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## The Evolution of the Retail Landscape

Mathew Novak  
*University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor  
Jason Gilliland  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Geography  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of  
Philosophy  
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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE RETAIL LANDSCAPE

Monograph

by

Mathew J. Novak

Graduate Program in Geography

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

**CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION**

Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jason Gilliland

Supervisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Mike Buzzelli

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jacek Malczewski

Examiners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Godwin Arku

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Tony Hernandez

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jeff Hopkins

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Robert MacDougall

The thesis by

**Mathew John Novak**

entitled:

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requirements for the degree of  
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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## **ABSTRACT**

If the city is a theatre of social interaction (Mumford 1996), then one of the principle stage sets is the retail landscape. Retail districts are generally where people congregate, making places of shopping among the liveliest areas the city. In addition to being social settings, retail areas are also where a large component of the city's economy is transacted, and they are implicated in the political dramas of the city, particularly those dealing with issues of growth and development. Retail shops are highly visible elements of the urban landscape, lining principle arteries and clustering at major transit nodes. Retailing is woven throughout the economic, social, political, and built fabrics of the city.

The evolution of the retail landscape was studied throughout the development of London, Ontario, a typical mid-sized North American city. The functional and spatial composition of the retail sector was documented from the first settlement, thru the era of rapid industrialization, to today's consumption-based city. Over time, the retail landscape exhibited much dynamism, reflecting changing socio-economic conditions, as well as technological innovation. Both the retailers themselves, and the environments in which their businesses were conducted, have evolved. From the primitive general store, thru the grand emporia lining '*mainstreet*', to the contemporary planned shopping centres.

Comparisons were made between the physical characteristics of the built environments constructed in various eras which make up the retail landscape. Drawing from the urban morphology literature (notably Conzen 1960), analysis was conducted of the town-plan, building forms, and land-uses of the various retail environments. In addition to documenting the general changes in these town-scape elements over time, further analysis was conducted on the form and function of the archetypical retail environments, the traditional '*mainstreet*' district and contemporary shopping centres. Although they differ in many ways, a common logic was found in all retail landscapes, united through the drive for profit maximization by the retailers who shape their environments in striving towards this goal.

Theoretical advancements to the field of urban morphology are presented, arguing that it is necessary to consider all elements of the town-scape in unison when describing the character of urban environments. A *trialectic* is proposed, taking into account how each of these elements simultaneously shapes and is shaped by the other two.

*Keywords:*

Retail Geography, Urban Geography, Urban History, Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

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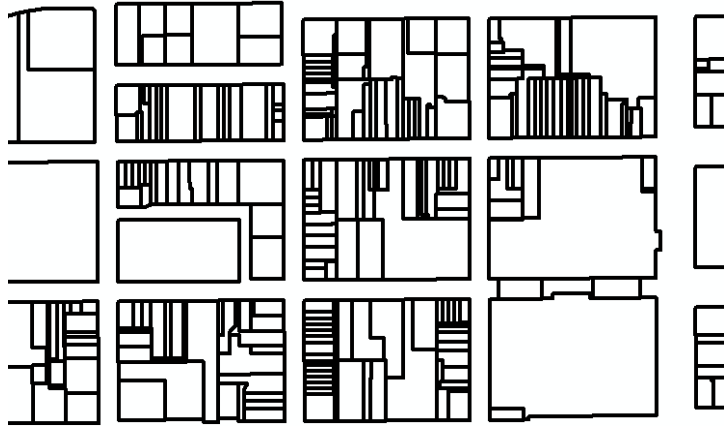
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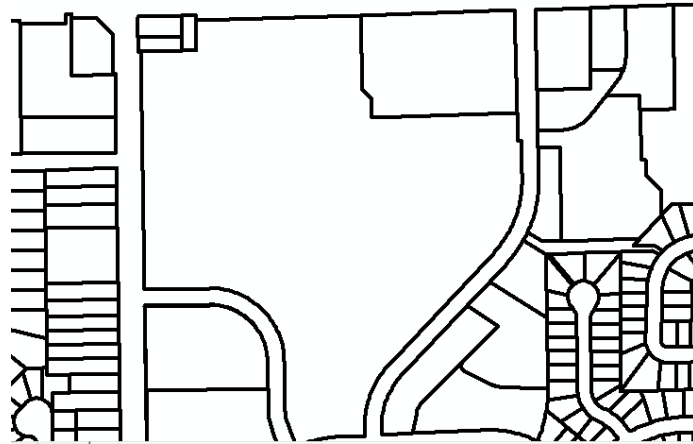
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**THE  
EVOLUTION  
OF THE  
RETAIL  
LANDSCAPE**



**City Centre (Lot fabric)**



**Shopping Centre (Lot fabric)**

CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

*Tracing the imprint of retailing*

*in the urban landscape*





## CHAPTER 1

**INTRODUCTION**

Kingsmill's Department Store is a fixture in London, Canada's retail landscape. Unlike most other retail establishments, it has resisted the lure of relocating to the urban fringe and remains along Dundas Street, the city's traditional 'mainstreet'<sup>1</sup> shopping district. The store has occupied the same location since it opened in 1865, making it a rare example of a steadfast element in the retail landscape<sup>2</sup>. Change is pervasive throughout the retail landscape of most North American cities; retailers evolve at exceptional speed to keep pace with the market and their competitors.

Kingsmill's is a remnant of an earlier time. While other retailers have changed their marketing positions and business practices, store environments and locations, Kingsmill's remains committed to its original location, and maintains many of the hallmarks of retailing from an earlier era. The structure still has wooden floors and tin ceilings and its façade was last updated when Art Deco architecture was in vogue. It has been able to use its history and traditional retail methods to maintain a loyal clientele. An elevator operator still guides customers to the appropriate floor and customer service is widely available and personal. It is among the last independent department stores in Canada, most others having either shuttered or bought by the larger chains as was the fate of London's other grand emporium, Smallman & Ingram's Department Store, which was purchased in 1944 by the Simpson's chain of department stores from Toronto.

Despite its obduracy, Kingsmill's store does reflect many of the changes which have taken place in retailing. The current structure is the third occupied by the store, the previous having been destroyed by fire in the early-twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Mainstreet is the term used throughout this thesis when talking about the retail landscape of the downtown core along the city's primary shopping street. It is used as the generic term since London, among many other cities, does not have a Main Street.

<sup>2</sup> Nash Jewellers, like Kingsmill's, is a long-established retailer which remains committed to their original downtown location which first opened in 1918; however, they also have a second location at the suburban shopping area at Masonville.

Each new structure employed the modern technologies and styles of the day. In the last decade, two expansions have been undertaken, reflecting the purchasing desires of the contemporary shopper; a gourmet kitchenware department and a contemporary apartment/condominium furniture department are now part of the traditional selections of clothing and house wares<sup>3</sup>. The types of products on the shelves have also changed, as have their fashions as seen in the progression of styles in the clothing departments. Technology has also impacted the store's operation. Today, bar-code scanners assist in the logistics of product checkout and inventorying.

## RESEARCH OUTLINE

Kingsmill's is but one small piece of the overall retail landscape, the entirety of which is a complex milieu of retailers competing for customers and sales while adapting to changing market environments. This thesis examines this retail landscape, tracing its origins and evolution over time, and situating it within the wider urban context<sup>4</sup>. Using London, Canada as a case study, the following chapters detail the retail landscape in successive eras of development including: the founding and first settlement in 1826, the linkages with the surrounding region in 1864, the industrializing city of 1881, the apex of the downtown in 1916, the early stages of suburbanization in 1958, and the contemporary situation in 2004. These specific years were chosen not only for their representational nature, but also due to the availability of detailed and robust data sources which document these landscapes.

The retail landscape in each era is analyzed by mapping the location of retailers contained in a large database created from the city directory listings. The

---

<sup>3</sup> London's downtown core, the immediate market area of Kingsmill's, has seen many new apartment and condominium projects due to incentives by the city which attempt to bring residents back to the core as part of downtown revitalization (Department 2009).

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this research, retailing is defined as the sale of physical goods to individuals who remove the article from site for its consumption. Thus, a grocery store is a retailer, since one buys the food and takes it away to consume it, while a restaurant is not since the food is consumed on site.

urban forms constructed by the many retailers are studied using both historical maps, notably the fire insurance plans, and contemporary digital datasets representing the city. Other contemporary and historical sources are drawn from to enrich the depiction of the landscape and explain how it changes over time. A Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS) is used to manage these disparate data sets and to conduct much of the analysis. The various data sources, as well as the process of spatially and temporally referencing them in the HGIS are discussed in the second chapter.

Four results chapters document the retail landscape in each era, looking at its functional, spatial and morphological composition. The first of these results chapters discusses the link between retailing and the early settlement of the city. In addition to giving a history of the settlement of London, it shows how retailing is integral with the urban development process. It demonstrates the impact that improved transportation linkages had on product selection in the early city. The second results chapter, Chapter 4 of the monograph, maps retail landscapes throughout the development of the city. It looks at the types of retailing in each of the aforementioned eras of interest, and their locations within the urban landscape. It also analyses the changes in retail morphologies over time throughout the entire city in general, and in three case-study areas specifically.

The general overview of retailing found in Chapters 3 and 4 provides a framework on which to detail two different retail landscapes. The downtown core, or the central retail district, is examined for the period of 1880 to 1930, the pinnacle era of mainstreet retailing. Micro-scale analysis shows the relationships between location, land values, land-uses, and town-plan characteristics. Since the analysis is conducted on an annual basis, changes within the form and function of the central retail district are shown over the fifty year period. The last results chapter (Chapter 6) switches focus from the traditional retail area to the contemporary planned shopping centres. This chapter traces the rise to dominance of the planned shopping centres in the contemporary landscape, and shows the many forms they take. Consideration is given to both the successful and unsuccessful centres, a novel approach since most existing literature examines only successful shopping centres (for example, Hopkins 1990; Goss 1999). The analysis details the location of the

shopping centres, their morphology and their functioning in terms of revenue generation and how people interact with their stringent environments.

The final chapter of this monograph discusses the changes and similarities found within the retail landscape as it evolves over time. Conclusions are made about the similarities found in many retail landscapes due to an inherent logic implemented by the retailers in their striving for profit maximization. Despite their radically different appearances, shopping malls and traditional downtowns share many functional and morphological characteristics. The aesthetics of the landscapes are then questioned. By looking at all three elements of the townscape, this research makes it clear that urban morphological examinations of the landscape must consider the town-plan, building forms and land-uses as they form a *trialectic*; each shaping the others while simultaneously being shaped itself. Finally, by looking at the traditional mainstreet when it was successful, a critique of the current downtown revitalization efforts is offered and suggestions are made to reinvigorate the heart of the city.

The remaining sections of this introductory chapter present the context, motivation and guiding theory for analysing the evolution of the retail landscape in London. A brief history is provided of retailing around the world, with attention paid to the environments in which it was conducted and the conditions which spurred their development. Then a conceptual model is developed which shows how retail landscapes are formed by retailers in their motivation for profit maximization. This model is used to guide the research, providing a framework to understand how retail landscapes are created and modified over time. Since the model and the resulting analysis is highly interdisciplinary, the research is situated in the field of urban morphology, an interdisciplinary field that offers theories and methods for understanding the processes of urban change and growth. A discussion of using urban morphology to read landscapes, and reveal the processes of change in the capitalist system conclude this introductory chapter.

## OBJECTIVES & MOTIVATION

This research results in a narrative with several objectives. First and foremost it strives to show the functional, spatial and morphological composition of the landscape at various times in the city's history. The findings attempt to elucidate the conditions surrounding the creation of each of these landscapes. This adds to the understanding of both historical and contemporary urban systems in general and the retail structure of cities specifically. Secondly, by comparing and contrasting the various environments it reveals change over time in the retail landscape. These changes to the physical forms of retailing are manifestations of changing market conditions, including social and economic circumstances as well as technological innovations. Changes are not solely sought; the research also looks for conformity in the landscapes, threads of similarity which are maintained over time which result from retailers sharing the similar goal of profit maximization. A third objective is to show how the various retail landscapes functioned. This is done in detail for the two most important landscapes: the downtown core at its height of importance in the urban system between 1880 and 1930, and for the planned shopping centres which account for much of the post-war retail sales and significant components of the contemporary landscape. A fourth objective is to devise a model, found later in this chapter, detailing how retailers shape urban forms which make up the landscape. This model should provide useful for understanding the complex milieu that both creates and causes changes to the retail landscape. Using the model to interpret the results of the research on the retail landscape demonstrates the need for an interdisciplinary approach to retail research, drawing from the numerous fields that retailing can be situated within. A fifth objective is to demonstrate how to fully read an urban landscape using the methods and theories of urban morphology. It is necessary to acknowledging all of the landscape components for a complete picture of both past and present cities. Doing so allows for the management of future growth and change.

A further objective relates to the technical side of conducting this research, and the utility of the techniques for understanding past and present urban conditions. The implementation of a Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS) demonstrates the utility of the system for managing and analyzing of the

large amount of data collected to detail the retail landscapes. It is hoped that historians and morphologists will see the value of implementing GIS in their research, despite the initial labour and financial costs. Doing so allows for simultaneous analysis of time and space in great detail and opens up new avenues of research. GIS also makes possible the examination of entire urban areas, rather than select case-studies that were done using traditional manual methods. This methodological objective is also met by shifting the lens at which the landscape is examined, from the micro thru the macro scale made possible by the GIS. The following pages look at the city, from within the walls of individual stores to the entire London area.

In answering these objectives, this research adds to our current understand of retailing in urban areas. It shows retail's weave within the city's fabric, and makes clear that retailing is an essential and valuable part of the city's functioning and character. Although an importance urban function, retailing is an often overlooked phenomenon, especially in historical contexts. Retailing was present from the first years of development, and formed characteristically urban landscapes when the rest of the settlement was rural. Academic understanding of retail history is sparse, notably in North America (Benson and Shaw 1992), so this work attempts to fill part of this void. It does so by providing an expansive overview of retailing throughout the spatial and temporal extents of a typical North American city.

Retailing is pervasive throughout contemporary life. One need only mention Wal-Mart to realize that the retail enterprise has expanded beyond the realm of economics. Wal-Mart has political, social and environmental associations (see Spotts 2005; Bianco 2006). It is also representative of technological change; from the products on the shelves, to the logistics in stocking them (Birkin, Clarke, and Clarke 2002; Angeles 2005), to the automobile which most customers use to take them home.

It is said that we are now living in a consumer society (Goodwin, Ackerman, and Kiron 1997; Baudrillard 1999), and may have been for quite some time (McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb 1982). At the heart of this consumer society is the act of consumption; "the selection, use, reuse and disposal of goods" (Campbell 1995, 105). Retailing is a critical component of consumption and is a vital link in the commodity chain, joining producers and consumers.

There is growing awareness of consumption research within the social sciences (see Miller 1995 for a review of consumption in various disciplines). Consumption is “a bridge that links the individual to the urban environment” (Jayne 2006, 12). In terms of retail environments, consumption brings citizens into the public realm in order to procure goods. More broadly, residents of the city consume spaces, not just goods. Thus, the act of shopping consumes not just for the goods themselves, but also the spaces in which the goods are purchased.

Many of the leading social theorists have studied consumption and highlight retail environments in their discussion; the drugstore by Baudrillard (1999), the department store by Harvey (2003) and the shops found in a gentrifying neighbourhood by Ley (1996). The study of the retail landscape helps shed light on these practices of consumption, and thus society in general, by describing in detail the environments in which retailing occurs.

Much existing consumption research looks at the contemporary situation, using abstract research. There have been calls for the rematerializing of this and other research in the social sciences (Lees 2002; Jackson 2000). By looking at the concrete forms of retailing as imbedded in the retail landscape over time this research certainly provides material results rather than abstract arguments derived from subjective interpretation or semiotic readings in the tradition of Barthes (1986) which have been applied in the aforementioned work. It also answers the call for more historical studies of consumption (Glennie and Thrift 1992; Glennie 1998; Jackson and Thrift 1995). One of the primary goals of this study is to contextualize the current retail landscape in terms of its origins and development.

Other motivation for this research stems from the importance of retailing within the economy. In 2009, retail sales in Canada were over \$415 billion; consumer spending accounting for 60 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of Canada. Retail trade directly produced over \$74 billion in GDP (Statistics Canada 2009b, 2009c) and employed over 1.8 million people in 2009 (Statistics Canada 2009a).

A pragmatic outcome of this research is its utility in guiding redevelopment schemes of traditional retail areas, notably the mainstreet districts. Professional planning journals are full of articles making recommendations for revitalizing these traditional areas (Ken 1997; Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984; Robertson 1990; Filion

et al. 2004; Lowe 2005; Robertson 1997; Southworth 2005; Filion and Hammond 2006; Bromley, Tallon, and Thomas 2005; Walker 2009); however, most of these studies ignore the history of downtowns, and instead focus on its current state and ways to fix it. By understanding the downtown when it was a vibrant retail hub which serviced the entire region, this research provides substantial indicators of how a successful downtown will function in the future and strategies to guide its development. This is not, however, normative or prescriptive research; rather, primarily a substantive and descriptive study of retail landscapes which can then be used by planners and other professionals and academics in their efforts to help spur success in these traditional areas.

The substantive descriptions of the retail landscape found in the following chapters add to the current understanding of retail's place in the development of cities. By tracing retailing from first settlement to the current metropolis, the interaction between retailing and the development of the city is detailed. A comprehensive description of the retail landscape is provided, documenting all retail establishments in each era, rather than isolated case study areas. GIS facilitates the creation and management of the large datasets which are then analysed using the tools offered by the software. This approach of documenting the entire city using digital representations advances urban morphological and historical research. Both fields have typically examined only specific areas usually using manual rather than digital tools.

London's history, size, demographics and location make it an ideal case study to trace retail evolution. London is a mid-sized Canadian city, the fifteenth largest city in Canada with a population of 352,000 citizens in the 2006 Census. London has long been located at the top of the retail hierarchy for the Southwestern Ontario region (Richard 1979). As a case study, London offers a manageable size to study the development of its entire retail landscape, while having a wide array of retail functions as it is the major service centre for the entire Southwest Ontario region. First settled in 1826 and gaining city status in 1855, London's history is sufficiently long to trace a wide variety of retail changes, and extensive archival records are available. Finally, London is a typical Canadian city in its development and demographic composition. In fact London is often used as a test-market for new retail innovations (Unknown 2005). The use of London as a case-study thus allows



for a sufficiently detailed, interesting, and lengthy history that is suitable to illustrate the retail landscape of the general Canadian city.

With the research outlined and the motivation demonstrated, this chapter continues with a concise history of retailing over the last six thousand years. It is but a brief overview owing to the complexity of this varied activity and its lengthy duration; proper descriptions of this history itself would fill volumes. It does show, however, that retailing has been an important activity in cities throughout history, as well the continuity in retail morphologies that are found over time. Next is a summary of geographical research on retailing, tracing both traditional and contemporary approaches. This leads to a discussion of the theory which guides the research, uniting the traditional and contemporary approaches to subject. Theory is also drawn from evolutionary economics, using the idea that retailers compete to maximize profits while adapting to changing environments. Finally, the tools and theories found in the interdisciplinary field of urban morphology are explored; they will be used to examine the landscapes of retailing.

## **A SHORT SUMMARY OF RETAILING'S LONG HISTORY**

Retailing is an ancient practice. In Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, markets were held thousands of years before Christ (Van de Mieroop 1999). Buyers and sellers came together in the marketplace which contained a variety of goods. There is debate over the functioning of the marketplace, such as whether the price mechanism was in place, and generally the role of the market in the overall economy (Silver 1983; Mayhew, Neale, and Tandy 1985; Silver 2009; Polyani 1944), although it appears now that market prices were in fact functioning in early Babylon (Temin 2002). Thus, in humanity's first cities was found an active retail marketplace, which demonstrated many characteristics which would define the practices of buying and selling for thousands of years.

The Agora, the heart of ancient Greek cities, was not only a place of political gathering, but also a marketplace. Fresh food markets were held here, and both transient and permanent sellers offered their wares (Vance 1990). In addition to basic foodstuffs, the stalls of the Greek Agora could be found perfumes, clothing and wine (Thompson 1993, 28) Vance calls the agora a primordial central business

district due to its various functional aspects being in close proximity, allowing for multiple purpose trips (Vance 1990, 53).

Two thousand years after the Greek Agorae, the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul was opened in the mid-fifteenth century containing thousands of shops fronting both covered and exposed corridors. Its plethora of food stalls grouped together can be looked at as the “the oldest and largest supermarket in the world” (Wolfe 1963, 25). This colossal structure contained clusters of speciality stores such as furniture and jewellery (Wolfe 1963). The lineage of the shopping mall can be traced back to these two covered marketplaces (Jackson 1996).

While the Grand Bazaar was bustling with customers in the Ottoman Empire, two thousand kilometres west, Europe was in the first stages of industrialisation in the second-half of the eighteenth-century. The dark ages were over, and no longer did the vast majority of the population subsist on farming with little occupational specialization as they did prior to the mid-eighteenth century (Deane 1979, 18). Instead, they began to toil in the mills and factories, or in extracting the raw resources which would be refined. Industrialization produced goods to be sold in the retail outlets. Wages also increased during this time as employment was found in the factories (Lindert and Williamson 1983).

Supply and demand sides of consumption were both stimulated by the industrial revolution. This is an undeniable statement; more debatable is whether supply was stimulated first, or vice versa (Gilboy 1932). Notable in consumption research that attempts to solve this question is McKendrick’s (1982) application of Veblen’s (2007) theory of emulative consumption. Using the example of the many domestics employed by the bourgeoisie, McKendrick assumes that fashions and desires for goods trickled down from master to servant, spurring demand amongst all classes; wages and a fluid social structure were also instrumental in spurring demand. Although Campbell (1987) agrees with McKendrick on the demand side spurring consumption, he argues that it was the hedonic longing for goods espoused by the protestant ethic that was the underlying factor. Campbell discusses the unquenchable desire and immediate gratification which can be seen as hallmarks of the consumer society (see Goodwin, Ackerman, and Kiron 1997). Fine and Leopald(1990) argue that it is necessary to consider both supply and demand since

they were mutually constitutive processes and the consumer society could not be a result of one or the other entirely.

Also debatable is the timing of the advent of the consumer society in general and modern retail practices specifically. Entangled in this debate is the differentiation between mass consumption, consumer society, and retail practices; each not necessarily accompanying the others. Shamma (1993) looks at the mass consumption<sup>5</sup> of grocery products such as tobacco and sugar which both occurred in the seventeenth-century England, suggesting that mass consumption was occurring before mass production; the American colonies were slightly behind. In terms of the stores themselves, Davis (1966) discusses how some sixteenth-century London shops had large glass windows and a varied selection, but in general were still dark and muddled. Cox (2000) counters Davis' and others' supposition that there is a distinct divide between pre- and post-industrialized shops, with convincing descriptions of the shops and their keepers in the early modern period being anything but primitive. The tradesmen were aware of advanced marketing, designed suitable environments for their outlets and were meeting the needs of the consumer who had already discerning tastes (Cox 2000).

Although Cox and others have argued that there was no revolution in retailing, but rather an evolution, the department store has come to symbolize for many the start of modern retailing (Miller 1981). "The increasing power of the commodity itself as spectacle was nowhere better expressed than in the new department stores" (Harvey 2003, 213). The first and arguably most famous of these stores is the Bon Marche, which opened in Paris in 1852. It sold articles with fixed prices and enticed buyers with piles of elaborately displayed goods (Miller 1981). Zola, the French writer who documented much of nineteenth-century Parisian life in his stories, vividly describes the practices of this 'machine for selling' in his story *Au Bonheur des Dames* or *The Ladies Paradise* (Zola 1995).

Department stores are not just continental phenomena; they were also well-established elements in the North American retail landscape. If Europe was their origin, then America was where they metamorphosed into the grand palaces of

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<sup>5</sup> Shamma defines mass consumption as products being available to one-quarter of the adult population on a daily basis.

consumption. No expense was spared, as is witnessed in Chicago's State Street palaces: Louis Comfort Tiffany was commissioned to design the ceiling in Marshall Field's behemoth flagship (Pridmore, *Marshall Field's Department Store*, and Chicago Architecture Foundation. 2002), and Schlesinger and Mayer (later Carson Pirie Scott) hired the leading architect of the day, Louis Sullivan, to create their emporium which today remains a masterpiece of early modern architecture (Siry 1988).

Department stores were influential in the retail landscape. Their power so pervasive that they became synonymous with the city in which they were built: Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, Bloomingdales and Macys' in New York, Marshall Fields in Chicago, and Neiman-Marcus in Dallas<sup>6</sup>. Canada too had its famous stores with Woodward's<sup>7</sup> in Vancouver and Eaton's in Toronto and Winnipeg, although Canada's department stores were typical of the lagging of Canadian retail practices behind those found south of the border (Burns and Rayman 1995). The fall of the Eaton's empire was lamented as a loss of Canadian culture when it filed for bankruptcy in 1997 (Star 1997).

The ascent to dominance by department stores is demonstrative of the shift from a production-oriented to consumption-oriented society (Benson 1988, 75). Furthermore, they shaped modern consumer culture, and taught people how to consume through their selling practices (Laermans 1993).

In North America the department stores located in the downtown, it being the centre of retailing and commerce for the entire region. Downtown was a uniquely North American word, referring to the central business district; it was also a uniquely American place (Fogelson 2001, 12). Although it was not separate politically and hard to delineate (see Bowden 1971; Murphy and Vance 1954b),

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<sup>6</sup> Public pride in the old grand dames of retailing is still persistent. When Macy's bought the failing Marshall Fields chain they rebranded the State Street flagship store in Chicago under much protest from the local citizenry. Some still refuse to shop at the rebranded store and there are numerous websites and public protests calling for the reinstating of the former moniker.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Woodward's first retail foray was on Manitoulin Island in 1875. His first store was in the hamlet of Bidwell (which now has a population of under ten people), then later the village of Manitowaning, Ontario; both enterprises were unsuccessful (Pearen 1996). The log cabin he used for his first enterprise is exceedingly different from the retail empire he would later helm on the West Coast headed by the flagship store on Hastings Street in Vancouver.

functionally and morphologically, downtown was very different from the rest of the city. It was the centre of commerce, but also contained residential, industrial, and institutional uses. Downtown was the most densely developed area of the city, and witnessed the greatest activity levels as well.

Although the skyscrapers and their office functions were impressive fixtures of the North American downtown at the turn of the twentieth century, it is the retail stores that brought most people to the core, these being most characteristic of the central retail district's intense activity and development. Despite their height and impressiveness, the office towers did not occupy the prime sites (Murphy, Vance, and Epstein 1955). Rather it was the retailers who took the most valuable land, building stores which were much lower, but also much more profitable (Alonso 1964; Murphy, Vance, and Epstein 1955). Retailers occupied the most valuable lots since they were also those with the highest traffic, and thus the greatest potential to attract customers (Hurd 1911, 93). One need only look to the location of Woolworth's discount store to find the greatest land values in the early-twentieth century city.

The downtown was not a static environment, its function changing over time as did its spatial extent and focus (Murphy, Vance, and Epstein 1955; Bowden 1971). One example of this is the relocation of the department stores in New York City, which moved northwards into the wealthy residential neighbourhoods in order to service this desirable high-end market as well as to be associated with the wealth of the Astors and the Vanderbilts (Domosh 1990). That they were even able to displace the elite who did not want these stores in their neighbourhoods demonstrates the power of the retailers, and the culture of capitalism in New York. Domosh (1990) contrasts this situation in New York with that of Boston where there was less regard for the market practices and the wealthy were able to resist the encroachment of retailers.

The primacy of the downtown retail district was not unflinching. As streetcar suburbs grew, retailers began to locate along the lines, servicing the new areas (Warner 1962). A large number of retailers were located outside of the core even in the nineteenth-century (Conzen and Conzen 1979). Still, the downtown remained the location of the best stores, and drew customers from across the city until the advent of the planned shopping centres.

Beginning in the early-twentieth century, the downtown retail districts of cities throughout North America were being increasingly challenged by planned shopping centres. In the early stages, growth of the new shopping centres was modest (Gillette 1985), and did not significantly erode the businesses in the core. After the Second World War, shopping centres proliferated and downtowns began to suffer (Cohen 1996). At the same time, the mass adoption of the automobile caused issues for the downtown since their urban forms did not facilitate the expansive parking and road networks required to smoothly operate the automobile. Even before World War II, parking became an issue downtown (Jakle and Sculle 2004, 61). Shopping centres offered the automobile bound customers ample parking and ease of access from the major auto routes.

Baltimore's Roland Park which opened in 1908 is the first example of a planned shopping centre (McKeever et al. 1977). The Country Club Plaza which opened in Kansas City in 1922 was a notable example of a planned shopping centre forming the heart of a new residential community (Gillette 1985). J.C. Nichols, the developer of the Country Club District, "fully understood the American suburb as it came into being before World War II" (Vance 1990, 490), integrating his plaza at the heart of a large new residential development. He was also aware that the automobile would be the preferred method of transit for many shoppers, and purposely built his centre away from streetcar lines (Vance 1990).

The architect Victor Gruen is the most famous mall designer, responsible for many notable developments in shopping centre design (Hardwick 2003). His Southdale Mall which opened in Edina, Minnesota in 1956 was the first enclosed corridor centre with climate control and other features now common in large shopping malls (Kowinski 1985). It was a radical departure from the strip malls and other exterior access centres which predated its opening. Wellington Square, which opened in London, Ontario's core in 1960, was the first enclosed shopping centre built in a North American downtown (Fry 1961). In the 1980s and 1990s many downtown shopping centres were built in an effort to save the core, nearly all of which were unsuccessful, using the very instrument which had bludgeoned it thirty years earlier.

Ironically it was the department stores, the leading merchants of downtown that were responsible for many of the early shopping centres. Department stores

had already begun to open branch stores to service new suburban communities with the hopes of expanding sales; however, it was never their point to compete directly with flagship downtown locations (Longstreth 1997). Seeing both the success of their suburban branches, and the increasing draw of shopping centres, department stores entered into these new retail environments. Further irony is that Gruen, the developer of the Southdale Mall, saw it as an antidote to suburban sprawl (Kowinski 1985). He thought of his centres not just as shopping centres, but also centres of community and cultural activity (Hardwick 2003, 1). Gruen (1973) aimed to “restore the lost sense of commitment and belonging...[to] counteract the phenomenon of alienation, isolation and loneliness and achieve a sense of identity” (after, Mayhew 2009).

Among the first of the department stores to open branches in suburban shopping centres were Hudson’s of Detroit and Broadway of Los Angeles (Longstreth 1997). The department stores themselves were often pursuing the development of the centres as a source of profit, as were insurance companies and other investors (Cohen 1996). Dayton-Hudsons, an agglomerate of the department stores, operated a property division creating shopping centres (Kowinski 1985). Their Northland Mall in suburban Detroit was the first to be the centre of other developments controlled by the same owner such as offices and apartment buildings (Kowinski 1985).

Today, shopping centres remain a dominant component of the retail landscape, accounting for \$280 billion, or over 65% of all retail sales in Canada (International Council on Shopping Centers 2010). They are also pervasive cultural phenomena, serving as the setting for popular films (*Mall Rats*, *Paul Blart Mall Cop*) and are used as leisure centres for a wide demographic (Miller et al. 1998). Downtowns are typically suffering in most cities, save for the largest metropolitan areas or those with an active tourist program. Retailing remains strong on Fifth Avenue in New York City, but Dundas Street in London is marred by empty storefronts and stores selling low-quality goods, such as novelties shops.

There are signs of the return of the North American downtown, but more as a mixed use centre (Filion and Huether 2003). Many include a festival marketplace, but the suburban shopping malls which were inserted in the downtowns with the hope of revival have failed (Filion and Hammond 2006). It is a goal of many planners and politicians to rehabilitate these traditional areas (City of London

Planning Department 2009), and planning journals such as *The Journal of American Planning Association* and *Plan Canada* contain numerous articles outlining strategies for revitalisation (Walker 2009; Ken 1997; Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984).

Many lament the loss of the traditional downtown retailing. It is often the same people who decry the sterility and homogeneity of the planned shopping centres. The masses, however, seem to prefer the convenience, comfort, and control of the planned shopping centres, as demonstrated by the busy corridors on most Saturday afternoons. This switch from city center to shopping centre is demonstrative of the constant flux that the retail landscape has undergone in its long evolutionary trajectory.

As indicated in the title of this monograph, the supposition of this work is that an evolution in retailing has occurred; revolution was deliberately not chosen to describe these changes. Cox (2000) and Henderson-Smith (2002) argue that advanced retail practices can be found before industrialization and evolution is the proper term to describe these changes. Most retail concepts are not new; their roots can be found in previous eras. The lineage of fixed stores can be traced to the stalls of the marketplaces of ancient civilization, and today's stores still share common characteristics. The present shopping malls and supermarkets share much with the Grand Bazaar built four hundred years ago. Retailing has a long history, and yet it is tied together through an underlying logic; that is, to sell as much as possible.

## **RETAIL GEOGRAPHY**

There is a long tradition of geographical research into retailing. Throughout the twentieth-century geographers studied retail landscapes; their approaches, however, have changed from the traditional mapping of store locations and delineation of market areas to the culturally influenced analysis of retail environments and their users.



## TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Traditional retail geography takes an economic perspective; many such studies map retail locations and determine their market areas. Its roots are in the famous works of Christaller (1966) and Losch (1967), who although working independently in the early-twentieth century, came up with similar descriptive models of the structure of the settlement system. Each proposes a hierarchy of settlements based on their size and the services they offered. Their models are based on the services offered in various sized settlements; as settlement size increases, there are fewer centres, but each offers more services, including retailing, and as such draws from a larger market. The primary difference is that Christaller's hierarchy is nested while Losch's is not; in the nested system each larger settlement not only has additional services, but contained all of the services of the smaller. In both models, potential customers would visit the nearest centre that offered the service.

Reilly's law of retail gravitation is another fundamental concept in the traditional retail geography literature (Reilly 1931). The law delineates market areas by the pull (gravity) of each retail cluster which is a function of its size. This deterministic law was modified by Huff into a probabilistic equation where the customer may visit any of the retail clusters (Huff 1964, 1963). Huff's advancement is that it acknowledges that customers choose between a variety of acceptable retail options.

These models and laws permeated much of the retail geography literature for the next fifty years (see Berry and Pred 1965). Perhaps their best known application is Berry's work on Southern Iowa (Berry, Barnum, and Tennant 1962) and Chicago (Berry et al. 1963; Berry 1967). While the works of Reilly, Christaller and Losch were originally specified for the regional system of settlements, as Berry and his colleagues showed for Southern Iowa, they also work well for the intraurban retail patterns as Berry demonstrated for Chicago. In this seminal work, Berry documents Chicago's retail landscape at a time of great change, as planned shopping centres at the urban periphery were challenging the traditional core, or the 'Loop' in the case of Chicago, retailers. In studying the city's retail areas Berry produced a taxonomy of retail district both by their functional and morphological characteristics (Figure 1.1).

This hierarchy is still in use to describe planned shopping centres (International Council on Shopping Centers 2009).

Continuing his work, Berry's students have looked at retailing in various other cities. Notable in this group is Jim Simmons, who has thoroughly examined Canada's retail landscape in general (Simmons 2007, 1991) with a particular emphasis on Toronto (Simmons and Yeates 1998; Simmons 1966). He and colleagues at The Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity based at Ryerson University have produced numerous reports on Canadian Retailing, with a focus on its geographical patterns (see <http://www.cscs.ryerson.ca/Publications.html>). They have compiled a comprehensive database pertaining to retail activities for the Greater Toronto Area. These spatially referenced databases have been instrumental in their research which exploit the power of GIS (Yeates 2001; Hernandez et al. 1999).

Over time the methods for studying the retail environment have become increasingly sophisticated. Retailers have been able to use advanced spatial analytical tools, as well as focused marketing strategies to gain competitive advantage in their marketing techniques by choosing the best locations possible. Strategies have progressed from relying on visceral feelings to using structured checklists, determining analogues, undertaking parasite approaches, through regression analysis, and finally applying sophisticated GIS techniques to determine their market programs (Clarke 1998). Large retailers can now employ entire GIS groups in their marketing divisions to rationalize their decision making process (Benoit and Clarke 1997; Hernandez and Biasiotto 2001).

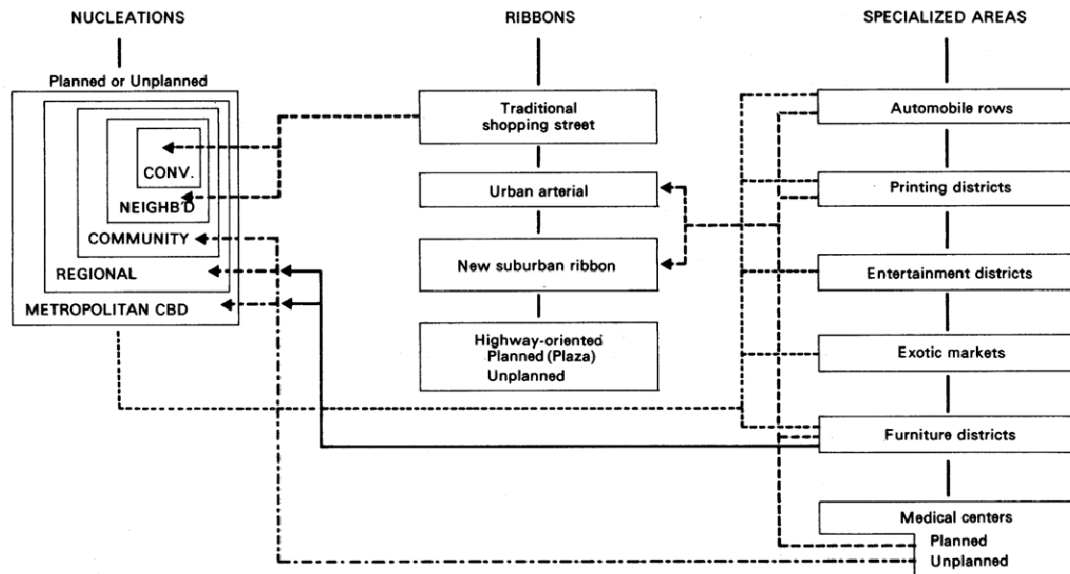


FIGURE 1.1 Taxonomy of urban retail areas.

Source: Berry et al. 1963

### THE CULTURAL TURN

Traditional retail geography, with its economic focus and empirically derived results stemming from the quantitative revolution, has its detractors. Crewe (2000) claims that many traditional retail geography studies provided only simplistic description by mapping store locations, being under-theorized and not taking either their economic or cultural underpinnings seriously. Similar sentiments are felt by Ducatel and Blomley, who are dissatisfied with the lack of study on retail capital (2002). These criticisms coincided with the ideological reorientation of the primary sociological structure from production to consumption (Zukin and Maguire 2004). “Consumption is a basic aspect of modern life” argued Sack (1988). Gregson (1995) asks: “And Now It’s All Consumption?” in the title of her piece in *Progress in Human Geography*, reflecting the shift in focus from the supply side to the demand side. The role and perception of the customer is becoming more interesting than that of the retailers in the eyes of some researchers. Yet, this shift from production to

consumption buoyed retail geography research. Due to its status as an essential element of the act of consumption, retail geography became vogue as a critical aspect of the new consumption mandate of the social sciences.

The growing importance of retail geography and its increasingly vocal detractors of the traditional underpinnings paralleled broad changes in the discipline, and the social sciences in general. As the discipline of geography left the quantitative revolution and took the 'cultural turn'(Cragg 1997), the interest in retailing shifted from economically driven analysis of retail locations and their market areas, to that of the interaction between retail environments and their users. Barnes contrasted the differences as: "The new retail geography emphasizing cultural identity and bodily performance (e.g., Miller et al. 1998) with the old kind based upon versions of the gravity model and distance minimizing behaviour (e.g., Berry 1967)" (Barnes 2001, 557). "Spaces, places and practices of consumption, circulation and exchange lie at the very heart of a reconstructed economic geography" argues Cragg (1997).

Miller et al.'s (1998) *Shopping, Place and Identity* provides a noteworthy example of this new retail geography. The authors studied the interaction of identity formation among various social groups with differing shopping mall environments, both the successful and unsuccessful. Interest in consumption is not limited to the retail outlet. In a review paper, Crewe acknowledges that consumption happens beyond the traditional retail outlets, eroding the barrier between public and private consumption sites (Crewe 2000). In addition to the traditional shopping streets and malls, she argues that the other sites of consumption are relevant for study, such as car boot sales and the home, where catalogues, parties and now the internet are all active venues for consumption.

