PROGRAMS FOR CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT*

Almost everyone is aware of traffic congestion, the shortage of automobile parking spaces, the decline in mass transit service, and the drab and uninviting appearance of downtown areas.

Among "experts," however, there is no agreement as to the effects of these shortcomings on the ultimate prosperity of the central business district. One group holds that the central business district is faced with the prospect of a continuing decline in values, which can only be disastrous. Its argument is that the various problems affecting the central business district are so great that they have discouraged large numbers of potential customers from patronizing downtown stores. The eventual result will be that investment in the central business district will continue to become less attractive; downtown property owners will not spend money on improvements to modernize central retail facilities.

Others hold that the central business district today is as sound as it has ever been. This view is summarized in several statements quoted in Parking as a Factor in Business, published in 1953 by the Highway Research Board as Special Report No. 11:

"Current market evidence lends support to those who contend that the central city is here to stay. According to an article in the Wall Street Journal of January 21, 1952, "Veteran real estate men say they can't recall a time when the demand for property was as great as now." In the same vein, the New York Times reported on May 4th, 1952, that "City trade grows, belying pessimists and rivals' claims." The

* Copyright, American Society of Planning Officials, 1955.
National Institute of Real Estate Brokers in the Bulletin for March, 1952, says, "In most cities prime investment real estate in the central business sections is tightly held in strong hands, consequently, there is a shortage of such properties available for sale. There is a ready market for such properties."

Each side in this controversy supports its claims with reams of data -- parking surveys, land use maps, studies of real property assessments and appraisals, traffic counts, transit studies, and consumer opinion polls. Both sides admit that problems do exist but they disagree on the nature of downtown problems and the best methods of solving them.

Present Downtown Improvement Programs

Nearly everyone interested in downtown problems realizes that most of them may be traced to the automobile. In the past, when transit was a city's chief means of transportation, the central business district completely dominated urban retail sales. Two of its most important characteristics -- its compact area limiting the necessity for long walks and the availability of transit service to all parts of the city -- gave the central business district two advantages that no other location could touch.

However, the ease with which people can get about with automobiles has encouraged the development of large shopping centers in outlying areas. Because of its compact area and high building density, the central business district has had far too little parking space convenient to downtown stores. The street system, which was adequate for streetcars and horse-drawn carts, is not designed to handle the large number of cars that now enter the area. Traffic congestion has, in effect, made the central business district less accessible today than it was in the past. More and more vehicles are bringing fewer and fewer people downtown to work or to shop.

Even though the dollar volume of retail sales in downtown stores is continuing to grow, its rate of growth is much slower than the rate for the city as a whole and for outlying shopping areas. Shopper goods sold in downtown stores now make up a smaller percentage of total shopper goods sales in the city than they did in the past; and that percentage is continually declining. Studies in Columbus, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, and Detroit show declines in the proportions of downtown sales to total sales in the metropolitan areas. The percentage of decline has been greatest in larger cities. (See Parking as a Factor in Business, Highway Research Board Special Report No. 11, pages xvi-xxi.) In at least some cities the increased dollar volume is due largely to higher prices rather than large increases in physi-
cal volume of goods sold.

A few people have suggested that the downtown area is doomed and that all attempts to save it are futile. Most people, however, believe that the central business district is a unique and essential part of the city, which must be preserved. Although there is disagreement on the best methods for saving the central business district, most attempts have consisted of piece-meal programs for providing better streets, for moving more automobiles, and for more automobile parking space. Transit has been given the secondary role of carrying those people who do not have cars or do not wish to drive.

Adjusting Downtown to the Automobile

The vehicular traffic problem of the central business district consists of two distinct elements: access to the area -- moving people and goods from their points of origin to their destinations; and circulation within the central area.

Two methods have been used in an attempt to make the central business district more efficient for automobile traffic. Another has been suggested but has not yet been tried.

Using Existing Streets to Greater Capacity. Through the application of traffic engineering techniques, the vehicle carrying capacity of existing streets can be greatly increased.

