planning staff initiated an extensive public outreach process. Residents were

“asked” - through open houses, youth activities, and a questionnaire mailed to every household in the region - to identify “values” of the greatest importance to the region’s future (Metro 2000). The leading values identified through this process were a sense of community; conservation of natural and agricultural areas; quiet neighborhoods; preservation of a small town atmosphere; convenient access between residential districts and employment, schools, and other amenities; and a balanced transportation system offering a choice between driving, walking and public transit. Respondents expressed greatest opposition to development that increased density near their homes, although they indicated willingness to make some form of sacrifice for the benefit of the region (Ibid.).

The Emergence of Regional Centers as an Organizing Concept

Following initial public consultation, Metro planning staff turned to technical analyses of the region’s existing development trends and potential future growth patterns. Early in the process, the promotion of mixed-use centers distributed throughout the region was identified as an opportunity to concentrate employment, population and retail growth into compact settings. In theory, this model for regional growth could create urban districts providing many of the amenities desired by the region’s residents without significantly increasing densities in existing neighborhoods while relieving development pressure from the fringes of the region. To capitalize on existing and planned public investment and promote transit use, these centers could be arrayed along the region’s light rail lines. According to a Metro planner involved in this process, the agency’s decision to investigate regional centers was influenced by the description of Greater Vancouver’s Regional Town Centres provided by a Vancouver councillor during a public event (Interview M-1).

A 1993 study by the transportation logistics firm Parsons Brinckerhoff and urban designers Calthorpe Associates explored spatial and economic requirements for sub-regional mixed use centers. The connection between the mixture of land uses and population and employment densities of centers was analyzed in detail to create standards for minimum densities to support specific levels of transit. Street design, proximity, housing mixture, and density guidelines for station areas were also explored. Although the Subregional Center prototype developed in the report was differentiated from a residential district by the presence of region-serving employment, the urban fabric of centers was intended to reflect older residential neighborhoods in metropolitan Portland, helping create a sense of place. Bellevue, Washington, Pleasanton, California and Walnut Creek, California were provided as precedents for Portland’s Subregional Centers. The critical distinction between the urban typology set forth in the report and ‘edge cities’ like downtown Bellevue is human-scale streetscapes, low-rise building massing and a coherent urban

fabric (Metro 1993). Although the study was only exploratory in nature, it introduced a typology – the Subregional Center – critical to the urban form proposed in the growth concept guiding the 1997 Regional Framework Plan adopted by the Metro board.

Through extensive consultation with local planners and politicians, regional planners gathered the inputs for a sophisticated modeling program projecting growth for each of the region's cities. A base case utilizing existing trends was compared against three growth concepts to assess projected land consumption, air quality, traffic congestion, vehicle miles traveled, and transit ridership. A second public consultation process asked citizens to comment on each of the four growth concepts. Based upon a questionnaire returned by 17,000 households (out of a total of greater than 500,000), regional planners determined that the region's citizens appeared to prefer: the concentration of growth into established centers such as historic downtowns; increased development along transit corridors; a reduction in average new residential lot sizes; and a reduction in commercial parking provision. While these preferences were reflected most strongly in the third concept proposed by Metro, they led to the development of a new scenario synthesizing the strengths of each of the four initial scenarios (Metro 2000).

A parallel process sponsored by the environmental organization 1000 Friends of Oregon analyzed a number of potential development scenarios for Washington County – which encompasses much of the region's western suburbs. Although the Land Use Transportation Air Quality (LUTRAQ) study was initiated to provide an alternative to a planned Westside Freeway, the process mirrored the 2040 Growth Concept by quantifying the outcome of various development scenarios and presenting potential methods for achieving an urban form that synthesized land use and transportation planning to create compact communities and enhance air quality. The LUTRAQ preferred scenario presented a sequence of urban centers, located in both existing and potential mixed-use districts, along the MAX Westside red line alignment (1000 Friends of Oregon 1997).

Metro and municipal planners involved in the formulation of the 'design types' included in the 2040 Growth Concept indicate that the LUTRAQ process did not directly influence the location or character of the regional centers and transit communities in the concept (Interview M-1, Interview H-1, Interview H-2, Interview C-1, Interview C-2). However, the similarity between the preferred LUTRAQ scenario for Washington County and the concept map of the adopted long-range regional plan is striking: a sequence of regional centers and station communities grow in $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radii around Westside MAX stations, surrounded by natural preserves and a number of smaller scale urban centers.

4.2 The 2040 Growth Concept

Following intensive negotiation between regional and municipal planners and officials, a Growth Concept intended to guide the region's development until the year 2040 was unveiled. The concept attempted to create an regional urban form supporting the following objectives: protect natural, agricultural and recreational areas; create a wider range of transportation options; promote a broad array of housing opportunities; cooperate with cities immediately outside of Metro boundaries to insure separation between communities; and achieve more intensive use of land along transit lines and main streets, as well as in business centers. Unlike the broad city-wide projections included in the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the Growth Concept developed a specific vision of regional urban form to accommodate future growth. To achieve the concept's broad objectives, urban land in the region would be divided between nine *design types* – land use typologies describing a mix of uses and specific density levels. Through an iterative process involving local planners, Metro officials and community members, each design type was assigned a portion of the region's expected population and employment growth – creating the quantitative basis for the growth projections contained in the 1997 Regional Framework Plan. As a general rule, the Framework Plan promotes the combination of housing, employment, retail and community amenities within centers to reduce automobile trips.

Central City

The most intensive design type is the Central City, incorporating downtown Portland and the Rose District immediately across the Willamette River. The Central City is intended to maintain its status as the region's center for finance, commerce, government, cultural and entertainment activities. With an expected density of 250 persons per acre – including both employees and residents - Central City is expected to accommodate 20 percent of the region's new employment.

Regional Centers

Regional Centers are the most intensive design type outside of the Central City, with seven centers distributed along major transportation routes throughout the region, each serving a sub-regional market area in the hundreds of thousands. Future development in Regional Centers will be characterized by compact, two to four story mixed-use housing and employment, as well as cultural amenities. The urban form of Regional Centers will be defined by a hierarchical street network encouraging transit use, walking and cycling while accommodating automobiles and freight. Average expected densities will be 60 persons per acre, including both workers and residents, a dramatic increase from average 1990 densities of 24 persons per acre. Regional Centers are expected to accommodate 11 percent of new employment and 3 percent of new residential development. Through future transportation improvements, all Regional Centers are

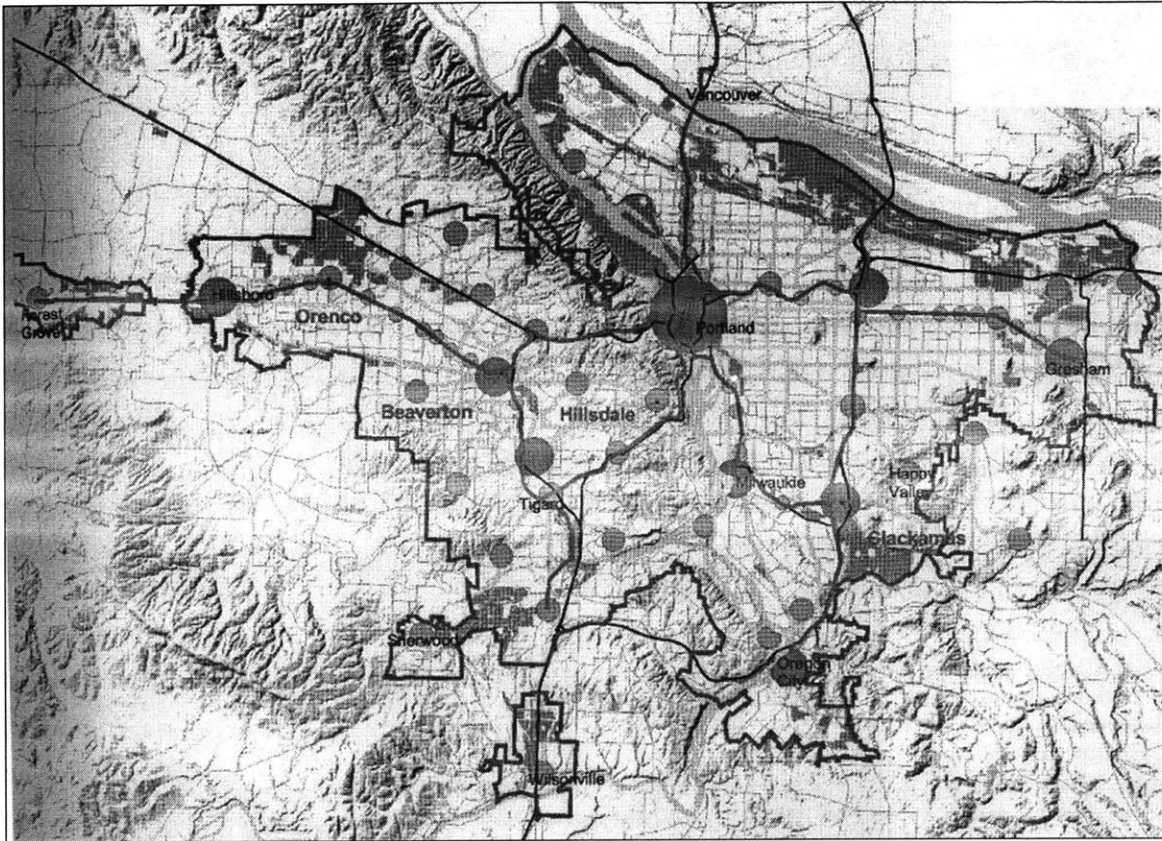


Fig. 4.3. 2040 Growth Concept for Metropolitan Portland adopted in 1994. The second largest red circles designate Regional Centers, while the orange circles connote town centers. (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001)

of station areas throughout the region. Station communities are expected to accommodate 15 percent of new employment and 27 percent of new households at typical densities of 45 persons per acre.

Main Streets

Main Streets serve as smaller scale town centers, featuring a similar mixture of housing and predominantly local-serving commercial uses in physical development evoking a strong sense of place. To capitalize on their distinct identities and charm, the retail districts of Main Streets may develop region-serving specializations such as antiques or fine dining. Straddling the line between two design types, Main Streets can act as Neighborhood Centers or grow into intensive Town Centers. Town Centers are expected to achieve densities of 39 persons per acre and accommodate 2 percent of residential growth.

Corridors

Located along major roadways with 'good quality' access to transit, Corridors will be less dense than centers but accommodate a more intensive and varied mixture of uses than other commercial

and residential areas. Physical development along corridors will be typified by rowhouses and one to three story office and retail buildings. Average expected densities are 25 persons per acre. The urban form of corridors will be both linear strips along arterial roads and nodal centers and major intersections. The Framework Plan does not specify the proportion of the region's growth anticipated for Corridors

Residential Neighborhoods

Residential Neighborhoods encompass existing residential districts and areas planned for predominantly residential development. The growth Concept delineates between two types of neighborhoods – Inner Neighborhoods and Outer Neighborhoods. Inner neighborhoods, typified by the older areas of Portland and Beaverton, feature small lots and convenient access to employment. With higher target densities, inner neighborhoods are expected to accommodate 28 percent of new housing and 10 percent of new employment. Inner Neighborhoods are expected to absorb additional density through in-fill development – some of which will generate additional employment. Outer Neighborhoods include both existing low-density residential districts and areas without convenient access to large employment centers. This design type features large lot sizes and limited transit access. Outer Neighborhoods are expected to accommodate 28 percent of new residential development and 10 percent of new employment at densities of 11 to 14 persons per acre. While Inner Neighborhoods are expected to include more frequent street connections, the Growth Concept calls for the adoption of master street plans for both design types requiring a minimum of 20 street connections per mile to improve connectivity.

Industrial Areas

Areas of the region identified as existing and potential concentrations of industrial activity are set aside as Industrial Areas. Initially, only land uses that support primary industrial activities were to be permitted within this Design Type. However, pressure from local governments led the final Framework Plan to create a more permissive Industrial Areas designation allowing office and research and development facilities. Transportation and other infrastructure in Industrial Areas will be provided principally to districts that appear capable of supporting agglomerations of a specific industrial activity. Industrial Areas are expected to accommodate 10 percent of employment growth, with no minimum densities.

Employment Areas

Employment Areas are identified in the Growth Concept as relatively undefined 'other employment centers' scattered throughout the region. Employment Areas are targeted for an increase in density from 11 to 20 persons per acre, accommodating 5 percent of new residential

and 14 percent of new employment growth.

Additional Designations

Several additional designations for non-urban land are included in the Growth Concept. Rural Areas are outside of the UGB, providing a physical and visual buffer between urban areas and the farm and forest lands beyond the growth boundary.

Open Spaces include lands both inside and outside of the UGB earmarked for preservation, such as parks, stream and trail corridors, wetlands and floodplains.

Neighboring Cities are cities in adjacent counties beyond the UGB. The plan calls for the preservation of Green Corridors connecting these small urban centers to the peripheral Regional Centers. Intergovernmental agreements will encourage neighboring cities to limit travel demand on green corridors and balance jobs and population. (Metro 1997, Metro 2000).

Political Considerations Surrounding Regional Centers

Rather than creating a regional parcel zoning plan, Metro required local governments to utilize the design types included in the Framework Plan to meet employment and growth projections in a manner consistent with regional goals. In many cases, this required a significant rezoning process – particularly for communities expected to accommodate Regional Centers and Station Communities. The specific design types through which development would be regulated were the subject of substantial debate, with many local planners and politicians expressing concern about the densities initially proposed for several of the typologies. Despite broad popular acceptance of growth management, many residents of Greater Portland place tremendous value on the preservation of a small town appearance outside of the City of Portland (Interview M-1, Interview B-1, Interview B-2, Interview H-2, Interview C-3). This is reflected in the reservations articulated in Metro's 1992 survey preceding its long range planning process, as well as the hesitance of many municipalities at the periphery of the region to permit medium to high density development around transit stations.

A number of planners from suburban cities felt that the Growth Concept was conceptualized in a relative vacuum dominated by technical planning theory (Interview H-1, Interview H-2, Interview C-1). The initial population and employment figures required to meet Growth Concept objectives were resisted by several suburban cities on the grounds that they would require too much vertical development and too much incursion into traditionally single family neighborhoods. In the case of Hillsboro, for example, the scale of physical development implied by Metro projections was inconsistent with the vision included in a comprehensive plan recently adopted by City Council. Metro projections for population and employment distribution were altered repeatedly

to accommodate local concerns, but the fundamental characteristics of the design types remained consistent. In general, the Regional Centers policy contained in the Framework Plan reflects strong cooperation between local and regional planners – including the participation of local planners in the formulation of this design type and the involvement of regional planners in the creation of a number of municipal and county Regional Center plans.

The location and character of Regional Centers was viewed by local planners and officials largely as an opportunity to garner public investment. In a number of cases, the location of regional centers on the 2040 growth concept diverged from local opinion regarding the best location for such a center. The Framework Plan articulates a coherent geographical basis for its distribution of Regional Centers:

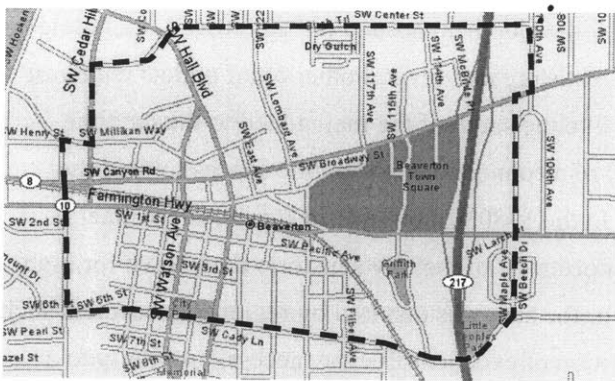
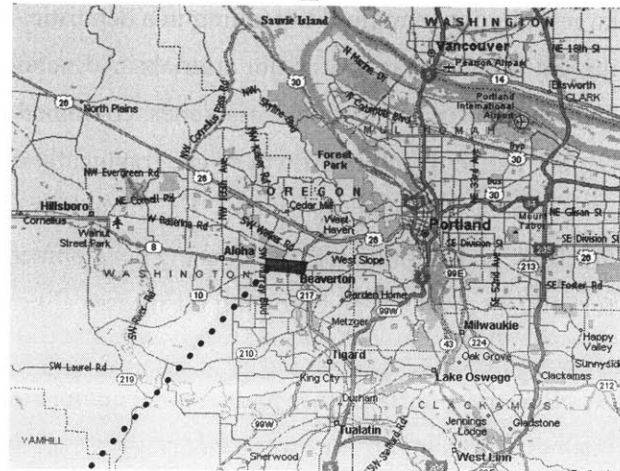
“Hillsboro serves that western portion of the region and Gresham the eastern. The central city and Gateway serve most of the Portland area as a regional center. Downtown Beaverton and Washington Square serve the east Washington County area, and downtown Oregon City, Clackamas Town Center and Milwaukie together serve Clackamas County and portions of outer south east Portland.” (Metro 1997: 22).