Other research takes a more critical eye on retail sites. This research is especially concerned with planned shopping centres which are seen as bland at best and dangerous at worst. As observed by Jackson and Thrift: "Shopping mall studies use Marxian political economy, identifying them as frothy spectacle or a threatening experience which bend consumers to their will" (Jackson and Thrift 1995, 210). Some lament the loss of uniqueness in the modern retail landscape, arguing that all shopping malls are the same (Zukin 1998). Conversely, Morris (2001) argues that malls are not homogenous; each having a unique sense of place. Others discuss how

shopping malls, drawing millions of mostly middle-class customers have become new public spaces, however, they differ in that they are privately controlled and exclusionary (Shields 1989; Voyce 2006; Staeheli and Mitchell 2006; Cohen 1996).

The homogeneity in shopping centres is a result of the ‘calculus of objects’ (Baudrillard 2001, 34), the centres solving the equation in order to spur sales. Each centre is designed to direct as many customers as possible through their doors, and keep them there as long as possible in order that they have the opportunity to spend as much money as possible inside. This highly rationalized design calculus driven by the goal of profit maximization results in similar environments between most shopping malls.

Some argue that the centres are actively influencing the public into spending money on goods they do not really need through clever tricks and other devices. Hopkins (1992) coined the term ‘elsewhereness’ to describe the result of the series of signs and symbols that shopping mall designers combine in their landscapes, creating a confused, dream-like place that the customers are transported to. One feels ‘elsewhereness’ upon seeing the two-thirds scale recreation of the Champs d’Eylsees juxtaposed next to Bourbon Street in The West Edmonton Mall. Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra is similar; the environments being fakes but more real than the originals (Baudrillard 1994). Goss (1993) thoroughly examines the landscape of the mall, detailing the devices that are implemented such as the lack of clocks, inclusion of tropical foliage and placement of stores and escalators, all with the intention of enhancing sales. He argues that shopping mall designers are actively manipulating their clientele, who have little resistance. Although his analysis is insightful, this paper is hampered by an ending which advocates for active forms of resistance against these hegemonic devices, such as the throwing of soap into the centres’ fountains in an act of Marxist revolt.

## **GUIDING THEORY**

The remainder of this chapter develops a theoretical model to describe how retailers shape the landscape in their drive for profit maximization. The model is situated in a complex interplay of many disciplines and ideas, drawing from history,

geography, marketing, urban studies, economics and sociology; the model is truly interdisciplinary, sitting at the intersection of these fields. As such, it is impossible for the model, and the following chapters which apply it, to follow any one of the disciplinary structures. Rather, the model, as well as the subsequent analysis and interpretation which apply it, are situated in the field of urban morphology which presents a highly interdisciplinary way to examine processes of urban change and growth (Whitehand 1994; Moudon 1992, 1995). Urban morphology offers the tools and theories for understanding and analyzing the urban landscapes<sup>8</sup> which retailers form and reform over time.

The primary relationship in the model is between the consumer and the retailer (Figure 1.2). Consumers wish to satiate their needs and desires by buying goods from retailers, while the retailers are driven by the goal of maximization, which they attempt to achieve by selling goods to consumers. Retailers can increase profits by selling more goods, selling them at higher profit margins, or lowering their costs of operation, such as dealing directly with the manufacturer. Retailers may also lower their costs and increase their sales through manipulating the built environment.

Retailers actively shape the built environment in striving for profit maximization (Figure 1.2). This process has existed for centuries and can be traced back to the stores of pre-industrial Britain (Cox 2000), through the grand department stores at the turn of the twentieth-century (Leach 1993), to contemporary shopping malls (Goss 1993). In each case retailers try to make highly enticing environments to spur sales. Retailers choose their location within the city to be accessible and create facades which are highly visible to draw people in. Once inside, they attempt to keep customers on site as long as possible by providing engaging, comfortable, and often luxurious shopping spaces. Retailers are not given free reign, however, in shaping the landscape. Urban planning, especially in the contemporary era, regulates acceptable uses for every parcel of land in the city through land-use

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<sup>8</sup> Or the townscape as Conzen (1960) refers to them.

zoning, and morphological limits are placed on the buildings through density and set-back limits<sup>9</sup>.

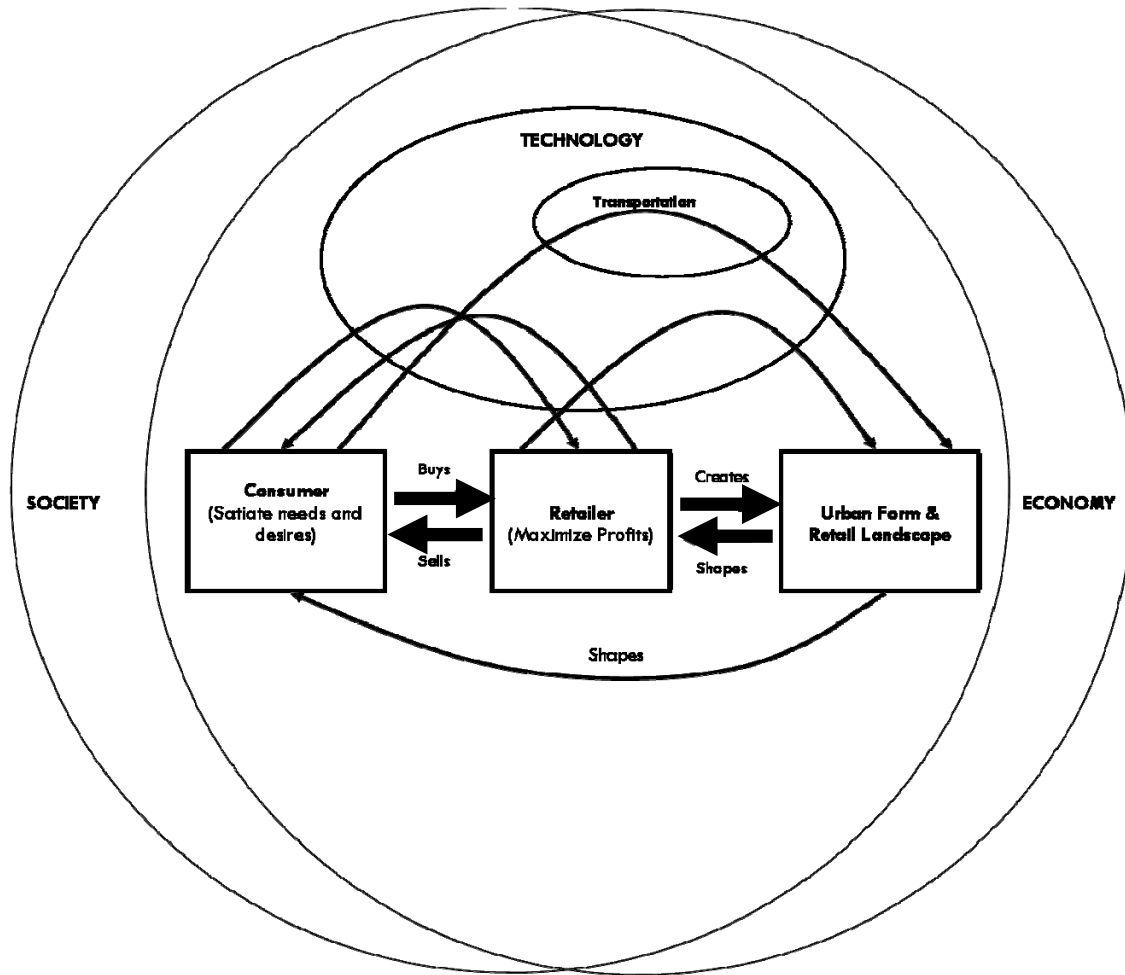
Although the retailers actively create the built environment, it in turn shapes the retail practices. The retailers must adapt to the spaces they inhabit. This is especially true for retailers who do not create their own space, but rather occupy spaces built for another purpose or time. They must then adapt their practices to the confines of the structure and its location. For example, the downtown retail landscape was mostly constructed around 125 years ago, and today's retailers who locate their must work within the confines of a landscape that was built for a different time, with its different socio-economic and technological conditions.

The urban forms also shape the consumers. The built environments created by retailers modify consumer behaviour for those reasons of profit maximization. The buildings, for example, are pleasant places to be for many, and keep people inside as long as possible. They also structure the behaviour in terms of social gathering spaces (Miller et al. 1998). The consumers, however, do not directly shape the physical environments they use since they have no control over these spaces. Retailers have sole domain over shaping the retail landscape, although usually they do so in response to the demands of the market, which is comprised of individual consumers.

Technology also plays a large role in this model describing the creation of, and changes to the retail landscape (Figure 1.2). Consumers and retailers are increasingly interacting through technology. Consumers can now purchase goods from retailers over the internet. Retailers influence customer's buying through various media, such as advertisements found on the television. These relationships then are manifested in the built environment as retailers adapt to the changes in the market spurred by technology. Retailers also incorporate technology into the environments they construct. This includes new building techniques, such as the

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<sup>9</sup> Although an important structure shaping retail landscapes, planning is a broad issue with many implications beyond the scope of this research. Also, much of the landscape predates planning regulations, and as such planning does not play a role in the forming of these areas. Like many North American cities, urban planning is largely a post-war issue and is important in shaping the planned shopping centres. As such, planning is discussed only briefly in two chapters, that which detail the city's changing retail landscape over time and that presenting the planned shopping centres.



**FIGURE 1.2** Model showing how the urban forms in the retail landscape are created, and how they in turn shape activities of retailers and consumers. The model, which also includes the impact of technology, notably transportation, is situated at the intersection of social and economic conditions.



steel framed expanses of the big box stores. Technological innovations that retailers adapt, such as just-in-time delivery and moving goods by pallets in bulk shipments, further shape the environments.

Transportation advancements are important technologies which dramatically shape the retail landscapes. New transportation devices change the mobility of customers. Over time, consumers have typically been able to move more freely throughout the city with advances in transportation; from walking to the streetcar to the automobile. These shifts in mobility dramatically alter the landscape, notably the placement of stores, but also through the provisioning of parking, and the allowance of larger lots.

All of these interactions are taking place in a complex milieu of social and economic conditions. It is at the crossing of these two broad structures where the model is situated since many are now seeing that they are not mutually exclusive. For example, there are social and economic results of the rise of women in the workplace in the second half of the twentieth-century.

The relationships are dynamic, with changes in any one agent or structure rippling throughout the system. These changes are then manifest in the urban forms constructed by the retailers which make up the retail landscape. If the consumers change, for example through a rise in household income, the retailers respond by building more stores, or reappointing their stores with higher quality finishes.

The remaining sections of this chapter give more detail about the aforementioned, agents, structures and relationships used in this model. The chapter concludes with a discussion pertaining to the ways of analysing the urban landscape drawing from the field of urban morphology.

## **A SYNTHESIS OF CULTURE AND ECONOMICS**

This monograph accepts both the traditional and contemporary retail geographies, using a synthesis of the approaches to guide the research. This approach has been a trend in recent work on the geography of consumption (Jackson and Thrift 1995), answering the call for the re-materialization of social and cultural geography (Jackson 2000; Lees 2002). Drawing upon both ideas produces a more

comprehensive approach to understanding the retail landscape. Simply mapping the stores is no longer sufficient. And producing a cultural study of the malls without a substantive basis of understanding the underlying economic and historical conditions of their development would leave this analysis floating in its subjective interpretations.

From the traditional approach, this research draws upon the basic understandings of economically constructed customer and retailer behaviours. As Christaller and Losch posit, customers travel to the nearest centre to obtain their goods. Using Berry's model (Figure 1.1), the centres form a hierarchy in the intraurban environment. This model is also useful to show that centres with different functions and forms emerge. The thesis also acknowledges the intense pressures that retailers face by their competitors, who are constantly judging the market and acting on any advantages they might see. For example, if an area is underserved, retailers will quickly locate there in order to attract customers who are having to travel elsewhere for their goods.

From the contemporary approach, this research is framed by the ways in which people use the retail environments, and the deliberate ways they are created. This allows for a critical reading of retail landscapes informed by the knowledge that they are deliberately crafted in order to spur sales. For example, the facades of the downtown streetscape act as advertisements for the building, drawing the attention, and the pocketbook, of the passerby. The cultural interpretation also reveals how important retail environments are to their sales success, and the interplay between producer and consumer of these environments in their design.

Considering both the economic and the cultural is needed since in modern consumption they are not so easily divided. As Jackson (2002) argues, culture is increasingly commodified, used in advertising and marketing to sell products. Likewise, "the rational calculus of the market is embedded in a range of cultural practices" (Jackson 2002). The economics is wrapped in culture as the search for identities is solidified through the act of purchasing goods, especially fashions. Likewise, "the economy is increasingly culturally inflected....culture is more and more economically inflected" (Lash and Urry 1994, 64).

Thus to properly understand the retail landscape and its (re)formation, both the economic and cultural aspects of its function must be acknowledged. The

shopping mall, for example, is an economic entity, a device for making money. Within its confines there is a complex culture of identity formation and socializing that goes on. Shopping mall designers understand the importance of culture in the economics of their bottom line. Centres are designed to foster desirable aspects of this culture, encouraging people to stay and linger with the expectation that they will also spend more. Likewise, the cultures of the mall are economically stimulated; the drive to consume is both economically limited, yet economically fuelled, as retailers actively market their products to customers who must spend within their limits.

### **PROFIT MAXIMIZATION**

Capitalist enterprises are unrelenting in their seeking of increased profits. For most enterprises, this is their sole purpose, and as incontrovertibly capitalist entities, most retailers exhibit this behaviour. Retailers constantly try to spur sales and lower costs in order to achieve the goal of profit maximization. There are some exceptions, for example, the small 'ma and pa' shop, which are content in maintaining a comfortable level of profit and not actively seeking to expand their business. These typically family affairs are the exception, rather than the rule; especially as large chain retailers take a bigger piece of the marketplace.

The profit maximization strategy is manifested in the built environments that retailers create. Each retail operation makes a decision based on its marketing strategy (Ghosh and McLafferty 1987). Locations are chosen which draw as many customers as possible. These sites are usually desired by many retailers, and thus their rent and land values are high. For example, locations in White Oaks Mall in London are highly coveted for the millions of customers that visit the complex. Subsequently these sites are among the most expensive retail locations in the city (Monday Reports on Retailers 2010). Retailers must find a suitable balance between the potential sales of a high traffic location and the high land rents these sites demand. Over time these strategies change, as do the environments; White Oaks Mall is only three decades old. These changes are recorded in the evolving retail landscape.

In addition to choosing sites, there are strategies and decisions pertaining to the retail buildings themselves. Retailers have increasingly become aware that the atmosphere of their stores can be used as a marketing tool. Kotler was among the first to synthesize this information, coining the term 'atmospherics': "the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler 1973, 50). His ideas have spawned a host of research since (see *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*<sup>10</sup>). This differs from the research on the social habits of retail spaces, and is usually intended to be used to understand what retailers can employ to spur sales.

Numerous papers have since documented customers experiences in different retail environments, for example the shopping mall (Michon, Chebat, and Turley 2005), and even virtual atmospheres in online shopping are shown to be important (Wu, Cheng, and Yen 2008). In addition to marketing goals, the environments of the shops can be used to achieve managerial goals through the utility of their employees (Bitner 1992).

The early retailers were also cognizant of the effect of store atmosphere in their strategies, and actively fashioned stores that suit their marketing needs. Walsh (1995) discusses merchandise display methods and store design in the shops of eighteenth-century London (England). Leach (1993), looks at the methods of enticing desires in the late-nineteenth century department stores.

It is shown that pleasure and arousal are the two emotional states which are stimulated by these environments, and the degree of each impacts shopping behaviour (Donovan and Rossiter 1982). By increasing the pleasure and arousal of their customers, stores are able to maximize their sales and subsequently their profits (Donovan and Rossiter 1982). Arousal is first encountered at the exterior of the store. Store facades are usually striking, arousing desires through their elaborate ornamentation and bright colours. This also increases their visibility, so that customers know exactly where the store is located. Arousal is used through other cues, such as the store windows (Leach 1993). Once inside, arousal is

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<sup>10</sup> An online search of the latter journal's index found 827 hits for the term 'atmospherics' in its volumes between 1995 and 2010.

continued through the display of goods, creating desires in the customers through elaborate vignettes. Arousal can also be stimulated through the quality of the stores. A notable example is the spartan interiors of the modern big boxes, which imply that the goods are also a good value, creating arousal to spend and take advantage.

Pleasure is also created in the environments. In contrast to the bare bones big box stores, others stores spend large sums on their interiors to make pleasurable environments. The traditional department store included lounges for men and women to relax and socialize. This heightened the pleasure of shopping, and thus drove sales. Similarly, the regional and super regional shopping malls which are important aspects of the contemporary retail landscape contain many pleasurable features, from seating and lush environments, to Ferris Wheels and other amenities. Although costly, these features add pleasure to the shopping experience, thus spurring sales and recouping any costs they incur.

### **EVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES**

“In dealing with capitalism we are dealing with an evolutionary process”; Schumpeter declares “capitalism is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary” (Schumpeter 1975, 82). Furthermore, “The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers, goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates” (Schumpeter 1975, 82). Capitalism is constantly changing, and in so doing it is forming and reforming geographical landscapes (Harvey 1985, 150).

Even the store content on making a base level of profit must still survive the capitalist system. If a store consistently fails to turn a profit, it will shutter. Retail landscapes are thus constantly evolving as competition ensues and environments change. Retailers are constantly evolving, much like organisms in the natural world as first described by Darwin (Darwin and Burrow 1968). They go through a process of natural selection, where those best suited to their environment carry on, while those who cannot adapt fail to continue (Roth and Klein 1993).

There is one major difference between how organisms and retailers evolve. The former, barring humans (and beavers), generally do not have direct control of their environments while the latter can manipulate their environments to suit their current needs. Retailers can choose locations that are accessible to as many customers as possible, and create environments that heighten emotions and spur sales. In fact, it is through these environmental influences that many retailers evolve.

Davies proposes to use evolutionary principles in describing retail change; however, she uses the common misconception that evolution connotes progress: “the march of retail progress supplanting more ‘primitive’ retail forms” (Davies 2002, 279). Evolution is not about progress, but rather, adaptation; progress being a more subjective term. Arguably there are aspects of previous retail landscapes which were actually more advanced, such as the manipulation of desires through elaborate store window displays which have been largely supplanted by cheap advertisement signs and basic mannequins found in contemporary store windows. It is quite easy to see these earlier windows as more advanced, and the newer windows more primitive; however, in order to explain these changes it must be understood that the earlier windows became outdated, while the newer ones are better suited to the contemporary retail environment.

Retail change has drawn quite a lot of attention (Brown 1987). The evolutionary approach to retail change is mostly concerned with institutional changes in retail practice, such as chaining, store size and marketing techniques (Roth and Klein 1993; Davies 2002). Rather than looking at the institutional change in retailing, this research applies evolutionary theory to describe change in the retail landscape composed of the individual stores that retailers fashion to adapt to the changing market.

It is assumed that retailers adapt their stores’ locations and atmospheres to meet the current demands of the market and the available technologies of the day. The demands of the market not only include its spatial configuration, but also product selection, and fashions popular in the culture of the day. Those retailers that fail to adapt their stores to the market fail to attract customers and turn profit and will eventually close. Only those retailers that are able to adapt their practices to meet contemporary market expectations will succeed. This is all occurring with

ongoing fierce competition between retailers, much like animals compete for scarce resources in the wild. At times retailers find it advantageous to cooperate, as do animals which live communally and cooperate to secure the resources. Much like honeybees, stores typically cluster together, forming a colony. This strategy produces a significant cluster to attract potential customers.

An outcome of this evolutionary dynamic which sees retailers adapting practices to best suit their environments is the loss of some elements. The process of creative destruction is at play, whereby through advancements some elements are lost. The portable cassette player has vanished, for example, due to the advances in Mp3 players. Although the Mp3 player is arguably a better device, some qualities of the cassette players were desirable, but have been lost as the technology has been replaced.

Although not explicitly using the term, the ideas behind creative destruction were put forth by Marx, who describes a tactic used by the bourgeoisie to manipulate the economy by destroying values amid crises to better their own profits and patch the sinking ship of capitalism (Marx and Engels 1955). Schumpeter elaborated on the concept and brought the term to wider-use, relating the advancements to the long-range business cycles (Schumpeter 1975). Page (1999) shows how the creative destruction process is active in New York, a city where the old is quickly replaced with the new due to its limited land availability and intense demand for space.

Marx's poetic yet prophetic phrase "All that is solid melts into air" (Marx and Engels 1955, 13) is telling of the way that concrete structures can be destroyed very quickly to make room for new stores. The old can vanish to be replaced by the newest retail environments. Oakridge Mall stood for decades at the corner of Oxford Street and Hyde Park Road in London, Ontario, but was destroyed in a matter of months. A new centre of big box outlets now occupies the site, the redevelopment being better suited to the contemporary market. Creative destruction can also occur for non-concrete elements of the retail landscape. The Smallman & Ingram's brand was destroyed when the department store was bought by the Simpson's chain of Toronto and renamed under that banner. The ideas and opinions associated with that name in London quickly vanished with its brand as the retail landscape evolved, driven by the pursuit of profits in the capitalist system.

## **MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RETAIL LANDSCAPES**

The tools and theories of Urban Morphology are used in order to read and understand the retail landscapes. Urban Morphology is the study of the city as human habitat (Moudon 1997). It is an interdisciplinary field, attracting researchers from architecture, geography, history, urban planning and design. Morphologists implement a variety of metrics to analyze the characteristics of these habitats as well try to explain their origins or morphogenesis (see Slater 1990; Whitehand and Larkham 1992).

Of primary concern is the physiognomy of the urban landscape, also called the *townscape* by M.R.G. Conzen in his seminal study on the origin and evolution of the forms comprising Alnwick, Northumberland. Conzen (1960) discusses three form complexes which comprise the townscape: town-plan, land-uses, and building fabrics. Only the town-plan of Alnwick was examined in this volume; Conzen had intended, but did not complete his study of the other two form complexes for Alnwick.

## **PREVIOUS URBAN FORM STUDIES**

Retail land-uses are generally under-represented in morphological studies. Geographer J.W.R. Whitehand examines the redevelopments of British town centres; however, he is primarily concerned with the architectural and development industries' roles in this process (1984; Whitehand 1979). Davis (2009) presents an international comparison of the commercial-residential building type, revealing that many similarities exist in their form despite being studied on three continents. Few studies actually look at retailing in the general context of the urban tissue. An exception is Scheer (2004) who presents a detailed analysis of the elasticity of the urban fabric in sites along a major commercial corridor. These examples show morphological examination at various scales of resolution, from individual buildings, to morphological regions. This thesis follows in this manner, adopting micro to macro lenses, examining the retail landscape from details of individual buildings to patterns apparent across the entire city.

Other studies have looked at the form of retail environments without explicitly using the terminology or concepts of the urban morphologist. Wyckoff (1992) examines a commercial strip in terms of its building fabric and land-uses in



Denver. The commercial strip theme continues with Jakle and Mattson's model of change along one strip in terms its land-uses (Jakle and Mattson 1981). In examining various neighbourhoods in Calgary, Sandalack and Nicolai (2006) touch on some of that city's retail landscapes, looking at the town-plans and building forms of each. Also in Calgary, Davies and Baxter (1997) look at the changes along highway ribbons as retail and other commercial functions are intensified. Longstreth (1997; Longstreth 1999) has extensively documented the retail landscapes of Los Angeles, and especially the car culture which has created them. He documents the changing environments over time from a detailed historical perspective. Continuing the theme of automobile commercial areas, Jakle and Sculle (1999) examine the architecture of fast food restaurants along roadsides. In a classic study during the era of highway building, Garrison (1959) examines the changes that occur in land-uses due to the new mobility patterns created by the freeway.

Recently urban form has been studied in relation to politically charged critiques of the urban environments. One area is the impact of form on the sustainability of cities (Jenks et al. 1996; Breheny 1992). These and other authors critique the new urban forms found in suburbia, including out of town shopping centres, as unsustainable and call for more traditional retail landscapes as part of new urbanism ideals (Katz, Scully, and Bressi 1994; Leccese and McCormick 2000). Notable in this work on urban sustainability is the analysis of distances that one must travel, usually by the automobile, to reach stores in the contemporary city. Some argue that travel by automobile is leading to an obesity epidemic, and if stores were closer to the residential this would be tempered (Frank et al. 2005; Townshend and Lake 2009). Others look at travel without such a defined agenda, instead choosing to look at travel patterns to and from the stores (Newman and Kenworthy 1991; Handy 1996b; Handy 1996a; Handy 1993).

Unfortunately, many of these studies do not explicitly make reference to the substantial body of knowledge found in Urban Morphology. For example, two papers that measure density and other characteristics of sprawl do not refer to how the morphologists have studied these issues (Tsai 2005; Song and Knaap 2004); the former referring to a Sierra Club paper but not to the urban morphologists. Arguably, it is the morphologists who must make their discipline better known to

the very popular study of urban form and its implications on health and the economy.

### **APPROACH**

M.R.G. Conzen, the originator of the 'British School' of urban morphology, detailed three interrelated components of the urban landscape: a city's town-plan, its land-use patterns and its three-dimensional building forms (Conzen 1960). Town-plan analysis examines the form of three basic components: buildings, lots and streets. These components can be viewed at a given point in time to see how they weave into the urban fabric. Their origins and evolution can also be traced over time – their morphogenesis.

This study will use a morphogenetic approach to interpreting the retail landscape, "tracing the evolution of forms in terms of their underlying formative processes" (Whitehand 1981, p. 1). As previously discussed, the drive for profit maximization is paramount to reading and understanding the formation of the retail landscape. All three components of the townscape, land-use patterns, building forms and town-plan, are examined to produce an inclusive history of retail activity as expressed in the built form of the city. The analysis begins before the city was incorporated in 1855. The earliest map from 1839 shows the location of the first few buildings in the London settlement. An 1855 map shows that development had occurred in the retail sector, but was still limited to two small strips along Dundas and Ridout Streets.

All three form complexes are examined in the following chapters; each looking at different retail landscapes and their relationship to the general urban fabric. The imprint of retailing on the town-plan is traced, as are the relationships between the three-dimensional forms of retail sites and their surroundings. Also examined are the retail land-uses types and their situation within the urban fabric.

Additional morphological characteristics are also incorporated, many of which were first outlined by Conzen (1960) (see Larkham and Jones 1991 for a glossary of these concepts). For example, the concept of the "morphological frame" is defined by Conzen (1960) as antecedent plan features that leave their mark on future growth. The morphological frame inherent in the lot structure is examined

in relation to the changing formats of retailing. As stores grow larger, and with new ownership structures of the buildings themselves in the large planned shopping centres, the morphological frame inherent in the lots is expected to become increasingly important.

Also pertinent is the 'burgage cycle' where buildings first occupy the fronts of lots and then are expanded through successive additions to their rears (Conzen 1960; Whitehand 2001). Over time the densities increase until ultimately clearance occurs, destroying much of the built areas; then the cycle continues again from the start. Although this theory was designed to describe processes in early-modern Britain, it is applicable to the town-plan of the core of the North American city in the last two centuries, where successive additions are added to the rears of the building due to the demand for space. The buildings are ultimately torn down to make room for parking lots in the second-half of the twentieth century.

In discussing her observations of the distinct retail patterns in Boston and New York, Domosh (1990) argues that the social and economic conditions must be considered when built form is analysed. Throughout this work the contemporary social and economic conditions of the era are considered. So too are the technological innovations which have changed these landscapes. It is not, however, a study into the causes of retail change; no regression analysis of retail characteristics with social and economic variables is performed.

Using the tools and theories of the urban morphologist, this research traces the evolution of the urban landscape. GIS is extensively used in the analysis, applying the capabilities of this software to the study of urban morphology. The research looks at the creation and change of the built forms which compose this landscape. In so doing it considers the landscape as both mould and mirror (Meinig 1979) of the city's dwellers; both its retailers and the customers.

Harvey (1985) draws our attention to the fact that capitalism is constantly making and remaking urban landscapes in its own image to suit its needs at a particular time. As entities in the capitalist system, retailers strive to maximize their profits. The result is that retailers are constantly building and fashioning landscapes in order to attract as many customers and sell as many goods as possible. As the market changes, retailers must adapt or face extinction. Retailers, however, are not solely responsible for the (re)formation of the retail landscape. Also to be

considered are the developers, architects, planners and designers who create the stores and their environs. Perhaps most important are the customers, whose changing cultures and financial conditions are imprinted in the landscape through what is purchased and where it is purchased. These processes, as well as the decisions of the various actors, are manifested in the urban landscapes they create and occupy. As Ley has demonstrated in his work on Vancouver, this imprinted landscape can be read as a text (Ley 1981, 1987). In order to decipher this text, the approaches and methods found in the field of urban morphology are used.

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the importance of retailing within the urban landscape throughout history, as well as outline how retailing has been studied from both traditional and contemporary approaches in geography. With the formulation of the guiding theory for this research complete, as well as consideration of the methods and approaches to analysing the townscape found in urban morphology, it is now time to discuss the sources and methods used in this research (Chapter 2). The next chapter (Chapter 3) shows the presence of retailing in the early settlement of the community, and the importance of it in the development of the city. Chapter 4 reveals the changing retail locations, functions, and forms over time. Detailed examinations follow of the specific landscapes of the downtown core at the height of mainstreet retailing (Chapter 5) and the planned shopping centres (Chapter 6). Finally, conclusions (Chapter 7) outline the differences and similarities of the retail landscape at different points in its evolution, reveal a 'trialectic' occurring between all three townscape elements, and suggest ways to revitalize the struggling downtown retail districts based on what has been seen in successful retail landscapes.

CHAPTER 2

# SOURCES & METHODS

*Uniting data within a Historical GIS  
to document the retail landscape*

# VERNON'S City of London

Street, Alphabetical  
Business and Miscellaneous

# DIRECTORY

FOR THE YEAR  
1916

Corrected to Oct. 1st, 1915 Price \$4.50

NINTH EDITION



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**CANADA FIBRE BOARD**  
One and One-Half Inch  
Reground, Coloured, Square  
and  
**HALF INCH**  
Reground, Coloured, Square  
and  
**TRUCKS**

**Ferguson Fibre Board Co.**  
34 Bank of Toronto Bldg.  
TORONTO, CAN.

**CITY OF LONDON**

**CIVIL ENGINEERS**  
Kernoch F. W., 1021, Richmond  
Moser John M., 425, Richmond,  
(See also)  
Minto J. A., 54, Bank of  
Toronto Chambers.

**CLOTHING**  
(Wholesale & Retail)  
Hobbs in Garment Co., 294, Colborne  
Canada Bldg., 21, 22, 23, 24,  
Green St., 150, 152, 150, Fab-  
ric  
Helen's Costume Co., 192 S. King  
London Coat & Apron Supply, 285  
Carlton  
Standard, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54,  
55, 56

**DEVELOPERS**  
Andrew C. Ferguson Ltd., 217, Dun-  
drie  
Boucher W. E., 392, Richmond  
Dunlop R. H. & L., 176 S. Dundas  
Fashion Craft, Shop, 26, 27, 28,  
Richmond  
Gibson J. C. O., 111  
Grafton & Co. Ltd., 178, Dundas  
and 272, Richmond  
Hays J. C., 277, Dundas  
Higginbotham T. P., 114, 112, Dundas  
Oak Hall, 158, Dundas  
Peltek T. Co., 113, Dundas  
Rephard & Co., 210, 218, Dundas  
Skelton H., 211, King  
Smallman & Ingram Ltd., 119, 127,  
Dundas, and 21, 57, Richmond  
Standard Dress Furnishing Co.,  
416, Dundas  
Wagner Clothing Co., 371, Falton  
and 120, Dundas  
Wolf C. H. & Co., 65, Dundas  
Wolf R. & Sons, 262, Dundas  
Young R. J. & Co., 142, 141, and  
665, Dundas

**COAL AND WOOD**  
(Wholesale)  
Edo J. M. H. York  
Henson Wm & Son, 526, Barwell

**WREATHS**  
ON THE DAY  
YOU SAY

**THE WATSON CO.**

**COFFEE AND SPICE MILLS**  
Gaston, Eckell & Co. Ltd., 218,  
Berkeley  
F. S. E. Coffee & Spice Mills Ltd.,  
19, Waterway

**IRONING**  
111, 113, 115, 117, 119,  
121, Dundas St.

**IRONING**  
Hart Iron Ltd., 261, Richmond,  
and 274, Waterloo  
Lyon J. & Co., 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35,  
Mann John & Sons, York, cor  
Barwell  
Laurie C. H. & Sons, 211, York  
Webster Harvey Ltd., 185-201,  
Berkeley

**IRONING**  
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Brook Bros, 228, Adelaide  
Chandler Bros, 285, Bathurst  
Connell Amherst, Manning & C.,  
205, Richmond and 610, Col-  
borne  
Dale J. M., 10, York  
Hynes & Shannon, 599, Ade-  
laide  
Giles D. H. & Son, 285, Adelaide  
Hendon Wm & Son, 374, Barwell  
Hart Iron Ltd., 261, Richmond,  
and 274, Waterloo  
Lyon J. & Co., 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35,  
Mann John & Sons, 281, Malind  
McCollum & Walls, 677, Rich-  
mond and 449, Art East  
McGillivray J. S., 225, Wilton  
M. J. & Co., 127, Dundas  
Manning & Co., 211, Malind  
Mann John & Sons, York, cor  
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## CHAPTER 2

**SOURCES AND METHODS**

This chapter is a synopsis of the process of building the Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS) used to study the development of the retail landscape in London, Ontario. It begins with by outlining the general structure of a HGIS, as well as details describing the specific system created for this study. Next is a discussion pertaining to the various sources used to create this HGIS, including their limitations. The methods for compiling a comprehensive database of retailers are then given, drawing parallels between it and social/demographic databases used elsewhere in urban research. Details follow as to the process of attaching a spatial and temporal reference to each piece of information. Finally, a survey of the analytical capabilities of the HGIS shows how the system is used to fulfill the research aims of this study.

A variety of sources describe the retail activities of the city through time (Table 2.1). The business directories list all the retailers, and other commercial enterprises of the city, but they are only cursory; they do not give detailed information about any one company. The papers of individual retailers such as their account ledgers and inventories can be used for deeper analysis; however, they are only available for select enterprises. Newspapers occasionally contain stories about specific retail enterprises, and the conditions of the city in general. The advertisements found on the pages of the newspapers give an indication of the nature of the businesses which paid for the page space, including the type of goods that are sold, and their marketing strategies. The built environment that retailers helped to create is documented in a series of other sources, such as photographs, illustrations, and architectural plans. The cartographic representations of the city show the location of the retailers, and the characteristics of the environments they constructed.

These data sources, quantitative and qualitative, nominal and cartographic, are integrated and analysed within a Geographic Information System (GIS). GIS is indispensable for this research project, offering a structure to manage and unite these disparate sources; it also offers numerous effective analytical tools. GIS

makes it possible to document and examine the spatial aspect of the development of the city's retail landscape. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the software facilitates the spatial referencing of the many rows of data contained within the nominal datasets, as well as the various cartographic sources.

This research is concerned with the origin and evolution of the retail landscape. Following the morphogenetic approach found within the field of urban morphology, the following chapters trace the dynamics of retail development; thus, the variable of time is also intrinsic in the analysis. Time can be accommodated in the GIS, although with several considerations to account for. Since most of the periods of interest were in the distant past, the system created is referred to as a Historical-GIS (HGIS), in contrast to Temporal-GIS which is often used to describe a temporally referenced GIS containing contemporary datasets (see Langran 1989).

With the data both spatially- and temporally-referenced, changes over time and space can be observed and complex spatial-temporal patterns can be discerned. By keeping the same spatial extent the HGIS can be used to track change over time in one area. The built form of a city block can be examined, for example, in several successive eras to reveal how it evolved (Gilliland and Novak 2006). Holding constant the temporal variable, HGIS can also reveal how landscapes differed between locations at a given time. Finally, both the spatial and temporal extents can be freed to show how changes occur over time and space.

## **VIEWING HISTORY USING GIS**

Many definitions of Geographic Information Systems exist, each tailored to a specific structure or use of the software. Perhaps the most cited yet comprehensive defines GIS as "integrated computer tools for handling, processing and analysing of geographic data" (Goodchild 2000, 301). The following section describes the creation of the GIS used to handle, process, and analyse data pertaining to London's evolving retail landscape.

Geographic data is unique from other data types in that it has a spatial identifier; thus, the object or phenomenon that the data is representing can be located somewhere on the earth's surface. GIS programs are explicitly written to handle this spatial information in two and three dimensions, as well as the other



TABLE 2.1 Data sources used

Type	Data Source	Years	Depository
Nominal	Business Directories	1863/4	UWO Archives
Nominal	Business Directories	1881	UWO Archives
Nominal	Business Directories	1915	UWO Archives
Nominal	Business Directories	1958	UWO Archives
Nominal	Business Directories	2004	UWO Archives
Nominal	Street Directories	1880-1930	UWO Archives
Nominal	City Directory	1881	UWO Archives
Nominal	City Directory	1915	UWO Archives
Nominal	Shopping Centre Directories	1981-2010	UWO Library
Nominal	Tax Assessments	1844	UWO Archives
Nominal	Tax Assessments	1916	UWO Archives
Nominal	Tax Assessments	1929	UWO Archives
Cartographic	Sketch of the Position of London	1839	UWO Map Library
Cartographic	Plan of the City of London, Canada West	1855	UWO Map Library
Cartographic	Fire Insurance Plans	1881	UWO Archives
Cartographic	Fire Insurance Plans	(1888 updated) 1912	UWO Archives
Cartographic	Fire Insurance Plans	(1915 updated) 1958-1960	UWO Map Library
Cartographic	GIS Files	1999-2009	City of London Planning Division
Cartographic	Land-Use File (GIS)	2004	City of London Planning Division
Newspaper	London Free Press	Various	UWO Archives
Newspaper	London Advertiser	Various	UWO Archives
Newspaper	Clipping Collection	Various	London Room (LPL)
Graphic	Photographic	Various	London Room (LPL) & UWO Archives
Graphic	Architectural Drawings	Early-20th Century	UWO Archives
Business Histories	Accounts Books, Ledgers, Inventories	Various	UWO Archives
Business Histories	Catalogues & Advertisements	Various	London Room (LPL) & UWO Archives
Business Histories	Theses & Compilations	Various	London Room (LPL) & UWO Archives
Census	Statistics Canada	Various	UWO Library & Online

Note: LPL is London Public Library

attributes which might be contained in each record or item. Typically this is accomplished by giving each piece of data spatial coordinates,  $(x,y,z)$ . These references allow any piece of information to be located in space. Both raster and vector data is handled in many GIS applications, the later dividing the system into points lines and polygons (Burrough and McDonnell 1998).

As mentioned, it is also possible for GIS to handle temporal data, allowing the data to be referenced in four dimensions. Whereas in traditional GIS each piece of data is given a spatial reference, in temporal GIS it contains an additional reference to its temporal position ( $t$ ). Thus, a point representing a tree, for example, can be position on the earth's surface  $(x,y)$  as well as when it was alive  $(t_1,t_2)$ . This referencing process is, however, much more difficult since the software was not explicitly written for this purpose. Gregory and Ell (2007) provide a comprehensive discussion of the use of time in Historical-GIS, detailing its problems and its potentials.

Historical-GIS has been used for a variety of research, including: from the national (Bol and Ge 2005; Gregory et al. 2002) to the local scale (Siebert 2000; DeBats and Lethbridge 2005), and for the analysis of past events (Knowles 2008b; Novak and Gilliland 2009) and conditions (Healey and Stamp 2000; Skinner, Henderson, and Jianhua 2000; DeBats 2008)<sup>11</sup>. HGIS is a relatively new tool for historical studies, but is rapidly gaining acceptance. Historians, however, have been slow to embrace the tool which could have large implications for the discipline. Lately their numbers are now growing as they see the potential of the system (Knowles 2008a). GIS offers an alternative view of history, providing the possibility to integrate and visualize data in ways previously unavailable (Bodenhamer 2008).

## **DESCRIPTION OF SOURCES AND THEIR INTEGRATION IN AN HGIS TO STUDY RETAIL EVOLUTION**

The general structure of the GIS created for this project is a series of time-slices representing the years 1844, 1881, 1915, 1958 and 2004. Each time was

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<sup>11</sup> Anne Knowles edited two volumes, the second with Amy Hillier, which contain numerous studies using HGIS demonstrating the breadth of the research being conducted (Knowles and Hillier 2008; Knowles 2002).

chosen for its representative characteristics of an era in the city's development as well as for the availability of data sources. They were also chosen to be at roughly even intervals; however, this was limited by the availability of the data sources. In addition to these distinct slices, several datasets were created for select periods on an annual basis; the notable example is the central retail district from 1880 to 1930. The complete run of annual city directory listings for this period was available<sup>12</sup>.