One of the first techniques applied in central business districts was the designation of one-way streets in and around the central core. Prohibition of left turns, and eventually all turns, has often followed. Curb parking has been eliminated on the most highly congested streets and one or two additional lanes have been opened for moving traffic. Truck loading in the central business district has in some places been limited to off-peak or night hours.

But in few cities can the existing street pattern accommodate all of the automobiles that might be driven downtown. Even though all traffic engineering techniques are applied to the street system, there is still a limit to the capacity of existing streets. Although no city has yet instituted all of the measures needed to produce the theoretical maximum street capacity, there is little reason to believe that the ultimate capacity of existing streets is great enough to handle the automobiles of everyone who wishes to drive downtown to shop or work.

Even where some of these measures have been instituted, there may be inadequate enforcement of traffic regulations. Cars parked in a "no parking"
zone along a curb can tie up a lane of traffic and double-parked cars are even worse. They can tie up one, two, or more traffic lanes. Police are not able to detect all violations and, at least in some cities, they have shown little inclination to enforce parking or traffic regulations.

Building New Streets to Increase Capacity. The institution of all measures to increase the capacity of existing streets is often blocked by political and business pressures. Because of this, cities have built new streets and expressways rather than attempt to use existing systems to their maximum capacity. Most new street construction has been on the fringes of the central business district and in outlying areas. High land costs and high density building have discouraged new construction in the central core.

Large expenditures for high-speed, high-capacity expressways leading to the downtown area have been justified as necessary to maintain the economic stability of the central business district by making it easier for more people to drive downtown. In theory, at least, these superhighways reduce travel time between the central business district and outlying areas, which will encourage people to drive. However, they also have had the effect of encouraging people to live farther from their work and from established shopping areas.

Furthermore, expressways have probably increased the problems of circulation within central areas because, while more automobiles can reach the central business district (or arrive at destinations near this area), the capacity of downtown streets has not been increased to handle the additional traffic volumes. Thus, even though travel time from outlying areas to a point near the central business district has been shortened, the over-all time required to reach the ultimate downtown destination -- an office or a shop -- may be as long as formerly because of increased traffic congestion and the difficulty in finding parking spaces.

Specialization of Streets. A method for increasing the capacity and efficiency of existing streets that has been suggested but not yet tried is the segregation of different types of traffic and the designation of streets to handle each type. Under this proposed method, some streets would be reserved for transit, others for access to stores for service vehicles. Some streets would be limited to the movement of automobile traffic through or around the central core. On some streets, all vehicular traffic might be removed and the streets used only by pedestrians. Proposals of this type are quite common in the plans for long-term business district renovation reviewed in the second part of this report.
Parking

Ohio State University surveys on shopper attitudes (reported in Highway Research Board Special Report No. 11-A, Shopper Attitudes) show that in the cities in which the surveys were made, the difficulty of parking is considered by shoppers to be the greatest disadvantage of downtown shopping. Other factors, such as crowded conditions, congested traffic, and poor public transportation, are considered much less important by downtown shoppers.

The central area was formerly a terminal point for people and goods. Today it is also a terminal for automobiles. The central business district has simply been unable to handle the mass movement and storage of automobiles.

Although parking surveys have been made and programs instituted to relieve the shortage of parking space, the parking problem has defied all attempts at solution. New garages and lots built to alleviate the existing shortage of parking spaces may have attracted more automobiles than they can handle, thus increasing the parking shortage.

Then, too, parking programs involve conflicting vested interests. Downtown merchants demand that the city provide parking spaces as a natural extension of the function of moving vehicles. Parking lot or garage operators minimize the parking shortage and claim that "private enterprise will continue to meet the challenge as it has in the past." The public demands parking spaces at reasonable rates near shopping and working areas and doesn't particularly care how they are provided.