From the perspective of some local planners, however, many of these locations were not consistent with economic realities, or conflicted with undeniable local political considerations (Interview M-1, Interview H-1, Interview H-2, Interview C-1). The selection of Regional Centers was driven primarily by the location of existing or planned light rail lines. Local planning agencies were given the task of transforming the graphic representation of a one-half mile circle around a light rail station into a viable economic and civic engine for a sub-region. In several cases, the location of Regional Centers coincided perfectly with local plans for intensification. Other Regional Center sites, however, required dramatic changes in the densities and scale of development anticipated in local codes. The City of Hillsboro lobbied for the commercial and residential district Tanasbourne – near the western border with Beaverton – to be included in the plan as a Regional Center, but fell in line with the region's designation of its historic downtown as a center once it became clear that this was necessary to insure that the Westside Max traveled through all of Hillsboro. Local concerns led Tigard, located in the southwest sector of the region, to reject Regional Center designation.

4.4 Regional Center Case Studies

Three case studies were selected to enable a more refined analysis of the planning and development of Regional Centers in Metropolitan Portland. Downtown Beaverton is an inner suburban commercial district with excellent transit and freeway access whose development has

been limited by historically Euclidean, low-density development standards. Hillsboro Regional Center is anchored by a built-out historic downtown surrounded by a medium density residential district with few vacant or readily developable parcels. The site was selected as a Regional Center despite limited redevelopment opportunity due to its location at the end of the Westside Max line. Clackamas Regional Center has been an Urban Renewal District since 1980. The center's excellent freeway access and supply of vacant and developable land have inspired expectations that it can emerge as a mixed-use civic nucleus for a large unincorporated area that currently lacks a clear center or attractive public spaces. The three case studies straddle a breadth of locational, economic and institutional contexts. Each Regional Center is considered for its morphology, land use and urban design policy, short-term development outcomes and apparent future development potential. The planning and promotion of each center is critically assessed in relation to larger economic and land use policies of its local government.



4.5 Case Study One: Beaverton

Located across Portland's Western Border in Washington County, Beaverton functioned as a small, relatively autonomous town until the 1960s. A Main Street district grew to the south of a right of way occupied by a plank road, and later electric railways, extending from downtown Portland to Hillsboro in the East. This route linking the city to its neighbors moved along Canyon Road, which emerged as a primary commercial arterial with the introduction of mass automobile ownership, becoming an especially attractive location for car dealerships. By the early decades of the 20th Century, the city had developed a small downtown, with residential development concentrating in a tight grid of small blocks to the south of Farmington Road. Hillsboro did not attract a solid cluster of industry, instead drawing a variety of uses including a film production studio and recreational airplane manufacturing plant. The remainder of the city – an expansive 17.2 square miles of primarily vacant and agricultural land – was laid out along a network of widely spaced arterials that shifted to the contours of the city's natural features. The city's population exploded following the completion of Route 217 - linked to Interstate 5 - through the city, growing from just over 5,000 in 1960 to more than . Beaverton became the second

largest city in the region, expanding in a dendritic, low density pattern of discrete uses growing inward from the edges of major arterials. A Euclidean zoning policy separating homes, offices and retail districts into single-use zones, combined with dominant development practices in the region, fueled the rapid growth of geographically diffuse low-density residential communities, office parks and shopping centers. Excellent highway access, short commute times to downtown Portland, and an influx of new housing developments helped Beaverton emerge as an attraction for affluent residents and growing businesses alike.

As Nike and a host of other international companies moved into buildings on vacant parcels in business parks in the northwest and southeast sections of the city, the economy of Beaverton's historic downtown stagnated. The thirty-five two hundred by two hundred foot blocks south of Farmington Street stood as relics of a time before the city was a bedroom suburb of Portland. The area to the northeast of downtown had seen new development around its 'auto row' – including a strip mall anchored by a Fred Meyer department store and several other retail outlets with vast surface parking lots. The expansion of city hall to the south of the mall added to the daytime population of downtown, but the lack of pedestrian connections and public spaces limited the visual and physical identity of the downtown. In the 1980's, a number of Beaverton planners promoted the idea of rezoning this area to the northwest of the city's historic downtown for high density mixed use development. This vision for the area was inspired by regional subcenters such as Bellevue, Washington. Indeed, the combination of excellent freeway access, proximity to a skilled suburban labor market to the east and large, assembled parcels provided the ingredients for a mixture of office, retail and residential development in the 1980s and 1990s. The concerns of Beaverton City Council members, as well as residents of nearby neighborhoods, led the city to maintain its longstanding policy of separating land uses into low-density single use zones throughout. The Beaverton planner responsible for creating Regional Center policies argued that this decision stopped the center from emerging as a true sub-regional hub while also reducing its long-range potential as an urban center.

The designation of the district as a Regional Center in the 2040 Growth Concept was met with a mixture of excitement and skepticism by Beaverton planners and politicians. Three light rail stations were planned for the northern edge of the city's downtown, introducing a potential catalyst for more intensive, pedestrian-oriented development. Unlike many other cities in which Regional Centers were identified, Beaverton had a relatively strong tax base anchored by scores of office parks and retail centers scattered through the city. However, the potential to create a mixed-use civic center in close proximity to City Hall and other major public investments provided an incentive to craft policies supportive of the region's vision of the downtown as



Fig. 4.6. Current aerial photo of Beaverton Regional Center. (Metro)

an economic and cultural nucleus for Portland's inner ring of western suburbs. The primarily commercial composition of the proposed regional center district – dominated by auto dealerships and retailers – made the site a relatively acceptable location for redevelopment from the perspective of city councilors and residents. By agreeing with regional officials that a Regional Center would be located in the area between the planned Westside Max alignment and the southern edges of the city's historic downtown, Beaverton was legally required to pursue policies consistent with the Regional Center design type described in the plan.

To assess the ability of the downtown to meet the density and design requirements included in the Growth Concept and Framework plan, the city conducted a downtown carrying capacity study, a transportation analysis, and a market study. The Regional Center was widely perceived as underdeveloped and visually unattractive, with Beaverton Town Square – an 11 acre community shopping center anchored by Fred Meyer, as well as other surrounding parcels occupied by strip commercial development and automobile dealerships - providing prime targets for intensification. To improve the downtown circulation network, mid-block connectors and new streets were proposed, as well as visual gateways at the western entry into the center from the off-ramps of State Route 217. Analysis of the relative economic potential and physical character of different

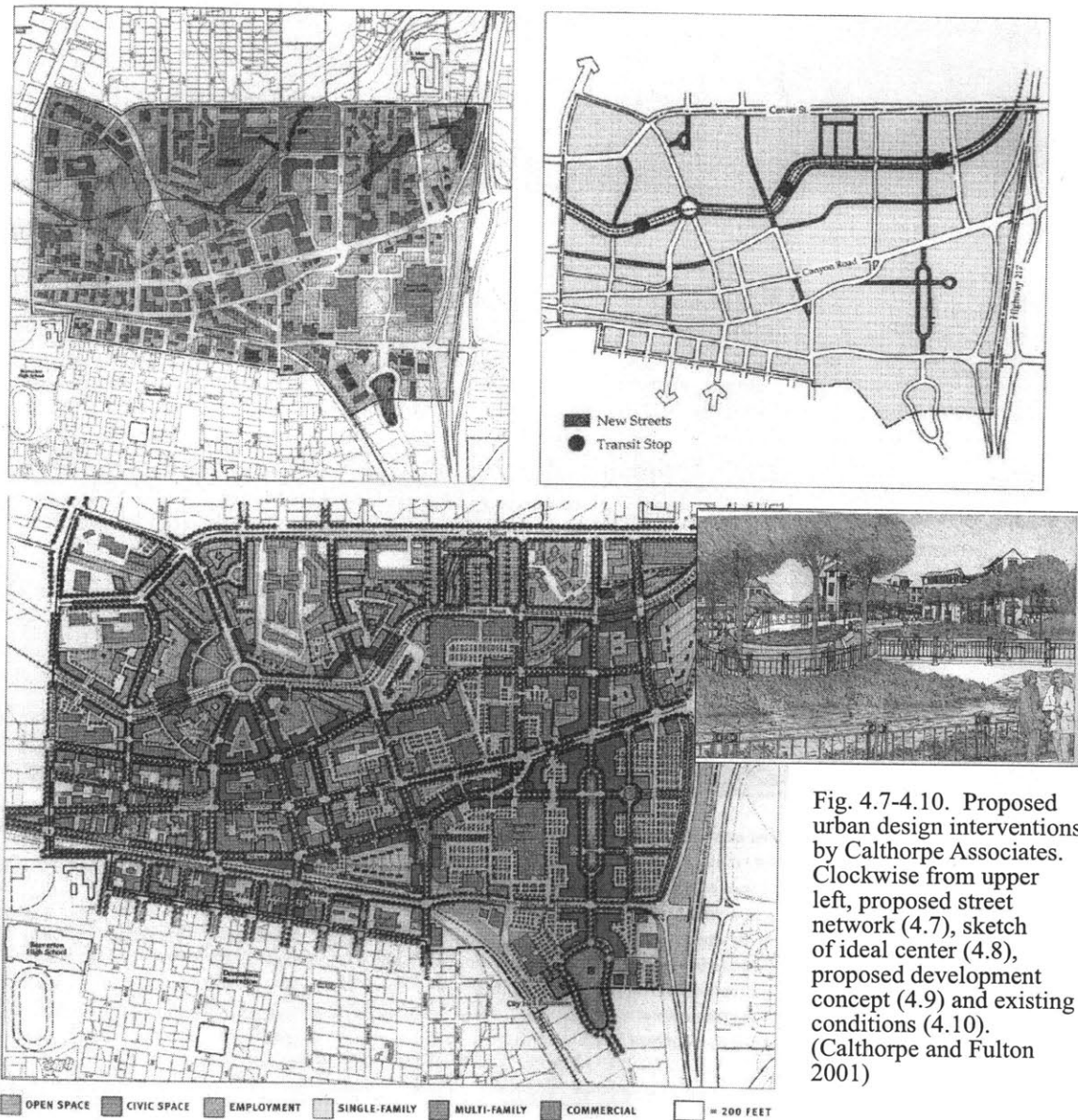


Fig. 4.7-4.10. Proposed urban design interventions by Calthorpe Associates. Clockwise from upper left, proposed street network (4.7), sketch of ideal center (4.8), proposed development concept (4.9) and existing conditions (4.10). (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001)

areas of the site led to the designation of three regional center zoning districts: an Old Town district intended to protect the identity of the city's historic downtown, and a high-density Regional Center district centered on the strip commercial in the middle of the site and the light rail stops to the north, and a Regional Center East district encompassing the large lot retail developments along State Route 17. The Regional Center East district is targeted primarily for employment, with a smaller proportion of medium to high density housing. A broader mixture of uses and greater pedestrian orientation is anticipated for the portion of this district directly adjacent to light rail stations. Permitted densities were substantially increased by allowing taller buildings in the Regional Center and Regional Center East districts (120 and 80 feet respectively

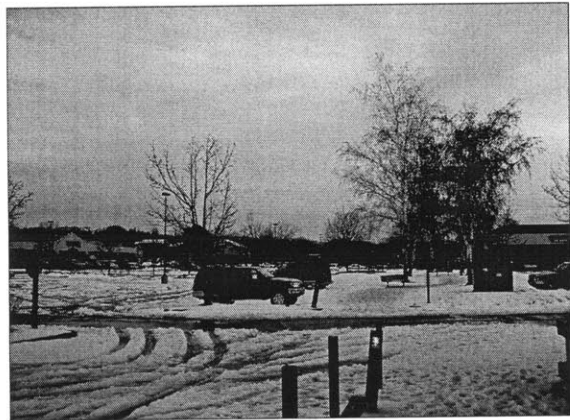
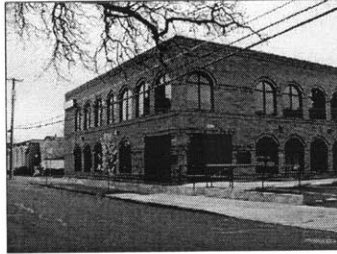
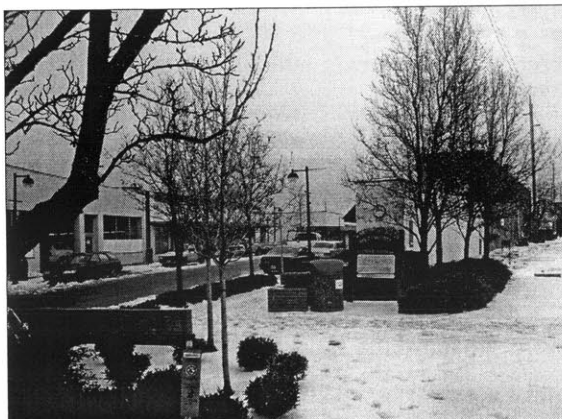
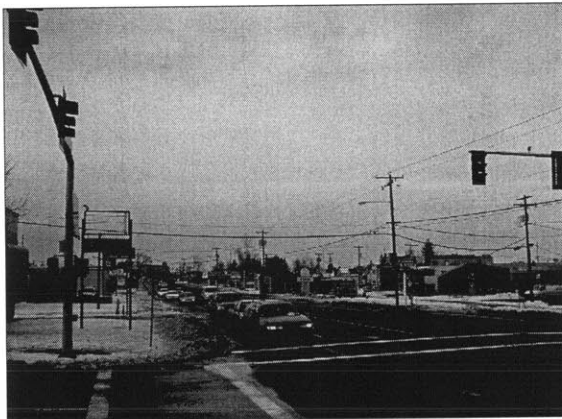


Fig. 4.11-4.18. Beaverton Regional Center today. Clockwise from top right, rednering of the Round (4.11), the dominance of automobile dealers in the district, with the Round in the background (4.12), vacant field adjacent to the Beaverton light rail station (4.13), historic downtown Beaverton (4.14), typical intersection (4.15), Beaverton Center - the district's commercial core (4.16), recently completed city library serving as a civic anchor for the southern edge of the site (4.17), and law office recently built in the center (4.18). (City of Beaverton, Shorett)



without special permits, 200 feet with a variance) and eliminating a Maximum Floor Area ratio for all of the zones (pending approval of a Planned Unit Development permit for only the Regional Center East district). The maximum building heights allowed by right in the core of the center are significantly lower than initially proposed due to community concerns about perceived negative impacts of density. To help achieve broader public realm objectives, density bonusing is linked to creating new rights of way through large blocks and bring buildings to the edges of sidewalks. Zoning for the Regional Center and Regional Center East districts attempted to encourage active use through by permitting more intensive development for proposals incorporating two or more uses. Development guidelines for the Old Town district promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings and the construction of new buildings consistent with the architectural scale and character of the district.

Together, these districts were expected to accommodate Regional Center densities and development typologies in a manner reflective of the concerns of local citizens and business owners. The city's economic development strategy for the Regional Center is premised on attracting businesses looking for the unique environment that would emerge if the center develops as planned – a pedestrian-oriented urban setting with excellent transit access and close proximity to a growing suburban labor pool. The city is considering targeting software companies because they have previously displayed a preference for traditional office environments. Proximity to a major hospital also makes the site potentially attractive for medical offices.