The availability of data sources also impacted this decision as to what eras to study. This was especially true for the cartographic sources which were used to both locate the textual databases, as well as discern changes in the city's built environment. Maps and plans were sparse, available only for select years. Many of the textual sources, such as the city directory listings, were available annually; thus it was the cartographic sources that were the deciding factors in selecting the years of study.

A balancing act is undertaken when determining what sources are to be used for the creation of the Historical GIS. Although they were available annually since the mid 1870s, it was unfeasible to enter the entire run of business and city directories due to time constraints. Years were selected that corresponded to the availability of the other data sources used. Since there was a fire insurance plan made for 1881 and updated to 1888 the 1881 city directory was entered. This year was also selected since it corresponded with the national census of Canada, allowing the records in the city directory to be matched with those in the census. Although the census was not used in this specific research, the 1881 directory was still chosen to be entered since it assisted in building a larger GIS project to study the history of London.

Consideration is given as to how these sources fit into the larger mandate of building a HGIS to study the general history of London, its built form and its demographic characteristics. Building an HGIS is a large undertaking, and is not recommended to answer solely one question. As such, years are selected that are also of interest for demographic analysis; for example, the selection of 1881 to match the census year, although the fire insurance plans date to 1888. Since constructing

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<sup>12</sup> M. Evans entered the City Directory listings for this period, which were made available for use through the UWO Archives. His work on this large undertaking is greatly appreciated.

an HGIS is typically a laborious and expensive undertaking, it is advisable to work on the project as a team, sharing data and contributing to the common goal of comprehensively documenting an area's history. This project was done in collaboration with a larger project, funded by UWO and SSHRC, undertaken to study London's changing social and built landscapes in the nineteenth-century and led by Dr. Jason Gilliland in the Department of Geography. The team effort made possible the undertaking of collecting large datasets and compiling the HGIS used in this project.

### **CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES**

The cartographic documents were perhaps the most important sources implemented in studying London's retail development. They were used to locate the phenomena corresponding to the records in the textual databases, as well as the other sources such as newspapers articles and photographs. Maps and plans also documented the built environment of the city, showing the locations and characteristics of the buildings, streets, and lots. Although each of the cartographic sources represent a static picture of the city at a given time, following a feature or location through successive years using a series of maps and plans allows for the tracing of changes.

Fire Insurance Plans (FIPs) were used as the primary cartographic source to document the city from 1880-1960. As their name implies, these high-quality cartographic representations of the urban environment were created for the fire insurance industry, which used them to evaluate fire risk in setting insurance premiums. Two firms, the Goad Company of Montreal and the Sanborn Company of Ohio produced many FIPs to represent towns and cities, the former working on the Canadian and British plans while the latter concerned with American urban areas (see Rainville 1996; Hayward 1982; Dubreuil and Woods 2002).

The insurance industry is known to be pedantic, and the fire insurers were not unique among their peers in regards to this trait (Baranoff 2003). They demanded highly accurate representations of the built environment. The plans thus prove invaluable to the urban historian as a document of the physical character of urban areas (Reynolds and Ruwell 1975; Aspinall 1975; Moulder 1993)

When a building or area changed a paste-up was usually glued over the existing plan to reflect the change. When sufficient changes had occurred a new series of maps were produced. These updates allowed the insurance industry to keep their rates current, making adjustments to reflect changes in a structure or its surroundings. For the urban historian, FIPs can be used to document the changes in an area over time. Using a series of the plans, one can conduct morphogenetic analysis.

The accuracy of the features represented on the plans was also taken seriously as demanded by the commissioners of the plans. They also contain many minute details, including the placement of doors, windows and the presence of fences and porches. They are especially detailed in terms of fire risk factors such as chimneys, boilers, fuel tanks and other such features. The materials used in the construction of the frame and roof of the structure, as well its facing are all documented. Notable for the morphologist is the building's size and shape as portrayed by its footprint. The level of detail is greater for the larger buildings, since they carried greater fire risk, as well as larger insurance policies. In the depictions of features such as factories and public buildings, one can find internal walls, doors, elevators, skylights and other features.

Land-uses are also indicated on the maps, with every building given a general description of residential, commercial, industrial or institutional. Many of the buildings, especially larger ones, are given more details as to their land-uses, such as a factory being used as a planing mill. Many were also marked with the occupant of the building. These land-use indicators allowed for the identification of retailers on the plans, as well as a comparison between the city directory listings and the plans as a method of error checking the data entry and geocoding processes described later in this chapter.

Similar in quality to the FIPs, the Geodetic surveys also documented in great detail the urban environment. These surveys, produced by government bodies, mapped the urban area and were used for the management of the city. The first for London dates to 1926, however, since this era was well-documented by the fire insurance plans these early years were not implemented in this study. The geodetic

surveys of the 1970s through the 1990s provide a valuable source to document this period which was not covered by the fire insurance plans<sup>13</sup>.

With the adoption of digital mapping, the city's planning department moved from the paper based geodetic surveys to Computer Aided Design (CAD) and GIS files in the late 1990s to store and manage its spatial information. These were obtained from the planning department and used to document the contemporary city. They provide the original GIS files to which the other layers were spatially referenced; this process will be discussed in a later section. Furthermore, since the files were already in digital format, the onerous task of digitizing and spatially-referencing the data was not required for the modern city. The GIS files organize the data into many layers which were also not previously available, including parking lots and multi-use pathways. Being updated annually allows for changes to be observed over small intervals of time. Unfortunately, they only date to the late-1990s, and thus their uses are limited to the analysis of the contemporary city.

### **NOMINAL SOURCES**

Various nominal sources document characteristics of the city not found on the cartographic sources. They can also be used to verify the information on the plans. The records are inputted into digital format and stored in datasheets within a relational database. The information in each datasheet is typically stored as rows of individual records, each with one or more attributes. For example, each business in the directory is entered for a given year as a unique record, with separate fields for its name, proprietor, address and the year of the listing. Commonly, one of the attributes is a spatial reference, such as a street address, which allows for the record to be mapped.

The city directories were produced by private firms, the most prominent of which for Southwestern Ontario was Vernon's based in Hamilton, and sold to businesses and organizations who would use them for such things as their mailings lists and canvassing. They present the listing both alphabetically and by street

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<sup>13</sup> The 1970s and 1980s were excluded from this analysis since no business directory was available for this period. Future research will attempt to fill the large gap between the 1958 and 2004 slices, showing the rise of the planned shopping centre.

address. In addition, directories often contained information sections pertaining to the community including its politicians and civic institutions.

The city directories often contain a business directory which provides a comprehensive listing of all the businesses in the city for the given year. They are grouped by the nature of the business, for example, tanneries and butchers. For those cities that had a wholesale sector, it was differentiated from the retail listings, for example millinery shops were demarcated from millinery wholesalers. For each retailer, the directories usually list a street address, although a location was at times referenced to by another description, such as “City Hall Building”. The proprietor of the establishment was also often listed.

City directories provide a comprehensive picture of the city’s residents and businesses, although their reliability for specific socio-economic groups such as the poor has been questioned (Harris 1986; Dostrovsky and Harris 2008). Since the directories are primarily used for their business listings, these demographic problems are relatively trivial considerations for this study. It is expected that the business directory listings were more accurate since one of their primary purposes was to allow for businesses to communicate with each other through messenger before the telegraph era (Knights 1969), thus having an accurate business information, including address was essential. They were also annually updated to keep this information current. Also, the enumerators who traversed the city collecting the data for the directories would have a harder time missing businesses than residents since businesses are more visible elements, usually occupying the ground floors, and open during the day when the enumerations were taken.

The business directory section listed all types of enterprise in the city, including retailers. Retailers that dealt in more than one type of good could be listed under multiple headings, for example A. & J. G. McIntosh was listed as selling clothing, carpets & oil cloths, and dry goods. These were complimentary goods which were offered together in one store. Other types, such as butchers were generally only listed under one category. In entering the information from the directories, each instance was included since it was important not to miss any retailers when looking for a specific type. To continue the previous example, if the McIntosh store was only listed once as a clothing store, but carpet retailers were being examined, this establishment would have been erroneously missed if it had

not been repeated in the database. These instances of repeated listings were noted so that they were not counted more than once when analysing the general retail landscape. This was accomplished by giving each business a Unique Business ID which was recorded in a field within the database which was being built.

The classifications used for the businesses pose several limitations. Changes between the classification methods occurred between years and differed among directory companies. The 1863 directory lists many provision dealers and only a few grocers. Since the provision dealers are similar to the grocers they were grouped together. More of the problems of dealing with the listings are presented in the following section on building a database of retailers.

An alphabetical listing of residents and businesses was also included in the directory, each record most often including a street address or other spatial reference for the listing. These listings also offer some demographic characteristics of the city; valuable information for determining market conditions. The residents listed were the heads of the household, which most frequently was male. Women were listed if they were widowed or spinsters; domestics were also often included. The occupation and workplace location were given for many of the listings. The housing situation, boarding, tenant or owner was nearly always indicated. The businesses in the alphabetical directory frequently listed the owners as well as the location; at times the manager's name was also given.

The street directory indicates the occupants of each address along each street. These listings followed each side of the street from one end to the other; cross-streets were indicated to help with bearings. The street directory was used to locate all the businesses and other uses along a given street segment. The segments of Dundas Street from Ridout to Wellington and Richmond Street from Carling to York were entered for every year between 1880 and 1930, creating a database of over 30,000 records which were used to study the mainstreet landscape at its apex (see Chapter 5).

Tax assessments were the other principal nominal data source. These were compiled by the city and provide an assessment of a given property's value. These values were not the actual value as defined by the market through rents or selling



prices, but do provide a useful approximation<sup>14</sup>. The assessments include the value of the lot, the value of the lot's frontage along the street measured in dollars per foot, and value of all buildings on the lot. Early tax assessments also provided the taxable income of the inhabitant, and even the number of dogs and cattle which were owned. Moorcroft (1975) provides an excellent summary of the procedures implemented in creating the tax assessment and the availability of data for the various years in London.

The tax assessments provided additional information beyond the assessed values<sup>15</sup>. They are valuable for their information pertaining to the use of the lot, for example the type of shop, as well as the physical dimensions of the lot. The dimensions are especially valuable since the fire insurance plans of London do not indicate the lot lines. The only indication of lot boundaries are fences, which often, but not always followed the lot lines; furthermore, fences were absent from many areas. The tax assessments allowed for parts of the lot fabric in the core to be reconstructed using this information about the lot dimensions. Polygons were created in the GIS using this information to specify the widths of the frontages, starting with the corner lot, and moving sequentially towards the other corner. This proved to be an accurate procedure since the lot lines generated largely coincided with the building edges on the fire insurance plans. Also, the lots also fit the dimension of the block as recorded on the fire insurance plans.

Details pertaining to the city's planned shopping centres are contained within the Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres. These annual listings, which are available from 1981 onwards, provide a comprehensive report on each shopping centre in Canada over 25,000 square feet, including such information as its ownership, management, tenants, rental rates, and traffic (Monday Reports on Retailers 2010). The data for the volumes is provided by the centre owners and managers and is not verified by the publisher (Monday Reports on Retailers 2010). As a result, not all centres have complete information about their performance and operations. This is especially true in the later editions, as the information becomes

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<sup>14</sup> The actual market values as determined through rents or sales are not available for most properties, thus necessitating the use the tax assessments.

<sup>15</sup> See (DeBats 2008) for a discussion of using tax records incorporated in HGIS to study urban history.

more guarded by the shopping centre developers. They are extensively used in Chapter Five to document the appearance, rise and at times the fall of these new retail environments in the post-war era. All the centres in London were evaluated for their opening date, ownership structure, sales and traffic figures. Other parts of the Shopping Centre Directories show general trends in Canadian shopping centres. They were also used to examine metrics for specific centres found elsewhere in Canada that were referenced in the discussion.

### **OTHER SOURCES**

Many other data sources were used to trace London's retail history such as newspaper articles and photographs. They provide additional context for understanding the evolution of the retail landscape. If the source contains a spatial reference, or if one could be discerned from its contents, then the source could be positioned within the HGIS.

Photographs provide excellent documentation of the changing retail landscape. Both interior and exterior shots of businesses were used to study the three-dimensional form of the structures. Details found in the photographs also add much to the story. The goods in the windows provide an indication of the type of store and the quality of its service; similarly the finishes of the store indicate its success and quality. When people are present they also reveal much about the culture of shopping. A photograph showing a street full of women in hats helps to explain the presence of many millinery shops in the late nineteenth-century. The numbers of people are also an indication of the activity levels in an area or given store.

Aerial photographs are one specific sub-type of visual documentation. They are available for a series of years, the earliest dating to 1922. They do not contain a description of the features, and the earlier versions were not of high-resolution. Further confounding their utility is the presence of clouds and shadows. They do, however, provide another source to document the city's changing landscape, and are especially valuable to fill the gaps between other cartographic sources. The modern air photos obtained through the city's planning division are more useful, being in full colour and high resolution. They are available annually as part of the digital mapping files provided by the city. They correspond with the GIS layers, giving

definition to some of the polygons. The modern air photos are valuable in order to differentiate different segments of retail plazas which are discernable due to their high resolution, for example demarcating the anchors from the rest of the plaza, as well as land dedicated to parking.

Newspapers provide two general types of information which adds to the understanding of the retail landscape. Articles written by journalists tell the story of an event which occurred such as the opening of a store, or a business merger. Details of the business operations or those pertaining to the daily life in general can also be taken from the articles. At times an article will discuss the number of customers that a store had, or its management structure. They can provide a picture as to shopping practices, much like what would be found in a diary, however, on a less personal and perhaps more objective level. Newspapers were used for all time periods, from the historical to the present day.

Newspapers also contain advertisements which are very valuable to this research. The advertisements typically listed the goods sold and a description of their quality. Although most likely inflated, these descriptions provide a resource as to the nature of the business. The presence of an advertisement typically indicates that the firm was successful in that it could afford the advertising fees. Marketing strategies of the firm can also be discerned by studying their advertisements in the newspaper. For many retailers, these advertisements are the only records which remain that detail their businesses, other than the business directory.

Although they could be equally valuable for understanding the contemporary retail landscape, for the purposes of this research advertisements were exclusively used from the nineteenth-century. Advertisements marked the actual opening day of a store allowing for analysis to the sub-year level. Retailers advertised going out of business sales, which could be used to study business failure. Advertisements were also used to indicate the timing of new goods arriving in the London market. Grocer's advertisements from before and after London was connected to points east and west by the railway are examined to determine the impact of new transportation linkages. The distances traveled of the goods can be discerned, for example oranges were likely coming to London from Florida. The locations where the goods were coming from is often explicitly mentioned, especially in the fashion sector; many clothiers proclaim that their latest arrivals were from London or Paris.

This demonstrates not only the transportation linkages, but also the diffusion of fashion into a relatively small and isolated Canadian city.

Account books and ledgers provide further details about the financial affairs of a business. By showing daily sales totals, the ebb and flow of the market over time can be traced. They indicate from where the goods which stocked the shelves were procured, as well as information pertaining to the store's employees. When customer account books are available they show who shopped at the store. By cross referencing the customers in the city directories, the homes of the customers and their journey to the store can be mapped. The inventory ledgers list the types and quantities of goods sold, demonstrating both the size and market positioning of the firm.

### **CREATING A RETAIL DATABASE**

The various nominal data sources were entered into digital format and used to create a retail database that details the retail landscape as it changes over time. Each source was entered into separate tables within the database and offers a specific set of information which. The rows of the table contain the individual records while the columns detail the various attributes entered (See Table 2.2 for the variables entered from each source). In addition to the information entered from the sources, additional data was added to many of the tables. As discussed below, classification of the land-uses and retail types was added. Once the records were geocoded, the distance between each point and the peak value intersection (PVI) at Richmond and Dundas Streets was calculated and included in the table using the GIS tools discussed later in this chapter.

The analysis of business histories is much like that of personal histories found in demographic research (for examples of urban historical demographic research see: Thernstrom and Knights 1970; Pooley 1979; Gilliland 1998). Each individual retailer is equivalent to a person in traditional demographic model. They have a date of birth, the day the company was formed, and a date of death, marked by its closure due to bankruptcy or sale (unless remain in existence to this day). Thus, the number of new stores (births) and store closures (deaths) for a given year can be calculated, as can the tenure of the store (life expectancy). The businesses can be grouped by type in a similar fashion to those classifications applied to groups

of people. Just as people may be grouped by sex, religion, or occupation, stores can be generally grouped by the goods they sell.

Whereas a demographer uses the census or alphabetical city directory, the business directory is the primary source used by the business historian. Stores were grouped by the type of goods sold, for example, butchers, bakers, and chandlers. The business directory also lists services and industries; however, this work is solely interested in the retailers, which are defined as those businesses from which one could obtain a physical good to consume off site. If a service is provided in addition to the good it is still considered a retail outlet. A butcher, for example, provides both a good and a service; the piece of meat, as well as his work in preparing that piece by dressing the animal and dividing the meat into portions as dictated by the customer. A butcher is considered a retailer since the customer did take away a physical good from the premise; similarly florists and tailors are also considered retailers despite the high level of service they provide. Services which did not provide a physical good to be removed from the shop were not considered. Thus, banks and other financial institutions were not included since they dealt in abstract notions of finance and money, represented on paper. Hotels provide a physical room in which to stay, but it was not removed from the premise. Similarly, restaurants and saloons were not considered as retailers since their services were primarily consumed on site. Although dealing with physical goods, wholesalers were not considered retailers since they did not sell to the general public.

Determining which businesses fit this definition of retailer is challenging for some types. For example, it was difficult to classify the butter dealers listed in the 1881 directory since they could either be businesses open to the public or wholesale distributors dealing with the local grocery stores. These elusive categories were the exception rather than the norm, and would not significantly impact the results if classified incorrectly. The majority of businesses were quite easy to delineate, such as dry goods stores and grocers.

**TABLE 2.2** The attributes used in the database created from the nominal sources.

Source	Years	Sample Size	Data Entered From Source						Additional Data		
Business Directories	1864, 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004	Complete	Category	Business Name	Proprietor	Street Number	Street Name		Retail /Wholesale	Retail Classification	Distance to the PVI
Street Directories	Annually 1880-1930	Dundas from Ridout to East of Wellington and Richmond from York to Carling	Name	Street Number	Street				Land-Use Type	Retail Classification	Distance to the PVI
Tax Assessments	1916, 1929	Dundas from Ridout to East of Wellington and Richmond from York to Carling	Street	Side	Cross Street	Street #	Name	Business Name/ Other	Metric Conversion Width	Metric Conversion Length	
			Width (ft, inches)	Length (ft, inches)	Value/Foot	Land Value	Bldg. Value	Total Assess			
Shopping Centre Directories	1981, 1985, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2010	Complete	Name	Address	Type	Year Opened	GLA	Levels of Retail	Distance to the PVI		
			No. Stores	Food Court	Enclosed	No. Parking Spaces	Annual Sales	Sales/ Sq. Ft.			
			Vehicle Traffic	People Traffic	Avg. Non-anchor rent	C.A.M.	Year Last Sold	Previous Owner			
			Owners Contact	Managers Contact	Anchor Tenants	Tenants					

Upon accounting for all of the retailers, they were divided into groups by the type of goods sold. Most generally the retailers were divided into those selling food stuffs, fashion goods and all others types of merchandise. Fashion retailers included tailors, milliners, dressmakers, ready-to-wear stores and dry goods houses, jewellers and shoe-makers. Food retailers included grocers, butchers, bakers, provision dealers, fruit, and fish and game shops. Neither tobacco nor alcohol shops were considered in the food category since they were considered not a food-stuff even though they are ingested. These fell into the other category, a miscellany of those stores which did not fit these classifications. The original business directory groupings were maintained in the databases for a finer level of categorization. This allowed jewellers, for example, to be distinguished from dry goods stores.

Further complications arose in the classification scheme in determining which group to fit a business that had more than one category. Department stores, for example, sold clothing, furniture and often food stuffs. Thus, they could fit into each of the aforementioned categories. To overcome this problem the original groupings in the business directory were used, such that even if it was known that a department store carried furnishings, but it was not listed under furnishings, it was not recorded in the category in the database. Similarly, if a store was reported more than once due to it being listed in different categories, then unique records were created for each listing. Thus, if a clothing store was listed under both men's and women's clothing, it received two records, one for each category. The duplicate records were marked in order that the numbers were not inflated when looking at all retailers and their locations.

Each business was given a unique identifier (ID) so that it could be distinguished from the other listings and to help with the data management. If a store was present in both 1882 and 1883 it was given the same ID. This allows for the longevity of the stores to be discerned. These unique IDs are especially important for tracing one business over time, as was done for the analysis of the central retail district since a continuous run of listings was available between 1880 and 1930.

Name changes complicated some of the management of the records within the database. Some years a business would be listed by the name of proprietor, and others by its formal name; for example Askin's fruits or London City Fruits in

differing years. Since Askin was listed as the proprietor of London City Fruits, and the address was the same, it can be assumed that the business was the same and thus given the same ID. When looking for the same business the data was sorted by name which was complicated by the fact that some years Askin's Fruits was referred to as T. Askin's Fruits or Thomas Askin's Fruits, thus moving the records at opposite ends of the database. Legal name changes also complicated the delineation of businesses, especially by the addition of a new partner in the company. For example, the addition of Allan Grey to the company would have changed Thomas Askin's Fruits to Grey and Askin's Fruits or Askin and Grey – Fruit Dealers.

Businesses, unlike people, can be in many places at once. This is a result of the chaining of stores with several branches operating throughout the city. Each unique location is recorded as a separate record. Location IDs are given to distinguish each branch outlet. Thus a store with four branches would have four unique records, each containing the same business ID but unique location IDs. This coding allows for chains to be highlighted in the analysis.

The categorizing of businesses is one large problem when dealing with retail histories. Another is determining the locations of the stores. There were many instances in the directory listings where no street address was given. Many of these listed a building or intersection rather than a street address while others simply did not have any spatial information. Retailers often locate in prominent buildings that are generally known to the population. Thus, the directory compilers documented the location by building rather than address. Today a business might be said to be in Masonville Mall the location of which is standard knowledge for the residents of the city. Over time, this knowledge can be lost, creating difficulties in determining the location of these retailers. An example is the retailers whose addresses are listed as The Albion Building. Although this building still stands today along the west side of Richmond Street, north of Dundas, it is not commonly referred to by this name.

In order to determine the location of a specific building its name is first searched for in the city directories and tax assessment datasets. If this is to no avail, then the fire insurance plans are used, which indicate the names of some of the prominent buildings, the Albion included. Since the locations are unknown it is much like finding a needle in a haystack, having to scour through many sheets



reading each building's name. Once located in the city directory, tax assessment or fire insurance plans, the building's corresponding street address is added to the records' for use in the geocoding process outlined in the next section.

Various software programs were used to create and manage these databases in digital format. For most purposes GIS is not the best way to produce and manage the raw, non-spatially referenced datasets. This is due to the complexity of the program and its limited data entry facilities. Furthermore, many people helped enter the data used in this study, many of whom were not familiar with GIS or had access to GIS software on their computers; thus, a more accessible software program was implemented for the data entry.

The spreadsheet program Microsoft Excel was generally used to enter the original sources. This was due to its relative light weight (in terms of memory and processing requirements), its ease of use, and wide availability and familiarity amongst those who were tasked with the data entry. Taking a laptop containing Excel spreadsheets to the archives is much easier than using either a database management system or the GIS software. The tables in which the data is entered are structured where each piece of data is given a separate field: addresses were stored as street number, street name, and street type, all in separate fields. Each row in the table corresponded with a new record.

Once entered, the data underwent a process of cleaning and error checking. This involves several strategies: fields are sorted alphabetically in order to determine if mistakes were made in the entry of text, such as the spelling of street names or the inclusion of superfluous spaces. Numeric fields, such as street number, are also sorted to ensure that no unduly large figures or extraneous characters were entered. Random records are then selected to be checked with the original sources to ensure the precision of the work. After the data were geocoded, further checks ensure that the addresses were matched to correct location as discussed in the following section.

Many of the Excel datasheets were then transferred into the database management program Access, also made by Microsoft. This software allows for the datasheets to be linked across common attributes to form a relational database. Once this database was structured, these relationships allowed for queries to be written that drew attributes from two or more unique tables, combining them into a

new table. Queries are also written to update the data and automatically look for errors. Much of the analysis can be performed within the database management software. For example, the number of retailers per year in each category can be quickly determined using a relatively simple query. This software is suitable for performing many of the analyses which is found in the subsequent chapters; however, it was unable to examine the spatial aspect of the data. To exploit the spatial aspect of the data, the datasets were imported into the GIS software and spatially referenced.

### **SPATIALLY REFERENCING THE DATA**

Once the various data sources have been selected, entered into digital format, cleaned and error checked, they can be incorporated into the GIS. Using the GIS each source, or each record contained within the source, that has a spatial identifier can be matched to its virtual representation of a real-world location (Figure 2.1). This spatial referencing, or georeferencing, process allows the spatial component of the data to be analysed. First the cartographic sources for each of the eras studied are georectified. Using these cartographic sources as references, the nominal datasets are geocoded to their correct location.

Special attention must be paid in picking a suitable GIS software package. ESRI's ArcGIS 9.3 was used in this research due to its relatively intuitive interface, as well as being a standard within much urban analysis by academics and professional planners. Furthermore, it is capable of integrating raster and vector data and the GIS data from the city was in the ArcGIS proprietary format (Shapefiles). The tools available in the software provided a means to spatially reference the datasets, and once done, analyse their patterns.

#### **Georectification**

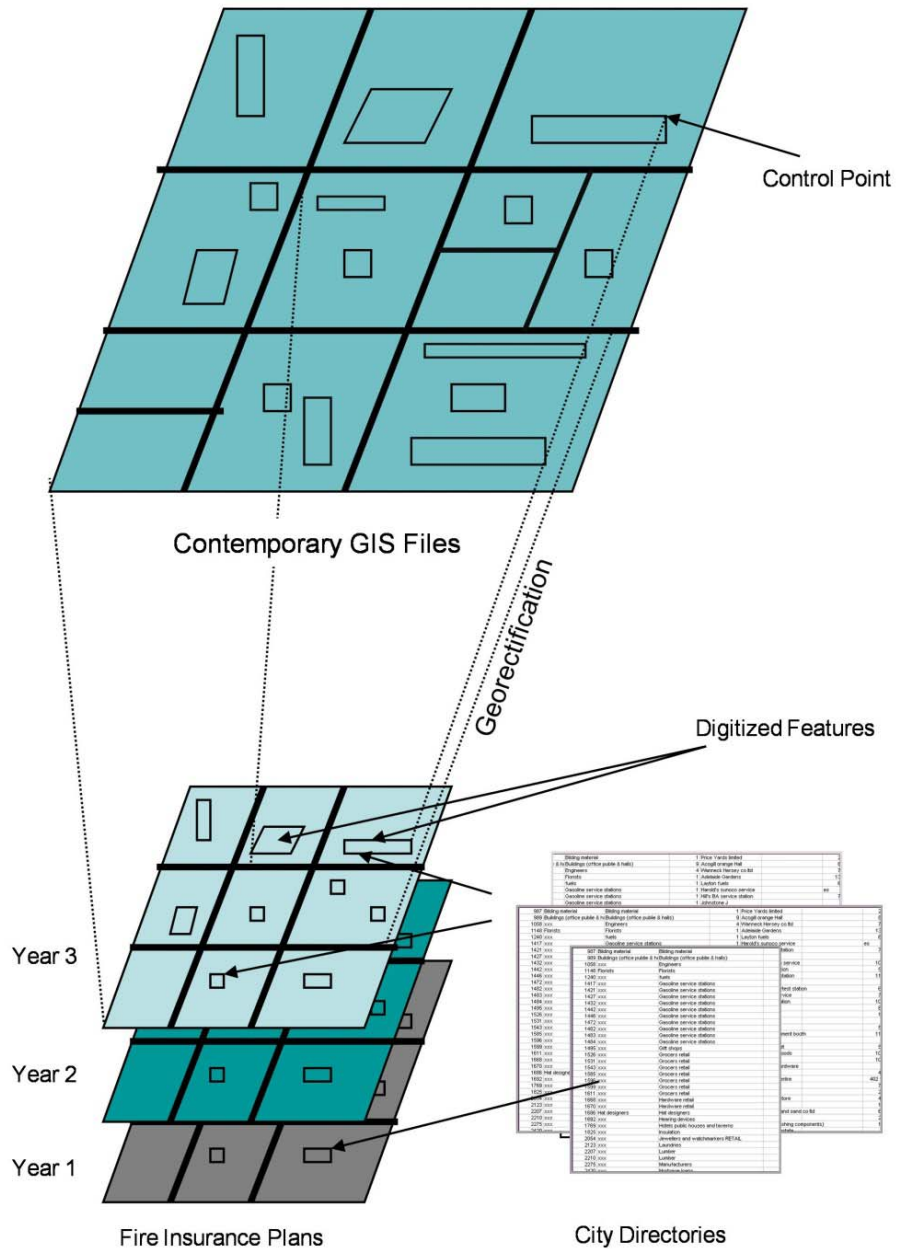
Georectification is the process in which the digital images are aligned with their proper spatial coordinates through a process of stretching and warping the images (such as rubber sheeting) using tools that are available in the GIS software (Gilliland and Novak 2006). The digital raster versions of the cartographic sources, notably the fire insurance plans, were georectified so that the images were matched to their proper spatial locations within the GIS. The images are stretched and warped using complex algorithms in the GIS in the process. The georectification

process enacted in this study matched known locations on the plans with their real world coordinates; the latter being discerned from the already spatially-referenced layers of GIS information obtained from the city. Having the maps digitized and georectified allows for measurements to be quickly made and analysis conducted using the tools in the GIS software, among other advantages (see Ramsey and Williams 2008 for a discussion of these and other benefits for georectifying historical maps in GIS).

The known location, or control points, that were matched between the old plans and the new GIS files were typically the corners of blocks. These are among the most static features of the city, barring the expropriation of lands for the widening of streets, a rare practice in London. Whereas the interior lot boundaries changed frequently due to splitting and amalgamations, the vertices at the corners of blocks remained relatively constant even over the 150 years between the historical plans and the modern GIS layers.

Typically the four corners of the plan were first matched. The GIS software uses complex algorithms to then stretch and skew the plan based on these choices. Often this produced a satisfactory alignment of the old and new. When it did not, additional control points were added, usually in the interior of the lots. At times these additional points still did not create satisfactory results. In these instances the digital plan was cut into smaller pieces, usually cropping out each block, which were then rectified. The smaller areas produced more accurate results.

Each of the plates in the 1888, 1915 and 1958 fire insurance plans were georectified in this manner. This results in a comprehensive, spatially-referenced representation of the city's built landscape in each era. Additional sources such as the 1855 Peter's Map and the 1839 plan of the City were similarly referenced. Once rectified, the features represented on the various sources could be digitized. Layers representing the buildings, streets and blocks were created by tracing the appropriate features. Each of these digitized features is automatically spatially referenced since they are taken from the georectified plans. Each is associated with a record in an attribute table, which can contain additional attributes pertain to the feature. The building material and the height, for example, were inputted for each structure; the data to fill these attributes was gleaned from the information on the fire insurance plans.



**FIGURE 2.1** Cartographic sources such as fire insurance plans are georectified to the current GIS files using known locations (control points), giving each the same scale and allowing for their layering. Features from the plans can then be digitized and records in the datasets are geocoded to their correct spatial locations.

### Geocoding

With the maps georeferenced, the records contained in the nominal datasets can be spatially referenced to their corresponding locations. This is accomplished through the geocoding, the process which converts address information into a point location (McDonnell and Kemp 1998). A series of geocoding procedures were carried out to convert the address information contained in the nominal datasets into points on the map. Since many of the datasets were historical, they are matched to the locations on the historical sources, as well as to those in the contemporary address databases when there was no change over time. A mixture of manual and automatic matching procedures is undertaken, the former for difficult to match cases and the later for all others which sped up the process of matching the tens of thousands of rows of data.

First the automatic geocoding process is attempted on the records. The address locators implemented for this are based on the modern addresses. Two different automatic procedures are implemented, the first matching to exact address points, the second to street number ranges. Checks were made by comparing the modern addresses with those found on the fire insurance plans to ensure that street addresses had not changed over time. Street number changes are rare; however, there are several streets that changed their names. In these cases the records are modified to reflect these name changes. A copy of the original street name is retained in a separate attribute field to preserve the original information.

All those records which could not be automatically matched were then attempted to be manually geocoded; twenty to thirty percent of the records had to be done in this fashion. In some cases the address was inputted incorrectly from the original source, so the original was referred to and used to correct the error. In other cases the address did not exist. When this occurred the record was placed in the nearest location. Thus, if there was no 55 Dundas Street in the address files, but both 53 and a 57 were present, then the record was placed between these two addresses. Other times there was no street address given. As mentioned earlier, many records simply referred to a building, or general area. If the building or area could be located the record was matched. For each record an attribute field was populated to indicate which geocoding method was used for its location.

Through the combination of both manual and automatic geocoding procedures most datasets were matched around the 95 percent level, well above the minimal accepted reliable geocoding rate of 85 percent (Ratcliffe 2004). The results had to be error checked to ensure accuracy. This involves selecting random records to make sure they were located in the proper address or area. Another error-checking procedure is to select all records along an entire street; viewing them on the map should show straight lines. Errors can be quickly spotted using this method since they would not be mapped to the correct street, appearing as outliers. The size of the point which represents the address can be related to its street number; thus, as the numbers increase so too should the size of the symbols in a gradual ascent from the beginning of the street to the end.

### **TEMPORALLY REFERENCING THE DATA**

Each data source has an inherent temporal reference. The temporal reference is often a year, typically the year the source was created. The GIS layers containing the cartographic information, their digitized features, and the nominal datasets thus have an inherent temporal reference. Any temporal information is recorded in the layers and datasets to temporally reference the data.

Two temporal referencing methods are used for the different datasets. The sources that document a discrete era usually contain the same temporal reference, typically the year they were produced, throughout the dataset. In these cases the year is simply recorded in the file name. The fire insurance plans of 1888, for example, are labelled with this year in each of the plate's filename. Likewise the buildings digitized from this plan were all contained within one layer (Shapefile) with 1888 in its name. The 1881 business directory was also housed in a unique file, named appropriately. In contrast, the continuous run of city directory listings for the central retail district over the period 1880 to 1930 are housed in one dataset. For this dataset, a year field is included wherein the year of each record is indicated since many years are contained within one file.

There are more complex ways of handling time, such as the inclusion of a start and stop date (see Gregory and Ell 2007 for a discussion of these practices); however, these more detailed dates were neither available nor necessary for this study. Since each unique business was given an ID, the first and last years of its

operation can be found by querying for the minimum and maximum values of the year field for all of the records with the same business ID. Subtracting the start year from the end year gives the length of tenure of the business. Other problems arise when boundaries change over time. This was not a problem since all boundaries used in this study remained constant over time, thus not requiring a temporal reference.

## **ANALYSIS USING THE HGIS**

Only after the laborious data selection, entry, and georeferencing and temporal-referencing procedures have been completed can the true potentials of the HGIS be realized. As a digital tool, HGIS offers many advances from manual analysis or that performed in traditional databases (Goodchild, Haining, and Wise 1992). It has the ability to perform on-the-fly analysis, offering new ways to quickly explore the spatial data. The numerous analytical capabilities, from simply visualizing the data and creating maps to spatial and attribute queries to advanced spatial statistical techniques, permit a thorough documentation of the evolving retail landscape.

Perhaps the most basic analytical tool is the visualization of the data. Displaying the data in an effective manner, however, is also perhaps the most powerful tool in understanding processes and to convey information to an audience. GIS allows the data to be viewed in an infinite number of ways. The data can be symbolized with colours and graphics, representing qualities of the variable in question. The GIS also handles various resolutions well, instantly displaying data from the micro through the macro scales. When the entire urban area is viewed, if an area of interest is found, for example a cluster of dry goods stores along Dundas Street, the software can be used to instantly zoom into this area to examine it in greater detail.

Animation is also available, displaying the dynamic nature of the data. The locations of retailers over time were animated, showing the spread from the core to the periphery between 1844 and 2004. Animation is, however, not possible on the static pages of this thesis. Other media, such as presentations, web-sties and digital books can handle animation. To accommodate the limitations of a thesis presented

in monograph form, each cell of the animation can be recorded as a unique map, grouped together into multipart figures (for example see Figure 4.6).

Among the most valuable visual analyses of the historical data in GIS is the layering of different eras. This involves making an upper layer transparent to view the data in the layer below it (See Gilliland and Novak 2006). In this way the spatial extent is kept constant revealing how the area has changed over time. This method is especially useful for the evolution of the physical landscape. The buildings in a particular year can be superimposed on those of another. The result shows how the building fabric has changed, revealing details which might not be apparent when compared side to side. The differences can then be studied using the morphological analysis with the high-level of accuracy that GIS affords. The caveat in this case is that the two data layers must be accurately referenced to a common grid so that the super-position lines-up. This method is done to trace the evolution of retail buildings, as well as the lot fabric downtown.

A GIS is a spatially-referenced database, thus permitting the traditional record querying techniques, as well the addition of spatial queries. Typically, the basic queries were conducted in Microsoft Access due to its strengths as a sole database management program, whereas ArcMap was used for the spatial queries<sup>1</sup>. Queries answered simple questions such as how many retailers were present in a given year, to more complex ones such as the functional breakdown of the retailers by type over a fifty year period.

Spatial queries are utilized to understand spatial relationships and patterns. They can be used to select features based upon their proximity to another feature. They can also group features into specified areas. Queries were used to determine the number of retailers which faced the major roads in the city. They also were used to count the number of retailers within each district of the city.

Although relatively simple, the measurement of distances between two features offers some valuable information which would be unavailable outside of the

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<sup>1</sup> The various datasets can be housed in a Geodatabase in recent versions of ArcGIS, offering many of the advantages of standard database management systems; however, this data structure is not implemented for the GIS files pertaining to London. Although there are some problems in dealing with the back and forth between Access and ArcGIS, the added complexity of the Geodatabase structure was not warranted for this project.



GIS. The distances between each retailer and the peak value intersection was calculated, the value stored as a separate attribute field. This figure allows the number of retailers within concentric rings to be discerned. Further, these measurements are compared with other attributes, such as the retail types, and land values.

More advanced spatial statistical techniques are possible with the tools available in the ArcMap software. Cluster analysis was performed in the dry goods and butchers in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Specifically, standard deviational ellipses were created for each retail type in each era. The sizes of these ellipses quantify the degree of clustering while their orientation indicates directional patterns in the data.

Morphological analysis is also performed using the GIS. Areas of lots, blocks and buildings are calculated for the digitized representations of these features. This most basic morphological measure is time-consuming to produce in the pre-digital era; however, it is instantaneously calculated in GIS once the laborious task of digitizing the features is complete. Comparing the ratio of building areas to lot and block areas produces density measures. Lengths, widths, and perimeters of features can be calculated with similar ease to describe their shape.

Now that the data sources used have been considered and the processes of creating and using a Historical Geographic Information System have been detailed, it is time to show how the system has been used. Using these expansive datasets and the power of GIS for their analysis, the evolution of the retail landscape is examined. Moving from the macro to the micro scale, the GIS is then tasked with studying the central retail district at its apex at the turn of the twentieth century. In the final substantive results chapter, the morphology of planned shopping centres is linked with their success. Notes pertaining to considerations and idiosyncrasies of the data sources and their analyses are included as footnotes in these forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 3

# RETAILING AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

*A Dense Retail Cluster Emerges Shortly After Settlement*



## **LONDON – THE FOREST CITY**

## CHAPTER 3

**RETAILING AND EARLY SETTLEMENT**

This chapter details the relationship between the development process of early settlements in North America and their retail sectors. It traces the origins of The City of London, Ontario (Upper Canada) and shows how retailing was present from its first year of inception. Within the first two decades, a densely built retail district had emerged, which would form the core of the city. The original settlement was very isolated, surrounded by vast areas of virgin forest. This inaccessibility limited the economy of the early city, including its retail sector. The arrival of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century dramatically changed the city, allowing for rapid growth, and a retail sector that could expand in both size and product selection.