Many different types of parking programs have been adopted by cities. Some have depended entirely upon privately sponsored programs run by parking lot operators or groups of downtown merchants. In other cities, parking authorities have been established and parking is provided either by joint action of government and private enterprise or by a parking authority single handedly. Parking Programs - Facts about Selected Urban Parking Problems in the United States, published in 1954 by the American Automobile Association, presents the basic information on such programs in 19 cities. Another source of information on public parking programs is PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE Information Report No. 43, Municipal Provision of Parking Facilities (October 1952).

Transit

The central business district has traditionally depended upon public transit as its chief form of transportation. Even today, with the tremendous increase in
the use of private automobiles, transit is still a major carrier of persons entering the central business district (see Table 1).

Although rush hour patronage has usually held up fairly well, transit systems have suffered a tremendous decline in business since the end of World War II. In 1946 there were approximately 19 billion transit passengers in the United States; in 1954 the American Transit Association estimated the total number of transit passengers for the year at about 9.9 billion. Off-peak and night services and service to outlying areas have suffered the greatest losses but the loss of revenue on these services has affected all operations of transit systems. At a time when transit companies should be expanding their services to meet increasingly strong automobile competition, they have had to curtail service and raise fares.

Local governments, in their enthusiasm for new expressways and parking programs, have neglected transit or, even worse, have imposed additional restrictions on already hard-pressed transit operations. Transit companies have requested exemption from street and franchise taxes but few cities have listened sympathetically.

The decline in transit and the prospects of even worse conditions in the future have increased transit companies' difficulties in getting bank loans for modernization of their systems. Some companies, near bankruptcy, have turned their franchises back to the cities. Sometimes cities have assumed transit operations as a public function. Some smaller cities have been left without transit service.

The Market for Transit. Persons living in a potential market area for transit may be divided into three groups: (1) those who have no other means of transportation and must use public transit; (2) those who may use either transit or their own automobiles; and (3) those who must use their automobiles in their business and cannot use public transportation.

The third group is lost to transit. The first group, which has no alternative, will use transit even though service is poor. But this group may be expected to diminish as more automobiles are sold. The loss of transit customers has, therefore, occurred principally in the second group. Here it must compete directly with the automobile and the success of mass transit will depend upon its ability to provide service that is comparable to the automobile in speed, convenience, and price. It is from the second group, persons who have a choice, that recovery of transit patronage -- if any -- must come. Obviously, there is little or nothing that can be done to increase the number who have no choice nor to decrease the number of persons who use automobiles in their business.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Shoppers</th>
<th>Retail Employees</th>
<th>Office Workers</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Date of Survey</th>
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<td>Atlanta, Ga.</td>
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<td>67.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
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<td>Buffalo, N. Y.</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
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<td>Charleston, W. Va.</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>8/20/54</td>
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<td>74.0</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
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<td>Dallas, Tex.</td>
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<td>55.0</td>
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<td>Dayton, O.</td>
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<td>47.0</td>
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<td>Detroit, Mich.</td>
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<td>Kansas City, Mo.</td>
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<td>Louisville, Ky.</td>
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<td>Milwaukee, Wis.</td>
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<td>Nashville, Tenn.</td>
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<td>38.0</td>
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<td>Omaha, Neb.</td>
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<td>55.0</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh, Pa.</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Providence, R. I.</td>
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<td>50.0</td>
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<td>1954</td>
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<td>Richmond, Va.</td>
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<td>Recent</td>
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<td>1953</td>
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<td>(a) 55.0</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1948</td>
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<td>(a) 37.0</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Wilmington, Del.</td>
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<td>(a) 61.0</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>Estimate Only</td>
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<td>Youngstown, O.</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data based upon surveys at specific establishments in the central business district.
(a) Includes all types of employees.
(b) Includes all riding transit for other than travel to and from their employment.
From Transit Facts, Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago.
Some of the disadvantages of transit that have undoubtedly made it less attractive in comparison with the automobile are transit stops unprotected from the weather; overcrowded conditions on buses; long walking distances to transit stops in outlying areas; excessive time spent waiting for transit vehicles; and the comparative slowness of mass transportation.

