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SHOPPING CENTRE PLANNING IN PALMERSTON NORTH

: A SUGGESTED STRATEGY.

A Paper Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
of Master of Arts in Geography at Massey University.

by

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P R E F A C E.

The rapid development of diversified multi-functional integrated shopping centres throughout the world has led one American observer to hail the "shopping environment" of such centres one of the new urban forms of the twentieth century. Palmerston North cannot even boast a large size planned shopping centre. It does, however, have a wide range of variously distributed centres, developed in accord with demand or as speculative ventures. This paper seeks to order and direction planning views on shopping centres in Palmerston North. A tentative strategy is constructed and briefly applied to the Terrace End shopping centre complex.

The author acknowledges the dual compilation and application of the Questionnaire for Retailers and Shoppers, with Mr B.R. Kells, a fellow geography masterate student at Massey University. The information collected and presented in the Shopping Centre Strategy could not have been obtained without the cooperation and time of shoppers and retailers in the shopping centres visited. Access to Valuation Department records is also gratefully acknowledged.

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SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION:

The structure of business centres within a city can be considered from several points of view. Central place theorist would regard such structure as an extension of central planning theory. Sociologists would note the relation of the population to the centres, while planners, taking a comprehensive view, are interested in the organisation of the centres, both within and around the centres in comparison to predetermined measures of efficiency and benefit.

Evidence presented by Berry, 9 suggests that empirical regularities govern the number and size of shopping centres within cities. Structurally, centres are thought to include "string street developments" and business nucleations. The nucleations are structured hierarchically from a central business district through to regional shopping centres of community facilities, local centres and single store centres.

Berry, 57 suggests a five-fold classification of shopping centres

- Convenience centres up to 17 stores
- Neighbourhood more than 17 stores
- Community more than 25 stores
- Regional 30-40 stores
- C.B.D. (Central Business District)

A regional centre has been defined in terms of function in Manchester University, 21, i.e. "to serve a large population with a wide variety of goods and services including those which shoppers buy after much thought at irregular and infrequent intervals, selecting carefully between alternative shops or goods".

Terrace End has reached the size, and has sufficient duplication to be classed as a regional centre. The term "local" in the questionnaire refers to a centre size intermediate between the single store and the regional size.

If it is accepted that any unit of development within a city is, in fact part of the city, then shopping centres can be argued to be a functionally related product of city growth. This paper is directed towards the nature of the product, the shopping centre itself, together with the planning environment that existed during present centre growth and a consideration of future planning measures. The development of a hierarchy of districts within the city of Palmerston North is not pursued in detail, nor is the concept of goods range. These, investigated in New Zealand by Clark in Christchurch and King in Canterbury, are

part of the total planning encompass but are not considered in depth, as they are only one part of the process of strategy formulation.

A great amount of research has been undertaken on aspects of shopping centre function and character. The emphasis, however, has been not on planning, but on central place relationships. This paper seeks to establish some pointers for shopping centre planning in Palmerston North. The following fields were included in the investigation. Firstly, an analysis of the rating structure of centres. Secondly, a questionnaire survey of shoppers and retailers to gain some measure of their preferences, dislikes and purchasing habits. By generating information for Palmerston North to accompany any theoretical analysis of the centres, an estimation of the usefulness and attraction of various centres can be made. Thirdly, the construction of a strategy (a broad frame of reference) for shopping centre planning by interpolating information obtained in the questionnaire survey.

Omission of points such as the historical development of shopping centres, location in relation to other urban land uses, problems of development, redevelopment of the C.B.D., good range, market potential, centre management and financing, though all part of a total planning matrix were not considered either, because of complexity, or time (which includes insufficient background knowledge).

The first proposed avenue of investigation, on rating characteristics, was proposed as a means to gain the name and address of the owner, the year of construction of the shop or centre, dimensions of the shops and internal facilities, rentals, lease length, and the name and address of the lessee. By approaching the owner, it was hoped to find out motivations to build, the reasons behind the choice of design and layout and the owner's feeling on planning shopping centres. The lessees were also to be approached to establish from credit lists the areal range of patronage for each shopping centre. Considerable difficulties were encountered in extracting current information from the Palmerston North Valuation Department records, and it was, accordingly, decided not to pursue the following lines of study

a) Rental and lease comparisons because of lack of data conformity on records
b) Dimensions of shops and internal facilities as these were a minor aspect of the planning picture and would also require elaborate analysis to be useful.

It was also thought this line of research could be adequately carried out using a different technique, namely a Retailers Questionnaire.

Though the problem under discussion is a tentative planning strategy,

a geographer can justify tackling the problem on several grounds. Before any planning decision can be made, the town planner or his employing body must have all the relevant facts at his disposal and it is in the collection and analysis of these facts that the geographer can make a major contribution. The geographer with some planning interest can at least attempt to suggest a framework of reference for planning shopping centres in Palmerston North (or any other city). The geographer's training in the analysis of place, spatial distributions, man centred distributions (ecological geography) and understanding of techniques of other disciplines allows him to work in certain stages of the planning process. Mayer, 143 follows a similar line of thought, i.e. "geographers may study cities for the purpose of formulating basic concepts of city growth, city location, or city character, or they may study cities in order to contribute to the solution of practical problems of urban planning". This study attempts to formulate solutions using the techniques of an interdisciplinary trained geographer.

ASPECTS OF THE EXISTING PLANNING FRAMEWORK.

The Palmerston North District Scheme Statement records the following comments on "shopping centres" in the city.

"Clause 6

(1) Permitted Uses - the commercial zones provide primarily for business or commercial development, and consist predominantly of areas for shops, offices and storage. The uses of land in shopping streets shall as far as possible provide continuity of shop frontage without the intrusion at street level of any other use which would tend to affect detrimentally the business or goods of retailers or would tend to draw unnecessary or obstructive vehicular traffic into the streets fronting retail shopping premises.

(3) Commercial "A" in the outer areas to meet the day to day needs of the neighbourhood.

Commercial B where the large store or a large number of stores can provide a suitable range of articles to meet the widely varying needs of the whole community". (Scheme Statement, 12).

According to the Palmerston North District Scheme Code of Ordinances the predominant type of construction "shops" means "any land, building, or part of a building on or in which goods are sold or offered or exposed for sale by retail and includes any auctioneer's or land agent's premises, a lending library, restaurant, a hairdresser's premises and a depot for receipt of drycleaning; but does not include premises used for the sale of fuel for motor vehicles". (Code of Ordinances, 5).

Two inclusions on shopping centre planning are found in Part XI of the Scheme Statement. The first, under development of car parks, reads " The following are the proposed number of additional car spaces to be provided in each area during each five year period:

	<u>Number of car spaces.</u>		
	<u>1 - 5 years</u>	<u>6 - 10 years</u>	<u>11-20 years</u>
(1) Terrace End Shopping Centre ¹			
(a) Ruahine Street	-	-	105
(b) Main Street to Broadway	-	55	55

1. The planning period is the years 1967 to 1987.

The second, concerning land to be acquired, notes "(1) Terrace End Shopping Centre.

(b) Main Street to Broadway - it is anticipated that the portion to be developed during years 6 - 10 of the planning period will involve those properties which front Broadway Avenue".

(Scheme Statement, 20)

The above are prefaced by a comment on "policy as to zoning". A number of objectives are stated.

- " a) To avoid the indiscriminate mixture of incompatible uses,
- b) To economise in the servicing of the District.
- c) To maintain the stability of individual property values.
- d) To maintain and provide amenities appropriate to every locality"

(Scheme Statement, 10). These objectives are ^{indirectly} elaborated and supported in a rigorous analysis later in this study.