Rather than pursue a specific plan for its Regional Center, Beaverton incorporated a vision for the center into a revised city-wide plan intended to bring the city consistent with the requirements of the 2040 Growth Concept and Framework Plan. Initially, zoning throughout the Regional Center did not permit the continuation of non-conforming uses such as the longstanding cluster of automobile dealerships along Canyon Road. The political influence of automobile dealers led City Councilors to retract this provision in the Regional Center zoning ordinance, allowing non-conforming uses to continue indefinitely. One Beaverton planner indicated that the Oregon Board of zoning appeals would likely have reviewed the case if the city had chosen to challenge the interests of automobile dealerships, but Beaverton city council members were willing to face the possible political consequences. Community perceptions that the 2040 Growth Concept would somehow affect 'other' parts of the region led to a schism between initial acceptance of the plan and eventual resistance to its local implementation. Fears that downtown Beaverton would become too 'urban' fueled resistance to increased densities, particularly at the edges of existing residential neighborhoods south of Farmington Road.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

Since the adoption of the 1997 Framework Plan, the Regional Center has attracted 100,000 square feet of office space, 260 residential units and 51,000 square feet of retail floorspace. The only significant project completed in the past four years is the first phase of The Round, a mixed use project flanking Beaverton Center Max station planned for an eventual 120,000 square feet of ground floor retail space, 350,000 square feet of office space, and 260 residential units. The Round was the result of a Request for Proposals process on city owned land around the station. The project was set more than five years behind schedule when the initial developer was unable to secure financing for the project. During this period, interest in the center lagged. In the view of one Beaverton planner, The Round was treated by investors as an experiment of the form of development envisioned for the center (Interview B-1). Although 92,000 square feet of office space included in the first phase was leased at a faster rate than virtually any other new space in the Westside in recent years, and the 260 residential units were sold prior to construction, no significant new development is currently planned or proposed elsewhere for the center. With the exception of a 38,000 square foot space leased to a health club on the ground floor of The Round, new retail has been automobile-oriented and lacked a street presence. The only office development other than the 92,000 square foot first phase of the Round has been a two story brick 8,000 square foot law office built to the edge of the sidewalk, with parking at the side of the building. The current lack of development interest reflects the ongoing viability of low-density economic activities, such as automobile sales, relative to the perceived viability of more intensive uses in the area; limited short term market demand for more intensive office and retail space on the site; and a general lack of investor confidence in the forms of development proposed by the city in suburban locations. Both the developers of the Round and investors making initial inquiries into Regional Center sites have shown greater interest in residential development and less interest in office development than initially expected (Interview B-1, Interview B-2). The prospect of residential development comprising a larger share of new development than originally anticipated is not viewed as a source of concern by Beaverton planning and economic development officials. The impact of existing, financially viable low-density uses on the potential for urban scale redevelopment cannot be overstated. The area immediately surrounding the Round, as well as the commercial corridors along Canyon and Beaverton Roads, is occupied by a regional cluster of automobile dealers that represent a less risky, relatively predictable source of profit, in comparison to the mixed-use envisioned by the city and region.

To activate that southern edge of the center, Beaverton built a library and civic park near its City Hall to create a civic anchor at this point in the site. Eventually, the city would like to see an axial street linking the library at the southern edge of the site and the round at the northern end, reflective of the design for the center proposed by Calthorpe and Associates as part of the 2040

growth concept process. The city is currently considering engaging in land consolidation to promote redevelopment of strategic parcels in the Regional Center, but has not actively pursued this possibility. Beaverton recently entered into an agreement with the Metro to utilize the center as a pilot project for spurring the redevelopment of Regional Centers identified in the 2040 Growth Concept. The project will explore possible approaches for attracting intensive uses into the center and capitalizing on the light rail stations along the northern edge of the center. The city's economic development manager has been unable to initiate a recruitment process due to the lack of either office space or land readily available for redevelopment.

Barriers to Implementation

The Clackamas County Economic development director, a county economic development officer, and the senior planner responsible for developing policy for the Regional Center were interviewed for this paper. The following were cited as primary barriers to implementing the Clackamas Regional Center Area Plan:

- The strong presence of automobile dealers along Canyon Road in the eastern portion of the Regional Center has proven a major obstacle to redevelopment consistent with the city objectives for the area. The high value placed on locating in the 'auto row' that has emerged in the Regional Center leads dealers to outbid other prospective users, dramatically reducing the potential for more intensive, mixed-use development.
- Convincing property owners that intensification will lead to much greater long-term profits has proven difficult. The city's vision for the area, in which the center becomes a vibrant civic center through iterative redevelopment, has been difficult to successfully convey to developers and owners alike. The mixture of small and fiscally conservative property owners in the district creates a long-term implementation challenge.
- At both a regional and local level, a perceived tension between natural resource preservation and intensified urban development has often led to a lack of emphasis on urban development. In the case of Beaverton Regional Center, this is exemplified in the region's insistence that a 200 foot boundary be set around a creek that runs through the center, limiting the development potential of a portion of the district and dampening the prospect of creating a continuous urban network.
- The fear of urban environments pervading the residents of the Metropolitan area limits the potential for places such as Regional Centers, which are anathema to the dominant

cultural ethos and lifestyle of the region.

- The availability of inexpensive greenfield sites, particularly in Hillsboro, reduces the ability of the Regional Center to compete for a variety of forms of new development, particularly offices.
- A lack of funding for local transportation improvements slows the pace of needed streetscape and circulation improvements in the area.

The Beaverton Contingency Plan

The City of Beaverton's 1996 Comprehensive Plan and subsequent development code provides a strategy of simultaneously promoting intensive redevelopment of the city's Regional Center while continuing to permit low-density office park and large format retail development in internally oriented, automobile-oriented sites. Under the development code, the City of Beaverton provides ample opportunity for new office parks. More than 52 acres of vacant land sit ready for development adjacent to existing Class A office space in the Campus Industrial zones throughout the city, creating the capacity for 3.3 million square feet of space under current standards. The cluster of office parks to the north of the regional center is home to major corporations such as IBM (Walker Road) and Nike, offering a better reputation and simpler development process than the Regional Center. Space for large format retail is provided in commercial zones along arterials outside of the Regional Center. The financial ramifications of limiting development outside of Regional Centers could be overwhelmingly negative for the City of Beaverton, but such a move would clearly improve the competitive position of the Regional Center – which, unlike the Regional Town Centres in Vancouver, is not clearly differentiated from stand-alone office and office park developments due to its low-density character, lack of urban amenities, and limited amount of residential development.



4.6 Case Study Two: Clackamas Regional Center

In contrast to the five other case studies considered in this paper, Clackamas Regional Center is located on unincorporated county land. Clackamas County stretches across the southeastern portion of metropolitan Portland, bounded to the west by the Eastside of the City of Portland, to the north by the Columbia River and Washington State, and to the southeast by the Urban Growth Boundary. The unincorporated area in the northeast section of the county developed as a working class suburb to the City of Portland in the decades following World War II, growing in a largely uncoordinated pattern of small single family housing tracts, strip malls and industrial facilities. To serve a growing population, a group of higher amenity facilities, such as the Kaiser Hospital and the Clackamas Town Center Mall, were built in the vicinity of the Interstate 205 and Sunnybrook Road interchange in the 1970s. The mall is the second largest shopping center in the region and the commercial hub for its southeast section. While the completion of the Interstate

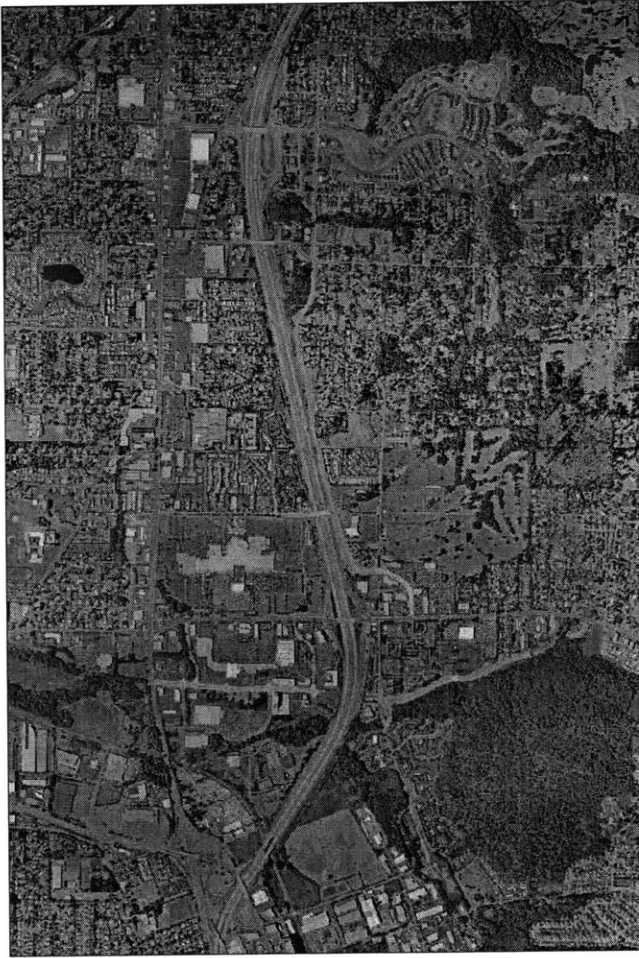


Fig. 4.19. Current aerial photo of Clackamas Regional Center. (Metro)

in the late 1970s physically separated the district, it provided the regional access required for significant economic development. In the years that followed, a series of offices were built in the area to accommodate corporate back offices taking advantage of highway access and the growing concentration of workers in the region's southeastern suburbs.

The State of Oregon made Tax Increment Financing (TIF) available to local governments in 1961 – enabling local governments to designate redevelopment areas in which all incremental increases in assessed property value are transferred to a development agency for the purpose of attracting economic development to the area through investment, planning and physical improvements.

To take advantage of the potential for redevelopment on low-density commercial parcels in the emerging center around two Interstate 205 exits,

Clackamas County designated a vast 2,156 acre area a tax increment finance urban renewal district in 1980. The County transportation and development department took responsibility for creating land use, transportation and economic development plans for the district. In 1980, the department adopted a plan and ordinance for the district promoting medium density commercial uses in a core surrounding the mall and along major streets, as well as a variety of residential and commercial uses in an outer ring. Pedestrian access and a high quality public realm were also promoted, although buildings were not required to approach the sidewalk or meet other rigorous design guidelines. Zoning for the district did not permit vertical mixed use, and capped maximum Floor to Area ratios at 1.0. These density levels were relatively high for suburban Portland, but attracting intensive, human scale development proved difficult. The county transportation and development agency utilized its financial leverage to assemble key development sites and build new roads through the district to increase capacity for automobile

travel. Throughout the 1980s, strip commercial development continued to concentrate in the urban renewal district, typified by 'big box' retail replacing less intensive local-serving retail along 82nd street, and two to four story freestanding offices to the East of the freeway and south of Sunnybrook Avenue. In 1989, the county development agency participated with developers in building a horizontally mixed-use development along Sunnybrook Avenue featuring 281,000 square feet of private sector office, 73,000 square feet of county offices, and 137 hotel rooms. Population density also increased in the area with the completion of a multi-family housing complex to the west of the mall. With the Clackamas Town Center mall acting as a nucleus, the district developed as the economic and civic center for a surrounding subregion with few public spaces and almost no intensive commercial development. In retrospect, one Clackamas County planner cited the elimination of smaller roads and the permission of large, unbroken blocks as the primary errors in the county's approach to development in the area, leading to a poorly defined, sometimes hostile, public realm.

The Clackamas Center Urban Renewal District had emerged by the early 1990s as a logical location for a sub-region serving center in the 2040 Growth Concept. Unlike the historic downtowns of Hillsboro and Beaverton, Clackamas Regional Center had already begun to serve as a true node for subregional economic activity, growing at a faster rate than any other business center in Metropolitan Portland. A number of large vacant parcels remained in the center, as well as ample opportunities for redevelopment. As an unincorporated area, the site faced fewer local political constraints as well. The primary disadvantages facing Clackamas Regional Center included a more remote location than many of the other centers, the limited buying power and educational attainment of the surrounding low to moderate income population, and a lack of public transit access. Although the 2040 Growth Concept illustrated a desired rail line linking the center and its surroundings with downtown Portland and other Regional Centers, the design and funding of the line had not solidified prior to the adoption of the Framework Plan. When placed before voters, ballot initiatives to pay for the line were rejected three times.

Clackamas County officials expressed few strong reservations about the required scale and density of development associated with Regional Center designation. The population and employment projections and streetscape requirements included in the plan were met with concern, but the County was generally supportive of the location of a Regional Center in its Urban Renewal District. Regional planners and Metro councilors were initially concerned about promoting the center because of its unincorporated status and proximity to the eastern urban growth boundary, despite its excellent transportation access and existing economic base. In the view of one county planner responsible for land use policy in the district, the Growth Concept

reinforced, and possibly accelerated, the approach that the County intended to take in the Center's long-term development. The plan placed pressure on the county to require structured parking, taller buildings, increased parcel coverage, and enhanced urban design. The center played a key role in the county's economic development strategy. Following repeated ballot initiatives limiting the ability of Oregon local governments to raise property taxes and conduct levies, intensified development in Clackamas Regional Center represented one mechanism for bolstering the county tax base without affecting residents.

The County initiated a three-year public involvement process in 1994 bringing together residents of surrounding communities, landowners, and local businesspeople to discuss the future of the center. Convincing residents of the value of higher densities proved difficult. The historically rural, low-density character of the county led many residents to grow suspicious of efforts to impose a new urban image on the site. When a rendering of the site by Calthorpe Associates commissioned by Metro was presented to community members, the reaction was so overwhelmingly negative that county planners decided not to bring Peter Calthorpe to public meetings. A campus-like sequence of three to four story buildings arrayed along processional public spaces, intended to help residents visualize an urban center consistent with the 2040 growth concept, was widely perceived as an affront to local character and lifestyle (Interview C-1). The Framework Plan also fueled local concerns regarding density. In addition, owners of businesses and land in the Regional Center expressed concern at the maximum parking ratios included in the plan, which in the case of office development were dramatically lower than prevailing ratios. (3.2 per 1000 square feet in the plan as compared to 4 per 1000 in practice). In response to these concerns, county planners explored staged approaches to intensifying the scale of development in the center.

A 1998 Clackamas county plan articulating the collective vision of county officials, members of the public, and Metro representatives cast Clackamas Regional Center as the dominant economic, cultural, civic and transportation center for the Eastside of Metropolitan Portland, providing a diversity of residential options and public attractions to serve both the existing community and region (Clackamas County 1998). In similar fashion to Surrey in Greater Vancouver, the plan projects a vision for a nascent, albeit more cautionary, downtown for a growing sub-region without a strong civic and economic nucleus. The principles guiding the Clackamas Regional Center Area Plan that emerged from the process included: making a gradual transition toward higher densities; rationalizing parking, improving circulation and connections, increasing the center's visual identity, creating civic spaces, providing a range of housing types, capitalizing on a prospective light rail connection, defining districts and neighborhoods, and insuring a safe,

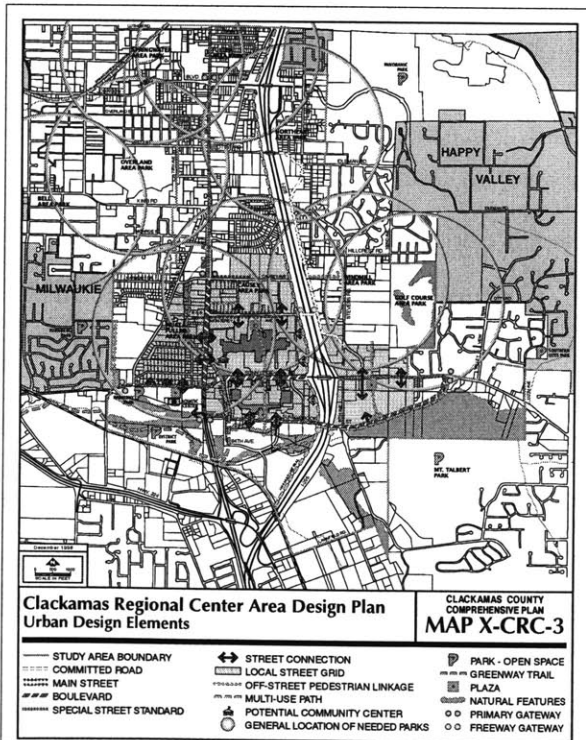
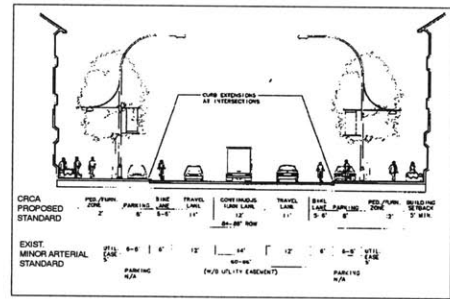
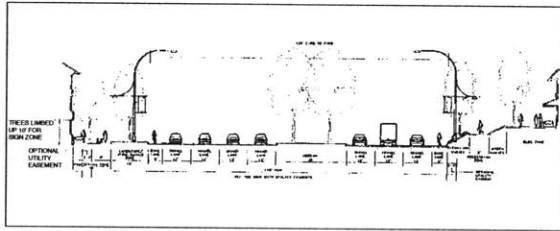
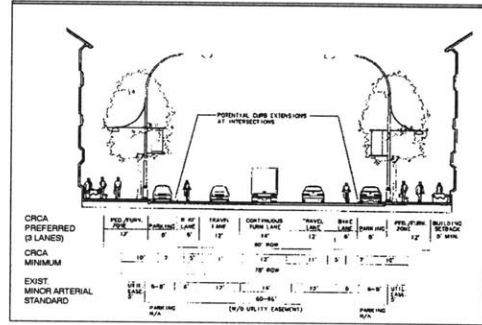
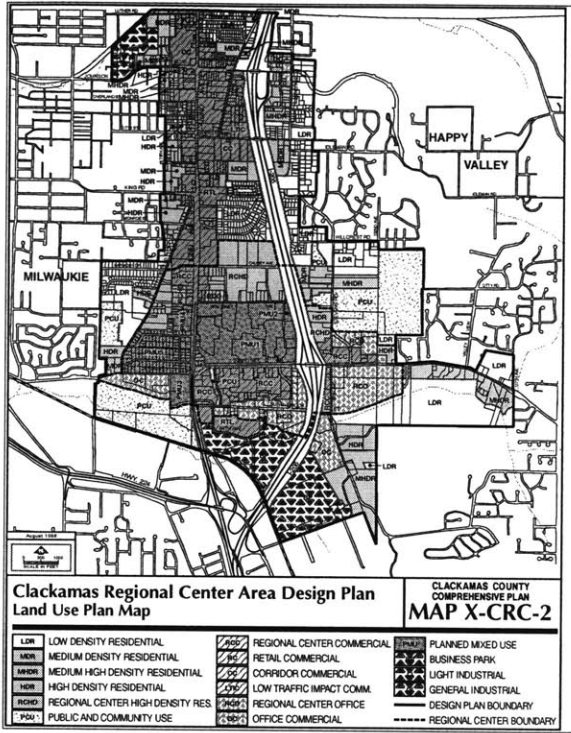