Attempts to Improve Transit Service. Transit companies have tried to re-capture some of their lost business by instituting special services and improving existing services.

One method used has been the "park and ride" plan. For years commuter railroads have provided free parking lots near their suburban stations and transit companies have often built parking lots at the end of or along their streetcar and bus lines.

Another service is the "shoppers' special" operated within the central business district during mid-day, off-peak hours and during evening shopping hours. Although fares for such service are lower than standard, the service is among the most profitable for transit companies. The volume of business is usually high and the routes are short. Also, there is no free transfer privilege. Transit companies seldom charge off depreciation against this service because the buses and streetcars used are also required for peak-hour service. Since bus drivers' contracts require stand-by payments for the hours between rushes in which the drivers do not work, the driver cost for shoppers' specials is negligible.

Another new service, the "club flyer," is now being tested in Cincinnati. This is a premium rate service that guarantees a seat and a fast ride for anyone who purchases a monthly ticket. A bus picks up each ticket holder at his home and when the last pick-up has been made the bus proceeds to its downtown destination without stopping. In the afternoon, the rider catches his bus downtown and is returned to his front door. It is still too early to determine whether this type of service can be operated profitably over a long period of time. But this is one of the few instances in which a transit company has attempted to provide a better standard of service, rather than cut already unattractive services even more drastically.

Transit companies have also instituted express service on major streets and expressways which can, under optimum conditions, approach automobile driving speeds.

Expansion of Transit Service. In a few instances, new transit lines and rapid transit systems have been put into use recently in an attempt to improve the basic transit network. New subways and rapid transit facilities have been built in Toronto and Cleveland. And Philadelphia has just com-
pleted an important downtown subway connection that replaces an older elevated structure.

In a number of cities there has been agitation for the reestablishment of private rights-of-way that were abandoned in the 1930's because of high property taxes. Transit authorities have suggested that cities turn over certain downtown streets entirely to transit vehicles. A more modest proposal of this type is that curb lanes of major streets in the central business district be reserved for transit vehicles. As yet, few public officials have paid serious attention to these proposals.

Shortcomings in Present Programs

Howard T. Fisher, in a speech, "The Impact of New Shopping Centers upon Established Business Districts," given before the National Citizens' Conference on Planning in May 1950, presented the following summary of then current traffic planning for the central business district:

Our present thinking is limited largely to four ideas:

First, the elimination of through traffic. This is fundamental.

Second, the improvement of tributary arteries serving the business district so as to eliminate traffic congestion for those traveling to the center. This is excellent, of course. But as is well realized, to the extent that it is successful it merely adds to the pressing traffic problems within the business district itself.

Third, the provision of more off-street parking within the business area. This of course is essential. But unfortunately such parking areas, instead of being located well within the business district, are usually located barely within it. While excellent for the needs of all-day parking for office workers and store employees, such peripheral parking is usually highly unsatisfactory for serving shoppers' requirements.

Fourth, the provision upon public pavements of controlled short-time parking through the use of the police power, with or without parking meters.

This statement summarizes fairly well the efforts that have been made to adjust the physical pattern of the central business district to the requirements
of the automobile.

But despite the large amounts of money that have been spent to provide new downtown facilities, there are few indications that these facilities have produced any noticeable improvements in traffic conditions. Certainly they have not had the effect of inducing great numbers of additional people to come downtown to work and shop.

A report by the San Francisco Department of City Planning, Daily Trips in San Francisco (abridged edition) published in 1955, shows that the total number of people entering the San Francisco downtown area has increased slightly but that the number of vehicles has greatly increased:

Since 1947, about 50,000 additional passenger automobiles have been added to the city's traffic streams. Similarly, about 50,000 people entering the Metropolitan Traffic District (Downtown and vicinity) use private autos to get there, where they formerly used public transit. Cordon counts show that from 20 to 22 per cent more passenger autos entered the Metropolitan Traffic District every weekday in 1953 than entered in 1947. Municipal Railway counts showed that in 1954 from 19 to 27 per cent less transit passengers entered the district than entered it in 1947. Although this results in a substantial increase in the total number of vehicles entering Downtown San Francisco, only a slight increase in the total number of persons has resulted. . . .

