

worked with the Oak Park Mall Commission, property developers, and city officials to determine the mall's successes and lack of them. It conducted surveys and used time-lapse photography to ascertain the frequency and intensity of pedestrian activity on the mall. The results were presented in a series of public meetings and consequently a set of design and management decisions were made.

The city-planning commission decided, over considerable local opposition and that of critics, to re-open the street to vehicular traffic. Opposition to the idea arose because people liked to stroll down the mall. It was a pleasant place. Henry Arnold (1993) said it would have become an exemplar of urban design if it had been allowed to develop for another 10 years and shops to adapt to the changes in the surrounding neighbourhood. In addition, the idea of spending \$2.76 million on returning the street to what it was before the conversion when the original bonds were only due to be retired in 1992 was anathema to many people. PPS prepared a design and integrated the reopened street with a retail management plan and a public space plan. The master plan was prepared by the Lakota Group with S. B. Friedman and Company, DLK Architecture and Metro Transportation on the team (see Figure 5.6c and d).

The destruction of the mall and the reconstruction of Lake Street took place in 1989. Considerable attention was paid to the landscape design of the sidewalks and to the planting in order to retain the admired atmosphere that the pedestrian mall had possessed. In 1990, there was a decline in vacancy rates to 19% and much interest in other retail properties by potential new tenants. Pleasant enough, Lake

Street is now simply another suburban shopping street (see Figure 5.6e).

What city planners have learnt is that a landscape architectural project by itself will not improve business in such situations however well it is executed. It is not a lesson that has been universally taken to heart (Fitzgerald, 2004). The pedestrianization of streets is still an idea that appeals. To be successful such road closures have to be in highly strategic, well-functioning locations. Lake Street is successful now because two unobtrusive parking structures were built to enhance access and the mix of types of stores has responded to marketplace demands. It serves the affluent shoppers that the gentrification of Oak Park has brought into the area but on a considerably smaller scale than in its heyday.

In the smaller cities in the United States that have strong competition from suburban strip retail development and shopping centres, such 'mallings' of main streets does not work. In Europe, there are many examples of highly successful pedestrianized central areas of cities: Gloucester in England, Wageningen and Arnhem in the Netherlands, Grenoble in France and Munich in Germany are amongst them. Pedestrianization is not, however, a panacea for a city's ills. Nor is it strictly urban design. At the policy level it is city planning and at the design level it is landscape architecture.

Major references

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