Fig. 4.20-4.24. Development and regulatory concept for Clackamas Regional Center. Clockwise from top right, sections of streets envisioned in the county's plan for the district (4.20-4.22), urban design elements of plan (4.23) and land use strategy (4.24). (Clackamas County)

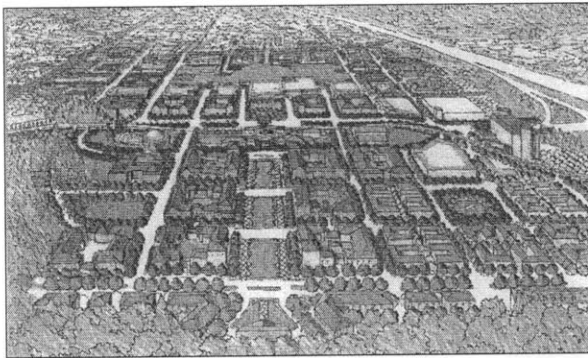
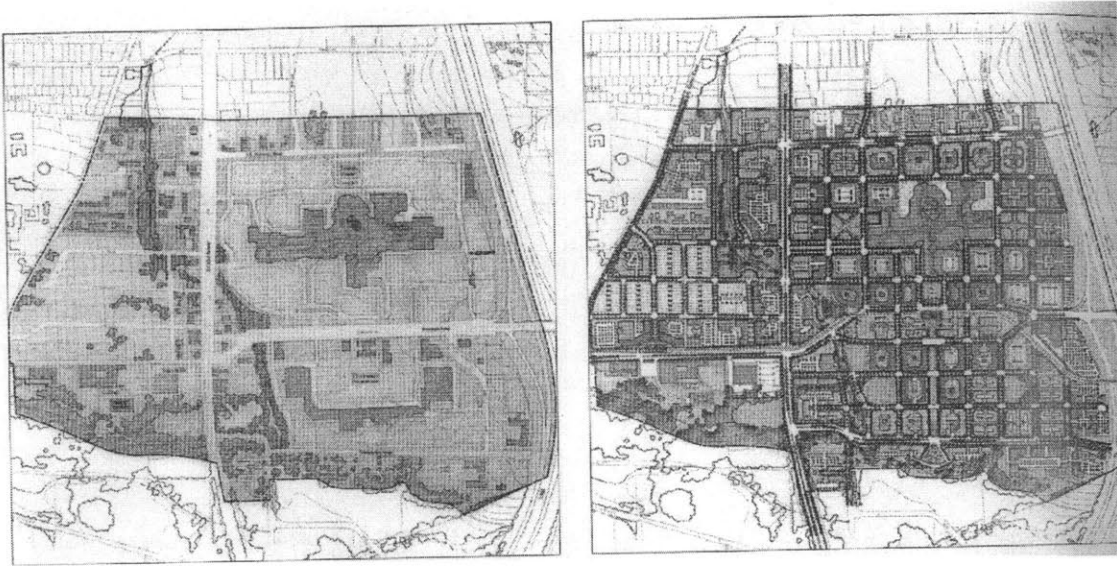


Fig. 4.25-4.28. Proposed urban design strategy for Clackamas Regional Center by Calthorpe Associates. Clockwise from top right, proposed development concept for the center (4.25), aerial shot of center as it exists today (4.26), aerial of same area with proposed interventions (4.27) and existing conditions (4.28). According to County officials, the plan was very poorly received. (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001, Clackamas County).

behind this approach is to slowly guide the market toward the densities anticipated in Regional Centers by first accumulating the critical mass of office development needed to support higher land values and subsequently higher densities. Similar interim provisions were adopted for retail and residential development.

The plan conceptually divides the Regional Center into five distinct areas: a mixed-use district centered on the Clackamas Town Center mall; a corridor of commercial and residential development along the existing commercial spines of 82nd Avenue and Sunnyside Road; a planned Class A office district around the interchange of Interstate 205 and Sunnybrook Road; a band of multifamily districts at the edges of the center; and an industrial cluster at the southern edge of the site. The Clackamas Town Center Mall is targeted for the most intensive redevelopment, zoned

as a public mixed-use district. To insure that mall ownership creates a setting consistent with the County's vision for the 100 acre mall site, the plan requires that any redevelopment scheme must incorporate at least 545,000 square feet of class A office, 600 housing units, and 200 hotel rooms, as well as stipulating that the scheme create a street presence along Monterey Avenue at the northern edge of the site, and provide convenient pedestrian connections throughout. Six potential street connections are identified to break the parcel into nine distinct blocks. This design and development district was crafted through extensive consultation with the mall owner, who deemed it the most realistic of three potential intensification scenarios generated by county planners. Three other planned mixed use districts are designated west of the mall across 82nd Avenue in an effort to promote a continuous public realm around the north and west edges of the mall. The area to the north of the mall is zoned for mixed use, with streetscape improvements identified in the plan required along Monterey and 82nd Avenues. The area to the immediate south of the mall is zoned for retail commercial and office. Minimum densities, required for Regional Centers under the 1997 Framework Plan, are 0.3 in mixed use zones, and 10 to 30 units per acre in various residential zones. The county requires maximum setbacks of 20 feet throughout the regional center, but does not specify a maximum FAR, building height, or parcel coverage. In portions of the site outside of the Regional Center, the plan aims to create an enhanced public realm through the requirement of streetscape improvements such as sidewalk widening and tree planting during redevelopment. A design plan for the area emphasizing street orientation, inviting corners and transparent first-floor facades, serves as an overlay guiding all development in the district.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

Since 1997, the Regional Center has attracted 101,000 square feet of office space, little more than 7,000 square feet of new retail floorspace, and 61 residential units – the vast majority in a 58 unit multi-family development north of the mall. 244 of these units were provided through an agreement between the development agency and the county housing authority to produce a cluster of moderately priced apartments immediately north of the mall. Retail development has tended to follow the pattern set in the 1980s and 1990s – large format stores located behind a large expanse of surface parking. Office development has been better oriented toward the street, with parking either located along the side of buildings or partially submerged beneath buildings.

The limited amount of development that has taken place since adoption of the plan in 1998 has been scattered throughout the site, with no clear nucleus yet to emerge. This is primarily a reflection of the stagnant local economy rather than any perceived site constraints on the part of developers. The owners of Clackamas Town Center Mall, a conservative pension fund, are currently in the process of proposing a large-scale redevelopment of the site. The plan includes all of the elements required by the city, but phased in over a five to ten year period, depending

upon the intensity of market demand for different products. The first phase of the project, scheduled for completion in October 2005, will extend the mall to the edge of the sidewalk along Monterey Avenue, completing a piece of the county's vision for a pedestrian-oriented corridor along this street and 82nd Avenue to the northeast of the current mall. The phase will include 244,000 square feet of retail space. An extension of the Eastside Max through Clackamas Regional Center is currently in the design phase and scheduled to begin operation as early as 2008. The station is planned for the southern portion of the mall parking lot, creating a challenge for bringing riders through the site to the pedestrian-oriented zone along Monterey Avenue to the north. The creation of three new streets through the mall will likely assist in enhancing circulation around the station and throughout the core of the Regional Center

It is far too early to assess implementation of the Clackamas Regional Center Area Plan. However, analysis of broader regional economic trends and the process leading to the plan's adoption suggests that the site is poised for development consistent with the plan. Among the Portland area Regional Centers considered in this study, Clackamas Regional Center appears the most capable of successfully serving its surrounding subregion. Despite regional concerns about the lack of a municipal planning process, the absence of entrenched local interest similar to Hillsboro and Beaverton may assist the emergence of the center as a true civic and economic nucleus for the Eastside of greater Portland, providing amenities and public spaces currently unavailable to its residents. The rezoning process, for example, did not appear to be heavily influenced by particularistic, individual concerns of business or land owners. Developments approved since the plan's adoption appear consistent with its requirements and objectives. The decision to permit interim uses at lower densities than required in the regional plan along the edges of the site may further delay the creation of an attractive public realm throughout the center, but may also hasten the redevelopment of sites that currently harm the image of the district – spurring more intensive redevelopment.

Barriers to Implementation

The Clackamas County Economic development director, a county economic development officer, and the senior planner responsible for developing policy for the Regional Center were interviewed for this paper. The following emerged from these interviews as primary barriers to implementing the Clackamas Regional Center Area Plan:

- Real Estate investor confidence in mixed-use development in suburban automobile-oriented locations such as Clackamas Regional Center remains limited, delaying the redevelopment process required for creating the space envisioned in the plan.

- County expectations remain ‘ahead of the market.’ The County is faced with the dilemma of either scaling back its expectations and permitting development inconsistent with its long-term vision or potentially delaying its growth. Permitting interim uses in parts of the site is the preferred strategy, but this too has proven challenging.
- Achieving a ‘pedestrian friendly’ public realm has been difficult due to the dominance of auto travel in the area, as well as the slow pace of the redevelopment process through which planned streetscape improvements are completed.
- Developers have been resistant to implement the urban design guidelines set forth in the plan – particularly building to the parcel line and placing parking either behind buildings or in structures.

The Clackamas County Contingency Plan

The vast size of the Clackamas Regional Center allows the county to pursue multiple economic development strategies within the same planning area. An urban vision for the streets surrounding the Clackamas Town Center Mall is set within bands planned for business parks and retail stores to the north, south and eastern edges of the site. This strategy capitalizes on the transit orientation of the center’s core while permitting typically less intensive activities in more peripheral locations. Through redevelopment, these areas may become linked to the center and the station as streetscapes are enhanced and a continuous public realm linking nodes of activity emerges. On the other hand, permitting densities below 2040 Growth Concept requirements may exacerbate the dominance of automobiles in the district and delay the eventual transition toward a pedestrian friendly environment.

The County is clearly motivated by its own economic agenda as opposed to the regional interest, but has allocated only a limited amount of land outside of the center for office and retail development. In contrast to the cities of Beaverton and Hillsboro, office and retail are not permitted in the county’s industrial districts. A largely vacant 191 acre district south of the Regional Center employment area is zoned for office or light industrial use, benefiting from highway access and proximity to the existing nucleus of the regional center. While this district generates significant potential competition for the center, it carries the potential for long-term connection to the remainder of the center – unlike planned office areas in the other cities considered in this study. Although the County has not required that all new development coalesce in the regional center, it has created the possibility for the vast majority of new development

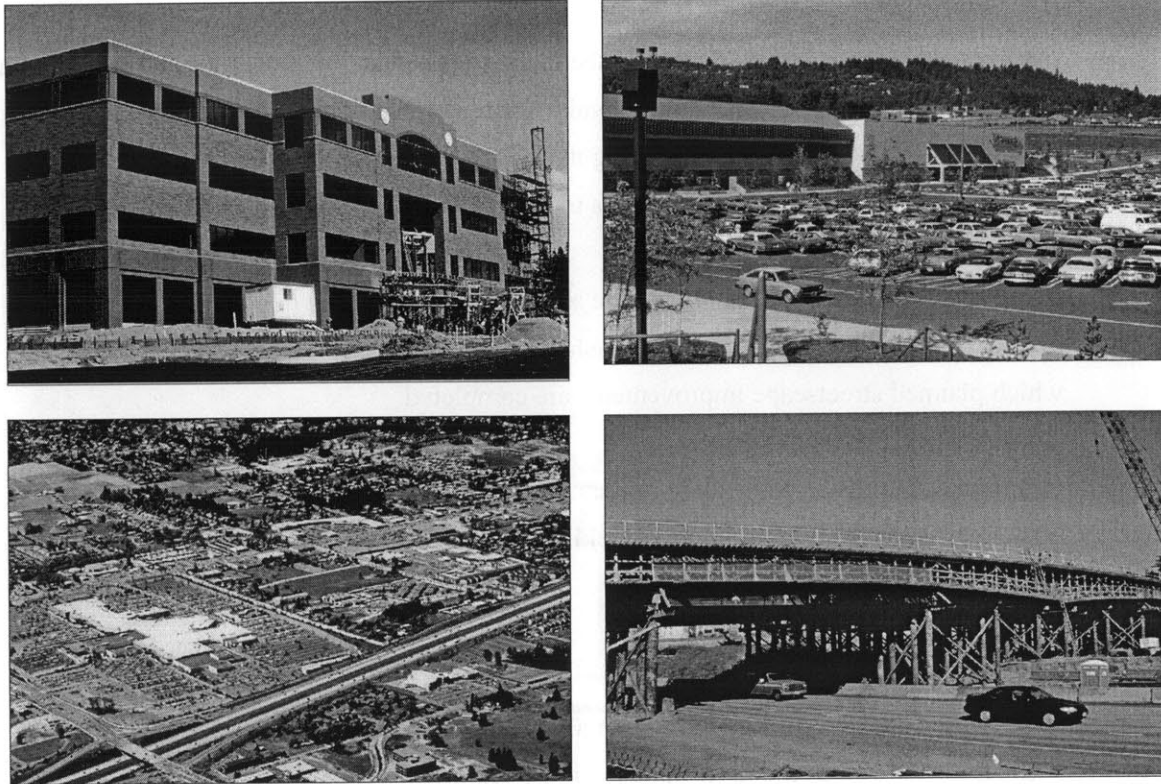
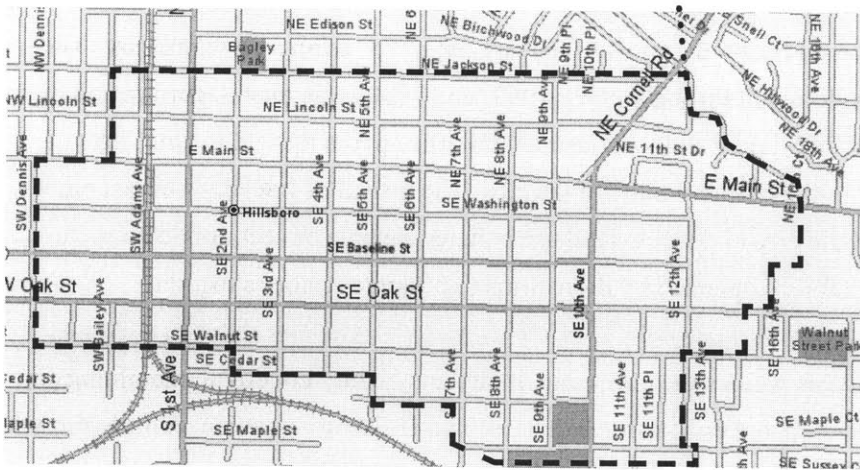
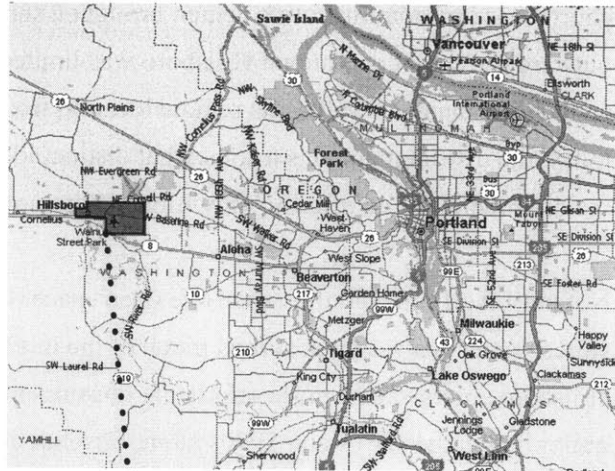


Fig. 4.29-4.33. Clockwise from top right, parking lot of Clackamas Mall (4.29), ongoing road construction in the Regional Center (4.30), aerial view of Regional Center (4.31), and one of two recently completed office buildings in the center (4.32). Low densities, dispersion of uses, and large block sizes are significant barriers tackled in the 1998 plan for the center. (Clackamas County)

to locate in the vicinity of a dense urban core, creating demand for its services and potentially



expanding its visual and physical sphere.