A survey of the number of people, by mode of transportation, entering the downtown area of Atlanta with downtown destinations, as reported in Now . . . for Tomorrow (published in 1954 by the Metropolitan Planning Commission of Atlanta) showed similar declines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transportation</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Car</td>
<td>78,300</td>
<td>63,700</td>
<td>82,200</td>
<td>78,900</td>
<td>79,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>By Transit</td>
<td>46,500</td>
<td>85,600</td>
<td>84,600</td>
<td>64,500</td>
<td>60,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Truck</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Foot</td>
<td>30,600</td>
<td>45,600</td>
<td>32,700</td>
<td>27,600</td>
<td>24,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156,000</td>
<td>195,500</td>
<td>201,000</td>
<td>172,300</td>
<td>167,990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other cities have reported similar increases in the number of vehicles entering central business districts; and a declining number of people.

E. L. Tennyson, traction commissioner of Youngstown, Ohio, speaking to a Public Administration Clearing House press seminar on the transit crisis in June 1955, summarized thus the shortcomings of "auto-centric" planning for the central business district that neglects the transit system:

Too many of our leaders today dismiss the transit problem by pointing out that almost everyone now has an automobile. All we have to do, they say, is to spend $101 billion more on the motorists, and our problems will be solved. People want to drive, we are told.

There are four serious errors in this reasoning:

1. In urban areas, only one-half of all the people can drive.

2. Only one-fourth of the people have an automobile available when they have to travel.

3. Because of congestion, large cities cannot possibly move sufficient traffic by automobile to stay alive.

4. Our urban economy cannot even remotely afford automobile transportation at peak hours for a large proportion of the people.

It appears that the time has come to question the assumptions that have been used as the basis for present downtown traffic planning and to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs. Have the measures that have been tried actually brought more people downtown? Have new expressways and garages made the trip more convenient and faster?

And, even if these methods have produced some results, are they worth the cost of the new facilities? How many downtown parking spaces can a city's economy afford when the cost is $1,000 to $4,000 a space? How many miles of expressway can be built at 1 to 15 million dollars a mile? At what point will expenditures for new facilities designed to make automobile travel more convenient pass the value of the benefits received?

Proposals for Central Business District Redevelopment

While present programs consist largely of providing more streets and park-
ing spaces for automobiles, a number of recent proposals for downtown redevelopment place the greatest emphasis upon improving conditions for transit and the pedestrian in the central core. The principles used in preparing these plans are summed up in a statement by Corwin M. Moline, Oakland planning engineer, to the 1955 Public Administration Clearing House press seminar:

As well as assigning each transportation job to the most suitable and efficient vehicle, we can do much to increase the efficiency of the facilities we have. I will list only a few of the more obvious possibilities:

1. Separate pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic at least in the hearts of our cities.

2. Assign, in so far as possible, each street the function either of moving traffic or of providing access to abutting property. No street has ever been able to fulfill both functions efficiently at the same time.

3. Separate high speed from slow traffic.

4. A fruitful avenue of improvement that is beginning to open up involves spreading out the peak loads, not through staggered hours but through staggered days. The four-day week and the guaranteed annual wage make this much more important than it has been in the past.

Planning proposals based on these principles have called for some specific actions: the elimination of automobiles in the retail core; the use of existing streets for pedestrians, transit, and service vehicles; improvement of the appearance of the area; removal of obsolete structures; and the provision of ample off-street parking at the periphery of the retail core.