**A SETTLEMENT IN THE FOREST**

John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, and his entourage arrived at the confluence of the North and South Branches of the Thames River in 1793 on route from Niagara to Detroit<sup>1</sup>. The situation of London was favourable in Simcoe's eyes as a site for the district's new capital. Although isolated in an unrelenting swath of virgin Carolinian forest, London was ideally situated in relation to the United States. Its isolation and distance from the border provided a shield from potential American invaders, thus offering a secure place from which to manage the political affairs of Upper Canada. It was also chosen since it would establish a British presence in the region, thus minimizing the possibility that the Western Territories would be assimilated by the United States (Whebell 1992).

Simcoe's capital plans would not be realized, however, due to the limitations of such an isolated site. London's loss of the capital appeased those to

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<sup>1</sup> Details of Simcoe's arrival open the two most cited histories of the city, Armstrong's *The Forest City: An Illustrated History* and Miller's *This Was London: The First Two Centuries*. This chapter does not intend to retell their stories, but rather synthesize a foundational understanding of the emerging retail sector as it relates to the early development of London.

the east who saw the plan as illogical and logistically impossible (Mombourquette 1992). Although the capital was not constructed following Simcoe's vision, the selection of the site did provide the possibility for later settlement. A Crown reserve of 3850 acres which was established at the Forks of the Thames River for the capital provided land for the eventual settlement (Armstrong 1986, 21). Simcoe's largest mark on the area was the clearing of Dundas Street which connected London to the port of the same name located on the western shore of Lake Ontario. Simcoe had ordered the road to be built to connect the proposed capital to the established settlements and ports to the east.

This land reserve remained undeveloped while the district surrounding it began to experience settlement. Farmers took advantage of the favourable growing conditions that the area provided, clearing and cultivating the fertile land and erecting homes and barns. Hamlets and villages began to appear in order to serve the needs of the rural inhabitants. The original seat of the Western District of Upper Canada was located at Vittoria, near Long Point on Lake Erie. As the areas to the west continued to be settled this site became less favourable for the administrative centre. When the district courthouse at Vittoria burnt in November of 1825 it was decided that the administrative seat should be moved. Although no settlement yet existed, London was chosen due to its more central location to serve the growing populations to the west. The reserve of land which had been set aside for Simcoe's capital was surveyed in 1826 by Thomas Burwell, providing a clean slate on which to lay-out an organized settlement (Miller 1988, 5). The original survey was bounded by North Street, now named Carling Street and Queens Avenue, to the North, Wellington Street to the East and the Thames River to the South and West. It consisted of a gridded street-network comprising a series of uniform blocks, each divided into ten equally sized lots.

With the land no longer in Crown reserve, development could begin at London. The lots created in the survey were given to those who agreed to pay a \$32 patent and build a shanty 18 by 24 feet. The district courthouse, the focal point of the community, was completed in 1829; it remains standing today, however it no longer serves as a judiciary seat but rather the political seat of Middlesex County. Robert Carfrae who settled in 1827 recounted his memories of the early settlement which had the courthouse and two taverns at its nucleus (Unknown 1889, 215).

Thus, institutions for the maintenance of the law and the provisioning of libations which often lead to its violation were at the centre of London's early development.

In the same year of Mr. Carfrae's arrival, Dennis O'Brien took possession of a vacant blacksmith's shop at Lot 18 on the South Side of Dundas Street which he converted into London's first retail outlet (Unknown 1889, 216). The store was primitive, with a counter created by the laying of rough boards between two barrels. "The log house, which he had previously occupied and used as a store-room, was minus chinking, and through the crevices the curious settlers would spend hours observing his stock of frying-pans, griddles, spiders, baking-kettles, tinware, and a thousand other articles which make the visitor to the country store covet the whole stock" (Unknown 1889, 216). This rudimentary shop marked the origins of London's retail landscape.

Within one year of the original survey, the retail sector had already come into existence with the settlement's first store. Its location is noteworthy, occupying a site on Dundas Street which would become the city's principle shopping street. It was joined by two taverns near the courthouse, one of which was located at the south east intersection of King and Ridout. This area was thus already established as the civic heart of the settlement. It would be here that locals, as well as those from the surrounding hinterland, would congregate and conduct their business; a place for the attending to the affairs of the public bureaucracy, for the procurement of provisions and for the lifting of spirits.

Goodhue and Lawrason joined the retail fray in 1832 with a general store, real estate office and post office at the intersection of Dundas and Ridout Streets (Armstrong 1986, 46), establishing this as the principle intersection in the village. It was the junction of two major arteries that ran not just through the town, but connected out to the hinterland and distant communities. Ridout Street connected to Westminster Township via a bridge likely built in 1826, and to the areas north of the river West of the settlement via Blackfriars Bridge which was built in 1831. In fulfillment of Simcoe's plan, Dundas Street connected London to the more developed east. These streets, which connected London with its hinterland and distant communities, were the principle arteries in the early town. Retailers thus chose to locate along them in order to attract as many potential customers as possible. The logic evinced two-centuries earlier remains today as retailers continue to choose the

most visible and accessible sites along the city's arteries, especially those which offer connections to points beyond the city.

## **BUMPY ROADS**

Early connections with areas beyond the village were primitive at best. Dundas Street linked the settlement with those to the east, notably the port facilities on Lake Ontario. In doing so it also connected the site of London with its hinterland which had been rapidly growing with homesteaders who were settling the land for its fertile soils and ideal climate. A second road connected the towns of the Niagara area in the east with Sandwich to the west, and passed near the settlement along the present Commissioners Road. This road was open for sleighs in 1799, but not suitable for other traffic until 1828 (Armstrong 1986, 27). Beginning in 1827 a stagecoach traveled this route, taking four days to traverse the nearly 400 km route between Niagara and Sandwich. London was at the midway point for the trip. It was thus two days in either direction to reach a port from which goods may be shipped by water, the ideal mode of transport of the time.

The poor state of the roads in the area kept the settlers in London isolated from their contemporaries in the more established towns to the east. With the journey gruelling and expensive, residents of London would make the trip infrequently, if at all. Likewise, visitors were uncommon in the settlement. As such the residents relied upon the early mail system to connect with the world, bringing in news, ideas and trends. The early inhabitants of the village lived in relative isolation, with little exposure to the goods offered by retailers in larger, more connected centres.

Due to the small, isolated market there was little variety in the goods offered by London's retailers. The small level of demand did not permit a large selection in goods since retailers could only sell the most commonly consumed goods. The staples of the early stores were whiskey, flour, pork and beans (Unknown 1889, 214). Furthermore, the isolation meant that most were unaware of the variety of goods available elsewhere. The latest trends, new inventions and other novel products were not generally known to the local market. With the shop owners running small

operations, they did not have international buying houses from which to browse for goods. It would have been difficult for them to even make the trip to Toronto or Hamilton to browse the offerings of wholesalers in these larger cities.

The poor transportation linkages also prevented a wide variety of goods from entering the village. Shipment of goods was slow and expensive. Transportation of goods by horse and wagon along the roads was slow at 3.2 to 4.8 kilometres per hour (Dahms 1981). Movement of goods was restricted by both the poor state of the roads as well as the limited capacity of the wagons and sleighs. The weight and durability of goods were limiting factors. Bolts of fabric were relatively easily sent over the corduroy roads; however, heavy stoves would be difficult to transport as would delicate glassware. As a result of the poor transport linkages the product offerings of the local retailers were greatly limited.

In addition to limiting selection of goods, the small markets also motivated retailers to diversify their operations in order to make ends meet. Some added financial services such as real-estate and loans while others were also involved in production. For some this diversification was successful, while for others profits were still elusive:

*The merchant's operations were all-embracing: they bought everything, they sold everything, they exported, they imported, they often ran ancillary businesses such as stills and mills, they acted as bankers providing loans and mortgages, and they frequently called their loans and foreclosed their mortgages. Many became extremely wealthy, ending up as vast landowners; others, possibly the more generous ones, failed and sometimes slipped into bankruptcy. (Armstrong 1986, 46)*

Even if demand had been sufficient, early retailers were limited by the availability of capital which was needed for the building of stores and the securing of stock. The first financial institution, the Bank of Upper Canada, opened on Ridout Street in 1835. Before the arrival of this first bank the money lenders were typically other retailers, who were unlikely to loan money to their potential competitors. During the first decade before the advent of banking in London, capital would have to be secured either informally through local networks, or from distant centres such



as York; however, these distant banks would be leery of lending to a fledgling enterprise in a little-known remote settlement.

With large amounts of available land, only modest employment and a resiliency often lacking in contemporary society, the early inhabitants provided much for themselves. The lots in the original survey were large, at 25 metres wide by 55 metres deep; large enough for an ample garden and the housing of domestic animals to satisfy one's basic food needs. Furthermore, the area was sparsely settled so one could cultivate adjacent lots. Retailers were relegated to providing the goods such as sugar and tea that could not be produced in the area. Homemade clothing was the norm, although most of the materials for their sewing would have been secured from the local stores.

The city's industrial sector developed shortly after the first residents arrived, providing economic growth for the developing settlement. Labatt's Brewery opened in 1828, followed by a tannery in 1829 and grist mill in 1833. Early industries were important for the retail sector in two general ways. The outputs of the producers provided goods to be sold in the retail outlets. At a time when transport of finished goods from other settlements was tedious, the local industries provided goods to be consumed within the community. Second, the industries provided an economic base. Those working in the industry would spend their wages on securing goods in the local retailers. As the specialization of labour continued through industrialization, the citizens were less likely to be self-sufficient in securing their goods, instead spending their incomes at shops for various necessities, as well as an expanding assortment of luxuries.

Not all the retailers who set up shop were successful. Although competition from other retailers was not stiff, the market was very limited in size and isolated from the distribution system. John Jennings was originally a peddler but later established a store in London: "He could write his name only, but possessed much natural intelligence, and was very impulsive" (Unknown 1889, 217). Many of the early retailers were primitive operations, the proprietors not versed in business practices. Jennings' business did not last long, perhaps due to his poor education, or possibly it was his impulsive nature; but, he would remain in the service sector, later opening a livery stable.

## THE PUBLIC MARKET & SURROUNDING RETAIL DISTRICT

Within a few years of its original survey, London was a flourishing settlement with activity in the institutional, residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. A report by the Reverend Benjamin Lundy in 1832 estimated the population at 300, with two houses of public worship, three hotels, six general stores; 130 buildings in total, nearly all frame (Armstrong 1986). Settlement of the surrounding townships also continued, spurring demand for goods and services available in London. The town was, however, still far from urbanized. Henry Groves, who settled in 1832, recounts a bear walking down Dundas Street in order to reach the river across which he swam to enter the woods on the western bank (Unknown 1889, 220).

The establishment of a public market was testament to London's growing position in the region; in turn the market also fuelled more development. The City was granted authority to hold a public market in 1835 by Upper Canada legislators: "The council had sought the creation of a safe, fair trading centre around which an economically strong, vibrant regional centre would grow" (Gouglas 1996, 3). The intended positive outcomes of the market were largely realized, providing a place for the interchange of London with its hinterland. Local farmers supplied much of the meats and produce sold at the market, thereby feeding the city. When farmers brought their goods to market they also purchased goods at the neighbouring firms to bring back to the farm. A similar spill-over would exist when locals went to the market for their food needs, picking up fashions and hardware on the same trip at the nearby shops which lined the market square.

Originally the market was located in a plaza beside the courthouse, solidifying the area, and the nearby intersection of Ridout and Dundas Streets, as the city's civic and retail hub. This site proved too small for the burgeoning market, and thus it relocated to a site on King and Talbot streets in 1843<sup>2</sup>. In 1845, the market was moved once more to the eastern extent of the downtown to facilitate the development of newly surveyed lands in that area (Gouglas 1996). This proved unpopular with the downtown merchants, who donated land in the core in order that a permanent market building might be erected at the more central site (Unknown,

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<sup>2</sup> The market remains on the same site today, however, the building itself has gone through several iterations (see Figure 6.2).

1889, 282). The two markets operated between 1846 and 1848, however, the one located in the newly established areas east of the core failed to attract sufficient business; the city was unable to support two markets. The more central site at Ridout and King streets continued as the city's sole market area.

The donation of land for a market in the city centre by the business owners was hardly an act of kindness. Rather it was a shrewd business move to attract more customers and increase sales. These retailers relied on the traffic which the market drew to the area. The market, along with courthouse, were poles drawing people to the intersection of Dundas and Ridout Streets during. When the market was relocated the adjacent business owners feared that their customers would leave this area. They thus donated the land, allowing for a permanent market to be established, providing them with a constant flow of customers.

Records show that the merchants near the market performed better than those located elsewhere in the city (Gouglas 1996). These differences were observed even for stores just blocks away. In his reading of the politics involved in the market, Gouglas (1996) argues that the city council enacted a series of by-laws which privileged the market over private businesses. Controls were placed on the dealings of farmers with the butchers and produce merchants in the city, favouring those who traded within the public market<sup>3</sup>. The intent of these by-laws largely fell under the Victorian pretences of product control for the protection and betterment of society; however, they were often instituted more for financial reasons (Gouglas 1996). The city politicians had strong interests in the businesses on or near the market square. Thus, as Gouglas argues, it was in their best interest to promote the market at the detriment of retailers elsewhere in the city.

Whether it was due to the favourable help from the ruling elite, or the simple fact that it provided foodstuffs and other staples to a growing population, the public market was a successful enterprise. It drew many to the downtown core, cementing the area as the centre of retailing in the city. Stores vied to be among the businesses which lined the market square in order to siphon customers from the busy area.

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<sup>3</sup> For example a by-law restricted farmers from selling meat to butchers for resale on the same day (Gouglas 1996).

The surrounding streets were also impacted, notably Dundas Street, which brought both local and distant buyers and sellers to the booming market area.

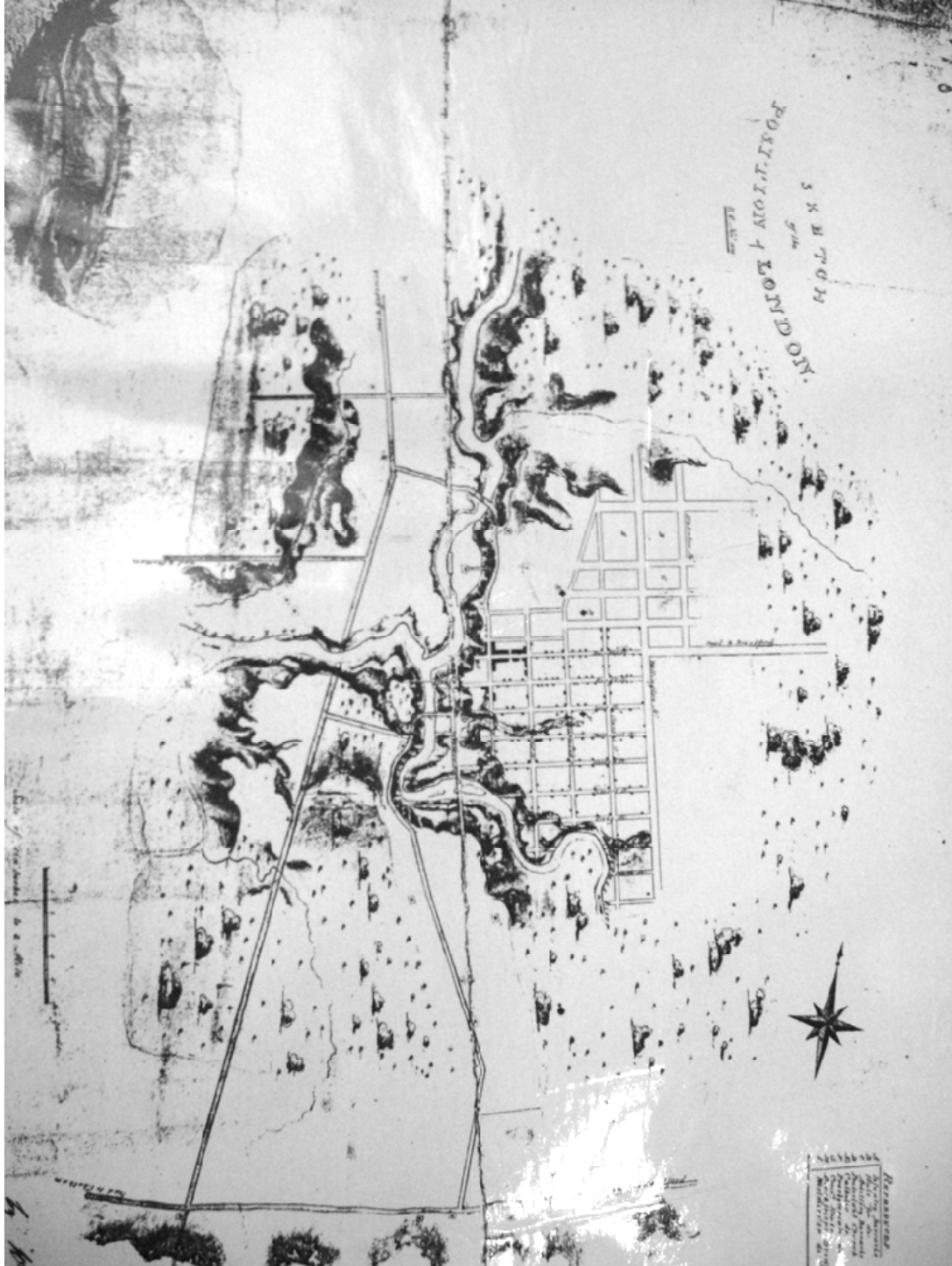
The first map to portray the village, including its buildings, was produced for the military in 1839 by William Eyre, a major in the 73<sup>Rd</sup> Regiment who was stationed in the barracks on the present-day site of Victoria Park (Figure 3.1). It shows the series of lots and buildings created by the original survey, bounded by the river to the south and west, North Street to the north and Wellington Street to the east. Across this area there was a generally even, although sparse, level of development, with two to eight structures per block. Surrounding areas outside of the village boundaries were, according to this source, undeveloped; only the roads connecting London to the east and west are represented<sup>4</sup>.

Although the map makes no reference to land-use classification, the sparsely settled lands inside the village were likely used predominantly for residential purposes. Few major industries had yet been established and the structures represented were uniformly small. The extent of the village was evenly developed at low densities except for an area centred at the intersection of Dundas and Ridout Streets (Figure 3.1). Here the map depicts a continuous stretch of buildings along the north and south sides of Dundas Street from Ridout to Talbot Streets. These buildings also wrapped around the corner to continue along the eastern side of Ridout Street. Another continuous frontage, although smaller, was present at the northwest corner of the intersection.

This area of dense development was the early roots of the city's retail landscape. Even in its primitive stages the retail sector demonstrated defining characteristics that would persist for the next 150 years throughout the era of traditional mainstreet retailing. Its built form was entirely different than other areas of the city, having a continuous streetscape of buildings whereas the rest of the city was sparsely developed. Although individual buildings are not discernable

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<sup>4</sup> The lack of surrounding farms and houses outside of the village limits on this cartographic representation does not preclude their existence.



**FIGURE 3.1** Map of the early settlement of London in 1839, showing sparse settlement throughout the area except for an already densely developed retail district in the core.  
Source: London Room – London Public Library

on the map, the blocks of development depicted were actually many individual retail shops abutting each other. The shops were built on narrow and deep lots, with no setbacks from the lot lines; maximizing the number of stores that could locate along a short frontage. Only two breaks were observed along the south side of this continuous retail streetscape, and only one to the north. A dense and varied retail core had established in the two decades since first settlement. Although the rest of the village was rural in character, the retail landscape was already exhibiting a quintessentially urban character.

### **RAILWAYS BRING INCREASED SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

The second-half of the nineteenth century witnessed vast increases in population, as well as agricultural and industrial production across the Great Lakes region (Inwood and Sullivan 1993). The population of Upper Canada rose to nearly one million by 1851, doubling in just ten years (Harris and Warkentin 1974, 118); however, roughly only 15 % of the people lived in incorporated urban areas (Smith 1982). Being the civic centre of the region, and located at the western extent of the densely settled belt of communities in Upper Canada (Harris and Warkentin 1974, 148), London underwent a sustained period of growth. London's population reached ten-thousand inhabitants in 1854 and was subsequently incorporated as a city one year later (Miller 1988, 81)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, in less than thirty years the settlement at the Forks of the Thames had grown from a small clearing in the woods into a thriving city. London was securely placed as the centre of the western district in terms of its population as well as economic importance.

By the time of incorporation as a city, London had a well-established and complex retail system. The market had expanded as London's population crossed the ten-thousand mark. The numerous other inhabitants living in the surrounding countryside and nearby towns who traveled to London to patronize its shops also added to the growing market. This growth in the market allowed for more stores offering a greater variety of goods. The strip along Dundas Street continued to be

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<sup>5</sup> Toronto, however, was three times the size of London, having a population of 30,000 in 1851. (Harris and Warkentin 1974, 152)

the focus of the city's retailing. Specialization of retailers was occurring with outlets offering millinery, cigars and produce. Goods were now available from a wide base of local manufacturers as well as imported from elsewhere in Upper Canada and even from foreign locales such as London and New York as shown in the advertisements in the local newspapers. Necessities became easier to obtain, and luxuries began to appear in store windows to tempt the passerby.

The arrival of the railroad in December of 1853 was of great importance for the continued development of London, as well as the general settlement system of Southern Ontario (Spelt 1972; Smith 1982)<sup>6</sup>. As Whebell (1969) demonstrates, development of the settlements was linear, occurring along the transportation corridors, as is seen in the communities along Dundas Street. The evolution of the settlement system is highly linked with the transportation system, and those centres which were located along the most developed corridors typically grew at increased rates over their neighbours which were away from these corridors (Whebell 1969).

Before the rail link, transport was limited to the primitive road network. Although the roads had been steadily improving since Simcoe's crews first cut the line of Dundas Street, the overland transport by horse drawn wagon or sleigh was both slow and uncomfortable (Dahms 1981). An early method of surfacing was the laying of logs next to each other in wet or muddy areas forming corduroy roads. These poor connections hampered much of the areas development. The railways advanced the economy of Upper Canada from primarily resource extraction, notable of which was farming, to one dominated by commerce and industry (Gentilcore and Wood 1978).

Trains made travel quicker and more comfortable. Rail was the preferred mode of transit for both people and goods, and travel by road actually decreased after competition by the trains arrived due to the unfavourable conditions in the buggies and sleights (Spelt 1972, 116) . The journey to Hamilton by train was reduced to six hours (Armstrong 1986, 83); slow by twenty-first century standards but a great improvement over earlier modes. In addition to the superior mobility it afforded passengers, the train also reduced the friction of movement for goods.

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<sup>6</sup> Smith (Smith 1982) States that the importance of the railway is stressed in nearly every regional history.

The arrival of trains dramatically changed the commercial functioning of the settlements. Dahms (1981) shows the major increase in the number of stores and services in the established centres of Wellington County between 1851 and 1881 as rail begins to service these communities. The boom in the retail and services in these centres serviced by the railroad contrasts sharply with the stagnation in those which did not get a rail connection. The rail system also facilitated the centralization of tailors and bakers into the larger centres in Wellington County, vacating the smaller settlements (Dahms 1981). Such specialized functions could now centralize due to the ability of customers to travel longer distances to obtain the goods. The arrival of the railway dramatically changed both the supply and demand side of the retail equation.

Whereas trade was stymied by the primitive road connections, rail afforded the potential for mass importation and exportation of goods. The weight and size of the goods became much less important factors since the trains offered far more room and power than the coaches and sleighs that plied the roads. Not only could more goods be moved more quickly and economically, but the trains also provided for safer, more reliable transport. Glassware and other fragile items could reach London without the jostling of the primitive roads.

The Great Western Railroad connected London not just to points east, but also continued to Sandwich (Windsor), thus permitting access to the west and the port on the Detroit River and the markets in between. Other rail links developed quickly with service connecting to Sarnia, Port Stanley and Toronto by the end of the decade (White 1985, 108). By 1860 the railway allowed for the entire economic system of the city to advance from an isolated local economy cut off by miles of dense bush and newly cleared farmland to an industrial centre connected to the major settlements of Upper Canada by a reliable and efficient transport system. Access to the ports further strengthened these linkages, giving access to more distant markets. Raw materials could be brought in and the finished goods exported to markets at great distances. Factories developed along the rail lines between York and Bathurst Streets. The industries provided employment and impetus for population growth. This translated into a larger market for goods, with greater demand from a larger population that had more income to be spent at the local retailers.



The increased movement of goods made possible by rail gave retailers more options with which to stock their shelves. Before the arrival of rail transport the products had to conform to the limits of the horse-drawn wagons and wintertime sleighs. They had to be durable to survive the perilous trip, and were limited by their size and weight due to the capacity of the sleighs and wagons. Not only was the movement over roads more difficult, it was also more expensive. Retailers had to charge more for their products to compensate for the transport costs. Furthermore, since travel was difficult, store owners could not quickly respond to changes in customer demand; placing orders for new stock was difficult. Rail erased these barriers, moving large quantities of goods quickly, carefully and economically. With the arrival of the trains, local retailers could secure more goods at lower transportation costs. The selection of goods expanded, and retailers could now respond quicker to their customer's demands, placing orders to the wholesalers to the east that would be quickly filled.

Rail also further integrated London with its surrounding villages and countryside (Smith 1982, 117). It brought customers into the city from further distances and with increased frequency. In the earlier period of transit via horse and buggy on the primitive roads, customers did not travel far to reach their desired stores (Dahms 1981). With the advent of railways, customers could now travel to London by rail to satiate more elaborate requests not available in his or her community. Thus the rails not only brought more goods to the retailers, but also the customers themselves.

A further implication of this integration into the larger region was the ability for London's citizens to travel beyond the city's limits. With travel time by train roughly only one-quarter that by road (six hours by train versus two days by stagecoach), London's citizens were more likely to travel to the major centres to the east once the train connection was established. By traveling to Toronto or Hamilton, Londoners would be exposed to the options available in these larger centres. They could secure the latest fashions from afar, and products not available in London's shops. Rather than limiting retail demand in London by obtaining goods elsewhere, such connections could have actually fuelled demand in the city. One would only make this trip on select occasions; however being exposed to the goods, he or she would continue to demand them while home. Those who never left would see the

goods obtained afar by others, and demand that these exotic wears become available domestically. Rail links exposed Londoners to new goods and fuelled demand for them while increasing the feasibility of their transport to the growing market.

## **ARRIVAL OF NEW PRODUCTS**

The new and the novel pervade the retail sector. By offering new products retailers can create additional demand. The fashion industry is predicated upon this technique, where styles are changed in order to encourage customers to purchase new pieces of clothing despite the ones they currently own not being worn out. Thus, the pair of pants from last season, although barely worn, is replaced by the newest styles appropriate to the year. Entirely new products may also be offered as they are developed or become available in a market.

A survey of advertisements in the local newspapers reveals these same techniques were in use in the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the advertisements announce that a new shipment of goods had arrived; often mentioning they were shipped from Montreal, New York or even more exotic European locals. An advertisement in the London Evening Advertiser on September 5, 1865 for the newly established J. Beattie & Co. proudly declares “British and Foreign Dry Goods, Millinery, Mantles, &c., & c.,” using a large typeface (Figure 3.2). The new and novel goods were shipped in from fashionable cities to the east and retailers boasted of the large distances the goods traveled<sup>7</sup>. Hats from Europe, for example, were regarded as being more fashionable than those produced locally. These lengthy journeys were made possible by improved transportation networks, notably the arrival of the railway in London, bringing goods from the ports to the east. The desirability of the good increased with the distance it traveled from producer to store shelf.

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<sup>7</sup> The inverse is true today, where locally produced goods are usually seen by the customer as more desirable and of higher quality. The trend towards locally sourced products is especially profound in the food sector in which the ‘100 mile diet’ is becoming popular amongst enthusiastic ‘locavores’ (see Smith and MacKinnon 2007)

New Wholesale and Retail

# DRY GOODS AND MILLINERY WAREHOUSE

## J. BEATTIE & Co.

### Will Open their New Store

(OPPOSITE THE MARKET LANE, OLD STAND, ON  
THURSDAY NEXT, THE 7<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER,  
WITH A SPLENDID ASSORTED STOCK OF

### BRITISH AND FOREIGN DRY GOODS, MILLINERY MANTLES, &c., &c.

Purchased personally by Mr. JOHN BEATTIE, in the various EUROPEAN MARKETS, on the most favorable terms. J. BEATTIE & Co. are prepared to offer the

### VERY NEWEST DESIGNS IN EACH DEPARTMENT

SUITABLE FOR THE COMING SEASON.

## TO THE TRADE!

*City & Country Dealers supplied with Millinery & Fancy Goods at the lowest possible advance on the sterling*

BEING THE LARGEST DEALERS IN

### FANCY DRY GOODS AND MILLINERY

In London, we are possessed of facilities which enable us at all times to offer the

Newest and Most Fashionable Articles, as they appear in the French and English Markets.

J. BEATTIE & CO., Dundas-street  
London. 1865.

**FIGURE 3.2** Advertisement for the J. Beattie dry goods store.  
Source: London Evening Advertiser, September 5 1865

The advertisement continues: “The newest designs in each department, suitable for the coming season” (Figure 3.2). Even at this early period fashion was seasonal, with styles changing frequently. The distinctiveness of goods offered by each store is often made clear in the advertisements. Also proclaimed is the exquisite taste of the store’s buyer, usually the owner of the establishment, who selected the objects in Detroit or Toronto showrooms and had them shipped back to London. In the mid-nineteenth century Toronto had emerged as the province’s main wholesaling and distribution centre (Gentilcore and Wood 1978); London did not have a large enough market for its own wholesale district, forcing the shopkeepers to look elsewhere for the fashionable goods to stock their shelves. Even at this early stage in the city’s history, style and fashion were of concern to the residents. Retailers took advantage of the desires for the new and novel to invoke sales.

“Train Arrived” announced the advertisement for A. Chisholm’s emporium, published in the *London Evening Advertiser* on March 8, 1865, “The Sale Extraordinary Commenced” (Figure 3.3). This advertisement describes a shipment of new goods to be sold at apparently bargain prices due to the securing of the goods from a commercial crisis in Montreal. Even early advertisements were persuasive and stretched the truth, much like today’s clearance and liquidation sales. The advertisement demonstrates the quantity of product that was becoming available in the burgeoning market; one store able to secure and sell several car loads of goods in just one sale.

This advertisement also indicates the relative ease by which goods could be transported by rail. One store could secure multiple freight cars of goods, taking advantage of a crisis in Montreal and bringing the goods to London. London’s retailers were connected to a large network, being able to secure goods from Montreal, Toronto, New York and even Europe. At a time when few illustrations were present in the local newspaper this advertisement features a picture of a train. It is significant that a train was used to depict the store, rather than an image of the goods that were offered. Its usage indicated to the reader and potential customer that the products offered were desirable since they came from afar.

Novel goods were not limited to the fashion industry; food retailers also introduced new products, hopefully spurring new market demands. Unlike the fashion industry, where novelty was usually a distinction in style, food retailers

**TRAIN ARRIVED.**



**THE SALE EXTRAORDINARY COMMENCED!**

EVERYBODY! COME AND SEE THE EFFECTS OF THE  
**GREAT COMMERCIAL CRISIS IN MONTREAL!**

SEVERAL DRY GOODS HOUSES FAILED.

Goods Sold at almost any Price for Cash!

**A. CHISHOLM**  
 JUST ARRIVED IN THE METROPOLIS IN TIME, AND  
 SECURED THE CHOICEST LOTS

WE ARE NOW SHOWING SEVERAL CAR LOADS OF  
**DRY GOODS AND READY-MADE CLOTHING!**

At prices which we can, without hesitation, affirm the cheapest offered in this  
 or any other city during the last few years,

**FIGURE 3.3** Advertisement for trainload sale at A. Chisholm's Dry Good emporium.  
 Source: London Evening Advertiser, March 8, 1865

could bring in entirely new products the likes of which had not been seen in London. Perishable goods could be brought to London by train before spoiling. Customers' tastes changed, demanding ever more exotic products.

A comparison of two grocery advertisements from the pre- and post-rail eras demonstrates the increase in product selection the trains brought. With rail transport grocers could offer far greater selection, importing food stuffs which were not native to the local environment. An advertisement dated October 30, 1845, but appearing in the April 17 1846 edition of "The Western Globe" for Chester Bebbe's grocery establishment mentions many different goods for sale: teas, coffee, sugars, starches and salt as well as a selection of spices and preserves; however, none of the items were fresh (Figure 3.4). Limes were available but they were preserved and ginger was ground.

Twenty years later an advertisement in the London Evening Advertiser on May 26, 1865 alerts that T. O'Callaghan's shop has fresh oranges and lemons (Figure 3.5). Also available are lobsters and salmon. Advances in the shipment of goods, notably through the arrival of trains in 1853, allowed grocers and other merchants to secure a far greater variety of goods for sale. The freshness of the oranges, which had to travel great distances, also demonstrates that not only was long-distance transportation affordable for the movement of goods, but that transport was also relatively rapid. Oranges from Florida and other perishables from distant regions could be transported the thousands of miles to London before they spoiled.

always kept on hand

**WHOLESALE AND RETAIL  
GROCERY ESTABLISHMENT,  
WINES AND LIQUORS, CROCKERIES, BOOTS, AND SHOES, &c.**

**CHESTER BEEBE,**

RESPECTFULLY to announce to his numerous friends, and the Public generally, that he is now receiving extensive additions to his former Stock, which having been furnished in the cheapest Markets, and selected with care, will enable him to compete, as regards quality and cheapness, with any Establishment in Canada West.

His Stock of **TEAS** and **TOBACCOS** is very large,—and he would particularly invite the examination of Wholesale Buyers before purchasing elsewhere, as he will sell at Hamilton and Toronto Prices.

**HIS STOCK CONSISTS IN PART OF**

<p><b>GREEN TEAS:</b> Imperial, Gunpowder, Fanny, Hyson, Young Hyson.</p> <p><b>BLACK TEAS:</b> Souchong, Oolong Souchong, Caper Souchong, and Pekoe.</p>	<p><b>COFFEES:</b> Government Java, Green do., Rio, Laguyra, and St. Domingo.</p> <p><b>SUGARS:</b> Loaf, Muscovado, Porto Rico, and Havana.</p>	<p><b>SUNDRIES:</b> Pimento, Pepper, Nutmegs, Cinnamon, Jamaica Ginger, Ground do., Pickles and Sauces, Windsor Soap, Hull &amp; Son's do., Preserved Ginger, Preserved Limes,</p>	<p><b>SUNDRIES:</b> Preserved Citron, Jar and bottled Mustard, Segars, Tobaccos, Indigo, Fig Blue, Licorice, Starch, Alum, Epsom Salts, Salt Petre, &amp;c., &amp;c.</p>
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**FRUITS.**—Raisins, Dried Currants, Shell Almonds, Soft Shell do., Pecan Nuts, &c.

HE IS ALSO RECEIVING A VERY LARGE ASSORTMENT OF

**CROCKERY AND GLASSWARE,**

At Retail, and in Original Packages, for Wholesale Buyers.

ALSO:

Boots and Shoes, Hats, Sole and Upper Leather, Paints, Oils, Glass, Putty, Cordage, Patent Pairs, Patent  
Tubs, Axes, Spades, Shovels, Brooms, Whips, Brushes, Manilla and Alicant Mats,  
Willow Baskets, Buckskin Mittens and Gloves, Cap and Wrapping Paper,  
Blue and Black Ink, &c., &c., &c.

*Dye Stuffs &c., &c., &c.*

ALL OF WHICH HE IS DETERMINED TO SELL AT A SMALL ADVANCE UPON COST

**FIGURE 3.4** Grocery advertisement shows preserved goods before the arrival of the train.  
Source: The Western Globe, April 17 1846

London, May 26, 1865. 487-1f

**STRAWBERRIES!**  
 STRAWBERRIES,  
**FIRST of THE SEASON**  
 AT  
**T. O'CALLAGHAN'S.**

**FRESH**  
**ORANGES, LEMONS,**  
*Peaches in Cans,*  
**LOBSTERS, SALMON,**  
**SARDINES.**

WE CALL PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO  
 A CONSIGNMENT OF  
**Apple Butter**  
 WHOLESALE & RETAIL.  
*Packages to Suit Purchasers,*  
 AND  
**CHEAP!**

Corner Dundas-st. & Market Lane.  
 London, May 26, 1865. 481-1f

**FIGURE 3.5** Grocery advertisement shows the availability of fresh produce exotic produce after the rail link is established.

Source: London Evening Advertiser, May 26 1865



## DISCUSSION

Retailing was present from the very first stages of settlement. Although primitive, these early stores serviced the basic needs of the early residents of London. As the city grew, so too did its retail landscape. Developing markets were quickly satiated by new retail outlets, and the expansion of others. The city's growth, however, was hindered by its isolation during its first thirty years.

The arrival of the railroad in the 1850s dramatically altered the trajectory of the city's history. Before the rail links, it was a long, difficult journey to reach London over poorly maintained roads to the larger ports to the east and west. The railroad buoyed the economy, and with it, grew the market. As Dahms (1981) shows for communities in Wellington County east of London, the communities without rail linkages saw a decline, while those with rail access quickly grew, including their retail sectors. Retailers tapped into the burgeoning markets spurred by the railroad links, satiating the growing demand with more outlets that began to sell specialized goods. The rail also brought new products to the settlement, since they could now be transported much more quickly and economically. Fresh fruits from tropical areas began to appear in the community shortly after the railroad appeared, replacing the preserved goods that were only available before.

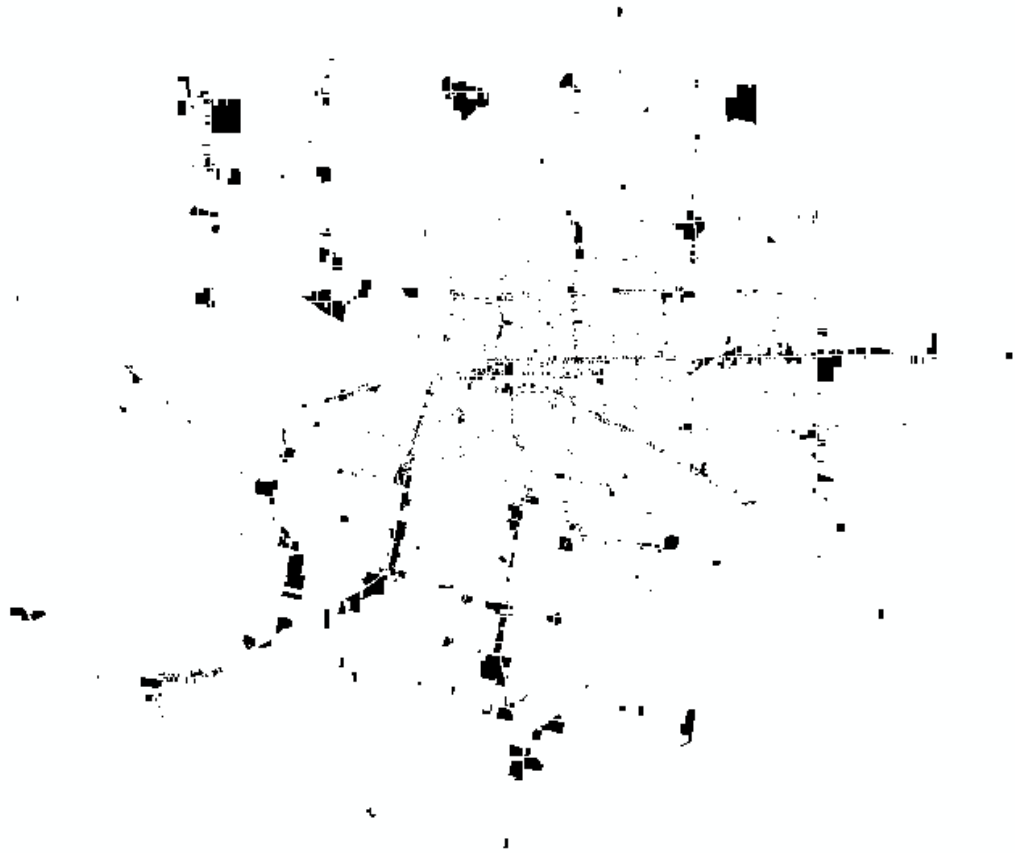
The development of the retail sector is intrinsically linked with the development of the city. As the city grew, so too did its retail sector. Within two decades of the establishment of the first general store's primitive operation there emerged a complex and dense retail district. A public market was the focal point of this retail district, bringing farmers from the surrounding hinterland to the city to sell products, using the proceeds to buy provisions at the neighbouring stores. It also drew people from across the city to the core, cementing it as the primary shopping district.

The central retail district was a quintessentially urban area while the rest of the city was sparsely settled and rural in nature. Characteristics of the modern retail landscape can be found in the dense cluster of retailing at the heart of the early settlement. Retailers chose sites that were adjacent to the courthouse and the city's main intersection, and clustering together allowed each to draw from the customers of the other. From this seed would germinate the city's retail landscape.