Case Study Three: Downtown Hillsboro

Located near the eastern border of the Urban Growth Boundary of metropolitan Portland, Hillsboro is a historically agricultural community that has developed rapidly in recent years into a working and middle class suburb of both single family homes and multi-family apartments. The seat of Washington County, Hillsboro was largely economically self-sufficient prior to the extension of State route 26 and other regional roadways through Portland's eastern suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s. The first urban settlement in Washington County, downtown Hillsboro served as the center for the surrounding area for decades following its establishment in the late 19th Century. The downtown grew in a tight grid of 400 by 400 foot blocks from east to west, bounded by the Union Pacific rail line. The district served as a Main street, professional services center and multi-family housing cluster for the surrounding agricultural communities. Main Street developed as the district's primary core, attracting movie theaters, restaurants and specialty shops during the first two decades of the 20th Century. Several large county buildings, including a

courthouse and administrative center, brought a substantial daytime population into the area. The outward growth of downtown Hillsboro was limited by its proximity to fertile agricultural land and a flood plain, as well as its remote location from the economic nucleus of Portland. Even today, the district maintains a somewhat distinct identity from the rest of Hillsboro, providing few major attractions and offering only limited automobile access.

Not until the 1970s did the expansive open spaces of Hillsboro begin to fill with residences and stores. After Beaverton absorbed much of the initial growth in the region's western suburbs, Hillsboro emerged as a more affordable housing option. Multi-family housing complexes multiplied in the 1980s and 1990s along Baseline Road and Tualitan Valley Highway, joined by strip shopping centers and scattered single-family cul de sacs. Like many other post World War II suburbs, the western and central sectors of the city did not develop a civic nucleus. The primary driver of new development throughout the 1980s and 1990s was manufacturing and high-technology firms, which found homes in the industrial and office parks located in close driving distance of State route 26 in the northern parts of the city. The arrival of Intel and several other large electronics firms led the city to develop land use policies capable of accommodating the flexible building configurations demanded by these firms to promote further clustering.

The linear shape of the city, as well as the clustering of city and county government buildings in the historic downtown, exacerbated this shortage. Downtown Hillsboro experienced little growth during the past four decades. New development has been dominated by public and institutional buildings, including a new county office complex along Main Street at the eastern end of the downtown and St. Mary's Hospital near the southern edge of the center. The City of Hillsboro did not view its downtown as a primary economic engine, a perspective reflected in zoning requirements permitting Floor Area Ratios of 0.5 in most parts of downtown and a limited amount of residential development. Detailed planning efforts were concentrated in the rapidly growing eastern sections of the city rather than in the downtown. The predominantly residential area to the west, although growing, was also not viewed as a hub for intensification.

The designation of a Regional Center in Hillsboro's historic downtown in the 2040 Growth Concept is viewed by Hillsboro planners as a primarily political decision that did not reflect the growth potential of the site relative to other locations in the city (Interview H-1, Interview H-2). Hillsboro sought an extension of the planned Westside Max light rail line to the cluster of Washington County buildings near the eastern edge of downtown. According to two Hillsboro planners, regional officials indicated that it would be difficult to justify extending the line without designating the station area a Regional Center. The planners argued that the economic potential

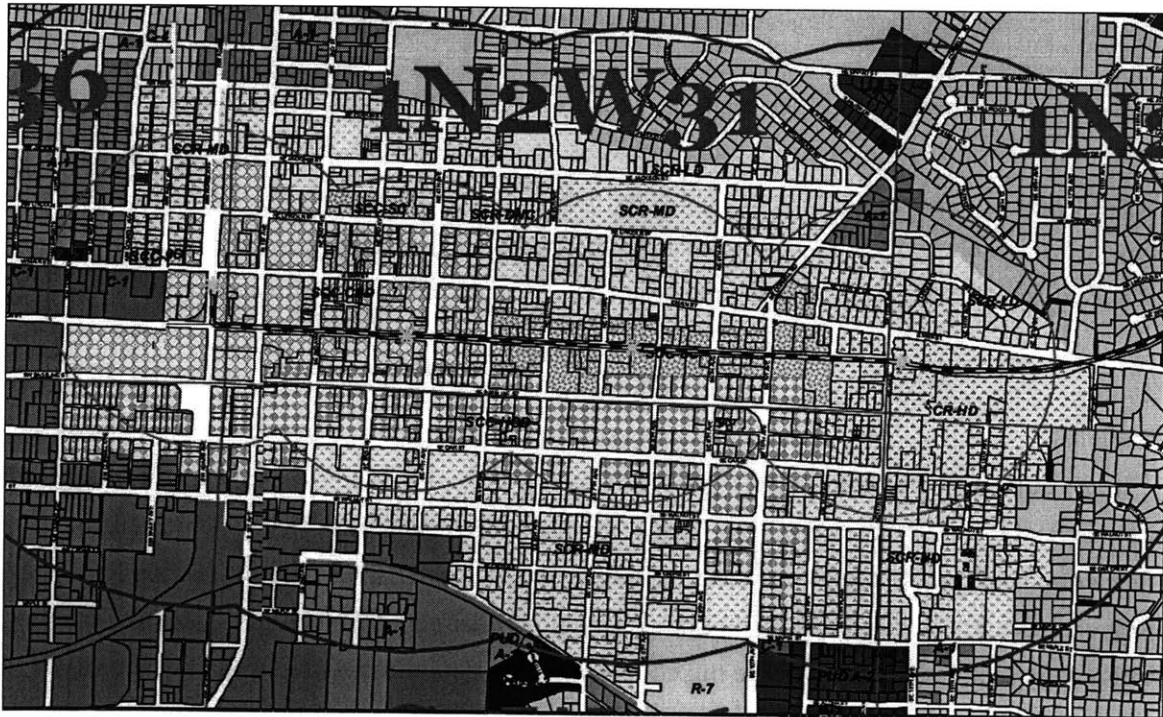


Fig. 4.34-4.35. Existing aerial image (4.38) and zoning (4.39) for Hillsboro Regional Center . Note the use of both 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile radiuses to define the catchment areas of the four light rail stations in the center. The area to the left is the historic downtown, slated for the most intensive development, while the area to the bottom and right is a low density residential environment targeted for incremental density increases. (Metro, City of Hillsboro)

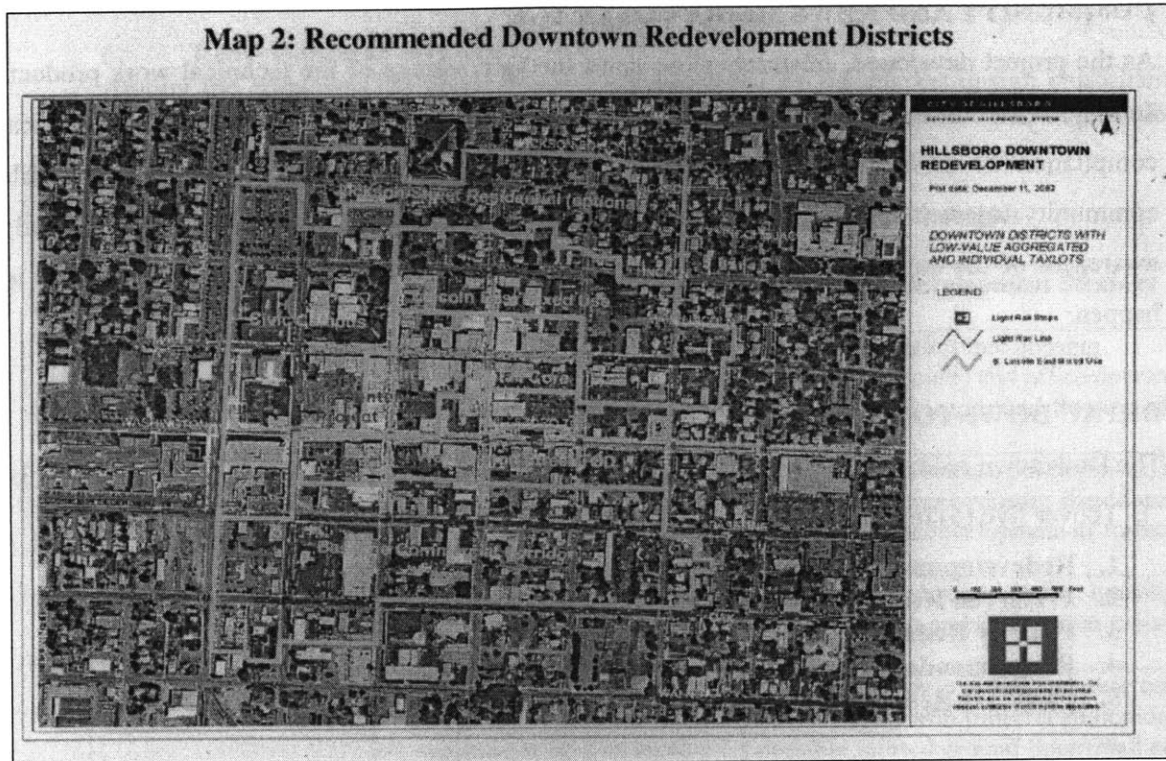


Fig. 4.46. Redevelopment districts recommended in a recent plan by the City of Hillsboro. The regulatory and land use strategies for the Regional Center, as well as its boundaries, were designated prior to rigorous analysis of the economic potential of the site. (City of Hillsboro)

of the downtown was constrained by the lack of an existing population center to the East, North or South, limits on future eastward and southward growth imposed by natural barriers and the growth boundary and limited opportunities for redevelopment. A high vacancy rate among the downtown's exclusively Class B office stock, an absence of vacant parcels and a fragmented pattern of small land holdings created additional barriers to intensifying the downtown.

To investigate the development potential of downtown Hillsboro relative the requirements of the Regional Center design type, the city commissioned a market study. The study projected that the district could not support the scale, density and mixture of redevelopment envisioned for Regional Centers in the 1997 Framework Plan. Many city planning staff viewed Tanasbourne, a district then dominated by greenfield sites near the city's western border, as a superior location for a Regional Center. Tanasbourne could draw on a much wider population base, as well as a growing technology sector, to develop as the mixed-use nucleus lacking in the western part of the city. While Tanasbourne benefits from convenient freeway access, it was not located within walking distance of the planned Westside Max alignment. In the late 1990s, plans emerged to build a mixed-use 'lifestyle center' in the district featuring nearly 400,000 square feet of upscale retail space along an outdoor street lining the interior of the project. Regional officials objected to the

idea of two regional centers in Hillsboro, and were also concerned about the transportation impacts of locating a center in a location away from already finalized alignment of the Westside Max. One Hillsboro planner claimed that a number of Metro planners privately supported the idea, but that regional officials were too afraid of admitting an error on the first Growth Concept to introduce a Regional Center at Tanasbourne.



Fig. 4.37-4.38. Sketches of forms of redevelopment envisioned for downtown Hillsboro in recent plan by the city.increases. (City of Hillsboro)

The downtown's Class B office space is occupied primarily by small professional services firms, with specialized medical cluster coalescing around St. Mary's Hospital. Fundamentally, city staff were skeptical of the polycentric Regional Centers model included in the Framework Plan due to high number of centers designated and the tacit assumption that access to rapid transit could spur intensive development in sites that had not already emerged as retail and office centers. City politicians and planners expressed broader concerns about the levels of population and employment growth and densities projected for the city as a whole – estimates that Hillsboro planners contend would have required the city to accommodate high-rise development inconsistent with the widely supported vision established in its Comprehensive Plan process during the mid to late 1990s. In the view of one Hillsboro planner, Metro did not perform the rigorous analysis required to test out the viability of its 2040 Growth Concept density requirements in the context of a fully or partially developed community. "This is after all a suburb," he argued, "and people move here because it is a suburb;" limiting not only the physical but political viability of adopting policies wholly consistent with regional planning objectives (Interview H-2). Despite this view, the city has oriented its long-range planning efforts around the development of both its Regional Center and station communities located along the Westside Max alignment – a corridor that emerged as an organizing feature for growth only after the light rail line was announced.

Although the city agreed to Regional Center designation for its downtown, Hillsboro's planners never expected the area to serve anything broader than a local market area.

Prior to its designation as a Regional Center, the city intended to plan downtown Hillsboro for infill development reinforcing the 'Main Street' commercial corridors along Oak and Baseline streets evocative of older American small towns. Based upon a parcel by parcel analysis of the city's growth capacity, Hillsboro negotiated with Metro to lower the population and employment growth expected in the next two decades, leading to a set of figures in the 1997 Framework Plan very different from those in the 2040 Growth Concept. Anticipated densities for the Regional Center were accepted by Hillsboro, despite the belief that they could not be achieved (Interview H-2).

In anticipation of the 1997 Framework Plan, the city rezoned both its historic downtown and the surrounding areas identified as part of the Hillsboro Regional Center in the city's comprehensive plan. As part of its city-wide rezoning process, the city applied a series of Station Community zones to areas within either walking distance or a short bus ride of the Westside MAX alignment. Reflective of its cautionary approach to the downtown, the Regional Center area is not even specially designated in the City's comprehensive plan map. Instead, the area is included among many other Station Community Planning Areas adjacent to light rail stations. Within the Regional Center, one unique zoning district was created – Station Community Commercial-Central Business District. This zone applied to the city's historic downtown core aims to create a "vibrant 18-hour activity window" in the are by promoting a mixture of hotels, offices, restaurants, health clubs, artist studios and second-floor residences in a pedestrian scale environment. Garden apartments, row houses, and townhomes are not allowed in this zone, articulating a desire for first floor retail consistent with the morphology of the district. Major institutional uses are also not allowed, reducing the potential for public sector investment in the area while indirectly promoting development outside of the center. The minimum Floor Area ratio for development in the Central Business District zone is 0.5 for the first phase of projects and 0.75 overall. While no maximum FAR is set, residential developments cannot exceed 60 units per acre. Buildings in the district must be between two and five stories tall to maintain the historic scale, and must be built to sidewalk edges. The remainder of the Regional Center was rezoned into districts utilized throughout the city. The area to the northeast of downtown was designated a preservation zone to protect it from new development, while the two block area on either side of the light rail alignment traveling west was designated a Station Community Commercial-Station Community, permitting a broad variety of commercial and mixed-use development with a minimum FAR of 0.5, building heights of 2-5 stories, and maximum residential densities of 38 units/acre. The area surrounding this zone, accounting for the majority of land in the Regional Center, is zoned for Station Community Residential-Medium Density, with a small area immediately surrounding a station zoned for Station Community Residential-

High Density. Both zones permit neighborhood serving retail at a minimum FAR of 0.5 and maximum heights of 5 stories in the high density zone and 3 stories in the medium density zone. Permitted densities are between 24 to 30 units/acre for the high density zone and 18-23 units/acre for the medium density zone.

It is noteworthy that the city did not engage in a separate planning process to cultivate a unique vision or policy framework specifically for its Regional Center. Instead, Hillsboro worked with consultants to develop a set of development scenarios for six key parcels throughout the downtown to identify the existing limitations to the form of development envisioned in the city-wide plan. Reinforcing earlier market assessments, the study found that current office rents and residential purchase prices for new space in the area would not produce sufficient profits to justify development. To stimulate downtown redevelopment, Hillsboro created a \$4 million Local Improvement District to improve streets, water and lighting downtown, and has considered land banking as a strategy to assemble the district's fragmented parcels for redevelopment. A new four-story civic center, planned to open in late 2004 across the street from the existing Washington County office building, will provide additional office space, 120 housing units, a 250 seat auditorium and two public squares, helping to define the western edge of downtown. The Hillsboro planning department is currently searching for a theme to guide an economic development strategy for its downtown. Railroad history and the area's agricultural character have both emerged as possible concepts for spurring redevelopment tailored to tourists and residents of other parts of the Metropolitan Area that could be drawn to the downtown by a combination of its small town atmosphere and a special attraction such as a museum. The historic core of downtown has also been considered as a site for amenities building upon its already human-scale streetscape to help make the city attractive to skilled workers and the high technology firms seeking them. The portion of the Regional Center to the west of downtown has not been the target of economic development activities, and is not viewed as part of a continuous space linked to downtown. In effect, this area is part of the Center for administrative purposes only.