Such proposals appear radical in the United States where the automobile has become the primary method of travel. However, in Europe and South America many of the best shopping districts are reserved almost entirely for pedestrians. For example, the Miami Herald for November 14, 1954 reports on at least three central shopping districts in South America where automobiles and other vehicles are not permitted:

A two-block section of Bogotá's Carrera Septima (main street) is never entered by motor vehicles. There the capital city's industrial tycoons, bankers, professional men and artisans gather daily to transact the bulk of their business.
Motorists simply by-pass the section, returning to the "main drag" farther on.

Ten gilt-edged blocks of Calle Florida, in the heart of Buenos Aires' fashionable shopping district are closed to all but pedestrians at certain hours each day, transforming the narrow thoroughfare into surging streams of shoppers and eddying pools of gossip-swappers.

And Rua do Ouvidor, Rio de Janeiro's main stem for smart shops, is solely for those on foot. Between 4 and 5 each afternoon the street is solidly packed with masses streaming from offices to do last-minute shopping or to meet friends for tea or cocktails.

The Lijnbaan shopping place in Rotterdam is, in effect, a designed shopping center within the central business district. This development, which is now nearing completion, owes its existence to the destruction of the central area of Rotterdam in 1940 by the German air force. It incorporates the principles that have more recently been proposed for downtown areas in American cities. Automobiles are excluded from the area but there are nearby parking lots for 1,800 automobiles. Streets are turned over to pedestrians and canopies protect them from rain and snow. Special racks are provided for bicycles. Transit lines run behind the center area. A cooperative project of 66 high quality specialty shops, the development covers a land area of about three acres and has approximately four acres of selling space.

Drawing from experiences in foreign cities and incorporating many of the best principles of design used in regional shopping centers in this country, official planning agencies in several cities have proposed that studies be made of the feasibility of turning the core of the central business district into a pedestrian area. The following section describes a few of the proposals that have been made. In nearly every case the plans described are intended merely as starting points for further study, rather than as specific plans for redeveloping central areas.

San Francisco. A report, Modernizing Downtown San Francisco, published in 1955 by the San Francisco Department of City Planning, is primarily a statement of principles for planning, rather than a specific proposal. Its purpose is to stimulate thought on various aspects of central business district development and to point out the necessity for over-all planning.

... a balance of interests must be sought in which everyone gives a little to gain a little. The downtown area cannot have, for instance, an infinite amount of parking, a
compact area, a good mass transit system, functionally important peripheral uses kept in the present close relationship, a minimum use of land for non-taxable purposes, infinite flexibility of movement, equal accessibility to all properties, off-street loading and unloading, and no great investment in functional improvements by private interests all at the same time. The very best designed of the regional shopping centers do not have all of these things and, in fact, completely rule out such important elements as mass transit, a great variety of uses, and complete accessibility by automobile to all businesses.

This report suggests six phases of the problem for which coordinated action is needed:

1. The provision of a regional rapid transit system integrated with the local system.

2. The completion of the freeway distribution system.

3. The provision of parking facilities at proper locations.

4. The systemization of the downtown streets to provide for pedestrian, surface transit, and vehicular movement that, to as great a degree as possible, is not conflicting.

5. The improvement of the over-all appearance of the downtown area to create an attractive environment.

6. The provision of new facilities, as needed, for the continuing development of the area.

Perhaps the most important contribution made by the San Francisco report lies in the critique of the appearance of the downtown area: garish and unimaginative neon signs, lack of trees and open space, the jumble of street signs, poles, newsstands, the overhead mat of electric wires. This report is one of the few that considers downtown appearance as a problem of equal importance with traffic, parking, and transit.

Buffalo. The Buffalo City Planning Commission has prepared a plan for developing a pedestrian shopping concourse and mall in the chief downtown retail area. The proposed plan would segregate different types of transportation. Automobiles would be routed on existing streets around the development and an underground transit terminal would be built beneath the heart of
the area.