The businesses sought out these locations even though land was plentiful and the structure of the city was still very loose. When the Covent Garden Market was moved the local retailers pledged land to have it reinstated in the core. Rather than demonstrating their kindness, this donation shows that retailers form densely developed retail landscapes that offer a critical mass of outlets to draw customers and hence increase profits. Even in this infantile stage of development the patterns which remain to the modern day had already been crystallized.

CHAPTER 4

**RETAIL'S  
CHANGING  
FACE AND  
PLACE**



## **RETAIL STRIPS & NODES**

## CHAPTER 4

## **RETAIL'S CHANGING PLACE AND FACE IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE**

Many decisions must be made in operating a retail business. Retailers carefully select products, service levels, and brand images to match their desired market position (McGoldrick 1990). Within their marketing strategies they also make choices that are manifested in the urban landscape; sites are chosen and store environments constructed with the fundamental goal of attracting customers and spurring sales (Scott 1970; Ghosh and McLafferty 1987; Wrigley and Lowe 2002). Locations that are accessible to customers are desirable in order to draw as many people through the shop doors. Likewise, engaging environments are designed to attract the attention of potential customers and keep shoppers on site as long as possible.

Over time, retailers have had to adapt their strategies to deal with changing socio-economic conditions and to keep pace with technological innovations. As transportation technologies advanced, accessibility patterns throughout the city changed, prompting retailers to adapt their location strategies. New technology is also incorporated within the buildings. Electric lighting, expansive plate glass windows, and the accommodation of pallets and forklifts all have been used to increase sales or efficiencies. Emporia are designed and located to accommodate the lifestyles of the day, be they the daily provisioning of groceries in the era before home refrigeration, or the weekly bulk purchase of goods two-income households of the twenty-first century. Stores also incorporate the fashionable architectural styles of the era, keeping current with contemporary trends. Additionally, product selection found on the shelves reflects the changing demands of the market, as well as the availability of new commodities on the supply side.

All of these marketing decisions are not mutually exclusive. The determination of what products to sell often directs where the store should be located, and having a great location usually means less space on which to build since

competition for these areas is brisk and land-values high. Over time, the complexity of this decision making process has increased; today retailers employ advanced geospatial technology and teams of analysts to determine the best sites and hire marketing firms and employ focus groups to hone brand images (Pick 2005). Long before the techniques were highly developed, retailers implicitly demonstrated a sophisticated logic in their operations. Although they did not have the access to advanced decision making capabilities, the early retailers still undertook refined marketing strategies: from selecting their location to product offerings and display to the design of the retail spaces themselves. Even in the rudimentary stages of settlement, these series of decisions resulted in a retail landscape sharing characteristics with today's city. Throughout the evolution of the retail landscape these strategies are united by retailers' search for profit maximization.

This chapter examines the functional and spatial aspects of the retail landscape as it evolved over time. The analysis is based on the model of how retailers shape the landscape presented in the opening chapter (see Figure 1.2). The model is dynamic, with changes in any of the agents or structures rippling throughout, and eventually being manifested in the urban forms retailers create in the landscape. The landscape is read at various pivotal eras to see not only how it has changed, but the impact of such things as transportation and economics on retail practices. The chapter answers the objectives of showing how the spatial, functional and morphological characteristics of the urban retail landscape have evolved from early settlement to the contemporary era. In so doing, similarities and differences are discerned as the landscape progresses through time. Implementing the HGIS provides information about the entire retail landscape and its relationship to the city. Shifting from the macro to the micro, the HGIS permits analysis on several key areas of the city in greater detail.

The chapter begins by documenting the functional composition of retailers in each of the representative eras of development (1863, 1881, 1916, 1958 and 2004), as well as normalizing their numbers by the population in each period. Consideration is given to the implications of the advent of chain stores in the landscape. The locations of stores are then mapped in each era, showing retail's changing place in the urban fabric over time as well as to facilitate the examination of locational preferences of different store types.

With the spatial and functional composition of retailing over time documented, the chapter turns to analysing the morphology of the retail landscape using the contemporary GIS layers which document these features. The contemporary files allow for the study of the retail landscapes built at different periods, with the distance from the core used as a proxy for timing of development. Calculations show the relative proportion of retailing in comparison with the other contemporary land-uses. The location of retail sites in the contemporary landscape are shown as they snake out from the core along the major arteries. The landscape is divided into its town-plan components (streets, lots, and building block-plans), so that each may be examined and then related to each other. Scatter plots show changing lots sizes and building footprints over time. Analysing the building forms in three dimensions shows their relationship to the town-plan, as well as the available technology and the general market conditions of their era of construction.

A third component of the chapter is a case study to compare and contrast the morphologies of three landscapes representing the quintessential forms of retail development. These include a traditional downtown core, an early retail strip along Hamilton Road, and the planned shopping centres of the contemporary era as seen in the Masonville district. This reveals many differences, as well as some similarities in their land-use, town-plan, and three-dimensional building characteristics.

Analysis shifts focus from micro- thru macro-scales throughout the chapter, in order to paint a comprehensive picture of the evolution of the retail landscape. It looks at the city-wide retail landscape in each era to provide a foundation for understanding retail's place and face (composition). By looking longitudinally, the work presents new insight into the changes over time in the retail landscape and the different types of retail forms constructed in each era. Contrasting different retail forms is both valuable and novel; most previous studies look at only one retail type, for example Shields' (1989) examination of shopping malls and Jakle and Mattson's (1981) study of the retail strip. Others have looked at entire retail landscapes, but only for a point in time, missing the opportunity to document changes therein over time (Berry et al. 1963; Berry et al. 1988).

The papers in the edited collection by Benson and Shaw (1992) do address change over time, but still for only relatively short periods, and do not document

retail changes from the early settlement to the modern day. They also pertain to scattered case-studies across Canada, Britain and Germany, whereas this study looks at retailing specifically in one study to map its evolutionary trajectory. The foundation constructed in this chapter is used to support the two following chapters which examine disparate but influential retail forms in greater detail; those being the mainstreet shopping district between 1880 and 1930, and the post-World War II planned shopping centres.

## FUNCTIONAL COMPOSITION OF RETAILERS

The earliest retailers in London were general stores, selling basic items needed to survive in the isolated settlement. They sold a broad range of merchandise; however, their selection was limited and luxury goods were only sparsely available. As the city grew, so too did the offerings in its retail shops. With a larger population came the opportunity for specialization, selling a group of complimentary goods and offering greater selection. Stores began to sell more than the staples, offering some luxury goods to the local residents. By 1849 London's sixty merchants were differentiated by the type of the goods they sold<sup>1</sup>; a total of fifteen unique types of retail outlets were present (*History of the County of Middlesex, Canada* 1889, 222-223). These retailers in 1849 included: four booksellers; three druggists; fourteen dry goods stores which sold a variety of fashionable linens, cloths and ready-made clothing; only three merchants remained which were identified as selling a general array of goods.

The 1863 city directory lists 300 retailers which were grouped into 31 unique categories (Table 4.1). All of the retail types that existed in 1849 remained, to which were added fur dealers, wine merchants and tobacconists. Many of the new categories involved the sale of foodstuffs, including butchers, bakers and produce merchants. Ice merchants were also established by 1863, providing the opportunity to keep food fresh in the days before home refrigeration technology. The increasing market size and accompanying demand for new goods lead to the specialization of

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<sup>1</sup> This is the earliest mention of differentiation of retail shops. The 1844 tax assessment simply lists the stores as "Merchant Shops" with no indication of the type of goods they sold.



retail outlets. Cobblers and watchmakers established outlets to provide a wide selection of goods, often in the latest styles, in response to customers' wishes. Such products were previously obtained through non-specialized stores which had far less selection.

By 1881 there were 719 retailers listed in the Business Directory with a further 763 other listings in this section detailing service and industrial proprietors. The diversity of retail shops again increased, with eighty-eight different categories present. Many of the stores were listed in several categories, for example A. & J.G. McIntosh was listed under the clothing, carpets & oil cloths, and dry goods categories. Although there was much specialization by this time, many stores sold an array of complimentary goods. Other types, such as butchers were generally only listed under one category, selling only one type of good.

In 1916 there were 106 unique retail categories in the business directory listings, an addition of eighteen from the 1881 directory. Of the new businesses were shops selling bicycles and phonographs, new technologies which found their way on store shelves shortly after their invention, expanding the city's retail landscape. Notable additions by 1916 were outlets offering automobiles and associated supplies needed to keep them operational. In the one-half century between 1863 and 1916 there was a three-fold increase in the retail categories

**TABLE 4.1** The population of London and the number of retailers present in the city in successive eras of development.

Year	Population)	Retailers	Stores per 1000 citizens
1863	12 000	300	25.00
1881	20 000	719	35.95
1916	59 000	915	15.51
1958	102 000	1739	17.05
2004	340 000	2498	7.35

Source: City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916, 1958 and 2004.

accompanied by an even greater increase in the types and qualities of goods offered within each category. As technological advances spawned innovation, more products were offered and new types of retailers entered the landscape to sell these novel products.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of retailers that sold products other than food and apparel. In 1916 these outlets were the largest component of the retail sector while they comprised the smallest component in 1863. These stores, selling everything from tobacco to building materials to drugs, reflect the changing retail landscape of the city. Traditionally, retailing provided the necessities of life, filling stomachs and putting clothing on backs. Fashion goods would be available at the clothing stores, but their primary purpose was outfitting people for daily wear. Other goods would be obtained far less regularly and were not readily available.

The increasing size and complexity of the retail landscape continued throughout the twentieth-century. There was a three-fold increase in the number of retail categories between 1916 and 1958, reflecting an increasingly complex retail structure in the city. The 336 categories found in 1958 comprised a total of 1739 unique retail outlets. These included a wide array of products, from traditional dry goods, to duplicating machines and electronic supplies. The number of categories this year is not directly comparable to the 1916 directory, however, due to the more detailed categorization of similar products. For example there are separate categories for electric stoves, eclectic washers and electrical appliances whereas the earlier directories would have listed these as appliances. Still, the large increase in the number of categories reflects an increasingly varied retail landscape.

The 2004 city directory lists only sixty-two retail categories, a large drop from previous years. This number does not reflect fewer retail types, or an amalgamation in larger stores that sell general merchandise. Rather, it is a result of using the Standard Industrial Codes (SIC) to classify the business types whereas previous years used groupings created by the city directory company itself. The total number of retailers grew between 1958 and 2004; however the rate of growth was much lower than found in the previous eras despite a large increase in the population. There were 2498 unique listings in 2004, whereas 1739 in 1958 (Table 4.1).

Between 1863 and 1881 the number of stores per resident increased, reflecting an increase in the London market which was serviced by the addition of numerous small outlets (Table 4.1). Since peaking in 1881 at thirty-six stores per thousand citizens, the number of stores per capita has fallen to seven per thousand residents in 2004 (Table 4.1). Although the market continued to expand during this period, with increasing populations and disposable incomes as well as the draw of customers from further distances, the proportion of stores servicing the population actually decreased. This can be attributed to the average store increasing in size, selling more goods and servicing a larger segment of the market. Throughout the twentieth-century a process of store expansions was initiated, where the smaller stores were nudged out of the landscape. This process can be attributed to the economies of scale realized by the larger emporia, and the profit maximization that this tactic permits. Occurring simultaneously with the expansion of individual retailers was the appearance of increasing numbers of chain stores, outlets under common ownership with multiple branches.

### **CHAINING**

Over time the retail landscape of London was marked by a change in the ownership structure of its stores. The entire compliment of stores in the early stages of the city was independently owned; each store was unique. Chains began to appear in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At first they were locally owned, a family business expanding to include a second outlet. By the middle of the twentieth-century national chains were operating in London, accounting for increased amounts of retail activity.

There were no chains found in the 1863 city directory. Each store was independent, with no two outlets operating under the same name. There is the possibility that one proprietor owned multiple stores each under a unique name; however, this is likely a rare scenario. By 1881 there were a few chains. One example is the fancy goods stores operated by William Bryce at 168 and 215 Dundas Street. The preponderance of chains remained limited in 1916. Those that were present were locally owned; no non-local chains had appeared yet in London's retail landscape.

While there were only a few chain stores operating in London throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, familial links were present within the retail landscape. Families appear to operate outlets within one retail sector. For example, in 1916 both an S.A. and a R.W. Cambridge were grocers at 679 Adelaide Street and 154 Rectory Street respectively. Although it is difficult to confirm their familial relation the numerous cases of common names occurring in a retail category is expected to be the result of family businesses. Families would become accustomed to one segment of retailing, and would pass the expertise through their close connections. The familial connections would also provide financial and labour assistance for the successful operation of the outlet. A son starts a butcher shop after apprenticing in his father's outlet, taking the familial knowledge of the trade and likely also being financially assisted by his father.

The wide scale presence of chains began in the 1920s and 1930s. F.W. Woolworth was opening five and dime stores at the most desirable locations in cities large and small across North America (Gustaitis 1998). Woolworth's London store occupied a site along the desirable stretch of Dundas Street beside Smallman & Ingram's Department Store. Metropolitan stores were now found across the nation, on both coasts. The sixty store chain was managed out of its flagship store and head office at 136-140 Dundas Street in London. Efficiencies in buying and management of stock were realized in this large organization (London Advertiser O 27, 1933).

By 1958 numerous chains had infiltrated the retail landscape, changing the composition of the retail sector. The chains were of local as well as regional, provincial and national ownership. Chains were especially prominent in the grocery market with the presence of numerous Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P), Dominion and Loblaw's outlets. The chaining was also found in the largest department stores, which commanded large proportions of the middle to high end markets for apparel and housewares. Eaton's, the foremost national department store chain, had a store at 432 Richmond Street in 1958. It would relocate to the newly constructed Wellington Square Mall, the forerunner to the Galleria Mall, which opened in 1960. Prominently situated at the corner of Richmond and Dundas Streets, London's most successful department store Smallman & Ingram's was originally a locally-owned enterprise but was sold during World War II to the Simpson's Company of Toronto for two million dollars (Windsor Daily Star,

November 15, 1944). Many of the successful local stores were acquired by growing non-local firms. An exception is Kingsmill's Department Store; incredibly this mainstreet stalwart remains in the family today 145 years after it was opened as a dry goods outlet<sup>2</sup>.

In 2009 Canada had 2056 chains, owned by 1522 unique companies (Moody's 2010). By far the largest number of chains was found in the apparel segment which had 676 unique brands. Chains are especially important in this fashion conscious segment due to their ability to secure the latest products and predict trends through their large buying offices. The brand of the store where fashions are procured can be as important as the brand of the good itself. Many apparel stores, such as the youth-orientated American Eagle, sell exclusively private label goods. There were 342 general merchandise chains and 331 chains selling goods for the home in 2009. Only 158 chains were found in the food sector, but these included national brands such as Loblaw's, Metro and Sobey's, which collectively control large segments of the huge food market.

Today chains are found throughout the city; no district or retail segment is without at least some activity by chain operations. Of the 162 111 retail outlets in Canada in 2008, 46 329 were part of chains (Statistics Canada 2008)<sup>3</sup>. The total operating revenue of chain stores is even more telling of their predominance, incurring over \$213 billion in sales while independent outlets had only slightly more at \$240 billion. The sales garnered at the average chain outlet are significantly higher than those found at the average independent outlet.

A closely related concept to the chaining process is the operation of franchises, which are independently owned outlets but united under a common brand name. In franchises the outlets are independently owned, but part of a larger,

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<sup>2</sup> Kingsmill's is perhaps the last of the independent department stores in Canada. There are family owned department stores remaining in Quebec, for example Simon's, however, they are operated chains of outlets which have primarily vacated the traditional retail street for suburban mall locations. Others have either shuttered or been bought and rebranded into the large national chains of Sears or The Bay. Despite the difficulties that downtown London has experienced Kingsmill's continues to attract customers and has undergone two expansions over the last decade, adding a contemporary home furnishings section this year for the burgeoning downtown apartment market.

<sup>3</sup> Chain stores are "defined as an organization operating four or more outlets in the same industry class under the same legal ownership at any time during the survey year."

broadly recognizable organization. Each store, in abiding by the covenants of the franchisee agreement, maintains an appearance typical throughout all the outlets. Thus, many franchises are similar to chains, operating homogenous environments in each outlet.

Chain and franchised stores typically operate in different environments than single-outlet enterprises, dominating the planned shopping centres. Eighty-five percent of outlets in London's two largest malls, Masonville and White Oaks, are chains and many of the newest big box power centres are completely occupied by chain outlets (Monday Reports 2010). Chains are less likely to locate in traditional retail areas, where a much higher proportion of independent, locally owned outlets are found.

## **SPATIAL COMPOSITION OF RETAILING**

Accompanying the increasingly complex functional composition of the retail landscape over time, the spatial patterns of retailing became more multifarious. As the city expanded and customer mobility increased the possible locations for retail outlets grew. Advances in transportation technologies were widely responsible for these changes, notably the mass-adoption of the automobile. Traditionally the tightly-woven core was the ideal site for most outlets, and the retail landscape was imprinted by stores striving to be as near the centre as possible. The central core remains an area for retailing in the contemporary landscape; however, it has lost its former predominant status. Numerous other retail districts have emerged, mostly at the edges of the growing city.

## **NINETEENTH AND EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

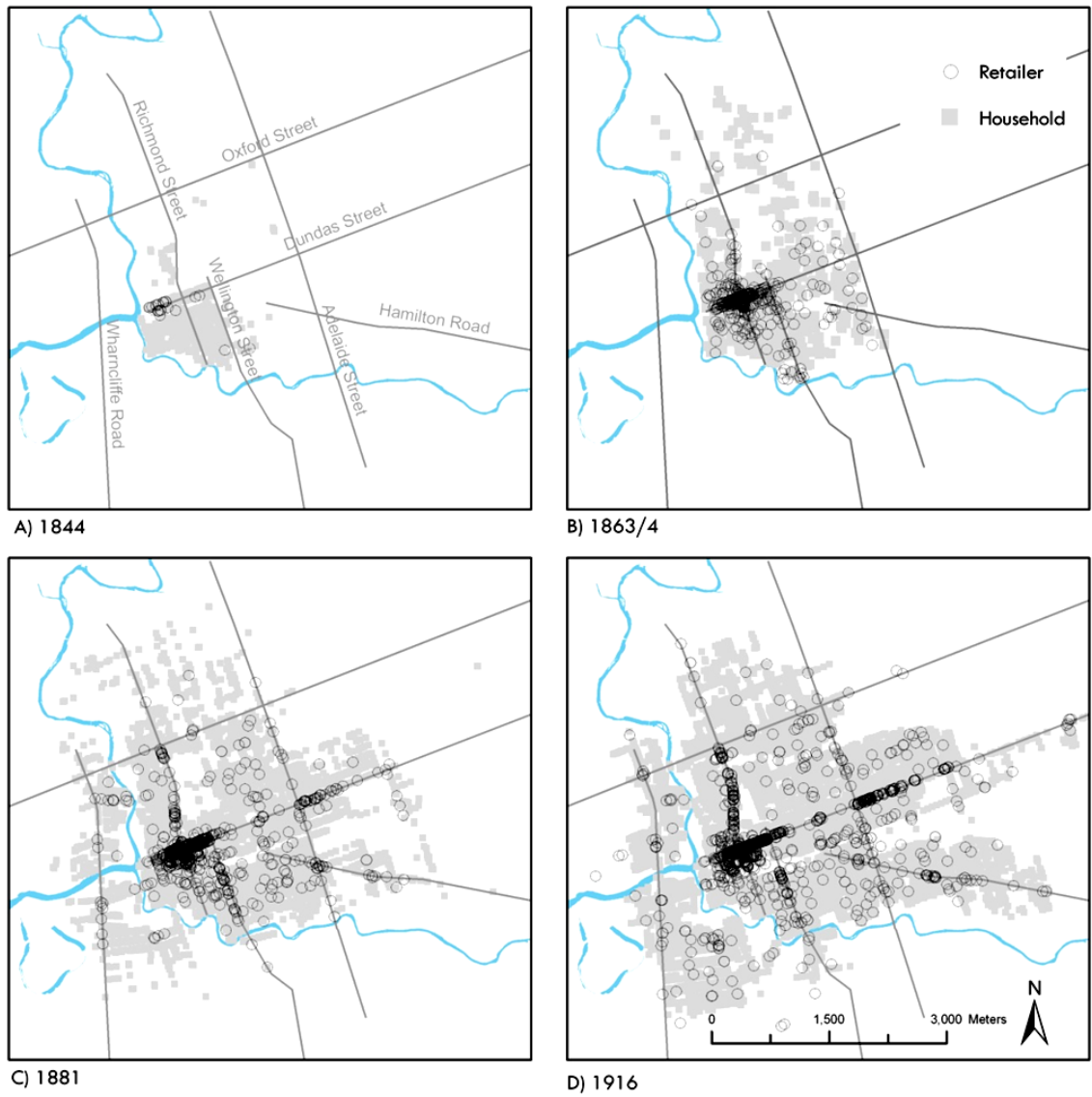
The earliest listing of land-uses and the names of their owners in London is the 1844 municipal tax assessment. It consists of 519 entries, of which 28 were recorded as 'Merchant Shops'. These shops were predominantly situated along Dundas Street, especially in the block east of Talbot Street; only four were located off the already-established mainstreet, two directly south of the cluster on King Street and a further two on Grey Street in the city's southeast quadrant (Figure 4.1a). This source corroborates the conjecture that those densely developed areas

on the 1839 map, represented as continuous stretches of buildings, were indeed occupied by retail shops.

The tight cluster of retailers along Dundas Street left large areas of the city without nearby access to retail sites. This was tempered by the fact that the city had a small spatial extent. The city's population was highly concentrated in the area to the south of Dundas Street and west of Wellington Street (Figure 4.1a). The longest distance traveled via the street network from the edges of the settlement to the Dundas Street stores is roughly 2 000 metres; a manageable distance to cover by foot taking approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes. The two merchants along Grey Street would also have serviced this area, reducing the distance traveled for many goods.

By 1863 the city's population had grown to 12 000 residents and subsequently had taken over a much greater aerial extent. Mapping the residents found in the 1863 city directory shows the city's development had spread to Adelaide Street and Oxford Street (Figure 4.1b). There were also people living north of Oxford Street, but in a very low density. Adelaide Street marked the edge of the city's political boundary as well as the settled areas; little development had yet occurred east of this demarcation in what would later become the autonomous suburb of London East.

Unfortunately, the 1863 City Directory does not include the suburbs: London East, London West and London South. These areas were sparsely settled by this time. Industry did not develop in London East until the 1870s, which subsequently drew inhabitants to the area (Lutman and Hives 1982). Similarly London West, across the Thames River from the central core, was surveyed, but did not have a substantial population at the time (Stott 2007). With only a small scattering of inhabitants, it is doubtful if these areas had any significant retail presence in the before the late 1860s.



**FIGURE 4.1** The location of retail outlets and the extent of the city in successive eras of development.

Source: Tax Assessment Abstracts 1844, City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916



Dundas Street was entrenched as the city's mainstreet, the focus of the city's retail landscape. Mapping store locations in 1863 reveals a predominant cluster of retailers along Dundas Street (Figure 4.1b), growing from the roots of the earlier retail landscape situated here since the city's first settlement. This cluster was much larger than in the previous era, expanded to reach to Wellington Street, three blocks east of its previous termination at Talbot Street. Retailers also began to locate along Richmond Street, which had seen little retail development in the previous era. Starting in the 1860s, Richmond secured the position as the second most important street in the city as measured in terms of its retail sector. A clearly delineated central business district was established, with the principal intersection shifting from Dundas and Ridout to Dundas and Richmond as the city grew eastward.

Retail growth was not limited to the downtown core. Several areas that previously had no shops were serviced by 1863. Other areas which had not even been developed in 1844, especially those north of Dundas Street, witnessed an influx of development, including many residences as well as several retail outlets. As the city grew in extent and population, retailers moved to take advantage of the expanding market. They set up shop in areas that had not been settled twenty years earlier, seeing potential to turn a profit in these growing areas.

By 1881 the city had expanded across the physical barrier of the Thames River to the South and West of downtown, creating the autonomous suburbs of London South and London West. A third suburb, the most populous of the three, was located east of Adelaide Street and referred to as London East. This area was home to many of the city's early industries, dominated by oil refining and train-car production (Lutman and Hives 1982). Dundas Street extended through the heart of this community, forming its principle retail corridor from Adelaide to Rectory Streets; few retailers located elsewhere in the community (Figure 4.1c). Dundas served as the mainstreet for London proper as well as the neighbouring community of London East.

A commercial district emerged in the community of London West along Blackfriars Street. Retailers chose this location due to its connection with the city

proper via the Blackfriars Bridge (Figure 4.1c). This vital connection filtered traffic along Blackfriars Street, resulting in more potential customers for these retailers. A second bridge was located in the southern portion of the community which connected with Dundas Street. This southern area was similarly populated to the northern area, and also connected to the city, but it lacked a retail cluster. This is likely a result of competition from the city's core retail district, which was much closer to the southern area of London West. Those living in this area would have traveled the short distance across the bridge to the city proper or to north to Blackfriars Street to procure goods.

The suburb of London South also had a small cluster of retailers by 1881, located along the Wharncliffe Highway (Figure 4.1c). Like the other retail districts in the city, retailers chose the street with the greatest connectivity to the other areas of the city as well as outlying areas, and subsequently the highest traffic volumes. The highway led south into the surrounding county and north to London West via a bridge across the Main Branch of the Thames River. Due to the small size of the settlement these retailers were exclusively grocers, supplying the most basic needs to the local residents, who would travel to the central retail district in the main city to obtain higher order goods and services. Likewise in London West, the local retailers were grocers and butchers.

By 1916 the developed area of the city had not grown appreciably despite the population having risen substantially, reaching nearly 60 000 citizens (Figure 4.1d). As such, the population density was much greater than in the previous eras. The number of stores increased to serve the expanding market. The downtown area continued to be the most desirable for many retailers, who in satiating their need for accessibility, created a densely developed retail district. The area, however, was relatively small, stretching from along Dundas Street from Ridout to Wellington Streets. Although some retailers located on Dundas Street east of Wellington, this area was not as desirable due to its relative remoteness, being over 500 metres from the peak value intersection at Richmond and Dundas Streets; a distance too far to easily stroll while browsing. Sites at the rears of the existing stores or on the upper floors were rejected, since retailing needs visibility and easy access to the sidewalk in order to attract the passerby.

Stores, especially those needing a large customer base, strove to locate at the most accessible locations along the principle streets. These lands were limited, however, and by 1881 were nearly fully developed; therefore, little growth occurred in this zone over the next thirty-five years. Retailers were forced to locate elsewhere in the urban core. Richmond Street between York and Central was home to an increasing number of stores, being the preferred location when spaces along Dundas were filled. Richmond was the principle artery for North-South traffic, connecting residential areas in both directions. It was also the location of a horse-car, and later street-car line, drawing customers into the core. Thus, retailers would locate along this heavily traversed route to catch the attention of passers-by as they approached the central core. Richmond Street remained, however, the less desirable option. As a result of lower demand, the retail emporia along Richmond Street were joined by a variety of other land-uses, notably financial firms and other office uses.

Areas outside of the core also become much better serviced by retailers, who began to locate throughout the urban fabric. Nineteen retailers were located north of Dundas Street in London East by 1916; whereas, the area had but two in 1881. Stores entered areas that were previously underserved, taking advantage of untapped markets as the population density increased.

Retailers were increasingly found along the major streets in the city. In addition to the already established Richmond and Dundas Street corridors, retail strips began to appear along Adelaide Street, Wellington Street, Oxford Street, Wharncliffe Highway and Hamilton Road. Of the 1117 retailers listed in the 1916 business directory, 722 or 65 percent were located along these seven streets. Intersections were especially favoured sites, due to their increased accessibility and visibility. In all areas of the city, retailers chose the principle arteries over the side streets for their locations.

Based upon the type of goods sold, retailers chose different location strategies. Those selling comparison goods such as clothing and jewellery favoured the crowds of the downtown core, and could pay for these desirable sites while those selling convenience goods were more dispersed throughout the urban fabric. These

patterns became increasingly cemented over time (Figure 4.3)<sup>4</sup>. Although the number of food retailers in the city greatly increased between 1863 and 1916, the number found in the central retail district peaked in 1881, and had shrunk dramatically by 1916 (Figure 4.3). This area garnered the highest land-rents in the city, which food retailers typically could not afford. They were replaced by higher-order apparel shops, as well as hardware stores, and book stores, all of which had higher profit margins. Furthermore, as the city expanded more people lived at increasing distances from the core. This growing market demanded foodstuffs that within short distances of their homes. Grocers, butchers and other food merchants vacated the expensive lands along Dundas and Richmond Streets in order to be closer to their customers outside of the downtown who wished to obtain food staples without traveling far from home.

The number of stores selling dry goods, mantles, and shoes, among other purveyors of fashion goods, nearly doubled between 1863 and 1916 in the central retail district (Figure 4.3). Elsewhere in the core their numbers were flat during this period. Fashion outlets began to appear in the periphery of the city between 1863 and 1881 and by 1915 there were a sizeable number of fashion stores in the periphery; however, there were far more food stores in these areas. Still, the central retail district contained double the number of fashion purveyors than found in all other areas of the city combined in 1916. Mainstreet was increasingly becoming the fashion district of the city.

The locational patterns of the different retail types are examined in greater depth by locating butchers and dry goods stores in each period. These two retailers occupy different ends of the retail spectrum; dry goods dispensing the latest fashions which require much comparison and browsing, while butchers compete little for their customers since the product is generally the same and purchased frequently in shops close to the customers' homes. By 1863 the spatial structure of the two types was engrained in the landscape, each demonstrating distinctive location preferences

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<sup>4</sup> Three areas were delineated: The central retail district which was the stretches along Dundas from Ridout to Wellington and Richmond Street from York to Carling; the urban core area bounded by the river to the south and west, Adelaide Street to the east and Oxford Street to the north but excluding the Mainstreet corridor; the urban periphery all remaining areas outside of the core (Figure 4.2).

that would remain through 1916 (Figure 4.4). Butchers were widely dispersed throughout the residential areas of the city whereas dry goods retailers primarily located in the downtown retail district.

In 1863 butchers located throughout the residential districts primarily to the southeast of the core; none were located in the core<sup>5</sup> (Figure 4.4). People patronized their local butcher to procure meats which were obtained regularly in the era when home refrigeration was primitive and unreliable. The product was homogeneous between butchers, requiring little comparison shopping for quality or price. Dry goods stores show a diametrically opposite locational pattern. In 1863 all of the dry goods retailers were located in a tight concentration along Dundas Street (Figure 4.4). This cluster results from the nature of the dry goods business, which relies on a large number of customers who browse the offerings and only purchasing when the style meets their wishes. High profit margins are necessary in the selling of clothing and fabrics to cover the expenses of maintaining large stock, as well as to pay for the elaborately finished stores and the high level of service required. The cluster of stores allows the customers to browse several outlets in short succession in order to find his or her preferred fashions, creating a critical mass of outlets which drew significant crowds. The clustering of these outlets lead to their mutual success despite the intense competition exhibited between stores for sales.

Over time these patterns remained relatively constant. As population growth expanded the city, especially to the north and east, butchers moved to service these new markets (Figure 4.4). Throughout the period between 1863 and 1916 butchers were excluded from the core area, except for the market building; mainstreet locations were dominated by fashion outlets. The cluster of dry goods retailers remained at the prime location of the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets; however, the central retail district was no longer the exclusive location for fashion retailers. In 1881 two dry goods stores were located along Dundas Street just east of Adelaide Street. This marks the establishment of a secondary retail district serving the community of London East. As growth occurred, this new district saw increasing numbers of dry goods and other retail stores.

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<sup>5</sup> Butchers were located in the Covent Garden Market serving the core area, however, they were not individually listed in the City Directory.

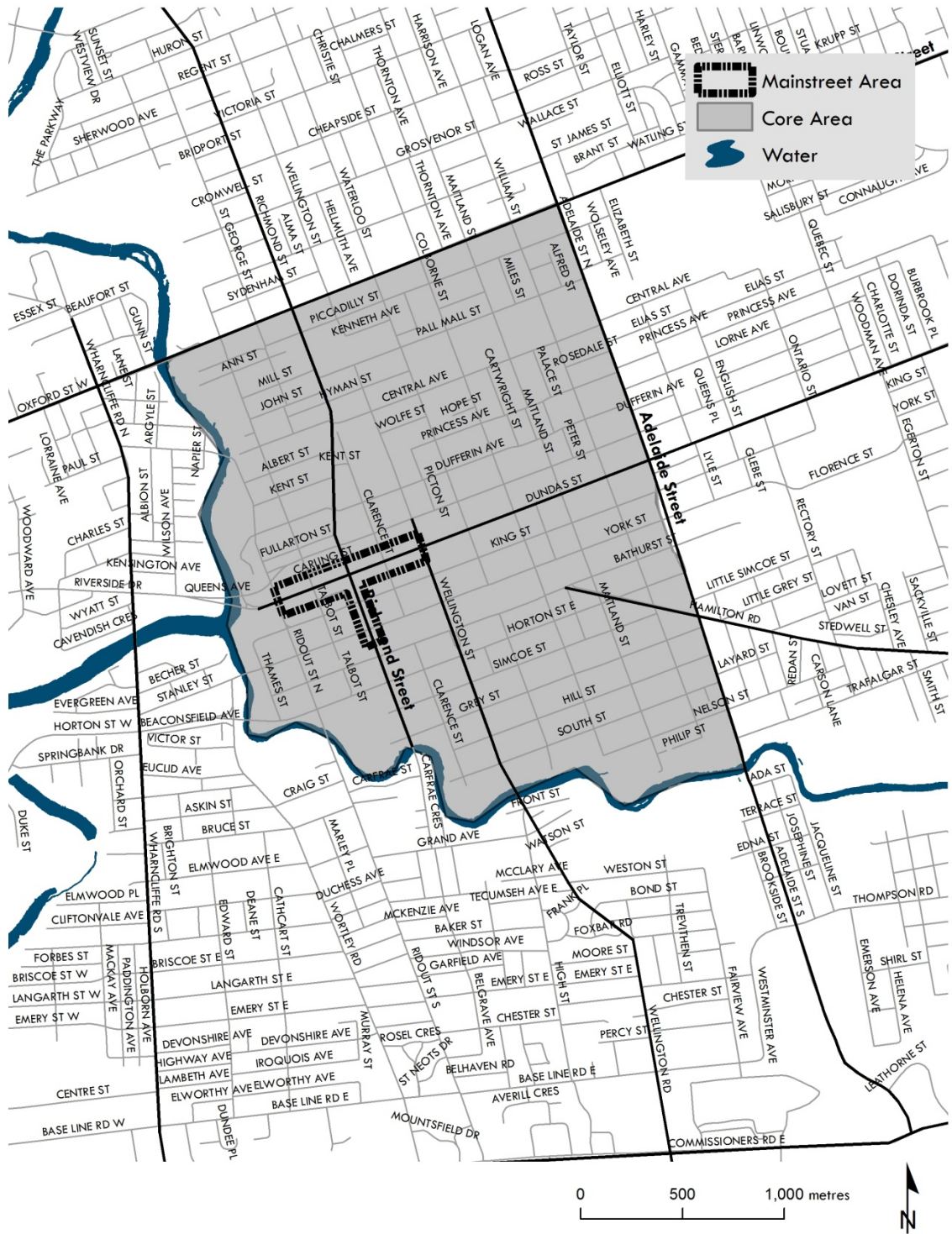
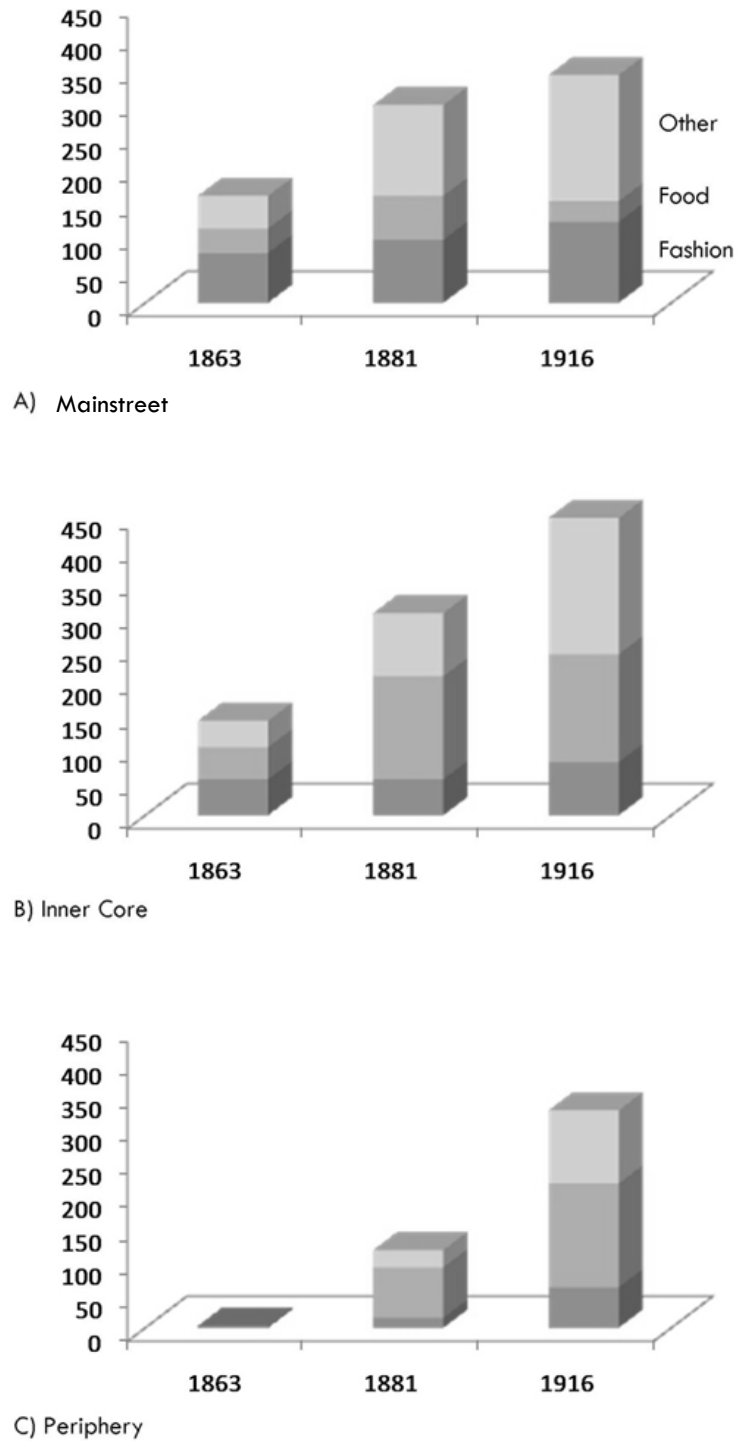


FIGURE 4.2 The boundaries of the mainstreet and inner core districts.



**FIGURE 4.3** The quantity of food, fashion and all other retailers in three areas of the city in 1863, 1881 and 1916.

Sources: City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916



A) 1863/4



B) 1881



C) 1916

**FIGURE 4.4** Butchers disperse throughout the city as it grows between 1863 and 1916. Dry goods retailers located only along Dundas Street in the core in 1864. In 1881 two are found in a new retail area to the east of the core, and by 1916 were located in each sector of the city. Sources: City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916

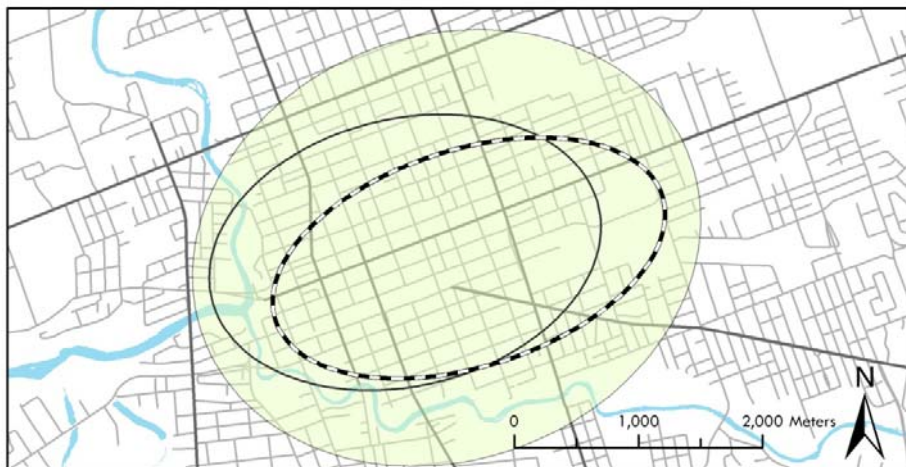




A) 1863/4



B) 1881



C) 1916

**FIGURE 4.5** Directional ellipses indicate the locations of butchers, dry good stores and the total residents of the city within one standard deviation of the mean centre of each feature.  
Sources: City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916

By 1916 dry goods retailers were also found in areas previously evaded by the outlets, locating along some of the major arteries throughout the residential areas (Figure 4.4c). These stores were likely smaller enterprises than those found in the retail core, unable to afford the high land rents there. Rather than relying on comparison browsing between stores and a large customer base to pay the high rents in the core, these stores would have catered to the more elementary needs of local inhabitants, offering more utilitarian goods with less flair and fashion. Although the city centre remained the primary shopping district for fashion goods, increasing numbers of stores were found in emerging retail strips outside of the core.