Current Perceptions and Implementation

Since adoption of the Framework Plan, 22,000 square feet of retail floorspace, 19,000 square feet of office space and 99 new residential units have been completed in Hillsboro Regional Center, with the vast majority of new development scattered in locations outside of the Central Business District. All new construction has been comprised of small, freestanding buildings – nearly all of which have been built to the sidewalk's edge. Additional office space may have been created in existing buildings, as some owners retrofit retail shells to accommodate Class B and C space. The greater, more frequently cited, success of the city's comprehensive planning process has taken place in the western and central sections of the city. Hillsboro has benefited

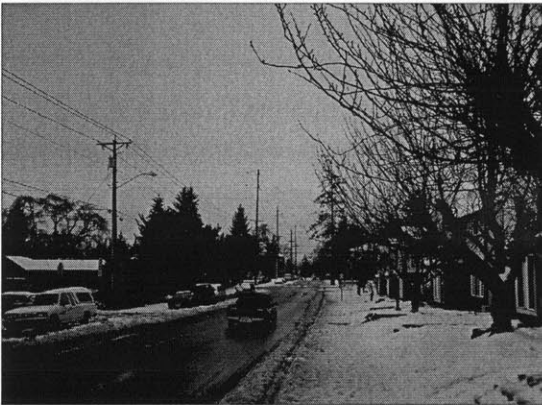
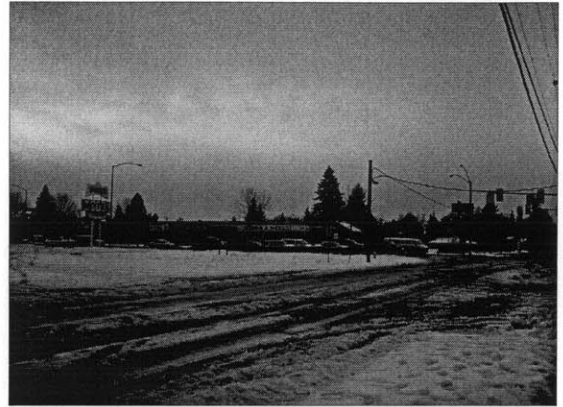


Fig. 4.39-4.43. Images of Hillsboro Regional Center today. Clockwise from the top right, a typical commercial street on the outskirts of the site (4.39), the alignment of the light rail line through the western edge of the center (4.40), a rendering of the civic center currently under construction (4.41), a typical residential street (4.42), and historic Main Street (4.43). (Shorett, City of Hillsboro)

from pent up demand for high-amenity residential and commercial development in the western suburbs embodied in the success of large mixed-use projects such as Orenco Station and The Streets at Tanasbourne. The Regional Center has not developed a clear economic identity, and has no emergent niche has appeared to define its future direction. Consistent with both city and real estate market expectations, the center appears to have few opportunities for development in the near future – due to the availability of more conveniently located sites elsewhere in the region. New development does, however, appear to have contributed to the quality of design in the district.

Barriers to Implementation

The City of Hillsboro Planning Director and the City counsel/senior planner were interviewed for this paper. The following were cited as primary barriers to implementing the Clackamas Regional Center Area Plan:

- The owners of downtown land typically do not have the capital or business acumen to invest in extensive improvements or pursue land assembly strategies.
- The Regional Planning policies that have circumscribed much of the planning for the Regional Center did not include sufficient input from non-planners, particularly developers and real estate investors.
- Metro requirements for Regional Centers are simply inconsistent with the development potential of Downtown Hillsboro, leading to development policies that may be too far 'ahead of the market' to be viable.

The Hillsboro Contingency Plan

Region 2040 and the 1997 Framework Plan appear to act primarily as administrative requirements for Hillsboro, exerting little influence the underlying principles informing planning policy in Hillsboro. The city's Comprehensive Plan reflects this orientation by adjusting the design types introduced in regional plans to meet local economic development and land use goals. The 'station community' design type, for example, is defined liberally in many of the city's station community zones to encompass an area within 5,200 feet of a transit station – four times longer than the convenient walking distance typically used to define transit-oriented development, and twice the half mile distance specified for this design type in the Framework plan. Despite this obvious violation of regional policy, Metro accepted Hillsboro's compliance plan without requesting that this distance be changed. To accelerate the growth of high-technology and other firms requiring large floorplates and flexible sites, Hillsboro provides a broad array of opportunities for new office development in its Comprehensive Plan and accompanying zoning by-law. A sequence of Station Community – Office Park, and Station Community – Corporate Campus zones buffer a three mile portion of the Westside Max alignment through Hillsboro. These zones permit office development at low densities and only a limited mixture of uses. Office development is also permitted in general commercial, and industrial zones in remote locations with limited, if any, transit lines.

One Hillsboro planner emphasized that the city's overriding objective is not to promote the objectives identified in the regional plan, but rather to promote economic development (Interview

H-1). According to this planner, the city would consider altering its current zoning if it appeared inconsistent with market demand. In addition to providing ample space for diffuse office park development, the city has dispersed its hopes for urban growth into three primary centers and a score of mixed-use station communities arrayed along the 9 Hillsboro stops on the Westside Max. During an interview, Hillsboro's planning director diagrammed the city's vision of a triangle of urban centers with the historic downtown anchoring the Eastern core, Tanasbourne holding down the Northwest, and a currently undeveloped area without transit access known as Three Sisters emerging in the Southeast. This strategy should not be surprising to anyone given the city's repeated assertion of its independence from the planning objectives of Metro. Unlike many of the other local governments considered in this study, Hillsboro presents no preconceptions of targeting its Regional Center as a primary node for intensive development. Downtown Hillsboro, with its limited capacity for redevelopment, is a very small hedge against the possible failure of the array of office park, entertainment, large format retail, and medium to high density retail development opportunities elsewhere in the city.

Chapter Five: Questioning Polycentric Growth Management

5.1 A Model in Need of Critical Assessment

The experience of suburban local governments in Vancouver and Portland attempting to promote sub-regional centers suggests that local implementation of a regional polycentric growth management has proven challenging, even under some of the most supportive conditions in North America. The inability of many centers to attract forms of development supported by regional consensus, transportation investment, and local zoning calls into question the validity of the assumption that cooperative regional/local policy can achieve a tangible physical alternative to suburban sprawl.

Before speculating about broader ramifications for the application of the emerging polycentric regional growth management model, it is useful to review the implementation of Regional Center and Regional Town Centre plans in Portland and Vancouver. This analysis attempts to answer the first question guiding this research: To what extent have sub-regional centers in Greater Vancouver and Metropolitan Portland developed into the physical and civic spaces envisioned in regional and local plans?

5.2 Measuring Progress Toward a Polycentric Region

The three case studies chosen to investigate the local application of polycentric regional growth management in Greater Vancouver have been planned as intensive sub-regional centers for at least two decades, although the approach to planning one of the centres has shifted during this period. This window of time, spanning a number of economic booms and political shifts, created the opportunity to compare actual physical development in the case study centres against municipal plans. Because local plans for Portland's Regional Centers were adopted between 1998 and 2000 and followed by an economic downturn, it is too early to elicit any firm findings from a comparison of planned versus actual development on these sites. However, initial trends can be assessed to explore emerging challenges and possibilities for implementing local and regional objectives for the centers.

Physical planning objectives for each Regional Center and Regional Town Centre can be roughly divided between *residential*, *office* and *retail* development, as well as *civic infrastructure* providing public facilities and amenities, and the overall *public realm* created by the combination of these different elements on the site. Within each of these categories, development outcomes can be compared with local plans to identify barriers to implementation, as well as future opportunities.

When considering the impact of regional policy on local land use decisions and development trends, it is important to note that local Regional Town Centre plans in Greater Vancouver were not supported by any official regional land use strategy before 1980, or between 1983 and 1996. Regional plans in Greater Vancouver have played a stronger role in framing an approach to local planning than directly influencing the content of local plans. An important event in the development of Regional Town Centres was the completion of a rapid transit connection between Vancouver to Metrotown and Downtown New Westminster in 1986, and an extension of this line to Surrey City Centre in 1992. Portland's Regional Centers, in contrast, are codified into a regional land use law specifying densities, parking ratios and mixture of uses. Perhaps more importantly, the region's land use code defines Regional Centers in relation to other suburban areas by permitting more intensive, varied uses in centers than other locations. Portland's regional government is still in the process of determining which regulatory mechanisms are appropriate for activating the physical development of Regional Centers.

Greater Vancouver: Planned Development versus Actual Development

Local plans for Regional Town Centres have been implemented with mixed success. The variety of location, transportation access, and market position among the region's eight centres creates an often unique set of challenges for local governments. The initial experience of first three planned Regional Town Centres help illustrate the impacts of long-range planning, civic support and market demand on the relative success of centre plans.

Residential Development

A critical component to each of the Regional Town Centre plans in Greater Vancouver reviewed in this study has been achieving dense residential communities to both animate the public realm and support civic and regional facilities and transportation investments. Each of the Regional Town Centres considered has emerged as a relatively attractive location for mid and high rise residential development. In Downtown New Westminster, developers have taken advantage of water views and transit access to convert industrial sites into thousands of new condominium units. The total population and population density of the city's Regional Town Centre have grown at rates far in excess of the regional or local averages – despite the fact that most of the centre is almost completely built out. This development is generally consistent with the vision articulated in the 1981 First Capital City Plan produced by the British Columbia Development Corporation, as well as subsequent city plans for the district. Consistent with a 1977 municipal plan for the centre, the edges of Burnaby's Metrotown have continued to attract 'point' condominium or apartment towers designed to maximize views of the surrounding region and an adjacent park.

Metrotown is now home to more than 25,000 residents at a total density of approximately 23 units per acre – second in the region only to downtown Vancouver. Planners responsible for the center’s long range planning have been surprised at the intensity of residential demand, which has led the city to reconsider the balance between residential and commercial development currently envisioned for the centre to permit a greater proportion of residential development. Even Surrey City Centre, considered one of the least attractive residential settings in the region, has succeeded in drawing a score of recent development proposals for medium and high density multi-family housing. In the decade since a plan was adopted to guide its development, however, the centre has grown at a slower rate than the rest of Surrey due in part to image problems and lack of investor confidence.

Patterns of residential development in the case study centres considered in this report presaged larger patterns throughout the region’s more recently planned town centres. Collectively, the population of Regional Town Centres grew at twice the rate of the region as a whole in the five years following the adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan, with only one centre growing at a rate slower than the regional average. Despite comprising only a fraction of the region’s land base, Regional Town Centres accounted for 13 percent of total population growth during this period. Growth was well distributed throughout the region’s centres, with no apparent relationship between distance from the regional core and rate of growth. The designation of medium and high density zoning districts accommodating intensive residential development by local governments has facilitated this process. Current trends suggest that ground-oriented two to four story townhouses and high-rise condominiums may begin to outbid other uses for land in these centers. This is the result of both a strong residential market, limited opportunities for new housing on the region’s fringe, and the relative lack of demand for competing commercial uses in the centres – a phenomenon discussed later in this section.

Another notable aspect of recent residential development in Regional Town Centres is the spatial association between transit stations and new residential construction. Transit ridership among town centre residents is considerably higher than residents of other parts of the region – both in locations with Skytrain, express bus, and regular bus service – suggesting an obvious synergy between transit and new housing in RTCs (Translink 2002). Very little development has taken place directly around Skytrain stations, which are relatively quiet, but create visual impediments and are perceived by some developers as safety risks. Major bus lines serving centres without Skytrain access are typically bounded by commercial streets without a residential component. The vast majority of new residential construction in centres has taken place several blocks away from transit stations and stops, along quiet streets with little, if any, commercial activity. This

may be partly the result of local planning policies separating town centres into distinct use districts, but also to hesitance about locating homes in mixed-use environments adjacent to major rail or road rights of way. Residential development has taken place at relatively high densities within centres, typified by Floor Area Ratios of between 1.5 and 3, but the physical design of town centre housing has emphasized natural features on the ground floor and maximization of views on the upper floors. With the exception of several notable recent projects, new housing in the Regional Town Centres considered in this study have tended not to engage the urban fabric, suggesting the possibility that transit access has established itself as a catalytic force for residential development in the region, but that demand (whether perceived or actual) for visually urbane living in suburban centres may be limited.

Office Development

Perhaps the greatest disappointment in implementation of Regional Town Centre policy in Greater Vancouver is the lack of employment-generating development. Because employment densities are typically much higher in offices than in other commercial uses, offices are critical to creating the daytime populations required to reach the critical mass necessary to support a wide variety of economic and cultural activities in centres. Plans for each of the region's original three Regional Town Centres anticipated an influx of office development. The success of Burnaby Metrotown in attracting more than a million square feet of new office space by 1991 suggested that suburban office development might coalesce into the other nascent Regional Town Centres in the following decade. In 1990, before four of the eight centers had been planned for intensive development, Regional Town Centres accounted for 12 percent of all office space in the region, compared to 21 percent in automobile-oriented office parks. By 2001, the share of regional office space in town centres had fallen to 10 percent, while the proportion in office parks had grown to 30 percent. The vast majority of the 2 million square feet of new office space developed in Regional Town Centres since 1991 has been at least partially funded by public agencies. The official designation of four new Regional Town Centres has had no apparent effect on their attraction to employers and commercial real estate investors. Typically located along regional roadways on vacant parcels, business park sites offer less expensive land, superior auto access, larger parking facilities, greater control over the image of the surrounding area and more flexible building configurations than potential office sites in Regional Town Centres. The potential competitive advantages of Regional Town Centres over office parks include walking distance proximity to related and supportive businesses, access to daily conveniences, and a vibrant urban setting. In similar fashion to the region's more recent town centres, none of the original three Regional Town Centres considered in this study have emerged as identifiable clusters for a specific form of economic activity.

The concentrations of entertainment and high technology firms that formed in Greater Vancouver during the 1990s were either focused in specific business parks or distributed throughout the region. None of the region's town centres has become a high amenity urban setting with attractive streetscapes, public spaces and the broad mixture of activities that might give justify a premium over serene, yet sterile and secluded, office park environments. In addition to these challenges, many Regional Town Centres face persistent image problems. In particular, Surrey City Centre appears to suffer from malignant perceptions that it is unpleasant and even dangerous. Downtown New Westminster faces similar, albeit less intensive, negative perceptions. The potential of the region's more recently designated town centres for office development is limited by their typically more remote locations, lack of highway access and sparse surrounding populations. In general, long approvals processes marked by special permitting requirements may further limit the potential for office development in Regional Town Centres (Royal LePage 2002).

Retail Development

It is much more difficult to generalize about the apparent viability of Regional Town Centres as retail locations than sites for office or residential development. Prior to their designation as Centres, four of the region's Regional Town Centres were anchored by regional malls – including Surrey City Centre and Burnaby Metrotown. The malls in each of these centres has continued operation with a moderate to high level of success following the adoption of local land use strategies calling for greater intensification. Burnaby Metrotown has emerged as the premier retail location in the region following downtown Vancouver, continuing to draw massive mid-market shopping facilitated by rapid transit access and a central location. The human scale, street-fronting retail envisioned in the 1975 Livable Region Plan and scores of municipal plans for Regional Town Centres has generally failed to materialize. Recent development along the major commercial corridor of Metrotown has taken an increasingly pedestrian-oriented character, while recent projects in downtown New Westminster have incorporated a first-floor retail element reminiscent of the storefronts lining the downtown's pre World War II streets. Surrey City Centre has continued to attract primarily automobile-oriented retailers along the highway that travels through its core. Two of the region's five other RTCs have attracted a number of individual projects in the past several years featuring a podium of street-fronting retail with weather protection beneath residential towers. Although a continuous sequence of human scale storefronts has not developed in any of these centres, these trends suggest that such a streetscape may evolve through redevelopment.

