

development that can keep a downtown from achieving critical mass. All told, there is nothing to be said in favor of the on-site parking requirement. Cities that wish to be pedestrian-friendly and fully developed should eliminate this ordinance immediately and provide public parking in carefully located municipal garages and lots. Parking must be considered a part of the public infrastructure, just like streets and sewers.

Consideration of the pedestrian scale must also play a role in the provision of transit. Diesel-belching buses are a poor substitute for benevolent streetcars, trolleys, and jitneys. Where laying track is not affordable, the city should consider small electric trams, which have brought new life to cities such as Chattanooga and Santa Barbara.

The reader will notice that, in discussing the physical form of the city, we have not once advocated the use of brick sidewalks, festive banners, bandstands, decorative bollards, or grassy berms (“the Five B’s”). The quick fix of the eighties, the Five B’s now decorate many an abandoned downtown, along with the latest-model light poles, trash cans, and decorative tree grates. There is nothing wrong with any of the Five B’s, except for the fact that, alone, they can do little to bring a downtown back to life. Actually, some retail consultants argue that decorative streetscapes are counterproductive because they distract shoppers from what they really should be looking at: the store windows. The average shopfront has only eight seconds to catch the attention of a passing pedestrian, so no competition is needed from flashy sidewalks or decorative planters.

Retail management

The sad fact is that the newest, most spectacular suburban shopping center would fail within a few months if it were managed as haphazardly as the typical main street. In order for Main Street to compete against the mall, it must be run with all the expertise lavished on the mall.

Suburban retailers are predatory by definition. Most new malls, big-box outlets, and other shopping centers are built not to satisfy unmet demand but to steal demand from existing retailers. Since malls survive by undermining other malls (and main streets), they have refined the techniques of merchandising to a science. Mall designers know that, upon entering, people tend to turn right, and walk counterclockwise. They know that visitors will most

likely purchase sunglasses if they are near the rest rooms. They know that women’s clothing stores will fare badly if placed near the food court. How can Main Street possibly compete? Fortunately, many of the concepts and techniques that mall designers use can be easily adapted for the benefit of the city core:

Centralized Management
Joint Advertising and Merchandizing
Anchors
Strategic Relation of Anchors and Parking
Proactive Leasing and Retail Mix
Dimensions
Retail Continuity
Incubators

All of the above techniques depend to some degree upon managed retail, a concept that causes some to bristle. “Whatever happened to a natural diversity?” they ask. “Are there any *real* places left?” The surprising answer to that question is that a *lack* of management has proven to be the enemy of diversity. It is why Key West has become an emporium of T-shirt shops, and why the only lunch available on Rodeo Drive for under ten dollars consists of potato chips and a soda. When left alone, retailers tend to repeat easy successes and entire sectors become homogeneous. Variety is achieved not through natural selection but through careful programming. Thanks to management, the main street of Disney’s Celebration provides not only restaurants for four different price ranges but a bar that is required to stay open until the last movie gets out. Even if there are only two customers, martinis are available at midnight. Does this make Celebration any worse, or any less real?

Marketing

Suburban developers have lapsed into a bigger-is-better, “build it and they will come” mentality. Typically, they direct their efforts at the largest market segments only, providing huge tracts of housing and big-box retail. This approach may make some sense in the urban periphery, where a critical mass is necessary to attract customers, and where homogeneity is considered a virtue. But in the city, where a diversity of form and activity already exists—and is cherished—development must be approached on a smaller scale, and with a thorough understanding of the customer base.

One of the most effective ways to revitalize an underbuilt city core is to subdivide undeveloped superblocks into smaller increments affordable to individual investors. This technique opens the door