The commission believes that the proposal is less radical than it appears. The following arguments are used to support this contention:

The center of a downtown area is a crowded destination. Vehicles passing through it only reduce its effectiveness for pedestrian use and every person in Downtown must become a pedestrian before he can become a customer or a worker.

Already no curb parking is allowed in downtown Buffalo.

Major off-street parking facilities are already located or planned around the perimeter of the proposed concourse.

The radial street pattern formed by Niagara and Genesee Streets presents a natural by-pass route for surface traffic around the proposed concourse.

An underground terminal under the proposed concourse for public transit vehicles only, would serve the proposed pedestrian mall at street level by escalator service.

Finally, the facility would encourage the use of public transit.

Atlanta. In its master planning program for the DeKalb-Fulton metropolitan area, Now...for Tomorrow, the metropolitan planning commission has suggested one of the most ambitious plans for central area development. This plan is designed to meet the following projected downtown requirements: downtown sidewalk capacity for 40 per cent more employees and for 50 per cent more people who come downtown to shop or do business; street capacity for 30 per cent more automobiles and 30 per cent more transit vehicles; accommodations for 37 per cent more all-day and 35 per cent more short-time parkers; civic and cultural facilities for conventions, exhibits, cultural and recreational activities; green space for all.

Under the proposal, all traffic that did not have a downtown destination would by-pass the area. Major streets would be kept open for transit vehicles, primarily but not exclusively, by limiting turns, eliminating curb parking, and prohibiting off-street parking on transit streets within the core area. Fringe parking lots would be established for all-day parking. Circulation within the core would be improved by better connections with the existing expressway system, providing perimeter circulation streets and close-in parking for shoppers and other short-time parkers. An area of approximately
85 acres in the heart of the central business district would be reserved for transit and pedestrians.

This plan also incorporates proposals by two local architectural and engineering firms to utilize air rights over downtown railroad tracks for a shopping and office building center. Use of air rights would tie together the two major downtown retailing areas of the city, now separated by a railroad "gulch."

Chicago. Although the Chicago "perimeter plan" was developed for major shopping districts other than the central business district, it incorporates principles that might be applied to central business districts in smaller cities.

Basically, the perimeter plan calls for the removal of through traffic from the heart of the shopping district and its rerouting on a specially constructed perimeter road. Parking spaces would be provided inside the perimeter, behind the main business streets. The existing streets would be narrowed to permit only transit vehicles to move through the main intersection. The additional space gained in narrowing streets could be used to increase sidewalk widths or to provide planting strips. All noncommercial structures in the area would be demolished and the remaining stores redecorated to improve appearance.

The plan is described in detail in a book, Economic and Legal Analysis, Perimeter Plan for Englewood Plaza, published in 1953 by the Real Estate Research Corporation of Chicago. A study of the application of the principles of the "perimeter plan" to the 63rd and Halsted business district in Chicago (one of the largest community shopping areas in the nation) is described in the book. It also includes a proposal for programming the improvements, a study of possible methods of financing the program, and a summary of the legal problems involved in its implementation.

Re-evaluating Downtown Problems

Almost without exception, the measures that have been taken thus far to deal with downtown problems have provided at best only temporary relief. In some cases they have solved one problem but have actually intensified others.

The failure to develop coordinated programs for studying and solving central business district problems may be traced to the lack of data on present and past conditions in the area, inadequate methods for evaluating available data, and the lack of coordination between various aspects of the program.
Unless correct information is available, it is impossible to weigh the validity of charges by downtown interests that property values are falling, that sales are down, and that there is a parking shortage.

Then, too, even when raw data are available, they may not be in forms which can be used easily.

The importance of adequate and correct data for planning cannot be overemphasized. Correct information can be used to refute specious arguments and block ill-considered plans and it may indicate courses of action that promise long-term results.

Too few cities have accurate information on trends in central area development and land use. Statistics on short- and long-term trends in land values are similarly unavailable. Even such information as traffic flow within central business districts and traffic surveys are often badly out of date. Conditions have changed so rapidly since the war that traffic cordon counts made in the late 1940's have little relation to present traffic movements.