Spatial statistics numerically and visually describe changes to the degree of clustering over time. Standard deviational ellipses were created using points representing addresses of the butchers and dry goods stores, as well as the points representing the locations of households (Figure 4.5)<sup>6</sup>. The size of the ellipses indicates the degree of clustering, the smaller the ellipse the more clustered the outlets. The ellipse representing dry goods was much smaller than that of the butchers in both 1863 and 1881 indicating the greater degree of clustering in this type. Between 1881 and 1915 dry goods outlets experiences a significant degree of decentralization as demonstrated by the increasing size of their representative ellipse. The primary axis of this ellipse runs along Dundas Street relating to the large number of retail outlets located along this segment. Also of note is the relationship between the ellipses for the butchers and the general population. Over time the ellipses of population shifted as northern and eastern areas were developed. The orientation of the ellipse for the butchers follows these changes, reflecting the inclusion of butcher shops in the new areas to satisfy these markets.

## **POST-WAR ERA**

Following World War II retailers became increasingly decentralized. Although the downtown core remained the primary shopping district of the city in

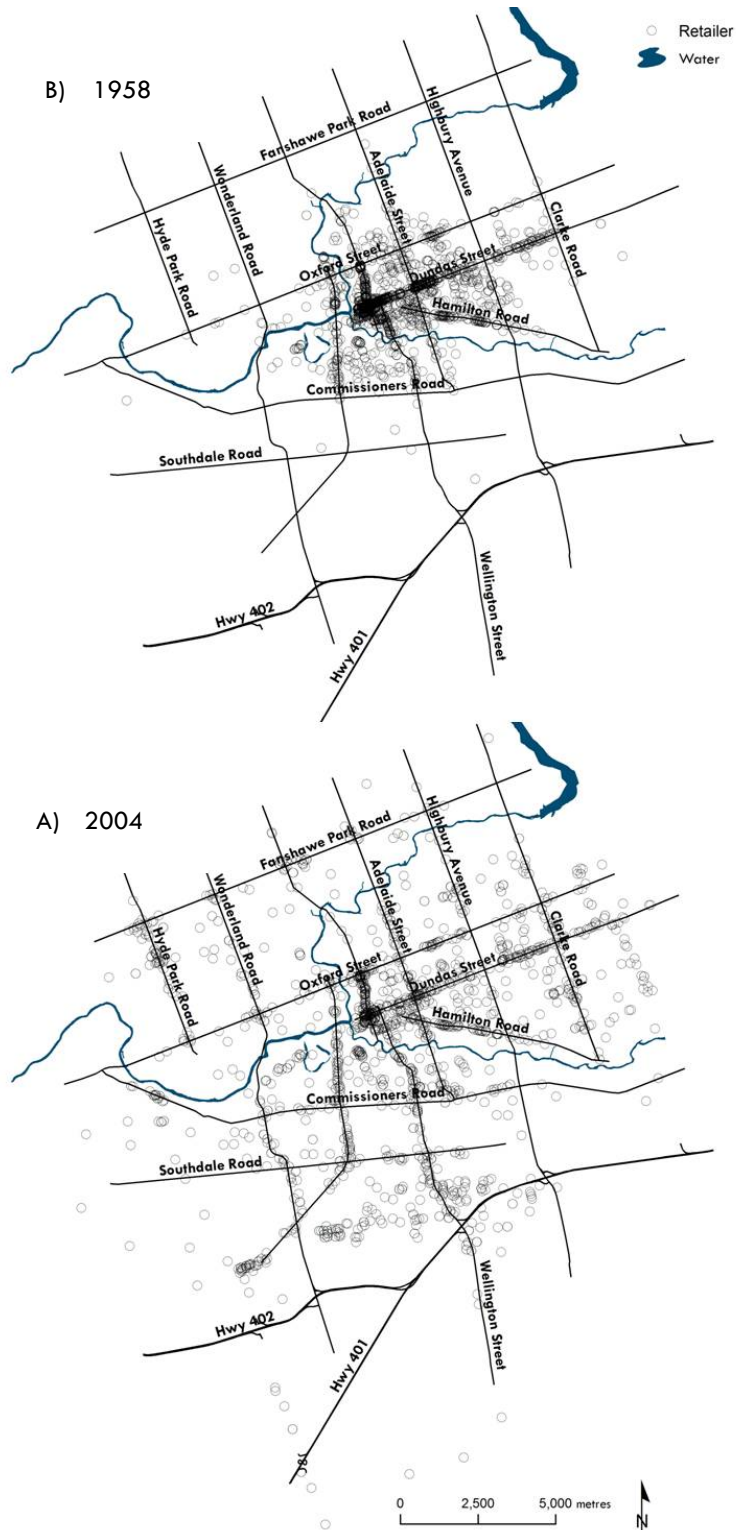
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<sup>6</sup> Each axis of the ellipse represents all of the x or y-coordinates within one standard deviation of the mean feature. The primary (longer) axis marks the horizontal or vertical coordinates with the most deviation.

1958, it was met with increasing competition from outlying areas (Figure 4.6a). Retailers continued to locate throughout the developed area of the city in this period. Retail strips stretched outward from the core along Hamilton and Wharncliffe Roads and Richmond and Wellington Streets. This was also the early stages of shopping centre development, which would pull numerous retailers to the urban fringes, in large, highly-planned developments accessed by the automobile.

Location patterns of contemporary retailers show the greatest complexity of any period. Whereas previously the central core was the main shopping district, in 2004 there were multiple retail centres and strips (Figure 4.6b). The core's dominance in retailing has been eroded by competition from shopping districts scattered throughout the extent of the city. Retail has become decentralized, woven throughout the urban fabric. It is, however, more evenly dispersed throughout the traditional areas of the city, those developed before 1960; newer districts see retailers primarily located on the large arterial roads and large gaps of underserviced, residential areas exist. Retail strips have been developed not just on arteries leaving the core of the city, but also on the cross-town roads. Oxford Street, Southdale Road and Fanshawe Park Road all have developed retail sectors.

New format shopping centres at the urban fringes produce high volumes of sales, attract numerous customers and absorb a significant portion of the market in the North American city. These retail centres form nodes of shopping usually at the intersections of the city's major streets. As will be discussed in chapter five, they are a dramatically different retail landscape; however, they do share a common logic with traditional retail areas due to their carefully designed environments for increasing sales and maximizing profits.



**FIGURE 4.6** The location of retail outlets in A) 1958 and B) 2004  
 Sources: City Directories 1958, 2004

In 1958 most of the city's notable comparison good shops remained in the core. The new retail areas that were emerging did contain some fashion goods outlets, but they were primarily servicing the convenience goods market. By 2004 much of the comparison shopping was being conducted outside of the core, usually in the planned shopping centres. The regional malls became the centres for high fashion shopping; they also provided public spaces in which people could leisurely shop. The retailers which replaced the traditional high-fashion outlets in the core moved decidedly down-market, offering discount and used goods. These core outlets were also filled by niche goods, such as antique and collectible stores.

### CHANGING LOCATIONS OVER THE LAST TWO CENTURIES

Over the last two centuries the proportion of retailing occurring in the downtown has diminished substantially. In 1863 more than half of all retail outlets were located along the mainstreet corridors of Richmond and Dundas Streets; today this area houses only 3 percent of the retail outlets (Table 4.2). In 1844 nearly all of the city's twenty-eight retail outlets were located along Dundas Street. The number of retailers in this district kept rising until 1958, peaking at 250. The gains seen in the district until the mid-twentieth century were modest, however, due to the district being nearly completely developed by the 1880s. Those retailers that wished to locate here were squeezed into what spaces were available.

**Table 4.2** The number and percentage of retailers in each era by district.

Year	Total No. of Retailers	Mainstreet Retailers	Core Retailers	Periphery Retailers
1844	28	24 (86%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)
1863	300	155 (52%)	142 (47%)	3 (1%)
1881	619	222 (36%)	281 (45%)	116 (19%)
1916	915	235 (26%)	393 (43%)	287 (31%)
1958	1739	250 (14%)	595 (34%)	894 (51%)
2004	2498	70 (3%)	332 (13%)	2096 (84%)

Sources: Tax Assessment Abstracts 1844; City Directories 1863, 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004

Mainstreet has lost two-thirds of its retail stores, having just seventy in 2004. It has become a secondary retail district at best, and is dwarfed by the retail activities occurring at the large shopping centres. Mainstreet is plagued by vacancies. Whereas at one time it was only the most profitable stores which could afford the high rents along mainstreet, today the landlords offer exceptionally low rents in order to secure any leases. The quality of the stores and their offerings in this area has diminished, attracting those which cannot afford the high rents elsewhere in the city.

Similar trends are seen in the number and proportion of retailers locating in the traditional core area of the city. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this area was the location for roughly half of all retail outlets in the city; in 2004 it contained only 13 percent (Table 4.2). With locations along mainstreet being nearly completely occupied, retailers were forced to locate elsewhere in the core when proximity to the peak value intersection was desired. This explains the increases to the number of retailers found in the core and the relative stability in their proportion of the entire retail landscape until the mid-twentieth century. As centrally located sites became less desirable the number of core area retailers has fallen. Today, the core contains only half the number of retailers found there in 1958.

The declines seen in the number of city centre retailers over the last fifty years, and the even more significant decline in the area's relative importance in the retail landscape, have been a direct result of the increasing prevalence of retailing at the urban periphery. During each successive era of development there has been increasing numbers of retailers locating outside the traditional core of the city (Table 4.2). In the early city virtually no retailers were located outside of the city limits, owing to the sparse development of these areas. As the city expanded more and more retailers moved to the urban periphery. By 1881 this area already accounted for one in five retail locations in the city; however, it was still a relatively minor component of the total retail landscape, servicing mostly pedestrian needs of the expanding residential areas.

It wasn't until after the Second World War that the retailing at the periphery became a significant component of the urban retail landscape. By 1958 over half of the retail outlets in the city were located here (Table 4.2). Today the areas outside of

the traditional core, bounded by The Thames River to the west and south, Adelaide Street to the east and Oxford Street to the north, account for by far the largest segment of the retail landscape. Although financial figures are unavailable, this area not only contains the vast majority of retailers, but also accounts for most of the market. Masonville and White Oaks Malls each have sales figures in the hundreds of millions of dollars (Monday Reports 2010). These malls, and the other planned shopping centres now account for much of the retail market, while the traditional areas of the city are left with only a small fraction; their one-time dominance being eroded by the success of automobile dominated retailing permeating throughout the newer areas of the city.

The locations of the bakers, jewellers, department stores and shoe stores illustrate the decentralization trends. These retail types were mapped for the years 1881, 1916, 1958 and 2004, showing the movement out from the core of these four types (Figure 4.7-4.10)<sup>7</sup>. As in the previous examination of butchers and dry goods stores in the central area of the city, standard deviational ellipses were created for to show the degree of clustering and any directional trends.

Although their timing and degree of spread differ, all show marked decentralization over the 123 year period. Bakeries were initially the least clustered of the four retail types (Figure 4.7). They scattered throughout the developed areas of the city in 1881 and 1916, but by 1958 were not found in the newer suburbs, but rather remaining in the traditional city. This trend continues in 2004, with few bakeries in the suburban areas. This is likely due to the inclusion of in-store bakeries in the numerous supermarkets which service the areas built after 1950, whereas the inner core has not seen the large supermarkets and has kept its neighbourhood bakeries.

Department stores show the most dramatic decentralization (Figure 4.8). London had no department stores in 1881, but by 1916 there were stores in both the core and East London which persisted through 1958. No department stores were found elsewhere in the city during this period. In 2004 London had numerous

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<sup>7</sup> There are fewer shoe stores in 1916 than in 1881 since the 1881 directory groups shoemakers with shoe sellers, while the 1916 directory separates these two types.

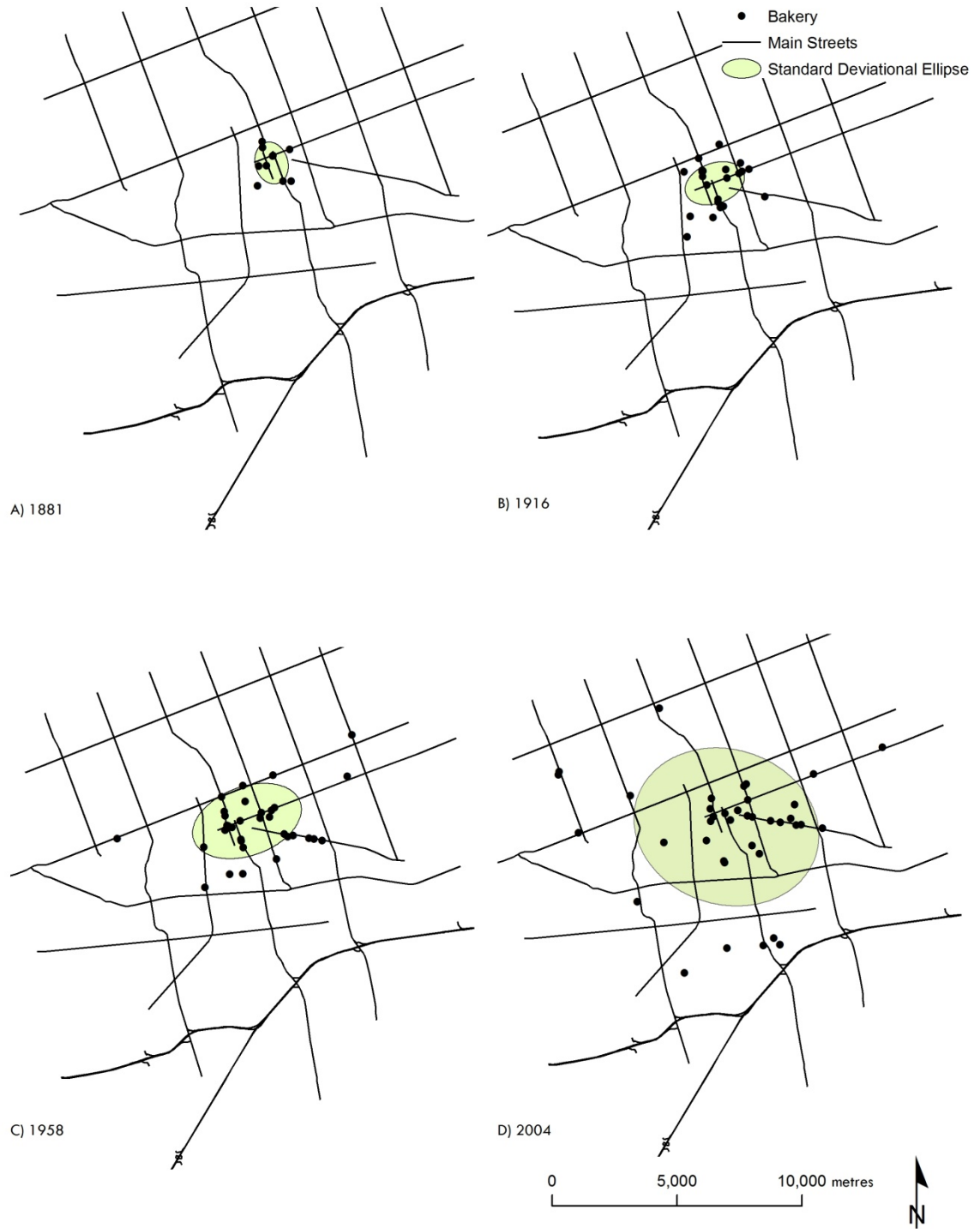
department stores scattered throughout its area<sup>8</sup>. The ellipses for 1916 and 1958 are very narrow, hugging Dundas Street where the stores were located. By 2004 the ellipse had expanded by three orders of magnitude, indicating the massive decentralization.

Shoe stores and jewellers show nearly identical spatial patterns over time (Figures 4.9 & 4.10). Both types were clustered in the core, mostly along Dundas Street in 1881. By 1916 stores had opened in East London. In 1958 most stores were still located in either the core or East London; however, a few had begun to line the major arteries. In 2004 both types had spread to more distant points, and few remained in the core or London East. The directional ellipses also become much larger, and have a north/south orientation due to the major shopping centres at both poles of the city where many of the stores have relocated.

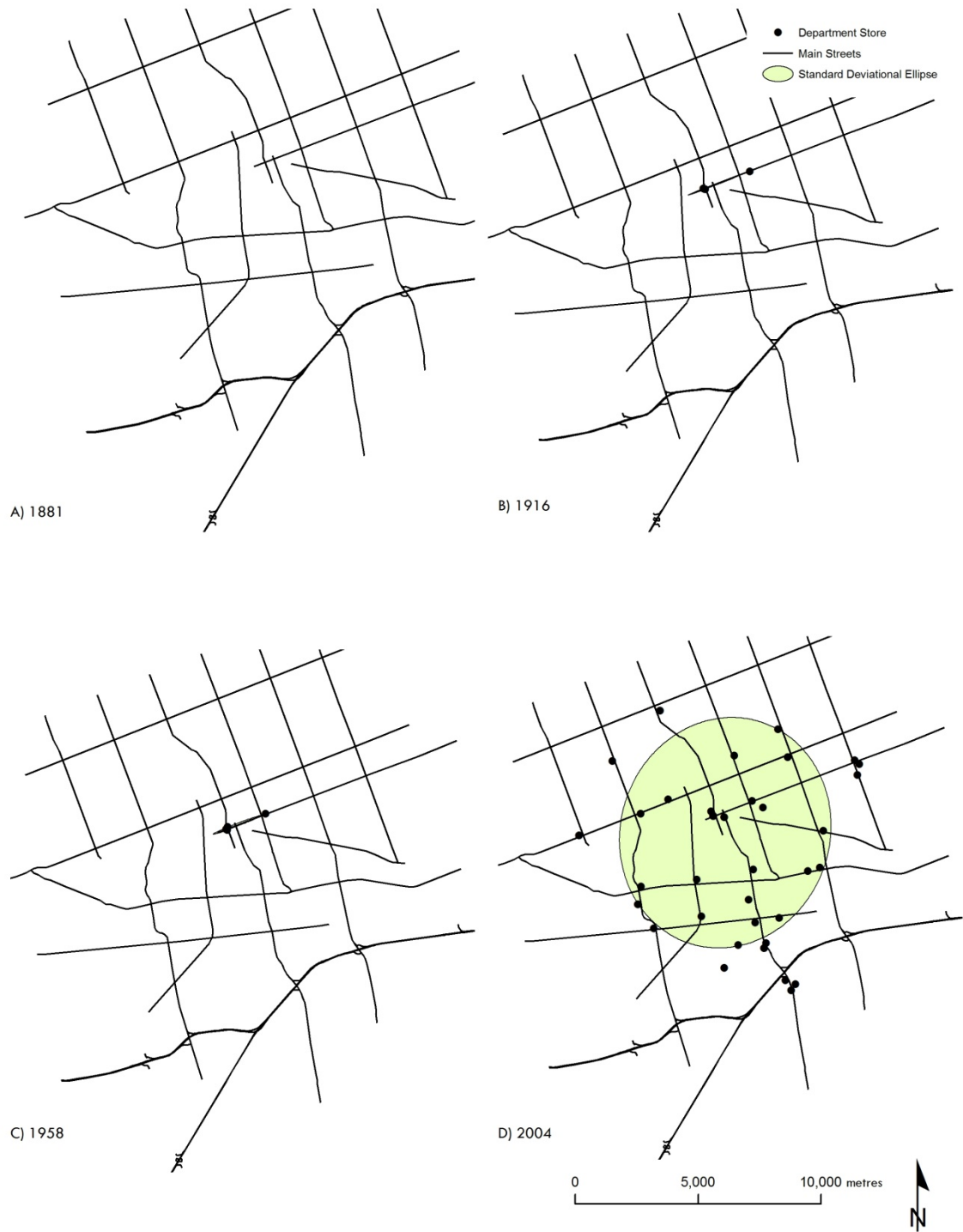
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<sup>8</sup> Many of the department stores found in 2004 would be classified as junior department or discount stores, such as the prolific 'dollar stores'. These outlets differ from the traditional grand emporia found in the core.

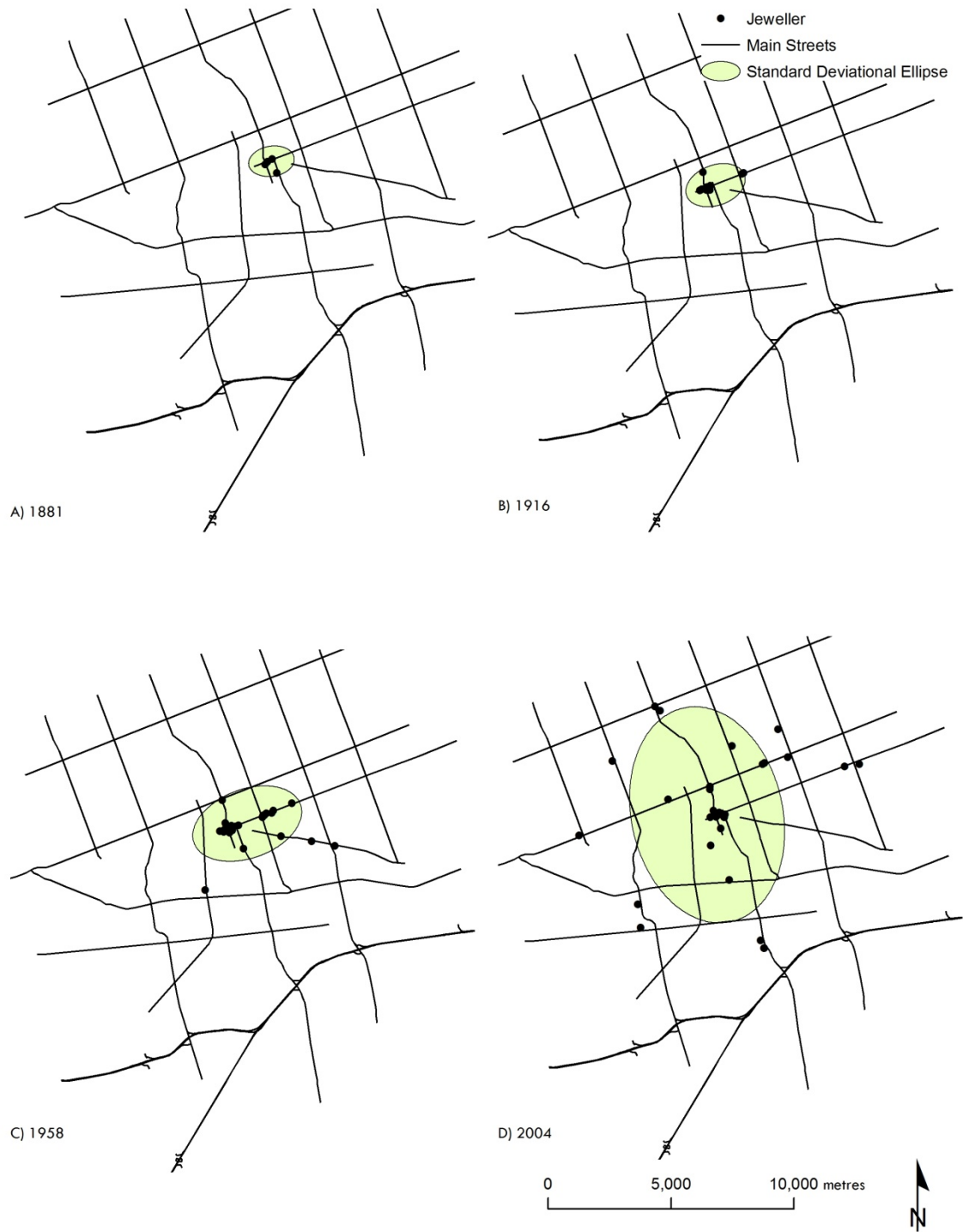




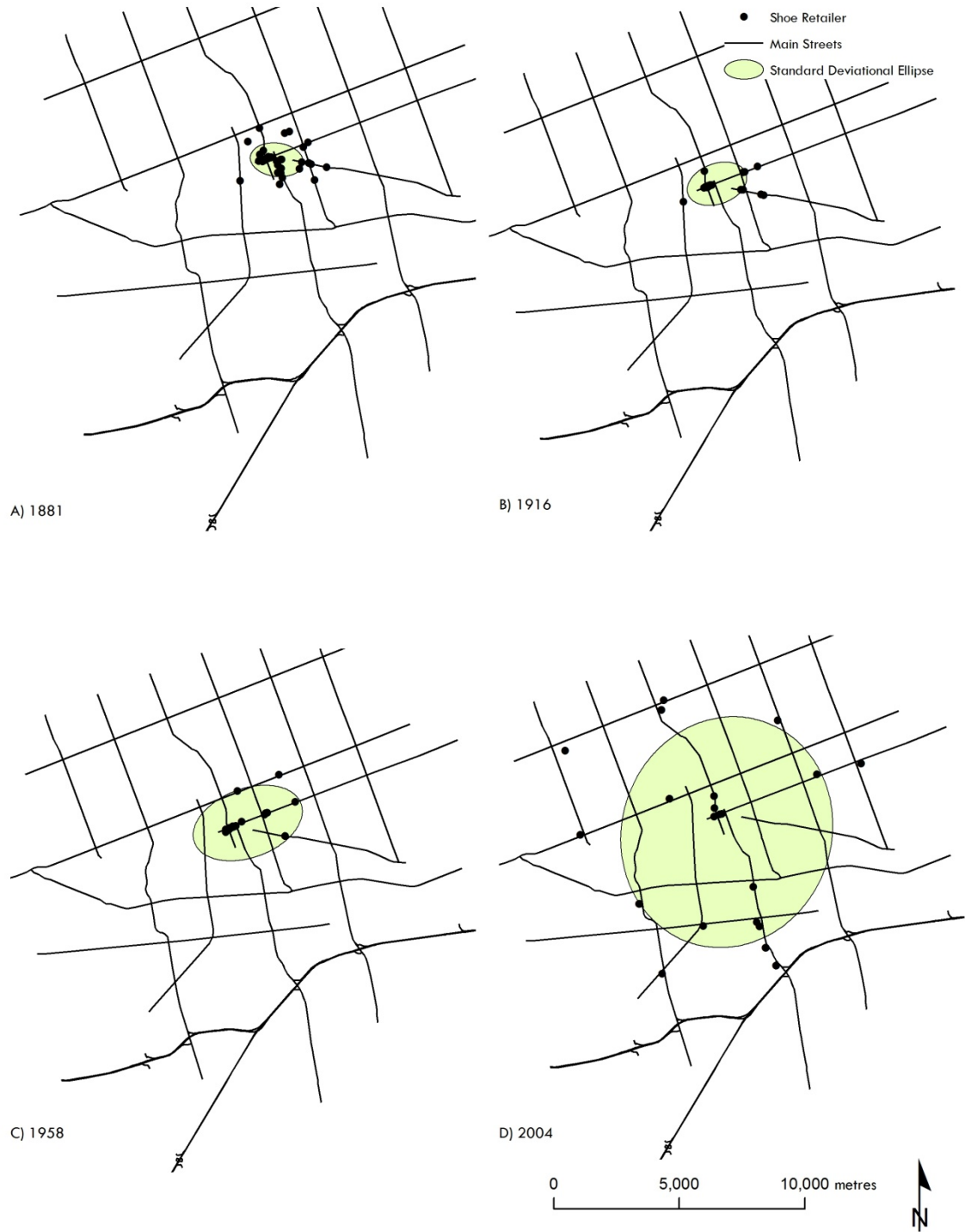
**FIGURE 4.7** The location of bakeries in A) 1881 B) 1916 C) 1958 and D) 2004. Standard deviational ellipses created from their point locations are also shown.  
 Sources: City Directories 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004



**FIGURE 4.8** The location of department stores in A) 1881 B) 1916 C) 1958 and D) 2004. Standard deviation ellipses created from their point locations are also shown.  
 Sources: City Directories 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004



**FIGURE 4.9** The location of jewellers in A) 1881 B) 1916 C) 1958 and D) 2004. Standard deviation ellipses created from their point locations are also shown. Sources: City Directories 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004



**FIGURE 4.10** The location of shoe stores in A) 1881 B) 1916 C) 1958 and D) 2004. Standard deviational ellipses created from their point locations are also shown.  
 Sources: City Directories 1881, 1916, 1958, 2004

## MORPHOLOGY OF RETAILING

Analysis shows that the locational patterns of retailers have dramatically change over the course of the city's history. The next part of this chapter will examine the morphology of the retail landscape, demonstrating how the built forms and their uses have changed over time. The landscape is adapted to suit contemporary socio-economic conditions and advances in technology. By comparing areas that were constructed in different eras it is possible to document how these changing conditions of the market have altered the retail landscape.

## LAND-USES

The total number of lots and structures under each land-use category, and their total and average areas are calculated to reveal the composition of the urban landscape and the proportion of retailing. These calculations are based on 2004 data used for municipal assessment purposes which classified the land-uses of each parcel within the city<sup>9</sup>.

In contemporary London the largest land-use type is Agricultural, nearly equalling all other land-uses combined (Table 4.3). This is not to say that farmland is scattered throughout the developed area of the city; rather, it is located nearly exclusively on the fringes of the city, especially the large areas south of Highway 401 that were annexed in 1993. These lands remain as farmland, but were annexed to help control future growth (Keating and Mehrhoff 1992).

Residential lands are the most abundant of the land-use types within the urbanized area of London, that is, the area excluding the large agricultural districts. There were 84 075 residential parcels, and 106 437 residential structures within the city in 2004. The residential land-uses greatly exceed all other types; their area roughly equals all other land-uses combined. The number of residential structures is over 20 times that of the next largest component, commercial land-uses.

Although there were only 2863 commercial parcels in 2004, each parcel was significantly larger than the residential lots (Table 4.3). The average size of a

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<sup>9</sup> This is the most up-to-date information available for land-uses; the proportions are expected to not be significantly different for today (2010).

commercial building was also much larger than a residential structure at 689 square meters, yet smaller than industrial and institutional buildings.

There were 1549 retail parcels in London in 2004 representing 1.67 percent of all the parcels in the city (Table 4.3). The total area taken up by retail parcels was 2.22 percent; however, when not including the rural agricultural lands retail accounted for 4.03 percent of the land area of the urbanized city. The average retail structure in 2004 was much larger than the industrial and institutional land-uses, at 776 square meters compared to 1397 and 1120 square meters respectively (Table 4.3). In total there were 2185 retail structures in the city, their area representing 7.41 percent of the total area of all buildings in the city.

These statistics indicate that retail land-uses, and commercial in general, make up only a small proportion of the city's land area and building stock. Residential land-uses are far more dominant in the city. That is not to say that retail lands should be looked at as unimportant. They are, in fact, vitally important components of the urban social, economic and built landscapes. Although their numbers are limited, they typically locate in the most heavily used and visible areas of the city. Retail strips line the major arteries of the city and clusters of retailers are found at intersections. They also form a vital component of the downtown core, the city's heart.

**TABLE 4.3** Quantities, total areas and average areas of parcels and structures in London in 2004 grouped by land-use type.

Land-use	Parcels			Buildings		
	No.	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Average Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	No.	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Average Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Agricultural	891	183480279.5	205926.2	2441	460650.5	188.7
Commercial	2863	16962976.8	5924.9	3438	2368101.0	688.8
-Retail	1549	8426236.3	5439.8	2185	1695464.6	776.0
Industrial	1741	41765005.7	23989.1	2276	3180306.0	1397.3
Institutional	487	13533477.3	27789.5	1268	1419638.4	1119.6
Recreational	757	28002047.1	36990.8	540	167494.5	310.2
	8407				15103437.	
Residential	5	92412439.3	1099.2	106437	3	141.9
No Data	1942	3238295.5	1667.5	547	193296.1	354.4

**Source:** City of London Planning Department 2004

## **TOWN-PLAN**

The prominence of retail land-uses becomes apparent when retail sites are presented on a map with the major arteries in the city (Figure 4.11). One-thousand one hundred and eighty five retail parcels, or 76.5 percent of the all the retail parcels in the city are located along the city's principle arteries (Fanshawe Park Road, Oxford Street, Dundas Street, Commissioners Road and Southdale Road running in the east/west direction, and Hyde Park Road, Wonderland Road, Wharncliffe Road, Richmond Street, Wellington Street, Hamilton Road, Highbury Avenue and Clarke Road in the north/south direction). This map (Figure 4.11) reveals the preference for retailers to locate along major arteries, forming retail strips. Many of these strips, such as Richmond, Dundas and Wellington Streets and Wharncliffe and Hamilton Roads, lead out from the downtown like tentacles. High concentration of shopping outlets occurs at the crossing of two major arteries (Figure 4.11). These intersections are desirable since they are more accessible sites, thus providing more potential customers.

The locations of retailers along major routes in the city is also a result of land-use zoning instituted by the planning department and written into the city's Official Plan (City of London 2006). Lands along the corridors are often zoned for retail purposes, thus excluding other land-uses. The city plan encourages the development of the arterial strips, as well as several nodes that are seen such as at Hyde Park (City of London 2006).

Another large concentration of retail sites occurs in the downtown core (Figure 4.11). These parcels are smaller than those located at the periphery. The general core of the city, bounded by the river to the south and west, Oxford Street to the north and Adelaide Street to the west has many retail sites scattered across its area. This differs from most other areas in the city, where retailers are generally located exclusively along the major arteries. Retail land-uses are found throughout the older districts, interspersed in with the other land-uses. This pattern is a remnant of the time when retailers were striving to be as close to the city centre as possible, locating throughout the urban core once the desirable mainstreet locations were fully developed.





**FIGURE 4.11** Retail land-uses form strips along the major arteries leading away from the core and cluster at major intersections in the urban periphery.  
Source: City of London Planning Department 2004

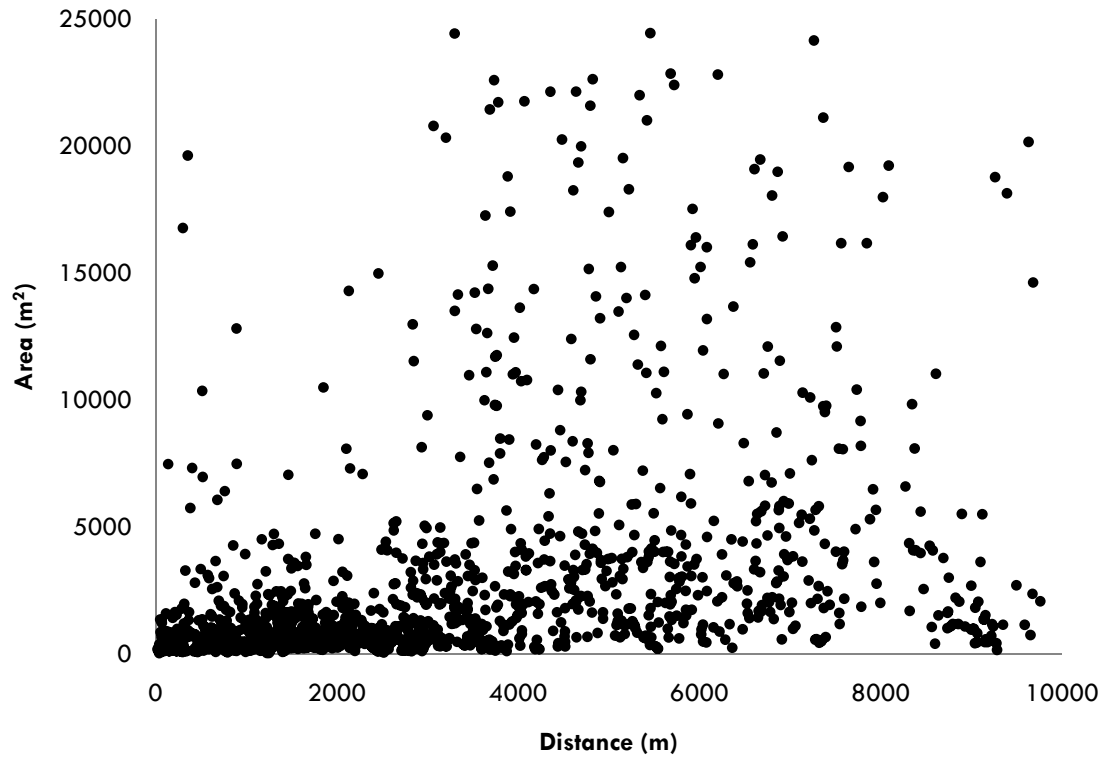
At this city-wide scale, patterns of retail provisioning also become apparent (Figure 4.11). Areas in the central city have a scattering of smaller retail parcels woven throughout their fabric. This contrasts with the pattern at the periphery, where large areas have no retail provisioning while large clusters of retailing dominate the major intersections. For instance, all of the retail activity in the Masonville is located at the intersection of Richmond Street and Fanshawe Park Road; no retailers are located within the residential districts of Masonville. The segregation of land-uses is apparent in the post-World War II city.

### **Streets**

Most of the retailers in the city, whether in new or old areas, are located along major streets for maximal visibility and accessibility. In the traditional areas constructed on the grid-iron of streets there is less differentiation in street hierarchy due to each street being similar in width and connectedness to the other portions of the network. Thus, the retailing in this area is more scattered throughout. In newer areas there is a hierarchy of streets due to the planning ideals pervasive throughout the second-half of the twentieth-century (Weiner 2008, 10-11). Arterial roads are highly differentiated from the side streets and cul-de-sacs which form most of the residential areas. Retailers solely locate along these arterials, enhancing the preponderance of retail clusters in the newer areas, leaving other areas without any nearby retail outlets.

Whereas many of the streets built after World War II are curvilinear, the arterials in the newer areas typically remain rectilinear. Thus even in newer developments retailers are found on a grid-iron of streets, albeit one that forms superblocks, with major arteries being approximately 2.5 km apart.

The access points to the planned shopping centres from the arterials often include dedicated turning lanes and even traffic signals, demonstrative of the fact that most customers access these sites using their automobiles. There are usually no streets accessing the shopping centres from the side or rear of the lots, despite their large parcel sizes. These centres are thus usually inaccessible from the residential areas that surround them, except by taking a long route by automobile through the neighbourhood's collector streets to the arterial roads.



**FIGURE 4.12** The area of each retail parcel plotted against the distance from the peak value intersection (at Richmond & Dundas Streets).  
Source: City of London Planning Department 2004

**Lots**

The size of the typical retail lot in the city centre is much smaller than that found in the urban periphery. This is evident on the large-scale map representing the entire city (Figure 4.12). The pattern becomes even clearer when the lot size is plotted against its distance from the core (Figure 4.12). As distance increases from the core, so too do the lots. Most of the retail lots within 4000 metres of the peak value intersection are relatively small, under 5000 square metres in size. There are, however, a few larger lots in this area, notably those taken up by Galleria Mall which is situated in the downtown core.

There is a discernable demarcation in lot sizes at the 4000 metre distance from the core (Figure 4.12). At this distance there is a step rise in the number of larger lots; some being greater than 20 000 square metres. There are also far fewer small lots at distances over 4000 metres, and the lot sizes become more widely distributed, contrasting with the uniformly small lots found in the urban core.

Since the core is the oldest area of the city, and growth occurred in a general concentric fashion much like the growth rings of a tree, the distance from the core can be read as a proxy for age of development. Areas nearer the core are older, while those at increasing distances are newer. Therefore, since the lot size increases with distance from the core, over time lot size has increased. Traditionally retail lots were uniformly small. Today there is a wide-variety in lot sizes. Many lots found in the contemporary retail landscape are ten or twenty times the size of those found in the traditional retail areas.