Civic Infrastructure

A critical component of Regional Town Centre plans is the creation of civic spaces that both activate development and serve as central places organizing the shape of both the centre, the surrounding city, and the region. The level of civic amenities contributed by Burnaby, Surrey and New Westminster to their respective Regional Town Centres has varied dramatically. Burnaby has engaged in a comprehensive strategy of land assembly and density bonusing to create a public library, recreational complex, community center, cultural services office, daycare center and public plaza in Metrotown. These improvements were either identified in initial plans for the centre or introduced in response to community input into long range planning processes. New Westminster has located a number of key municipal facilities in its downtown, and has played a role in drawing provincial and regional institutions as well. The city has not, however, relocated any major offices or amenities near the waterfront. Since the adoption of the 1992 plan for Surrey City Centre, the City of Surrey has provided only minimal public investment to activate its Regional Town Centre. The public facilities envisioned in the 1992 plan simply have not been completed; the new public spaces and buildings that play a pivotal role in the life of the centre – the new City Centre tower and the Surrey City Centre transit transfer station - were all completed by the province or the regional government. Throughout the region, town centres have typically received levels of public investment more comparable to Metrotown than Surrey City Centre. Since the adoption of the LRSP, three new city halls have been completed within other Regional Town Centres, and the local governments of the two controversial Regional Town Centres added in the early 1990s have added mixed-use civic centres.

Public Realm

The general quality of the urban design of Vancouver's Regional Town Centres is widely perceived as low. In many centres, an inherited urban frame of superblocs, unbroken mall facades, and deep setbacks - combined with persistent fears of new forms of development and a lack of institutional capacity for formulating a comprehensive design framework – imposes significant barriers to creating the active public realms envisioned in plans and required to insure pedestrian comfort and access. The lack of quality design in Regional Town Centres does not necessarily represent a deviation from local planning policy. Metrotown has developed a particularly negative reputation due to the lack of visual and physical connections between the 1.6 million square foot mall that serves as its anchor, freestanding residential towers lining its periphery, and the inconsistent retail frontages along its primary commercial street. The 1977 Metrotown guideplan, still in place today, provides little control over many urban design elements such as building setbacks, façade articulation and pedestrian connections. The design of Surrey's Regional Town Centre, on the other hand, remains low both because of a lack of the new

development necessary to realize the design objectives of the 1991 plan for the centre and city policies requiring deep setbacks along the regional roadway that remains the district's commercial core. Downtown New Westminster has created an attractive waterfront promenade, but has been unable to connect this relatively isolated setting to the rest of the center – which benefits from an early 20th century pattern of small blocks and street fronting buildings, but has faced difficulty in creating a continuous pedestrian environment due to the persistence of vacant lots and a lack of interest in creating first floor retail. Despite these limitations, site visits to Regional Town Centres other than those considered in this study found several bustling with foot traffic due to the attraction of retail clusters, as well as the presence of significant civic facilities and dense residential communities. New development in one center has begun to address sidewalks, creating a truly urban streetscape for one to two blocks at a time.

Metropolitan Portland: Planned Development versus Actual Development

Portland Metro officials have indicated publicly that development in Regional Centers is taking place at densities below the minimum expectations codified in the Growth Concept and Framework Plan, with mixed-use comprising only a minimal proportion of new construction (Metro 2001). A 2001 study commissioned by the regional government found that small parcel sizes, a lack of vacant land, higher development costs, competition from more traditional suburban locations, uncertain financial returns, ongoing long-range policy development and environmental regulations inhibiting redevelopment reduced the development potential of Portland's Regional Centers (Ibid.). Zoning policies for regional centers were viewed as too far 'ahead of the market,' diminishing the potential for iterative redevelopment consistent with contemporary supply and demand (Ibid.). Metro may actually place regional centers at a competitive disadvantage through floodplain protection policies that disproportionately affect land within centers – accounting for as much as 50 percent of the land within three of the centers not considered in this study (Ibid.). These general findings are reflected in the limited initial physical development of the Regional Centers considered in this study. A closer look at each of the centers suggests that although these constraints are often apparent, the unique location, character, and planning approach to different centers may influence its success as an urban space.

Residential

Like the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the 2040 Growth Concept for Metropolitan Portland emphasized a mixture of uses in its planned suburban centers. The plan's objectives of providing a variety of housing options and creating attractive public realms are expected to be accommodated in large part within Regional Centers. The three centers analyzed in this paper have experienced varying levels of residential development, with very few new units completed in Clackamas, a promising major condominium development nearing completion in Beaverton,

and a scattered array of single and multi-family units built in Hillsboro. In comparison to even the slowest developing Regional Town Centres in Greater Vancouver, residential growth has been stagnant in Portland's Regional Centers. Proximity to the region's light rail alignment appears to be a driving force behind several recent or planned multi-family projects in both Beaverton and Hillsboro Regional Centers. The residential densities envisioned in the 2040 Growth Concept – between 23 and 40 units per acre – are consistent with recent multi-family residential construction in all of the centers. Minimum density requirements translate into more expensive housing products, requiring a market of buyers that may not yet exist in sufficient quantity to justify such development.

Office

Offices provide a critical source of the daytime population and customer base necessary to creating the '18 hour activity' desired by many of the municipalities in which Metropolitan Portland's Regional Centers are designated. In similar fashion to Vancouver, Metropolitan Portland has continued to struggle to bring offices into a more urban, mixed-use environment. Assessing the degree to which the office development envisioned in plans for the Regional Centers considered in this study has been achieved is complicated by the economic downturn that has slowed development since shortly after the completion of local plans for the centers. Virtually no new office development has taken place in Downtown Hillsboro, while one successful project has been completed adjacent to a light rail station in Beaverton Regional Center and Clackamas Regional Center has attracted close to 200,000 square feet of new office space since the adoption of the county's plan for the center. The 2002 Metro density study cited above suggests that the struggles of Hillsboro and Beaverton to attract new floorspace are more typical of Portland's regional centers than the relative success of Clackamas. The Metro study found that Regional Centers are currently unable to compete with office parks for many of the same reasons facing Greater Vancouver's Regional Town Centres: a lack of demand for the rents required to produce office space at the densities envisioned in regional centers, the prohibitive cost of structured parking, and ample, inexpensive land on greenfield sites. The report also noted forcefully that the number and location of regional centers – each of which is expected to accommodate intensive office development – is sharply inconsistent with observed and projected market forces. For instance, three Regional Centers are designated in what is effectively a *single* Eastside sub-regional office market adequately served by the cluster of offices located in Clackamas Regional Center (Metro 2002). Taking the report's finding a step further, designating two additional centers in the Eastside – even if moderately successful – is undesirable because it diminishes the potential for creating an agglomeration of office space capable of commanding the amenities required to create an urban alternative to suburban office parks. By creating too

many centers, the region curtailed the potential for even a single center conforming to the region's vision. In an effort to support the emergence of regional centers, the Metro Board is currently considering an amendment to the regional land use code that would limit the development of offices in industrial zones.

Retail

The Growth Concept is much less prescriptive in its vision for retail development in Regional Centers. Although a market area of approximately 100,000 is cited, the scale and character of actual retail facilities is not described in any detail. Reflecting existing conditions, both regional and local plans permit new large format retail along both commercial corridors and in Regional Centers. The large block sizes and excellent regional auto access of Beaverton and Clackamas regional centers make them strong ongoing locations for large retail facilities. Virtually no new retail has been completed in any of the three case study centers since the adoption of the Framework Plan. However, a planned expansion of the Clackamas Town Center Mall will mark one of the first urban scale retail projects in the Portland's Regional Center, bringing the existing mall to the edge of a street identified in local plans as a primary pedestrian corridor. New suburban retail development in the region has gravitated toward large, pre-assembled sites with the capacity to accommodate master planned projects. Developers in the Portland area appear reticent about creating truly urban development emphasizing street frontage or including ground floor retail because it is an unproven product type that will stand out from its surroundings until further similar development is completed. Perhaps the most visually urban retail development in the region over the past several years is being completed in a location that the Hillsboro unsuccessfully attempted to target as a Regional Center. One other new large-scale retail development, featuring small storefronts along outdoor promenades, was completed recently in a Regional Center without transit access located in the heart of an affluent residential district. The potential for developing a predominantly retail hub around transit, in similar fashion to Metrotown in Burnaby, may hold potential, but has yet to be explored outside of Clackamas County – where a similarly scaled mall was already in place.

Public Realm

Assessing the public realm of the Regional Centers included in this study is especially difficult given the brief period of time since the adoption of center plans by local governments and the limited amount of redevelopment that has taken place during this period. The only significant new development in Beaverton Regional Center is a first step toward a continuous, attractive streetscape linking light rail stations to the core of the center. Recent and proposed development in Clackamas Regional Center forms part of a long-term, staged approach to creating pedestrian

streets defined by commercial storefronts and offices. The early 20th century scale and grain of Hillsboro Regional Center set an attractive, continuous precedent for adaptive reuse of existing buildings and contextual development. The city's new civic center, noted above, creates a public gateway to the site from the transit station at the western terminus of the regional light rail line, as well as an active urban gathering place that was previously missing from the center. The dominance of large parcels occupied by automobile-oriented uses set back from the sidewalk in Beaverton and Clackamas Regional Center impose immediate constraints to developing a coherent public realm, but also provide an opportunity for rapid redevelopment when other uses become more economically viable than the car dealerships, service retailers, and restaurants that currently inhabit the landscape.

Civic Infrastructure

The placement of civic amenities – particularly uses that expand daytime population and create foot traffic, such as libraries, schools and public offices – provide an opportunity for local governments to activate slowly developing Regional Centers. In the several years since local Regional Center plans were adopted, Hillsboro has created the most significant civic amenities through the construction of a mixed use government, performing arts and office complex. Beaverton has created what the city hopes will be an eventual southern anchor to an attractive pedestrian street running through its Regional Center through the construction of a library and civic park. No major public facilities have been completed in Hillsboro, and only limited additional improvements are explicitly mentioned in Regional Center plans. By virtue of its unique financial powers, the Clackamas County Development and Transportation Department has been able to participate in a major redevelopment project, as well as fund significant road and streetscape improvements consistent with its 1999 Clackamas Regional Center Plan. A review of the metropolitan Portland's other Regional Centers revealed no other significant civic amenities similar to those built in Hillsboro or many of Vancouver's Regional Town Centres. The financial constraints imposed by recent Oregon ballot initiatives reducing property taxes, coupled with educational funding crises, limit the ability of local governments to justify expenditures on new public facilities. Given these circumstances, the contributions of Hillsboro and Beaverton to the streetscape and activity base of the cities' Regional Centers is notable. However, a failure to systematically prioritize Regional Centers for future civic expenditures can have the long-term consequence of allowing short-term political considerations to determine the location of public investments. Clear evidence of this is a comparison of Burnaby – which followed a plan that explicitly located sites for public investment, and Surrey – which relied upon anticipated private development for public improvements that have never been completed. Notably, none of the local governments reviewed has created any plans for locating schools inside Regional Centers.

5.3 Identifying Factors Affecting Implementation of Center Plans

Given the varying levels of implementation described above, it is worth attempting to identify factors affecting the achievement of Regional Center and Regional Town Centre plans. This section seeks to answer the second research question posed in Chapter One: What factors appear to influence the realization of the physical and civic development outlined in plans for the Centers of both regions? Realization of Center plans takes place at both the local and regional level. *Local implementation* involves physical and civic development consistent with specific standards (i.e. desired densities, mixture of uses, and urban design characteristics), while *regional implementation* involves the concentration of intensive new commercial activity into a coordinated network of Centers (as opposed to the diffusion of new activity into uncoordinated, typically automobile-oriented locations). However, it is dangerous to disentangle these two scales of implementation because regional dynamics are directly impacted by local land use decisions and development trends and *vis versa*.

Local

This study found that the following factors appear to influence the local implementation of Regional Center and Regional Town Centre plans.

Realistic assessment of existing and potential market demand. Perhaps the greatest, most obvious, factor determining local implementation is pre-existing or latent demand for intensified real estate development in a sub-regional center. Centers for which little demand exists have simply failed to materialize according to plans. This is, of course, heavily influenced by automobile and transit access, as well as proximity to the center of the region. Different factors influence individual sectors as well: retail demand is sensitive to surrounding demographics, while office demand is related to the location of skilled workers, and demand for the urban residential product suitable for centers hinges on the level of amenity within a center. The ability of local governments to either calibrate the planning of centers to *existing demand* or to *manipulate demand* based upon a realistic understanding of market forces is clearly a critical to effective implementation.

Size and scale of center planning districts. The size of the geographic area targeted for sub-regional centers, relative to demand of intensive development in a sub-region and municipal commitment to the center, may be critical to their success. The ideal center articulated in regional plans for both Vancouver and Portland is a pedestrian-oriented setting incorporating a diversity of

uses unified by some form of continuous streetscape. The scale at which this desired setting can be achieved in a suburban location with existing uses is unclear. With the exception of a master-planned community developed under single ownership such as Reston, Virginia, few precedents exist for a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented environment at the scale anticipated by nearly all of the plans for sub-regional centers in Portland and Vancouver Centers. In every case study considered in this paper, regional center boundaries were drawn prior to any rigorous economic analysis of the growth potential of the planning area. With the possible exception of New Westminster, the physical areas targeted for intensive region-serving development in local plans are much larger than what would have been recommended following such an analysis. Surrey City Centre provides perhaps the clearest example of an overly ambitious, highly unsuccessful, zoning scheme adopted against the advice of both real estate and land use specialists. Initial trends suggest that the size of suburban Portland's Regional Centers may also be unrealistically large, although the focused sub-area approach of Clackamas Regional Center provides an interesting alternative. Metrotown is among the smallest of the Centers considered in the study, and is clearly the most successful, but has still experienced some difficulty achieving the critical mass anticipated in plans. The size of individual centers is particularly important in relation to the number of designated centers in a region and the level of competition they face for suburban office, retail, entertainment and civic space - both of which are considered in greater detail later.

Stability of local planning approach. The relative stability of a municipality's approach to planning – both for its sub-regional center and other parts of the city – appear to affect the perception of the center as a real estate investment, while also influencing the coordination of civic investments and facilities with planning objectives. The most obvious comparison is Metrotown, which has followed an admittedly limited guideplan since 1977, against Surrey City Centre, which has shifted between several plans. In addition to pursuing a relatively consistent regulatory approach to Metrotown, Burnaby did not deviate significantly from an economic development strategy that emphasized both town centres and business parks. To achieve the level of retail and entertainment currently in Metrotown, the city made a number of difficult decisions to limit intensive redevelopment elsewhere in the city that would have enriched its tax base. A coordinated strategy of land banking, targeted public amenities, and development controls has solidified the potential of Metrotown. Surrey, in contrast, has shifted its economic development strategy repeatedly in response to apparent trends and short-term political considerations. Although it would be premature to assess the stability of Regional Center planning by Portland's suburban governments, it is worth noting that two significant deviations from initial plans have already taken place in the case study cities. Beaverton's initial decision to limit the continuation of non-conforming uses, particularly auto dealerships, was overturned in response to political

pressure, while Hillsboro is still struggling with an economic development strategy. These kinds of accommodations and changes of direction may separate relatively successful centers such as Metrotown from unsuccessful ones – even given a central location, transit access and opportunity for redevelopment.

Regional

This study found that the following factors appear to influence the implementation of Regional Center and Regional Town Centre policy at the regional level.

Number, location and scale of centers. A consistent theme emerging from real estate analyses of centers in both regions is that the number of intensive office and retail clusters anticipated is simply too large. The limited success of centers in attracting concentrations of new commercial development may be linked to the presence of *too high a number* of planned centers – creating unneeded competition when centers already must compete with office parks, malls and traditional forms of residential development. Academic inquiries into sub-center formation relative to regional population suggest that the number of centers proposed in both the Livable Regional Strategic Plan and the 2040 Growth Concept are far too high (Cervero 1997, Cervero and Wu 1997, Garreau 1991, Giuliano and Small 1992, Gordon and Richardson 1996, Gordon et al 1986, McDonald and Prather 1994, McMillen and McDonald 1998, McMillen and Smith 2003). An appropriate number of sub-centers for the regions, given the literature and current trends, would appear to be 2-4 and 3-5 for Portland and Vancouver respectively. If one considers the composition of post World War II suburban centers in North America – relatively diffuse and typically segregated by use – it may be appropriate to expect that the more intensive form of sub-center proposed for the suburbs of Portland and Vancouver would occur even less frequently. The kinds of amenities expected in Regional Centers and Regional Town Centres are typically associated with higher rents, which become easier to justify as the center attracts a greater agglomeration of economic activities. Such agglomerations are more readily achieved if there are few competitive locations for intensive development. The political compromise required to gain the support of fragmented local governments for a regional plan is one possible explanation for the apparent over-supply of centers in Portland and Vancouver. The influence of theoretical models of regional form that take for granted unfounded assumptions, such as the notion that a center should serve a market area of approximately 100,000, may add a technical veneer to the flawed logic informing the number and location of centers.