The second deficiency is the inability of technicians and laymen to interpret information that is available. For example, several cities have found that the number of shoppers entering the downtown area is declining, although the dollar volume of downtown store sales has continued to rise. There have been changes in the types of goods sold downtown. Such statistics clearly indicate a change in shopping habits, which will eventually affect downtown retailing. Perhaps people now come downtown only to make specific purchases and the number of "window shoppers" has been reduced. If this is the case, downtown stores will probably have to rely less upon impulse items and attempt to maintain large and varied stocks of basic shopper goods. On the other hand, the declining number of persons entering the central business district could indicate that people now go downtown to purchase those items that are not available elsewhere. If this is the case, the central business district can expect to lose more business to outlying areas as a wider range of goods becomes available in branch department stores.

Other statistics may be equally ambiguous. An increase in retail sales in the central business district may show that the area is holding its own in competition with new shopping centers or it may merely indicate that retail prices have risen since previous surveys were made.

Fortunately, research is being conducted to find methods of using the raw data that are available. A number of pilot studies on various aspects of business district problems have been compiled in an excellent piece of central business district research, Parking as a Factor in Business, previously
referred to.

The studies reported in this book are probably more valuable for the techniques that are used than for the factual information that has been gathered. Included are summaries of the Ohio State University surveys on shopper attitudes; a study called "Economic Relationships of Parking to Business in Seattle Metropolitan Area" by Louis C. Wagner; "Relationships between Downtown Automobile-Parking Conditions and Retail-Business Decentralization" by William J. Watkins; and studies on central city property values and trends in transportation and economic activity in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Probably the outstanding recent contribution in the field of basic research on the central business district is Central Business District Studies by Raymond E. Murphy, J. E. Vance, Jr., and Bart J. Epstein, published by Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

This book, which consists of reprints of three articles originally published in Economic Geography, reports on methods for delimiting the central business district, making comparative studies of such districts in different cities, and for analyzing the internal structure of the central business district. Although these studies were conducted in cities of between 150,000 and 250,000 population, the principles and techniques used may be applicable in cities of other sizes.

Research of this type should be useful in dispelling false preconceptions about the downtown area. For example, Paul F. Wendt's study, "Central City Property Values in San Francisco and Oakland" (included in Parking as a Factor in Business), presents methods for deriving quantitative measures of the fluctuations of property values in the central city. The study shows, among other things, that in the core of the central business districts of these cities, property values are today near their all-time high, which was reached in the high speculative days before the depression. However, it also shows that in San Francisco and Oakland properties on the fringes of the central business districts have suffered the greatest declines in value.

There is probably no better statement of the magnitude of the problems of central business districts and the need for further research on their character and solution than that which appears in Central Business District Studies, mentioned above:

The problems of the CBD are endemic to American cities, as well as to those of many other parts of the world. They are a product of our great emphasis upon urban life occurring
simultaneously with the achievement of great mobility in transportation. Our cities seem literally to be flying apart. And yet, some sort of nucleus must be maintained, some center around which the disparate parts may congregate. Just what this center will be like when the period of readjustment is over is the all-important question. Much depends upon the answer. Billions of dollars are involved.

It is a problem that must be solved before really intelligent planning can proceed. Why attempt to arrest the flight of retailing activities to outlying shopping districts, if that is the longtime trend in any event? Perhaps the CBD of the future will be a Central Office District, an area in which the business enterprises of the city will maintain their offices, accompanied by only enough retailing to serve the immediate needs of people who work in the office buildings. Perhaps, on the other hand, there will be a way of expediting travel into and out of the CBD so that it may continue to be a retailing center as well as an office center. It may well be that retailing is doomed in the CBDs of very large cities, but that this function can be successfully maintained in the CBDs of moderate-sized cities. If this is true, we need to know the maximum size of city in which there is hope of maintaining the District's retailing function.
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