**Building Block-plans**

As with the lots sizes, there is an increase in building block-plans (also referred to as building footprints) as distances increase from the core (Figure 4.13)<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the largest buildings also are found at distances over 4 000 metres from

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<sup>1</sup> Buildings with a footprint smaller than ten square meters were excluded from this analysis. It is expected that they were slivers in the GIS file caused by the splitting of buildings by the lot layer as well as other digitizing errors; few actual buildings this small exist.

the peak value intersection. Areas inside the core have no very large buildings, defined as those over 20 000 square metres in size. Only several mid-sized buildings, those of footprints between 10 000 and 20 000 square metres, are found in the core, notably the Galleria Mall.

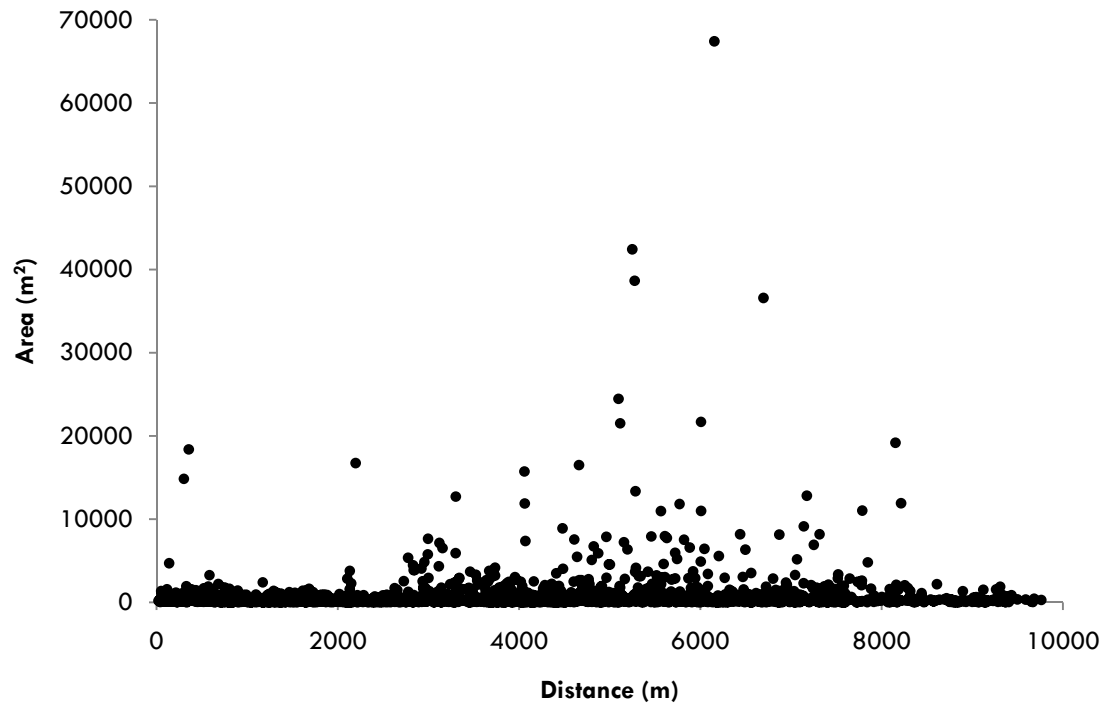
The range in building sizes is much narrower than the range in lot sizes (compare Figures 4.13 & 4.14). The majority (56 percent) of buildings are between one-hundred and 500 square metres in size, while almost all buildings are less than 5000 square metres in size (Figure 4.14). Only twenty-two retail buildings in London are greater than 10 000 square metres in size, these being the largest shopping centres in the city, the regional malls and big box power centres.

As distance increases from the core, the area of each parcel covered by buildings decreases (Figure 4.15). The average coverage quickly decreases to less than 50 percent within one kilometre from the peak value intersection. Very few lots have over 30 percent coverage at distances greater than 4000 metres from the core, with the majority being under 10 percent developed. Although the largest retail buildings are found at the furthest distances from the core, this is also where the largest parcels are found. Lots directly adjacent to the peak value intersection are nearly completely covered by building(s). Throughout the core front and side setbacks are typically zero, and empty space is only found at the rear of the lots. This is a result of the intense demand for these spaces in the previous walking and street car eras causing very high building densities.

## **BUILDING FORMS**

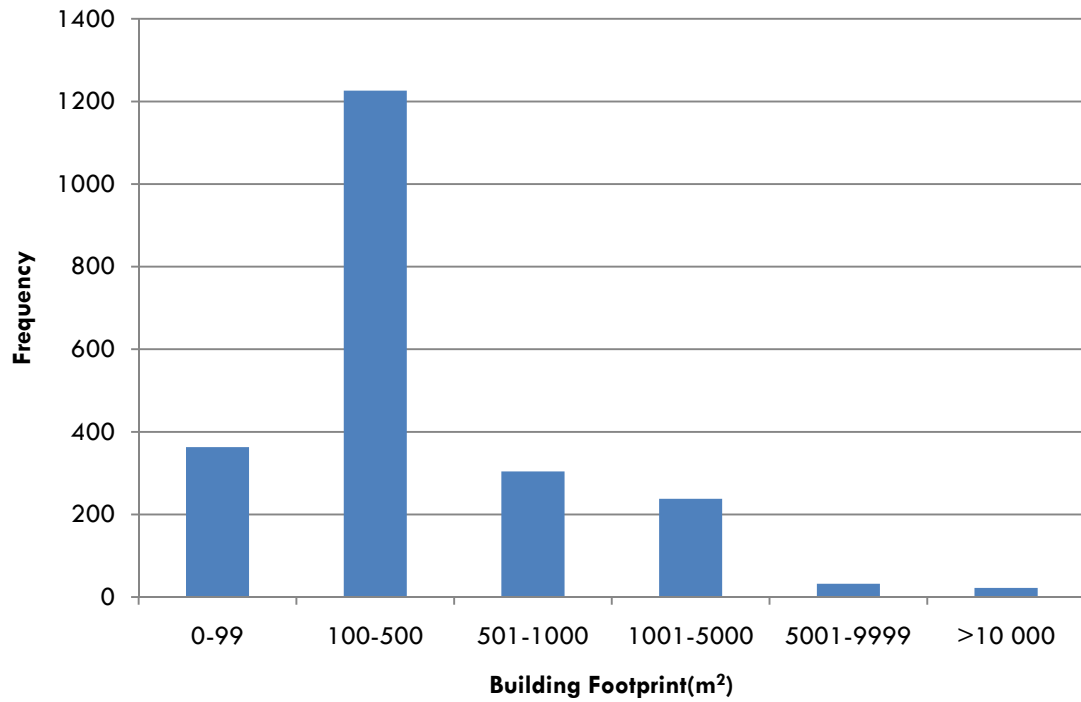
Retail buildings vary dramatically by the era in which they were constructed. Their forms are a result of the development pressures, building technologies and the architectural styles of the day. Little similarity exists between the forms of the nineteenth-century mainstreet store, the 1960s strip plaza and today's big box outlets. They are united, however, in their attempt to attract as many customers as possible, each having highly visible facades and selling spaces to maximize customer satisfaction.

Throughout the history of London, retail buildings were typically more substantial than the other building types in the city. In its earliest stages of

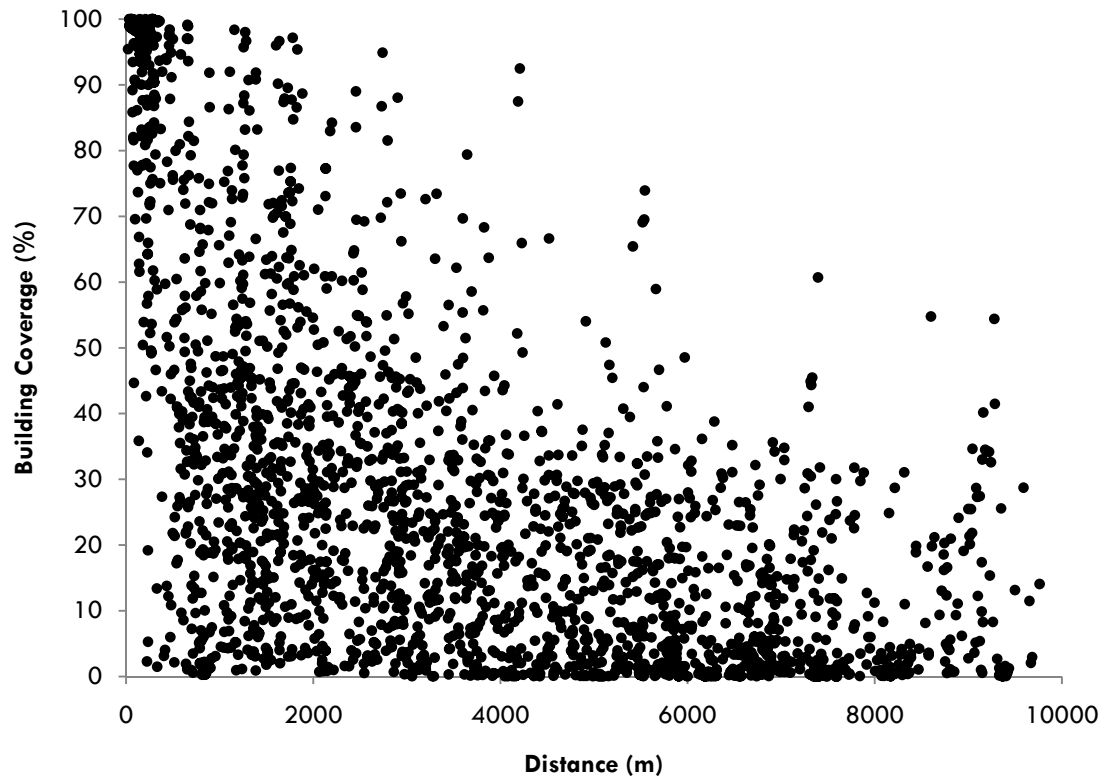


**FIGURE 4.13** The area of retail building footprints plotted against the distance from the peak value intersection.

Source: City of London Planning Department 2004



**FIGURE 4.14** The frequency of retail buildings by size of their footprint.  
Source: City of London Planning Department 2004



**FIGURE 4.15** The building coverage on the lot plotted against the distance of the lot from the core.

Source: City of London Planning Department 2004



development, when London was still a frontier settlement, the city's shops were among its most prominent structures. The average value of the merchant shops was triple that of the other buildings as recorded in the 1844 assessment. Unfortunately the records do not indicate the height or construction materials of the shops, but they do for the other properties. The buildings with the highest assessment were all two stories and of brick construction. Thus we can assume that these early retail shops were at least two stories high and built more substantially than the typical structure, probably of brick.

Most of these earliest retail buildings do not survive, having been replaced by a rash of new construction in the mid to late-nineteenth century. Many of these buildings remain today in the landscape of the central retail district. The buildings found along mainstreet are characterized by tall and narrow structures (Figure 4.16a). Most are typically three or four stories in height, but are only a few metres wide. They are built adjacent to each other; their high densities maximize the limited space available. The buildings on mainstreet formed continuous streetscapes with few gaps or empty spaces. Their facades were highly ornamented, with cornices, patterns created in the brickwork, signs and stained glass among other stylized features. The purpose of this festooning was to draw attention to the outlet, and signal the quality of the goods which were available inside.

The most elaborate retail buildings date from the mid to late-nineteenth century and are found along the traditional mainstreet. It was during the streetcar era that the best retail outlets were found in the core. As such, the mainstreet retailers had the resources to construct the grandest buildings, and apply liberal ornamentation to their surfaces. Demand for these locations caused the outlets to grow taller and at high densities. The resulting continuous and imposing streetscape in the central retail district remains a defining part of the built environment in many urban areas.

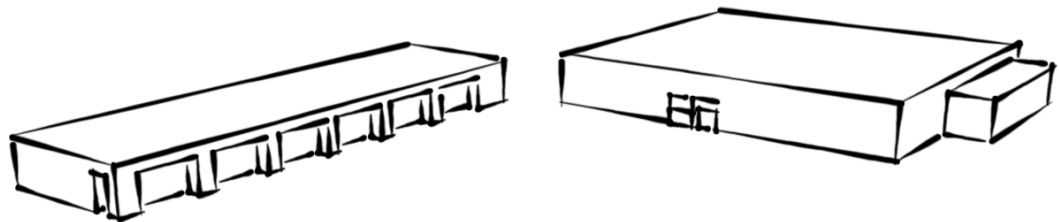
Moving away from mainstreet one still finds high development densities in the traditional retail corridors; however, the buildings are shorter, one or two stories tall, and gaps are present within the streetscape. The development pressures were less in these areas than in the core, reducing the need to create large buildings and

continuous streetscapes. Building ornamentation also becomes noticeably less flamboyant, many having simply adorned facades. The shopkeepers in these areas did not have the resources to invest as heavily in the creation of extravagant buildings. It was also less necessary to stand out from the other shops since these areas were less competitive retail districts. Fashion was less important in these areas where customers shopped for convenience goods closer to home.

The planned shopping centres of the post-World War II era take on a much different character. Their massing is generally long and low, seldom more than two stories in height and usually only one story (Figure 4.16b). The stores are grouped into long and narrow buildings. Although there is no setback between the individual stores in each of the buildings, the structures themselves are built with large amounts of space between each other and the lot boundaries. Ornamentation is kept to a minimum, with many having just bare concrete or galvanized steel facing as their materials. Signage is larger, being visible from the automobile at high speeds. Although ornamentation has been making a return in post-modern design vocabulary, it is usually applied with less detail. The arches and towers which some of the shopping centres now incorporate are meant to be viewed at a distance from the fast-moving automobile rather than the fine details observed on traditional facades applied to draw the eye of the pedestrian.



A) Traditional retail building forms



B) Post-war planned shopping centre

**FIGURE 4.16** Representations of buildings (not to scale) in A) traditional retail districts and B) modern planned shopping centres.

*CASE STUDY:***COMPARISON OF THE MORPHOLOGIES OF THE MAINSTREET, AN EARLY RETAIL STRIP AND A CONTEMPORARY SHOPPING CENTRE**

The morphological and functional characteristics of three disparate areas of the city are analyzed to show how their different histories, including their age of development and various demands on the land, impact the contemporary retail landscape. The three townscape elements – lots, buildings and streets - are examined for the three major types of retail districts in the urban landscape: the mainstreet, an early retail strip and a contemporary shopping centre. Also examined are the land-uses mixes in each region including the types of retailers found therein. The building forms in three dimensions are discussed in detail in the following two chapters for the downtown and the planned shopping centre respectively; thus, they will not be discussed in this section.

Each of the three areas was chosen since it is the quintessential example of its type in the retail landscape. There is only one mainstreet, or central retail district, making its selection obvious. Hamilton Road is the best example of a retail strip extending from the downtown core along an early street-car line. Masonville represents the contemporary landscape of planned shopping centres, containing both an enclosed mall and surrounding strip plazas all of which are nearly exclusively accessible to the automobile. A rectangular study area, two kilometres by one kilometre in size is overlaid on each era ensuring that the area of analysis is consistent. The rectangle is centred roughly at the centre of each area of interest, but was not precisely located in order to increase the randomness in the sampling for each area. All of the analysis uses the 2004 land-use and building and lot GIS files obtained from the city planning department and the 2004 business directory portion of the city directory.

London's downtown, as discussed earlier in this chapter, was first developed in the early-nineteenth century. It is the oldest area of the city. It is also the area which has been under most intense development pressure for most of the last two

centuries. Businesses strived for core area locations for access to their customers. The street-car suburb along Hamilton Road, located to the southeast of the downtown, was settled around the turn of the twentieth-century; however, since it was not located in the core it did not have the same development pressures that the CBD did. Retailers who could not afford the rents of the core, or those wishing to open a branch store might locate along this retail strip. Masonville, an area that includes a regional mall as well as several smaller surrounding plazas was used to represent the planned shopping centres that permeate throughout the contemporary retail landscape. This area, which was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, has become one of the major shopping districts in the city, generally at the expense of the traditional downtown retailer.

## **LAND-USE COMPOSITION**

Each of the areas displays a distinctive mix of land-uses, with the Hamilton Road and Masonville areas more similar to each other than to the central business district (Table 4.4). The largest land-use in the core is commercial at 524 lots, while in the other two regions residential is by far the most prevalent. Along Hamilton Road there are 114 commercial lots while at Masonville there are only 21. In Masonville there were almost no industrial or institutional parcels, while a small number were located in Hamilton Road and in the core.

The downtown has been developed the longest and its varied land-use mix can be partly attributed to this long history. It dates to the founding of the city and the study area was actually a large portion of the early city. The varied land-uses are remnants from an earlier era when being close to the centre was attractive for all land-uses, taking advantage of the greater transportation and communication linkages of the core. The rail lines and yards allowed for the movement of goods, and the focus of the city's civic life here ensured many customers. Many residents also wished to live close to the core in days when transport was often undertaken by walking.

**TABLE 4. 4** The number of each land-use type in the downtown, Hamilton Rd. and Masonville study areas.

	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>No Data</b>
Downtown	524	47	27	448	53
Hamilton Rd	114	75	19	1965	21
Masonville	21	1	3	966	35

Source: City of London Planning Department 2004

With almost all of its parcels being residential, Masonville is the most homogeneous of the three areas. Hamilton Road was somewhat mixed, although it had by far the most residential parcels at 1965, while only 114 parcels, roughly 5%, are commercial (Table 4.4). The Masonville area was developed near the end of the twentieth-century and has a much lower mixture of land-uses. It represents a development era when mixed-uses were not preferred, and was predominantly residential. It does have a large commercial base, but this is situated only on 21 lots; indicative of the trend towards larger lots and buildings over time.

Equally pronounced is the differing makeup of retail types in each area (Table 4.5). The downtown has similar numbers of fashion, food, furniture and general merchandise retailers, with only a few automotive and building materials outlets<sup>2</sup>. Miscellaneous retailers constitute the largest category in the core, including types such as books, toys and novelty goods. Hamilton Road had far fewer retailers than the core, averaging only ten in each category. Fashion retailers, numbering only two, are virtually absent along this stretch, as are building material stores. Fashion outlets are the most prominent type of retailer at Masonville, where eighty-two fashion stores are located, double the number found in the

<sup>2</sup> The retail categories given in the 2004 edition of the London City Directory were organized by Standard Industrial Codes (SIC). These were generally followed for the groupings with one major exception. Jewellers were reallocated from the miscellaneous category to the fashion category to remain consistent with the earlier groupings which did not employ SIC categories.

downtown. Most of these fashion stores are located inside the large regional mall at Masonville. Masonville has only a few retailers in each of the other categories, except for miscellaneous, which number fifty-seven.

The types of retailers are telling of the functioning of each of these areas. The core was the primary location of high-order retailing such as the fashion and apparel businesses throughout the nineteenth-century century until the mid-

twentieth century. By 2004 there were only 41 fashion retailers in the core, it being eclipsed by the Masonville area located at the urban periphery. Today's regional malls are essentially the fashion centres of the retail landscape, drawing customers from throughout the city and region.

The downtown, with 110 retailers in the Miscellaneous category, has become an area of specialty retailing. The bike shops, novelty stores and toys and games emporia have located here. The expensive rents at the planned shopping centres and strict tenant rules exclude these types of retailers. The malls are primarily sites of high-fashion consumption, mixed with sporadic complimentary offerings such as gourmet foods shops and gift-shops. The miscellaneous retailers have thus flocked to the core, replacing its high-order fashion shops with a wide-variety of offerings. These firms take advantage of the low-rents in the core to locate their outlets, since their patrons will make the trip to the core, despite the inconveniences that automobile drivers face with traffic and parking conditions in the core. Downtown

**TABLE 4.5** Number of retailers by type in each in each area in 2004.

	<b>Fashion</b>	<b>Auto- motive</b>	<b>Building Materials</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Furniture</b>	<b>General Merch.</b>	<b>Misc.</b>	<b>Total</b>
Downtown	41	6	3	38	31	26	110	255
Hamilton Road	2	10	3	13	12	8	17	65
Masonville	82	5	1	13	22	7	58	188

Note: Groupings follow the Standard Industrial Codes (SIC)  
Source: London City Directory 2004

also offers the advantage of being most central to all areas of the city. When a specialty store opens selling a unique product that is only desired by a small segment of the population, or a large segment but replaced infrequently, it necessarily has to draw on a large market area. Being in the core of the city allows its market area to be the largest possible.

It is evident from the number of retailers and their functional types that Hamilton Road operates not as a regional hub as do Masonville and the Core, but rather as a neighbourhood shopping district. The stores here are mixed, with only a few in each category (Table 4.5). There are many food stores in this area which typically service only a limited geographical area. The other types have only two to twelve retailers, demonstrating not much demand for the goods in the limited market area of this retail district. Market saturation is likely reached in many of these categories; new stores are not added due to lack of space, but due to lack of demand.

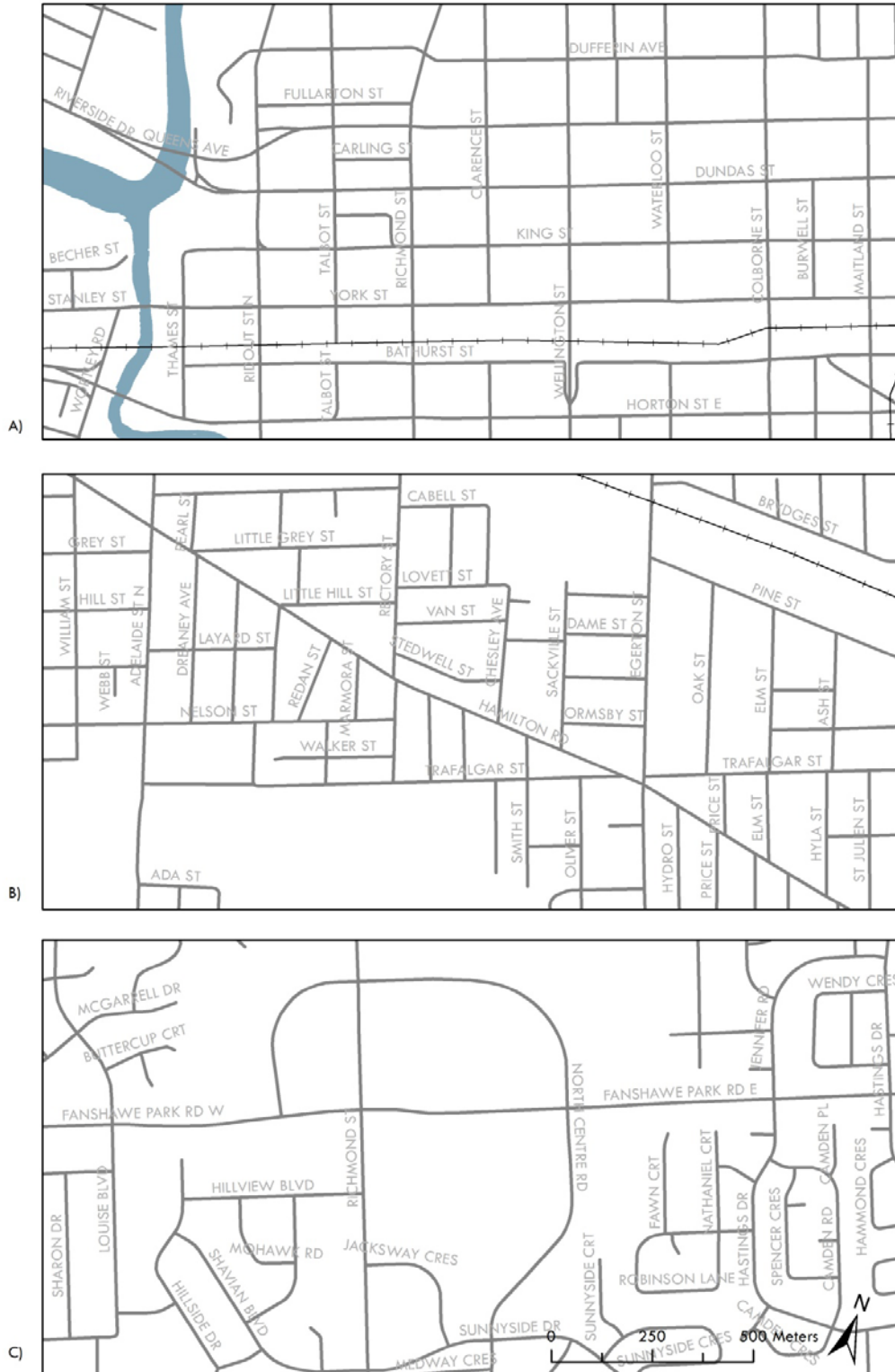
### **TOWN-PLAN**

The three areas studied, a downtown core, a traditional neighbourhood shopping street and a new planned shopping centre at the urban periphery have unique morphological characteristics. Comparing the three elements of the townscape, streets, lots, and building footprints reveals the disparate character of the built environments. These features relate to the era in which the area was developed, the technology available at the time, the ownership regime of the land, as well its value.

#### **Streets**

The street network in the downtown core is almost a perfect rectilinear grid (Figure 4.17a). This pattern is interrupted by two major features, the Canadian National Railway which runs east-west at the southern extent of the area between Bathurst and Horton Streets, and the Thames River to the west of core. These two features are barriers to many of the thru streets, which only cross at bridges or overpasses. These barriers not only interrupted the street grid, but also act to girdle the extent of the central business district.





**FIGURE 4.17** The street network in A) the downtown core, B) Hamilton Road and C) Masonville areas.

Hamilton Road slices through the largely gridded street pattern in this early suburb (Figure 4.17b). Its retailers serve the residents on the adjacent streets. Running on the diagonal to the grid, it intersects many of the side-streets. Its high connectivity makes it the most accessible street in the area. Further, it is by far the longest street in the area, connecting the south eastern edge of the downtown with Highbury Road and the expressway to Highway 401. Thus more traffic flows along this street, drawing retailers here. Its history also has much to play in its development as a major retail artery. It was the site of a street-car line which connected the community with the core. This made it a much more prominent street, and drawing people to catch the streetcar who would then pass by shops and purchase goods. Further, the visibility of the storefronts from the pedestrian, automobile and streetcar traffic were and remain beneficial to increasing potential customers' awareness of the retailers and their offerings.

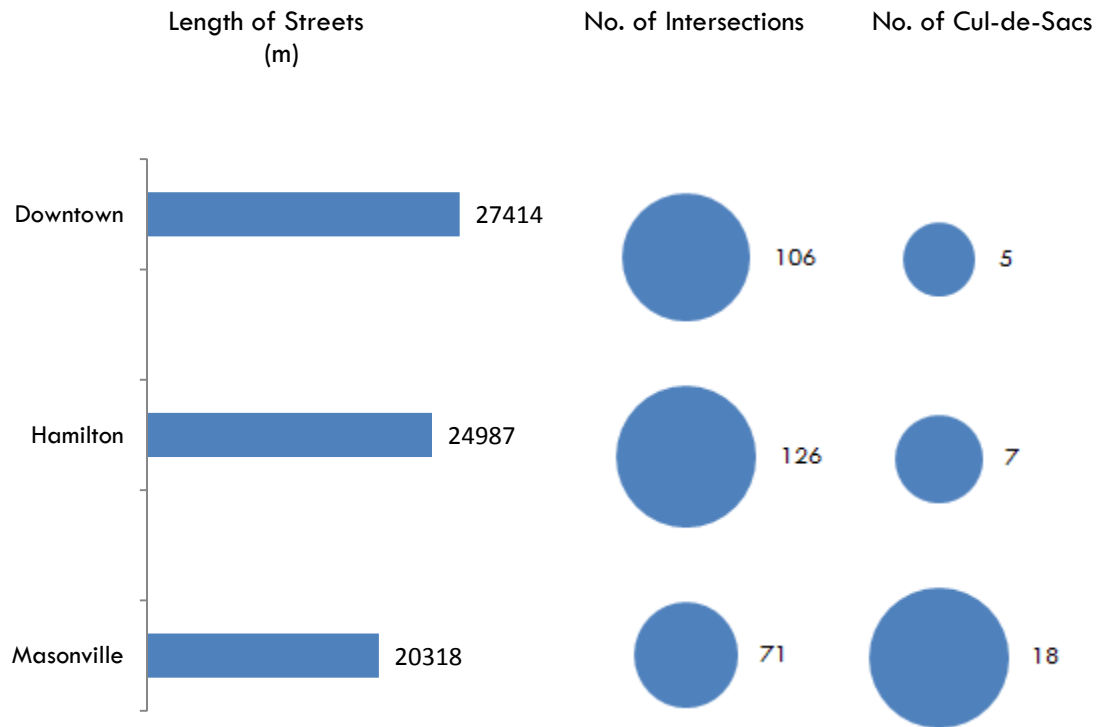
Masonville's street network is typical of many late-era developments (Figure 4.17c). The intersection of Fanshawe Park Road and Richmond Streets is the major node, and the focus of the area's retailing. Each corner of this busy intersection contains large-scale retail developments, the most prominent being the mall to the southwest. These streets are part of the city's super grid, a network of large arteries for moving high-volumes of automobile traffic. A service road loops around three sides of this intersection to help ease congestion at the main intersection by moving automobiles from one shopping centre to the next around the periphery of the retail area negating the need for cars to enter this congested intersection. There are only a few connections between the curving streets servicing the residential areas and the major arterial roads, making travel distances large from many of the houses to the area's stores.

The grid network found in the downtown as well as Hamilton Road area facilitates non-motorized movement within the areas. The increased connectivity created by the large number of intersections mean that routes can be more direct in these networks. Hamilton Road being on a diagonal to the grid further increases the connectivity in this area. The street network in the Masonville area moves cars efficiently, but not pedestrians since its blocks are large and intersections are sparse. Furthermore, the curvilinear nature of the side-streets means that paths are not direct. For example, to go from a house on Nathaniel Court to the Mall

following the street network one must travel up to Fanshawe Park Road, rather than a straight-line east as would be the case in a gridded street pattern. The residential areas in Masonville are effectively cut-off from the retail areas, many found on secluded cul-de-sacs. The looping and curving nature of the streets also confuses one's sense of direction.

Although the grid pattern of streets is the most efficient in regards to distance traveled between two points, it is also that type which has the longest length of streets (Figure 4.18). In the downtown core, as well as Hamilton Road area the total length of streets is much greater than that in Masonville. The street network in the core area is longer than that along Hamilton Road since it is nearly a perfect grid, with only a few locations where this pattern is broken. There are also several blocks where streets had been pushed through blocks increasing the total length of streets.

The grid patterns also contain far more intersections than the suburban streets of Masonville. There were 106 intersections in the downtown and 126 along Hamilton Road, while only 71 were found in the Masonville area (Figure 4.18). In automobile dominated areas, intersections are a hindrance, slowing traffic movements and causing congestions; therefore planners and road engineers keep them to a minimum. The scale of the intersections is also very different, with the downtown intersections usually narrow, without additional turning lanes, traffic measures or yield ramps. The main intersection at Richmond and Fanshawe Park Roads meanwhile is vast, with four lanes of traffic in each direction, separated with medians and sophisticated techniques for dealing with the large number of cars which travel through it. There are more cul-de-sacs in the suburban area than in either of the traditional gridded areas; however, most were located in the residential areas with few in the retail sectors. Retailers do not choose cul-de-sac locations in any of the study areas since stores need to be more accessible, whereas residential uses desire the shielded locations provided along these dead-end streets.



**FIGURE 4.18** The total length of the street network as well as the numbers of intersections and cul-de-sacs in the downtown, Hamilton Road and Masonville areas.

The large number of cul-de-sacs and the curvilinear street patterns in Masonville are efficient in creating a minimal street network; however, they are inefficient in accommodating non-motorized transport since the distances traveled between two points are typically much longer than in a non-hierarchical gridded street system. Therefore, based upon the configuration of its streets, it is appropriate that the retailers in Masonville, as in most suburban locales, are primarily accessed by the automobile. These landscapes are constructed to accommodate the automobile over other forms of transport.

In Masonville there are several private sections of the road network which run through the planned shopping centre parking lots. If these streets had been included in the analysis, the total length of streets would be greater; however, still far less than the traditional grid patterns found in the other two areas. These streets on private property which service the planned shopping centres are demonstrative of the increasing privatization that is occurring in shopping areas. In the downtown core there are no private streets; retailers are located along public thoroughfares. In the planned shopping centres found in Masonville and elsewhere in the city there are many private streets which effectively shield the retail areas from the public domain. They are predominantly designed for automobile accessibility; little thought is made of those using public transit or walking into the sites. Where bus stops are provided, they are along the arterial roads, and require the passengers to walk through the large parking lots, and cross busy roads when getting to their desired retail destination(s).

By neglecting other modes of transport these centres essentially filter customers to those who own an automobile. Since automobile ownership is typically attainable only by those of sufficient financial resources, the shopping centres essentially exclude the lowest income households. Moreover, the street connecting stores has literally been enclosed in the mall, with its retail outlets facing inwards rather than out. Whereas the stores found in traditional areas are accessed by public spaces, those in the planned shopping centres are accessed by privately controlled spaces.

**Lots**

The characteristics of lots found in Hamilton Road are similar to those in the downtown; however, these older areas substantially differ from the lots in Masonville (Figure 4.19). In downtown and Hamilton Road the lots are typically rectangular to match the rectilinear network of gridded streets, while in Masonville the lots are much more random, many having curved segments. Furthermore, in the older areas the lots are typically homogenous in size, while those in the newer areas are of a large range of areas.

The pattern of lots in all areas is a product of its history. The downtown lots were originally surveyed by Burwell in 1826 in order to prepare the town-site for settlement. The grid of streets and blocks originally subdivided into ten lots, five on each of the north and south sides of the blocks, has remained largely intact. Most blocks have seen their internal configuration of lots evolve, however, with many splits and amalgamations occurring over the years. This reflects not only the age of the settlement, but also the development pressures in the core. Being the most desirable area in the city for much of London's history, there has been immense pressure to locate businesses and other uses in the core, and thus maximize the land inventory most efficiently. This led to a series of lot reconfigurations, especially the splitting into smaller parcels under development pressure to fit more uses on limited space.

Much of the contemporary lot fabric is a result of the many scattered ownership of the downtown core throughout much of its development. No oligarchy in ownership was present in the downtown core when much of the parcel fabric there



**FIGURE 4.19** The lot pattern in A) the downtown core, B) Hamilton Road and C) Masonville areas. Retail parcels are highlighted.

was developed<sup>3</sup>. There were many parties involved in the core, each owning small parcels. Lots were subdivided by owners who wished to raise some capital by severing parts of their lots. The scattered ownership also made lot amalgamations difficult since it would take a series of dealings with neighbouring parties to secure larger lots. The dearth of large lots in the downtown are a result of this piecemeal approach to land ownership and the hindrances this caused in securing adjoining lots

Despite the difficulties in lot amalgamation, there are lots of various sizes found in the downtown. There are lots smaller than 100 square meters while others are an order of magnitude larger. This is a testament to the long history of the area, its scattered ownership, and most notably the intense demand for space in the core. The originally uniform lot system has been reconfigured into one with a wide range of lot sizes, although most remain roughly rectangular.

Similar to those found downtown, the lots in the Hamilton Road area are typically rectangular and match the grid pattern of the streets (Figure 4.19b). Unlike the downtown, almost all lots are relatively the same size with few large lots. The lot pattern is much more similar to the original survey. If it had the same developmental pressures as the downtown core, this area would be expected to have substantial reconfiguration of the lot fabric despite being settled fifty to seventy-five years later than the core. But this more distant locale has much of its original survey intact, with less lot amalgamation and splitting due to the lower demand for the space. Space here was not reconfigured as often as that in the downtown.

Within the Hamilton Road district it is possible to see differences in the development pressures as well. Along Hamilton Road, where pressures were greater than found in the neighbouring residential areas, there has been some lot reconfiguration (Figure 4.19b). Lots along the artery are much less uniform than those found along the adjacent residential streets. The residential areas to the east of the central business district in the downtown case study show similar homogeneity (Figure 4.19a). Lots in retail areas undergo much more reconfiguration

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<sup>3</sup> The scattered ownership of lots in the core is documented in the tax assessments of 1844, 1881, and 1916



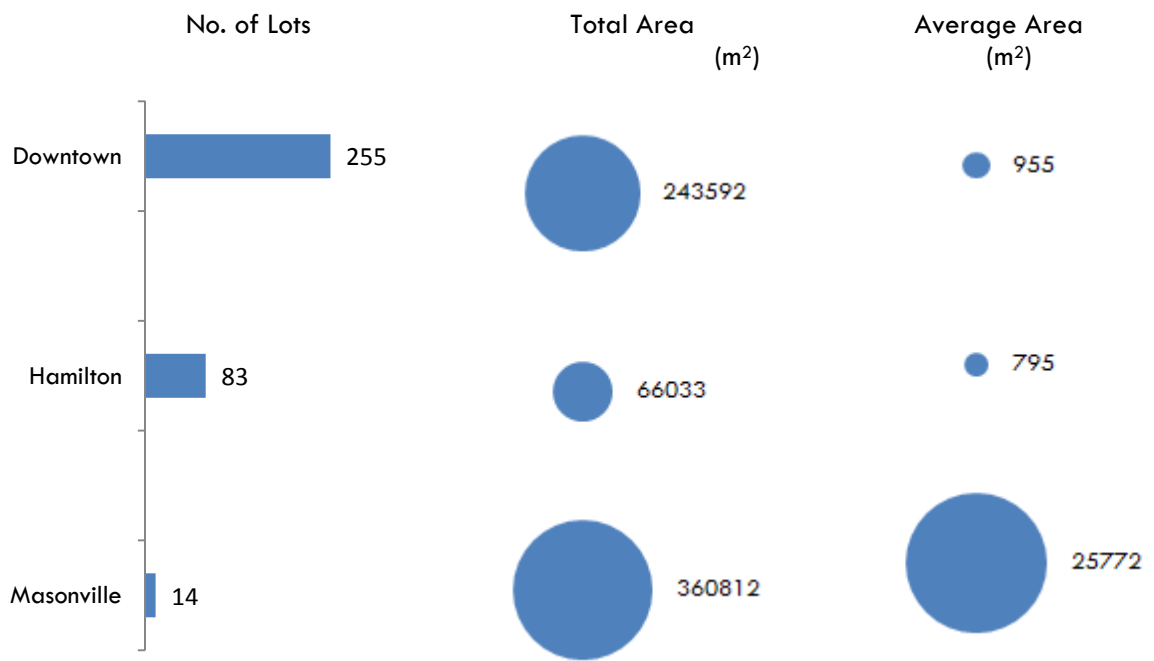
than those in residential areas, likely due to the intensity of development pressure for these sites.

The slicing of Hamilton Road on a diagonal through the rectilinear lots has caused a different lot configuration along this main artery. The frontages of these lots are likewise diagonal to match the street (Figure 4.19b). Further, these lots have narrow frontages along the street, and are typically much deeper than they are wide in order to maximize the number of store fronts along the retail artery.

In Masonville the lots in the residential area are drastically different from those in the commercial zone. The residential lots are much smaller, and many of them are pie-shaped to match the curves and cul-de-sacs in the street pattern (Figure 4.19c). The retail parcels, meanwhile, are much larger in size and are very irregular in shape. Whereas the retail lots in the traditional areas are usually rectangular, the lots in Masonville are polygons with more than four sides, some containing arcs. Unlike the downtown or Hamilton Road areas, the retail lots in Masonville are not narrow and deep; rather, the lots in this suburban retail cluster have long frontages along the street network.

The wide frontages in Masonville, like other suburban shopping areas, are demonstrative of the area's reliance upon the automobile. Masonville is not designed as a pedestrian retail district, as are the older districts downtown and along Hamilton Road, but rather one where shoppers arrive to, and move through the area by automobile. Retail lots need not be close together in order to allow for shoppers to get from one store to the next by foot. In an automobile dominated retail district distances are less of a barrier due to the speed and ease of movement throughout afforded by the car. Moreover, the extra space is beneficial to automobiles, which require large amounts of room to manoeuvre. The wide lots allow for ample parking areas at the front of the shops. They also allow for driveways and intersections feeding the stores to be more dispersed in order to facilitate traffic movement.

The downtown had by far the greatest number of retail lots of the three areas with 255; Masonville had but fourteen (Figure 4.20). The size of the average retail lot downtown and along Hamilton Road was very similar, 955 and 795 square meters respectively. The size of an average lot in these two traditional areas is dramatically smaller than that found in Masonville, where the average lot is 25 772



**FIGURE 4.20** The number, total area and average area of retail lots in three areas of the city – downtown, along Hamilton Road and in Masonville.

square meters or twenty-five times as large. Thus, even with only fourteen lots in Masonville, the total area of the lots there was 360 812 square meters, over a hundred thousand square metres larger than the downtown's total area of retail lots.