Municipal incentives for compliance with regional objectives. Greater Vancouver and Metropolitan Portland cities in which Centers have been designated face a dilemma: adopting

policies consistent with regional planning objectives can limit economic development and the potential to create a strong non-residential tax base. The Greater Vancouver municipalities considered in this paper have all developed multiple economic development strategies: one permitting intensive development in Regional Town Centres, and another promoting the development of office parks and, in some cases, large format retail, on inexpensive land with convenient auto access. Remote office parks provide an array of local benefits, increasing the number of jobs available to city residents while enhancing non-residential tax bases without creating the traffic, aural and visual impacts associated with large format retail development. In contrast to American states such as California, where property taxes are repressed and a significant share of sales taxes are transferred to local governments, Greater Vancouver's municipalities do not receive a pro rata share of the proceeds from sales taxes and do not face a property tax ceiling, making office development comparatively more attractive than malls and large format retail. The negative impacts of remote office development are primarily regional in nature: increased prevalence of automobile commuting, reduced potential for employment generating development in Regional Centers and downtown Vancouver. Without a more direct feedback loop, local governments are provided with limited incentives to consider the regional impacts of permitted development. Although Burnaby has clearly been the most successful in creating a long-range strategy for attracting remote office space, Surrey has followed with an aggressive plan to draw more than 25 million square feet of office park development over the next twenty years, while New Westminster has also identified locations for accommodating a combination of office parks and large format retail. A review of municipal plans from throughout Greater Vancouver suggests that this trend extends to other cities in which Regional Town Centres have been designated. This *hedge strategy*, incorporating multiple, mutually unsupportive opportunities for economic gain, is also apparent in the Portland area local governments considered in this study. The impact of local policies treating planned Centers as hedges against limited development elsewhere in the city, and vis versa, is limited implementation of regional planning objectives.

5.4 Toward Refined Polycentric Growth Management

This section attempts to answer the third question guiding this research: 3) What alternative approaches might local and regional governments use to more effectively plan and promote sub-regional centers? The following approaches derive from the research conducted in this study and represent potential starting points for future investigation of a more refined model of polycentric growth management.

A more rigorous approach for identifying and planning regional centers. The 25-year experience of Greater Vancouver and 6-year experience of Metropolitan Portland suggest that

intentional regional centers are unlikely to succeed unless certain criteria are met. The most successful center considered in this study, Metrotown, has emerged as a viable sub-center to downtown Vancouver because of long-range local and regional land use planning policies, appropriate density allowances, central location, mass transit access, proximity to two regional roadways, and the presence of a number of large, assembled parcels previously used for relatively low-value activities. It is unlikely that Metrotown would have evolved to its current state if it had not been granted excellent transit access through three Skytrain stations, high density development had not been permitted by the City of Burnaby, or it had not been so centrally located. The objective of the Metrotown Guide Plan that has been least successful – intensive office development – may be closely linked to a strategic local planning decision to permit similar forms of development in less expensive greenfield sites with superior auto access.

This series of factors should be instructive in considering the viability of potential Regional Center sites. Yet the processes of identifying locations for Greater Vancouver's Regional Town Centres and Metropolitan Portland's Regional Centers did not explicitly consider many of these factors. The dominant forces influencing the location of centers in both regions were mass transit access and surrounding population base. This approach works best for planning currently undeveloped areas in which no existing circulation networks or commercial and civic centers – formal or informal – are in place. The precise locations of centers were determined by local governments, who often lack the capacity or interest in performing the rigorous analysis necessary to identify the most economically, ecologically and socially viable location for a center truly capable of acting as a hub for an entire sub-region. Too often, the most politically viable location is not the most economically viable, but is selected because: a) it is home to few interests with the desire or political influence to stop a significant rezoning; b) it represents an opportunity for a supplementary, unexpected community development strategy; c) it represents an opportunity to revitalize a historic district that has fallen on hard economic times. Together, these considerations can lead local governments to select to Regional Center locations that lack the multi-modal transportation access, developable parcels, and market demand necessary for intensive redevelopment.

The scale at which regional centers are identified should be a combination of local and regional. In Portland and Vancouver, centers have been loosely designated at the regional level and then refined locally, placing the onus for detailed planning on local governments that may not possess the institutional capacity to create effective, well-informed plans. The complexities involved in planning for an unproven suburban typology requires a wide variety of analyses that are best

coordinated regionally. A refined criteria for *selecting* Regional Centers would include proximity to planned or existing transit lines, but could also take into consideration: a) redevelopment and/or intensification potential of prospective sites; b) current market demand for different forms of development on potential sites; c) existence of emerging or longstanding sub-centers with potential for transformation into civic spaces with a broader mixture of uses; d) the likely short and long-term absorption of regional and sub-regional office and retail development within potential sites given a variety of scenarios; and e) specific local, regional and state investments that can anchor potential sites – especially schools, hospitals and other civic institutions that are identified as central features of cities and regions and generate high levels of activity.

An enhanced *implementation* strategy for Regional Centers could include: a) a well- defined set of public improvements anticipated through the development of a center that forms a coherent physical vision, with the portion contributed by government entities and developers clearly identified; b) a city-wide planning process supportive of the concentration of activity and employment generating uses into the center; c) more explicit consideration of the relationship between uses, building typologies, densities, and the quality of the public realm; d) dynamic incentives calibrated to make the forms of development desired for a center viable given changing market conditions; e) coordinated facilities and land use planning to capitalize on the catalytic potential of major local investments such as schools, libraries, and offices by placing them into Centers.

Iterative transportation and land use coordination. Station areas along a transit line are unlikely to provide a naturally successful location for sub-regional centers *unless* land use planning is centralized and competitive locations to designated Centers can be reduced or eliminated. Rather than letting the alignment of a mass transit improvement dictate the location of centers, the planning of fixed transit routes should be more iterative and respond more effectively to the most economically and ecologically optimal locations for centers throughout the region. Although this would certainly increase the initial construction costs of a line, it would improve both its long term financial viability and its capacity for facilitating transit-oriented development capable of achieving ecological, social, and economic planning objectives simultaneously.

Incremental ‘carrots and sticks.’ In the absence of fully coordinated regional land use planning, local governments lack a financial incentive to adopt land use policies consistent with regional objectives that may limit a local tax base. For regional land use planning to work effectively between fragmented local governments, the financial consequences of supporting

regional planning principles must be softened. One obvious method would be to require that property and business taxes derived from office and certain types of retail development located outside of planned Centers be placed into a regional pool and distributed proportionally to the region's municipalities. In contrast to this and other 'carrot' approaches, regional and state agencies can more effectively utilize their permitting and investment capacities as 'sticks' to limit development inconsistent with regional plans. The state of Maryland provides one relatively successful example of this approach. The argument against these incremental approaches is that they are piecemeal, and fail to address the underlying causes of diffuse, unsustainable development patterns. In the short term however, they may represent the most promising means for promoting the development of mixed-use sub-centers as alternatives to suburban sprawl.

Truly democratic regional planning. The notion that the municipal scale is most appropriate for the details of land use planning rests on the weak premise that local planning enhances opportunity for citizen input and reduces the potential for an insensitive, 'one size fits all' approach to regulation. Research into political influence in the planning process indicates that it is precisely at the local level that interests detrimental to the overall public interest – such as developers and wealthy neighborhood organizations – can exert the greatest influence (Leo 1998). Local land use planning is *inherently undemocratic* to the extent that municipal and county decision makers lack the leverage to combat special interests that would have much greater difficulty influencing the process at a regional or state level. In contrast to many other political arenas, land use planning is typically dominated by *small players* with the capacity and willingness to influence local, but not regional or state, processes (Ibid.). Possibly the three greatest impediments to developing successful Centers and achieving broader regional planning objectives are regional governance, jurisdictional fragmentation and municipal finance. While a thorough analysis of these factors is beyond the scope of this paper, analyses of planned centers in both Vancouver and Portland suggests that a lack of centralized regional planning controls, combined with the presence of multiple municipal governments seeking to cultivate a strong non-residential tax bases, creates a strong incentive to sidestep regional planning objectives when determining the location and character of permitted development. Truly regional land use planning, overseen by officials elected through a regional or sub-regional vote, can mitigate many of these concerns. A uniform regional appeals process can further strengthen this process. Many of the forces that seek to localize the scope of land use planning benefit from this very limitation.

Reconceiving the Region. At a more fundamental level, the way in which regional plans conceive of the metropolitan area and its future development may require greater innovation. In plans for Portland, Vancouver, and several mid-20th Century precedents, the region of the future

is presented as a series of compact nodes featuring a variety of activities, all within walking distance of each other. An intensive center gives way to a lower density periphery along the edges of the node to create a buffer between existing low-density development and the proposed intensification. Arrayed along a transit line, each node is an iteration in scale and density of other nodes: a regional core, a regional center, or a town center. Together, this vision forms an interconnected network of unitary wholes. The region is a perfect geometry of concentric circles drawn to capture what has been mathematically calculated as a convenient walking distance from a transit station. Development patterns suggest that this conceptually complete model for regional growth is exceedingly difficult to realize, due largely to economic forces moving against the grain of mixed-use transit-oriented development, but also to an inability to implement this vision at a local level – even under supportive conditions. It is worth considering for a moment whether regional planners and urban designers need a new model for conceiving of future growth and, perhaps more importantly, if it is appropriate to transpose any predetermined model across the dynamic social, economic and political surface of a region.

The assumption that a regional plan is capable of assigning modular forms of growth (Regional Centers, Town Centers, etc.) to specific physical locations without careful consideration of the unique geometries of these places appears overly optimistic. The form of growth promoted in the regional plans considered in this paper is explicitly described as organic and contextual, but none of the plans include a clear recognition of the particular characteristics of the sites selected for intensive growth. Whether a site is comprised of early 20th Century 200 by 200 foot blocks, post World War II superblocks, or a combination of both can determine its suitability for the kinds of development described for each land use type. Drawing growth targets on a regional map prior to investigating these specificities is unrealistic both politically and economically, and is easily perceived as hubris on the part of regional planners and officials. Likewise, attempting to promote a purportedly organic form of development – such as Calthorpe Associates' plans for several of Portland's Regional Centers – that is in fact reflective of a school of design fails to allow for the morphological process that created the very places informing these ideologies. Permitting a variety of designs does not necessitate promoting automobile-oriented development. Basic principles of human scale and pedestrian orientation can be achieved through a variety of architectural vocabularies and scales of physical development.

At the regional scale, the assumption that a metropolitan area can grow in a sequence of relatively self-sufficient nodes has no basis in contemporary reality or emerging trends. The conception of the node held by many planners demands critical evaluation. The notion that the growth of suburban centers can radiate from an inwardly focused central space such as a main street or

transit boulevard recalls a social and economic era that has long since passed. The early twentieth century 'main street' community that one Portland Metro planner described as an important inspiration for the region's vision for its centers was marked by relative homogeneity, limited vehicle travel, and industrial concentration. The preconditions for the American community idealized by authors such as Duany and Calthorpe are simply unlikely to return. In its place is a more diverse population residing in an often disparate array of districts, transportation corridors and economic clusters. The answer to the problems created by the post World War II region – separation of land uses, automobile congestion, and spatial inequity along racial and class lines – cannot be found by looking backward in the history of North American cities. The dynamics of the early 20th century community are arguably the source of many of the problems apparent in the regional form of contemporary North America. Ethnically exclusive patterns of settlement were only accelerated by the highway, subsidized home mortgage and covenant community. New Urbanists that idealize the small early 20th century community understate the degree to which the social and physical 'sense of community' evident in these spaces was often the result of a process of racial and economic differentiation that left many disenfranchised. For this reason alone, a design philosophy recalling an earlier era may have limited contemporary resonance. Technological changes including rapid auto travel, large commercial floorplates and increasingly omnipresent communications infrastructure linking different parts of the region make the re-creation of a 'small town' environment even more awkward.

None of these considerations suggest that the fundamental premise of guiding future growth into geographically concentrated areas linked by transit is misguided. Sub-regional centers do not need to be self-contained, convey a 'sense of community,' or feature a particular architectural vocabulary or scale to achieve the most critical objectives of regional plans for Portland, Vancouver and other regions: facilitating travel by multiple modes, enhancing access to employment opportunities, and increasing the variety of available housing options. The desire for a 'sense of place' should not overshadow the more pressing concerns fueling regional planning efforts, and thus should not lead to policies calling for an architectural scale and vocabulary reminiscent of the early 20th Century American town. The second largest development form described in both *The Regional City* and the *2040 Growth Concept* – the Town Center and Regional Center respectively – is typified by 2-3 story buildings. This scale of development is ultimately driven by the ethos of smallness and 'community' informing both documents. While politically palatable, this ethos appears inconsistent with the higher scale of physical development required to anchor a mixed-use center located along a transit line outside of a central business district. This scale is evident both in the Edge Cities of the United States and successful Regional Town Centres in Vancouver: apartment buildings and offices alike are typically ten or more

stories. The one center that clearly supports the visions of both regions, Metrotown, has a poor public realm exacerbated by the scale and orientation of many new buildings. Supposing that a new paradigm of development took hold featuring smaller scale buildings, structures would likely need to be more than five stories to justify the investment required, as evidenced by a handful of recent projects such as Addison Circle in Addison, Texas. It is important to note that the building heights suggested in the Framework Plan have not restricted local governments from permitting towers as tall as 200 feet in Portland's suburbs. Nonetheless, this vision of scale informs the total vision of the region that coalesced into the plan for its future.

A more imaginative approach to the region is possible that accepts the long-term heterogeneity of patterns of commuting and leisure, dispensing with the ideal of relatively self-contained nodes. The vision of the region projected by many planners can evolve from a geometrically homogeneous network arrayed along linear networks to a mosaic of linked fragments with unique physical geometries and social lives. Rather than creating a sequence of programmatically similar mixed-use centers, the intensification of development into specific locations could facilitate the emergence of clusters featuring a much finer grain of activity and higher level of amenity than is currently available in suburban commercial centers such as office parks or malls. Different sites throughout the region create different kinds of opportunities based upon topography, morphology, existing economic activity, and the current and expected demographics of a surrounding area. Whether these differences are recognized at the regional scale in plans or utilized by local planners to shape city or district plans, it is important to conceive of the region as a group of diverse centers connected by trip patterns that are both professional and personal, and do not necessarily follow a clear logic of proximity. The regional coordination of development should emphasize broad land use and transportation objectives while utilizing a sophisticated analysis of existing conditions and potential growth scenarios to actively promote specific kinds of economic activity in different parts of the region. The inevitable dispersal of gains from such a strategy would require some form of tax base sharing among local governments, as discussed above. The practice of plan-making should reflect this more fragmented, contextual understanding of the region and its parts by approaching the planning process without any preconceived models for physical development. The elimination of these short-hand methods for conceiving of the region and its future form can facilitate the creation of plans that respond more effectively to the physical, political, economic and social contours of a metropolis.

5.5. Promising Directions for Future Research

The results of this preliminary investigation suggest several promising directions for future

research. Limited implementation of plans premised on transit-oriented development raise deep questions about the potential of transit for shaping the physical realm. While a substantial body of literature exists on the apparent relationship between the location of transit stations and new development, a more detailed inquiry can be made into the complex interplay between the specific kind of transit serving a station (light rail, heavy rail, bus), the physical geometries of station areas, and local zoning policy. The fissure between regional objectives and local planning policy suggests the need for an evaluation of the practice regional plan-making. What kinds of coordination between local and regional governments are most effective in creating regional plans that can actually be adopted at the local level? What role should regional planners play in determining the physical location of future development? Should regional plans include maps identifying locations for development, or follow the lead of European spatial policy plans that include only text to avoid the pretense of physical master-planning and the attendant perceptions. Another promising avenue for investigation is whether a specific model for physical development (i.e. regional centers, town centers, etc.) are appropriate for promoting broad regional planning objectives (reduced auto use, greater diversity of housing) , or if only models rooted in the unique characteristics of individual districts include the necessary ingredients for success. A critical question fueling such an inquiry might be: Is it better to attempt to transform a district dominated by mall superblocks into a finely grained sequence of public streets and smaller buildings, or to propose a hybrid that capitalizes on existing circulation patterns and accepts the dominance of large buildings and the reality of a limited number of public rights of way?

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