The dramatic difference in lot sizes between the traditional and contemporary retail areas cannot be understated. The traditional areas have many small lots, owned by a large number of people while Masonville has only fourteen lots. Thus there are at most fourteen land-owners in Masonville controlling an area much larger than the entire retail compliment downtown. Masonville was developed in the 1980s on a farmland; the only underlying features were the surveyed township roads which are now Richmond Street and Fanshawe Park Roads. With the original parcels much larger, it was possible to create large retail lots when the area was developed as a regional mall and surrounding plazas.

### **Buildings**

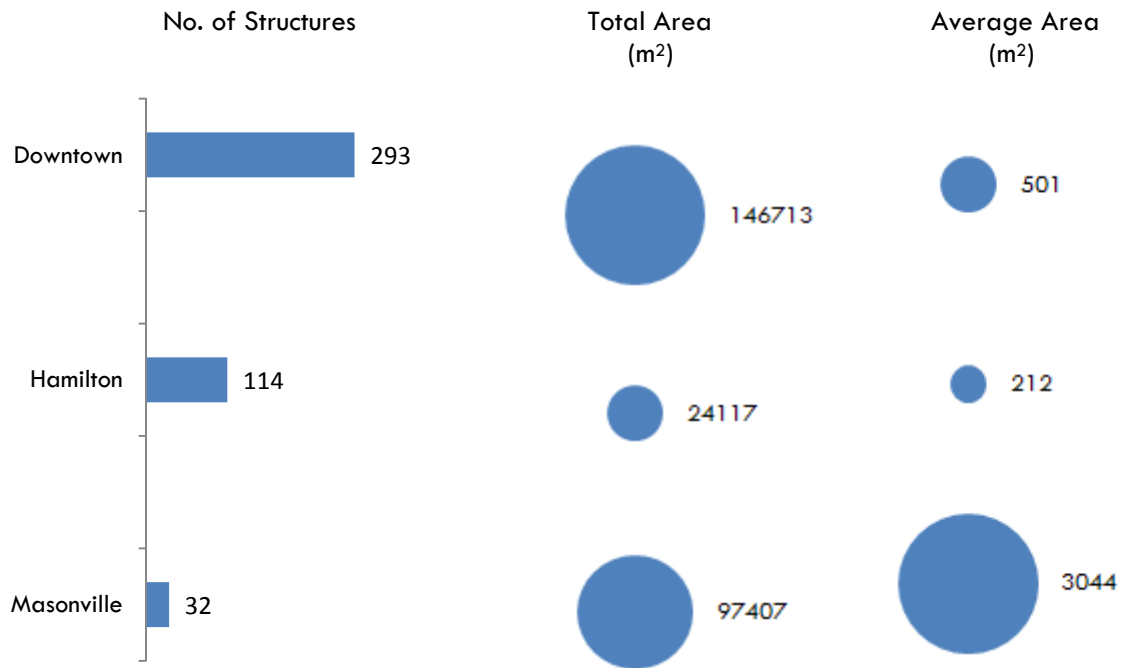
The buildings in each area mirror the characteristics of the lots. This is not surprising since lots act as platforms upon which the buildings are constructed. The size and shape of each lot constrain the characteristics of the buildings which can be constructed on it. Conzen (1960) describes this as one of the form complexes in the town-plan.

The buildings downtown are nearly all rectangular, matching the characteristics of the underlying lots (Figure 4.21a). The buildings are generally the same size, however small, and are long and narrow in relation to the lot. The most notable exception is the Galleria Mall, which encompasses nearly two full blocks of the core. There is little room between the buildings; most are built to the lot lines on the front and sides. This causes a continuous streetscape to emerge, with a constant rhythm of buildings one after another all approximately the same size and having the same setback. No one building stands out. Along Hamilton Road this pattern remains much the same, although the frequency of retail buildings is much lower (Figure 4.21b).

The retail buildings in Masonville are dramatically different from those in the downtown; there is also substantial difference between each other (Figure 4.21c). Some buildings are immense, such as the mall, while others are very small housing



**FIGURE 4.21** The building footprints, with retail uses highlighted, in three areas of the city – downtown, along Hamilton Road and in Masonville.



**FIGURE 4.22** The numbers, total size and average size of retail buildings in three districts.

only one unique store. Their shapes are also random, although one common shape is an *L*, which is found in four of the plazas. This design, also found in shopping plazas across the city, allows for a large parking lot in the centre, surrounded on two sides by the retail structure. These *L*-shaped buildings typically face the main arteries, with their parking out front signalling space for the automobile. The mall itself is an island situated in a sea of parking. The disparate characteristics of the buildings in this area are due to the varied shapes and sizes of the lots on which they are built. The large lots and lower built densities further facilitate the variation in these buildings.

There are 293 unique retail buildings downtown, 114 along Hamilton Road and 32 in Masonville (Figure 4.22). Thus there are 1.15 retail buildings per lot downtown, 1.37 along Hamilton Road and 2.29 retail buildings per lot in Masonville. The higher number of buildings per lot in Masonville reflects the much larger size of the lots affording more room for erection of buildings.

Although Masonville has only fourteen retail buildings, the total area of the district's retail building footprints exceeded that of the 255 buildings in the downtown. The total areas of retail buildings in Hamilton Road district is substantially lower, only one-sixth that found in Masonville. The average retail building downtown and along Hamilton road is roughly the same while Masonville's structures are much larger, over twenty-five times the size on average.

In Masonville the total area of retail lots is only 27.0% covered by buildings, whereas in the downtown 60.2% of the retail lot area is built upon. Masonville has less than half the built coverage density that the downtown area has. Spacing is greater between the buildings; many appearing to float within their lot rather than being tied to it as the buildings are to their lots in the traditional areas.

Much of the extra room in the periphery is taken up for automobile purposes. There is little greenery on the lots even when the spaces are vast. Parking lots and service roads cover much of the suburban retail lots in order to accommodate the automobile. Meanwhile downtown the retail lots have nearly no on-site parking. The only parking available is along the street. Galleria, the downtown mall, located its parking below ground since the space was not available above. This option is much more expensive, and the suburban malls typically do not employ underground parking since the space is available there to accommodate the automobile.

## DISCUSSION

The morphological comparisons reveal the dramatically different retail landscapes which are present throughout the extent of the city. Each was created to service the characteristics of the market at the time. The socio-economic conditions as well as the state of technological innovation are recorded in their disparate forms.

Although there are underlying strategies that remain constant, the retail landscape has been in a perpetual state of change. Spatially, stores continue to cluster together; however, today they are locating at the urban fringes rather than the downtown core. Functionally, the stores have evolved from general stores to those offering specific types of goods to meet a growing market demand as well as to provide new products made available by technological advancements. Their ownership has also changed greatly, from nearly exclusively single shops in the nineteenth-century, to familial chains in the early-twentieth, to local, provincial, national and international chains in the post-World War II era.

In 1863 there were roughly equal numbers of food, apparel and other retailers across the city. By 1916 apparel retailers were far outnumbered by their food and other counterparts. These shifts reflect changing desires of the customers, as well as changing possibilities of products. Early inhabitants secured much of their food staples either in their own garden, raising livestock to eat or from the farmers who traded at the market. As people became less involved in securing their own food they relied more upon local grocery stores as well as butchers and bakers. As London became more urban, with less land per person and more modern lifestyles, independently securing one's food was replaced by shopping for it at the local store. These outlets were able to provide a large selection of products. The advertisements in the local newspapers heralded that exotic produce such as oranges and pineapples was available by the mid-nineteenth century. Trains connected the previously isolated settlement to the wider marketplace.

As the city grew, its economy expanded, as did its retail market. Increases in incomes spurred the sales, as the population was able to afford a greater quantity and variety of goods. New stores entered the landscape while others expanded to satiate the expanding demand. Since the turn of the twentieth century the number

of stores per capita has been decreasing despite the larger retail market. This is due to the size of each store growing larger. The small independent grocery stores have been replaced by large supermarkets, each servicing a much larger segment of the market.

### **TIMING OF NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS**

There is obviously a link between urban development in general, and the retail sector specifically. As shown in Chapter 3, retailing was present from the first year of settlement. The isolated settlement had a limited market and thus a small retail sector. The economy was greatly stimulated by the arrival of the railroad in 1853, bringing wealth and jobs as the city was able to industrialize with improved transportation linkages for the importation of raw materials and the exportation of finished goods. The railroad also stimulated the market by providing a host of new products, such as fresh fruits, and made feasible the transport of a variety of goods.

The number of stores increased at a quicker rate than the population growth throughout the first century of the city's history (Table 4.1). But what is the link between retail and residential development in specific areas of the city? Did residential areas develop first, and retailers only then moved in to satiate demand once it became sufficient? Or were the retailers first to locate in new areas, with the intention of establishing themselves and cornering the market that would later fill in the residential growth?

In the early city nearly all retailers were located in the central core (Figure 4.1a). In 1844, roughly twenty years after settlement began, there were large areas of residential development without retailers imbedded within the neighbourhood. New residential areas were being built in areas without retailers. During this early era the distance from homes to the city core was limited, typically less than two kilometres along the street network. The core was where one had to travel to procure most goods. Outside of the mainstreet area, development was sparse, with a low density of residential structures. Residential growth came first in the early city, with little retail activity outside of the core since the neighbourhoods did not have



the density to local stores, and most were close enough to the core to travel there quickly to procure goods.

Twenty years later, the city had expanded appreciably, especially to the north (Figure 4.1b). Retailers, particularly those selling foodstuffs, began to leave the core, and integrate within the neighbourhoods, following the residential growth. Areas remained that were still poorly serviced, mostly to the north of the core, but it is noticeable that already retailers were being found within the neighbourhoods.

By 1881, retail and residential growth were linked (Figure 1C). No residential areas excluded a retail establishment, and no retailers were located in isolated areas. Although the retailers locating at the periphery were primarily selling convenience goods such as meats and produce, others selling comparison goods such as dry goods were also beginning to locate outside of the core. During this time growth was not only occurring at the edges of the urban area, but existing areas were also growing through intensification of their retail and residential land-uses.

After roughly half-a century of residential led growth, a new, iterative process of development was occurring between residential and retail which would continue until the end of the Second World War. A few houses would be built at the edge of the city, followed by a retail store. The store in turn spurred more houses to be built due to the availability of goods and services in the area. In other instances, retailers were first to locate in an area at the very edge of development, spurring residences to follow. Retail was linked with residential development. Nearly all residences were within a short journey to their local grocer.

The iterative process was occurring even in the earlier periods when retailers were following residential development. Although retail lagged residential development for the first fifty years, once established, the retailers functioned as a stimulus to the neighbourhood. When retailers began operating in established neighbourhoods, new growth occurred in the area as people chose the areas due to their proximity to the retail outlets they relied upon to secure their quotidian needs. In turn, the new residents created a larger market which drew even more retailers.

This iterative process is a result of the piecemeal development process occurring at the time. Throughout the nineteenth-century, no large tracts of housing were developed in London. Rather homes were built in small numbers,

either by the owner directly, or in small developments by independent builders. Homes were built at the edge of the city, perhaps a block or two beyond the existing developments, but not in isolated clusters away from the city. Moving outwards towards the periphery there was not a sharp cut-off, but rather a gradual decrease in the number of developed lots. The city directory listings for Adelaide Street between 1881 and 1891 shows a mixture of residential, commercial and other uses were found along the street, but in decreasing densities as one traveled away from the central city. Looking at the entire city in both 1881 and 1916, grocers and other retailers located along the streets very near to the developed area of the city. They never were on isolated blocks, but some were found in the last blocks developed, sharing it with only a couple of other residences.

The piecemeal development process made it difficult to discern the exact timing of developments along the streets. Being a gradual tapering of contiguous development makes it difficult to demarcate where the city stops. Since the developments were contiguous with growth also makes it difficult to answer the question of which type of growth comes first. If developments were not contiguous, then a cluster of homes some distance from the main city could be traced over time, showing the critical mass needed before retail would arrive to service them. Likewise, if a retailer was listed at some distance from the existing edge of the city, the delay before residential development could be examined. Confounding these issues was the poor data found in the city directories for the peripheral areas. Houses were seldom numbered, and comparing successive years shows that their accuracy is questionable. Listing would disappear from year to year, and then reappear. Even the ordering of streets was at times wrong, and street numbers were seldom listed.

Today, the iterative process of contiguous urban growth has largely been superseded. In its place are examples of retail both leading, and lagging growth. Some areas of the city have large retail developments with no residential areas nearby. An example is the new housing tracts east of Highbury Avenue south of Commissioners Road. Others areas have massive housing subdivisions built, with no retail provisioning nearby. The power centre at Hyde Park was built in farmer's fields, with no abutting residential uses when it first opened, although over time, subdivision have began approach this new suburban retail cluster. The automobile,

and the mobility it affords, is a major factor for this new development process. No longer do stores need to be within close proximity to the residential areas. In fact, many residential areas are built specifically without shopping since the noise and traffic they can produce are seen as a nuisance.

Thus, there is a three stage model of the link between retail and residential development. In the early stages of settlement most stores clustered in the downtown core, and residences grew outwards at the edge of the city. After forty years of this residential-led growth process, stores began to appear in the residential areas, being attracted to access these new markets. Once retailers had started to locate within residential areas, an iterative process of growth occurred between these two land-use types. Stores would open up to follow new residential developments at the urban fringes, which in turn would draw more residences to the area since they were accessible to the stores. In other areas a store would open up at the edge of the city, to be followed later by housing around it. The final stage is found after World War II, when isolated retail and commercial clusters have been developed. The mobility afforded by the automobile has allowed retailers to not locate within new residential developments.

## **POST-WAR RETAIL LANDSCAPE**

Vigorous competition from suburban areas has eroded much of the city centre's earlier dominance in the retail landscape. In the earliest settlement the core was a general retail area, with the majority of the city's retail outlets selling both comparison and convenience goods located here. As the city grew food stores and other convenience outlets left the core due to the rents for the spaces and located throughout the urban fabric to service these new residential areas. What remained were retailers selling high-order comparison goods. It was in the core that the latest fashions were found throughout most of the twentieth-century; however, its prominence has fallen in the closing decades of the century. In 1916 two thirds of the city's retail outlets were located in the core while only one-sixth in 2004.

Today's retail landscape is comprised of thousands of retailers, with both locally owned and chained businesses. Nationally, roughly half of all retail sales

occur in chain outlets (Statistics Canada 2008). Chains are much more predominant in the planned shopping centres, while local owned are found in the urban core and other traditional retail areas such as Wortley Village, Richmond Row and Old East Village. Local outlets cannot compete with the high rental rates in the successful shopping centres, thus taking advantage of the low rents found in the traditional districts.

With the evolution of the retail landscape documented throughout the course of the city's history it is now time to look at the two major components of this landscape in detail. Turning the lens from macro to micro, the next chapter examines mainstreet retailing in its heyday, the period at the turn of the twentieth century, when it was the city's principle shopping district. Then the development of planned shopping centres is traced in the modern retail landscape.

## **THE IMPRESS OF PLANNING**

The model that was presented in the introduction to describe how retail environments are formed includes a provision that retailers must work within the confines of planning regulations when creating or modifying the landscape (See Figure 1.2). Planning has generally increased in scope and depth over time in Canada (Hodge 1986). As such it has had a growing importance in shaping retail areas; however, planning has existed since the first settlement. The community was surveyed into a grid of streets, and the blocks subdivided into lots. The retailers worked within the confines of this survey to construct urban forms and develop a landscape. Over time many modifications have occurred, but the general root of the survey still remains, shaping London's landscape.

Although the survey entailed a type of planning, it was not until the years following the Second World War that planning as is thought of today was instituted in the city. In 1946 the Ontario Government passed legislation creating the Provincial Planning Act (Pleva 1992). There had previously been planning, most notably the plans conducted by Thomas Adams in a directive of the federal authorities which wished to establish planning and conservation programs in Canadian cities. These efforts were short lived, likely due to budget cuts, but Adams

had established a vision for the city, notably with the river at its core that lead planning in the city throughout much of the twentieth-century (Pleva 1992).

These early plans did not significantly impact the retail landscape as retailers were generally free to operate any type of store where they wanted. There were, however, restrictions on the types of structures built, especially in the downtown where building codes dictated brick, fire-proof construction in order to reduce the risk of further conflagrations which had struck the city in the mid-nineteenth century (Brock 1992). Throughout much of the development of the retail landscape, retailers were little impacted by planning. They simply worked within the survey grid and abided by a few construction guidelines.

Since the end of the Second World War, however, much of the retail landscape has been formed and reformed within the guidelines put forth by a comprehensive set of planning regulations which restricts where retailers can locate, and what they can build. The provincial planning act led to the establishment of the London and Suburban Planning Board. This body was tasked with controlling the rapid growth which was experienced spurred by the return of veterans, continuing rural to urban migration, as well as the increased adoption of the automobile. The board attempted to control growth and initiated a series of annexations of the surrounding townships and villages to help the city maintain control over its future (Pleva 1992). A major component of this peripheral growth was the planned shopping centres. Beginning in the late 1950s, many centres were built at the edges of the existing city in previously undeveloped areas. The planning board was instrumental in controlling where they went through land-use zoning, and specifying building characteristics through the various codes, including density and minimum set-backs. The neighbouring municipalities were desirous of the benefits of these new centres, notably for the expanded tax base and the bringing of associated developments to their jurisdictions. As a result many adjacent municipalities wooed developers to build centres. Much tension existed between the various jurisdictions and the City of London. Conflict also arose between the established outlets and those wishing to build or expand outside of the city's jurisdiction (Hamilton and Martin 1982; Matyas 1980). Many of the cases went to the Ontario Municipal Board, a planning tribunal set-up to settle significant planning disputes.

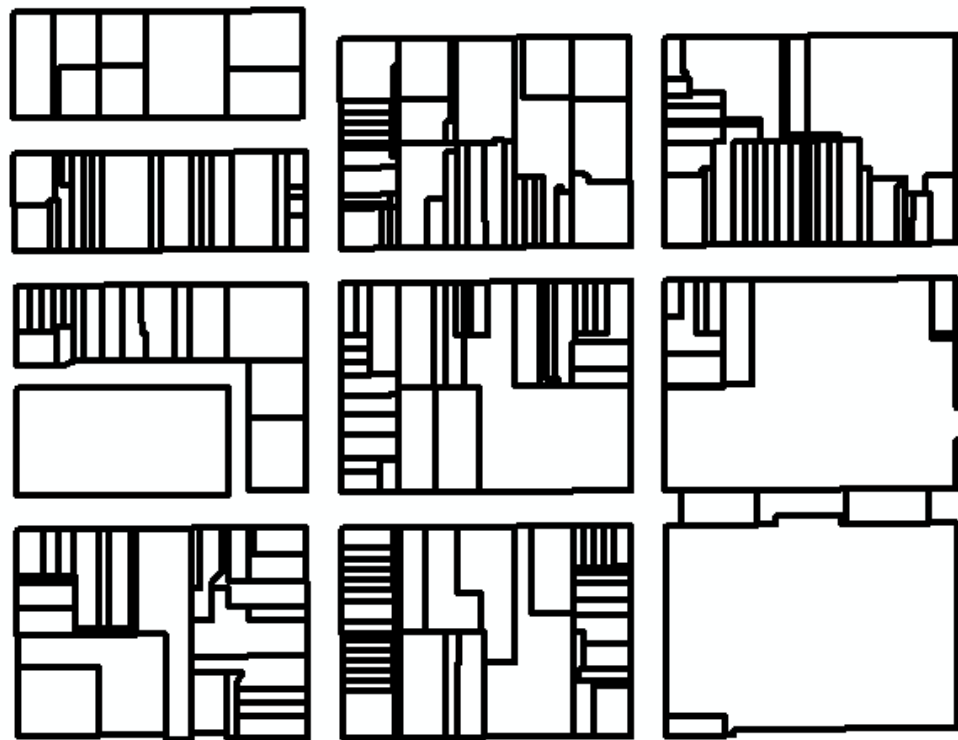
Today, retailers in all areas of the city deal with planning in the development of their landscapes. The Official Plan has sections which detail where retail areas should be focused, and how they should function (City of London 2006). All land in the city is zoned for specific uses, which any retailer must either follow, or attempt to change through a lengthy rezoning process. The types of buildings constructed are also denoted in the plans and zoning, notably the built densities, minimum lot sizes and set-backs. Design guidelines are also suggested for building character and aesthetics (City of London 1999). Other requirements stipulate parking provisioning and access to the road network. The city is subdivided into commercial districts within the planning documents, each with its own requirements and objectives (City of London 2006). One area with notable planning attention is the downtown core, which has struggled to compete with intense competition from the planned shopping centres at the periphery. Planners are active in trying to rejuvenate the core, and have produced over one-hundred reports on the downtown since 1980 (City of London 2008). In the contemporary city both new areas as well as existing landscapes are guided by large amounts of planning.

CHAPTER 5

# THE APEX OF MAINSTREET RETAILING

*The successful central retail district*

*1880-1930*





## CHAPTER 5

**THE APEX OF MAINSTREET RETAILING**

Throughout much of the city's history the central retail district was the principle shopping area. It was here that one would come to browse for the latest fashions as well as pick up many of the necessities for daily life. Mainstreet was a vibrant hub of activity, with customers and citizens alike congregating in a dense milieu that has come to symbolize for many the city at the turn of the twentieth-century.

This chapter examines the central retail district<sup>1</sup> in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth-century, a time when the district was at its apex. Demand for space was high and customers abundant in the premiere shopping district in the city. The spatial and functional compositions of the district are studied at the micro-scale, looking at individual buildings and aggregating them to the block-faces<sup>2</sup>. Dundas Street, London's mainstreet was the spine of the district along which most shops located. Richmond Street, the second most important artery in the city, is also included in this area.

The central retail district was a densely developed area due to the intense demand for space within its limited area. Land values in the district were exponentially higher than anywhere else in the city. A discussion of the land values opens this chapter, framing the results which follow. Then the functional composition of the district is analysed, with a specific breakdown of its retail land-uses. Following the land-use analysis is a detailed study of the area's built forms,

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<sup>1</sup> The term mainstreet retailing is used interchangeably with the central retail district, both representing the same area along Dundas Street from Talbot to Wellington and Richmond Street from Carling to King. Extending beyond this area is the general downtown core of the city, its Central Business District, which had a wider array of functions including office, governmental and industrial. The CBD, core and downtown are all used to describe this larger area.

<sup>2</sup> A block-face is comprised of the buildings and the parcels in a block abutting a street segment. An example of a block-face would be the north side of Dundas Street between Richmond and Clarence Streets.

namely the three elements of the town-plan, and their interrelatedness. Also considered are the three-dimensional qualities of the interior and exterior of the buildings which line mainstreet, and their formation into a vibrant streetscape.

This chapter adds to our knowledge concerning the functioning of the downtown cores of cities at the turn of the twentieth-century. The dynamic nature of the downtown is demonstrated by looking at the changes in the land-use composition and assessed values between 1880 and 1930. A major finding is the realization that, despite the intense demand for space, the central retail district did not expand, and was a relatively small area. Conclusions are drawn as to the uses of the downtown and the relationship to the underlying town-plan. Looking at all of the townscape elements at the micro-scale provides evidence for their inter-relatedness throughout the urban development process.

Recent books have on the downtown include Isenberg's (2004) social history of the downtown and Fogelson's (2001) study of the rise and fall of the city centre; both of which are general surveys of the downtowns of (North) American cities. Richard Dennis includes a chapter on shopping in the urban downtowns around 1900 in his volume which addresses the rationalization of cities undergoing modernity (Dennis 2008); however, he is almost exclusively concerned with the grand department stores and their movements; he makes a similar argument as Domosh (1998) that these important institutions can change the social practices of their users and the areas where they locate. These volumes lack the comprehensive analysis of the micro-scale form and functioning of the core during its heyday outside of the department stores that have already been well-documented (Bluestone et al. 1981; Leach 1993; Ashmore 2006; Miller 1981).

The research presented in this chapter more closely aligns with the work produced from an earlier generation of researchers who were examining the form and functioning of downtown cores. Murphy and Vance produced a series of studies that proposed methods for delineating the downtown core (Murphy and Vance 1954b) and mapping their internal structure (Murphy, Vance, and Epstein 1955). Their comparative study of nine central business districts shows the generally tight structure and the importance of the peak value intersection (Murphy and Vance 1954a). Although these works are more typical of that found in this thesis, they differ in that they look only at the downtowns in the post-World War II period. They

are not historical works, and they also look at the entire Central Business District, whereas this research is concerned primarily with the mainstreet shopping district, or central retail district. Bowden's work on nineteenth and early-twentieth century San Francisco (1971) is perhaps the most closely related paper to this chapter. He details the changes of downtown San Francisco, showing how it was a dynamic organism, and idea that will be tested here, although in a much-smaller city without the intense development pressures found in large cities.

The aforementioned works miss the opportunity to examine the morphology of the core, and its relationship to the functioning of the central retail district. This chapter shows the form, function and composition of this important area at the height of its success. In doing so, this chapter does reveal an inherent logic in these selling areas due to the profit maximization strategies of the retail operators. It thus is an example of how the underlying motivations of capitalism shape the landscape, and demonstrates that these drives were pervasive over a century ago.

## **LAND & BUILDING VALUES**

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century both land and buildings values were much higher in the core than elsewhere in the city. The 1916 abstract of assessment records for the City of London shows that assessment values per linear foot of frontage along Dundas Street near Richmond Street could be one or even two orders of magnitude higher than those found in the less desirable areas of the city. Some lots along Dundas Street reached \$900 per assessed foot of frontage and many were greater than \$600 in the downtown core. Few addresses along this street had assessed values less than \$100 per linear foot. This contrasts with the citywide average assessment of \$25.42 per linear foot; many lots had a value of less than \$10 per linear foot. A large number of lots, especially those located at the urban periphery, were not even assigned a value, reflecting their extremely low values and not included in the average.

## LAND VALUE AND ACCESSIBILITY

The great variations in the values of parcels can largely be explained by their differing accessibility, as summed in the popular adage of Hurd (1911, 13):

*Since value depends on economic rent, and rent on location, and location on convenience and convenience on nearness, we may eliminate the intermediate steps and say that value depends on nearness.*

The parcels in the downtown core were the most valuable since they garnered the most rent, itself a function of location. Locations that were the most central, that is those in the downtown core, were the nearest to all other parts of the city. Thus, due to their accessibility, they were the most desirable.

In the pre-automobile era centrality was an essential factor since movement through the city was limited. The primary mode of transit in the early to mid-nineteenth century was by foot; only the wealthy could afford to own a horse (Warner 1962, 16). Horses were also a nuisance, needing daily attention including food, water and waste removal not to mention a stable. For the majority relying on their own two feet, mobility was both slow and energy intensive; thus, it was important to minimize the distance traveled to conserve both time and energy<sup>3</sup>.

In the walking era the spatial centre was the place with the shortest distances, and thus the greatest desirability. It is no coincidence that it also became the centre of the city's social and economic functioning. People could walk to the core from throughout the city in relatively short time. Since the furthest extent of the city was only one to two kilometres from the centre, journeys by foot could be undertaken in approximately fifteen or twenty minutes at a leisurely pace. The core, being the most accessible location in the city, is where demand for space, and subsequently land values, were the greatest. Murphy and Vance (1955) show that in the mid-twentieth century, the peak value intersection of nine U.S. cities remained within several hundred feet (roughly 100 metres) of the geographic centres of their central business districts.

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<sup>3</sup> In Boston, a city with a much larger population than London, the area of settlement was still within a two mile radius of city hall (Warner 1962, 14).

By the late-nineteenth century mobility had been improved significantly over the traditional modes of walking and horse and carriage through the advent of the street railways. Their carriages, at first pulled by horses and later powered by electricity, allowed people to move greater distances with more speed than via previous methods. They were also economical; the nickel fare became standard in cities across North America (Miller 1960). The streetcars made movement quicker, easier and less expensive. Now the working classes could circulate through the city by catching a trolley along one of the many lines. Distances were no longer limited by energy expenditure and time as the speed of movement increased.

Although the mainline railway reached London in 1853, the technology of intraurban rail transport was not in place for almost another quarter century (Armstrong 1986, 81). The first horsecar lines began operation in 1875 along the city's principle streets. The lines were electrified in 1895, allowing even more convenient travel throughout the city – not to mention an improvement in the sanitary conditions, eliminating the manure from the horses which would have littered the streets. Like the horsecar, the electric streetcar funnelled people from the peripheral areas into the core along prescribed routes.

Rather than decentralizing the activities of the downtown core through increasing the mobility of the average citizen, these lines cemented the dominance of the core as the city's preeminent retail district. Having already been established in the walking era, the streetcars did not so much change the core, but rather amplify its predominance in the city. The streetcars brought people into the core from the periphery where they would patronize the area's shops and services. The previous concentration of stores and services offered in the core were expanded as more customers could reach the area. As the desirability of the core increased, the best shops offering the best goods displaced their competition, which were forced to seek locations elsewhere; this process is more fully documented later in this chapter.

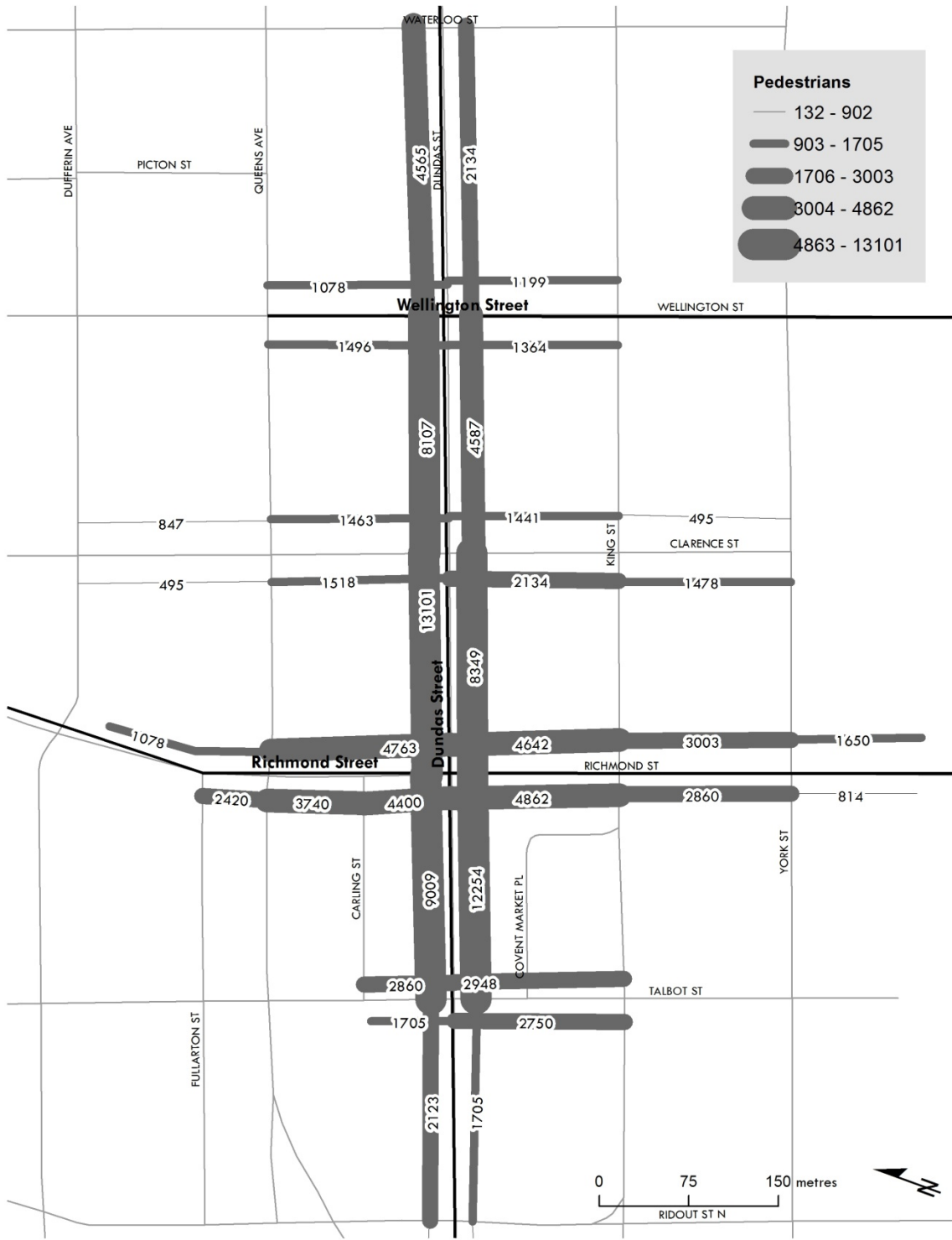
All areas in the core were not equally desirable. Sites near the trolley stops were more accessible to the swarms of people boarding or departing the trolleys. Each of these trolley users could be thought of as a potential customer. Locations adjacent to where lines crossed were even more desirable since they not only delivered people coming in from two lines, but could also attract those who were transferring lines. London's two busiest streetcar lines traveled in the four cardinal

directions along Richmond and Dundas Streets. At the intersection of these lines was found the heart of the city's retail core in the late-nineteenth century. It was at this busy intersection where citizens would exit the streetcar, possibly catching a perpendicular line or to conduct their business in one of the adjacent shops and services. This busy node was the Peak Value Intersection (PVI) in the city, that is, the intersection at which the surrounding land values were the highest.

Land near the peak value intersection was in demand for its accessibility, which was amplified by the streetcar lines. As Alonso (1964) postulates using neoclassical economic theories in his seminal work *Location and Land-use*, each land-use strives for the convenience of a central location: residents desire proximity to the employment opportunities, as well as stores and other services found in the core; commercial uses need to locate in close proximity to their clients, as well as the services such as printers and banks; and industries need to be accessible to the labour pool, as well as the transportation network for the importation of raw materials and the exportation of the finished goods. Each of these uses competes for the same central land; however, their utilities for this land differ, as do their ability to pay for the land. Those uses with the steepest utility curve, that is, those whose utilities decrease the most dramatically as distance increases from the central location, are most compelled to locate near the core. They thus bid the highest for the land, paying more in rent than the other uses which are excluded from the area. The combination of these differing utility curves is seen in the famous bid-rent curve that is found in most introductory urban textbooks, and is the underlying principle of much of the fields of urban and economic geographies, explaining the differing land-use patterns across the city's extent.

It is retailers who, according to Alonso (1964), have the steepest utility curve. Simply stated, the more customers that a shopkeeper is able to bring through the doors, the higher his or her sales will be, and subsequently the greater his or her profits. For retailers, the savings of moving to cheaper, less accessible sites are negated by a steep decline in sales due to lack of customers at these locations.

By locating in the most accessible areas, retailers were attempting to attract as many customers as possible, thus spurring sales and maximizing their profit. Both the casual passerby as well as the premeditated customer planning to visit the store were targeted by this strategy. Each customer demands that the store is



**FIGURE 5.1** Pedestrian counts in the core in 1940 show a spike at the peak value intersection at the crossing of Richmond and Dundas Streets.  
 Source: Rich (1940)

accessible based upon their transportation means. In the walking era this was the general area of the central city. The streetcars focused the customers in specific area, thus heightening demand for space in specific areas, notably at the peak value intersection. It was here that many customers would congregate, travelling in from the periphery on the streetcar lines. It was thus where the retailers strove to locate, and paid handsomely for the privilege.

This demand for a limited supply of space caused the property values to be exponentially greater at, and near, the peak value intersection than elsewhere in the city. As previously mentioned, rents at the PVI in London could reach \$900 per linear foot frontage, nearly forty times the average value of all lots in the city. If a retailer wanted to locate here, he or she had to be able and willing to enter a competitive market for the land. Doing so, however, could result in significantly higher profits due to the greater exposure to customers. Not all retailers could afford this land, and only the most profitable could survive at the peak value intersection. Each had to evaluate their situation in the trade-off between high rents and potentially high sales.

Pedestrian counts taken in 1940 corroborate the association between accessibility and land values. Although representing a slightly later period, these counts are the earliest available for the city<sup>4</sup>. The counts show that Dundas Street was the most trafficked street in the entire city centre (Figure 5.1). Extrapolating the findings for a one-day period, there were 13 101 pedestrians reported traveling along the north side of Dundas Street east of Richmond Street, and 12 254 on the south side of Dundas Street west of Richmond. All four of the busiest blockfaces in the study were on Dundas Street adjacent to Richmond Street.

Richmond Street was significantly less busy in terms of pedestrian traffic than Dundas Street, but remained much busier than the other streets in the core. Even on those block-faces adjacent to the peak value intersection, Richmond Street had only half the traffic as Dundas Street. This illustrates the primacy of Dundas

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<sup>4</sup> The counts were conducted by (Rich 1940) as part of his research towards a B.A. thesis at the UWO business school. Unfortunately the counts were only conducted for short intervals, and only completed once; however, it is the only information available for traffic counts from this era.

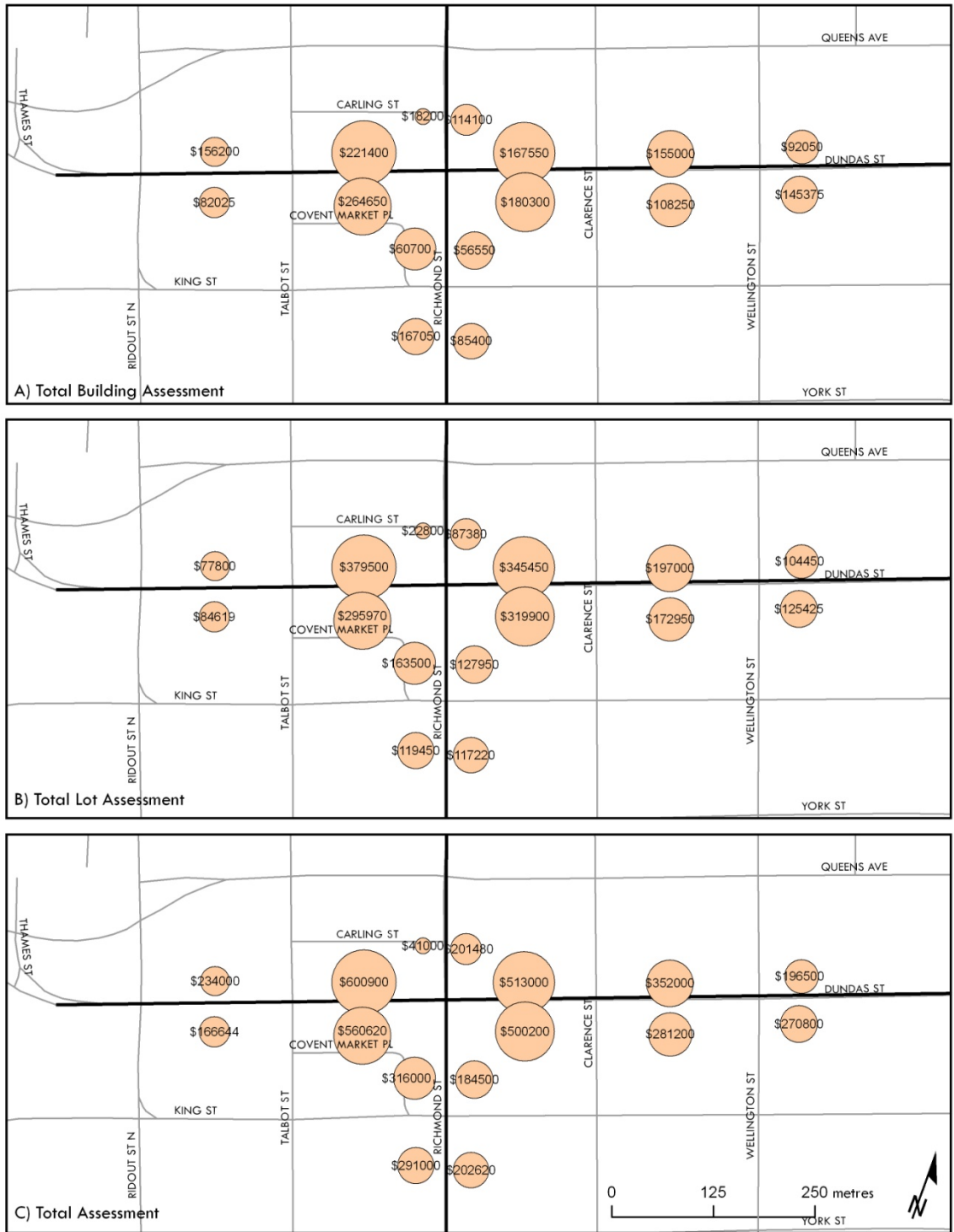


Street as the city's mainstreet, the principle artery through the central retail district.

The block-faces on Dundas Street witnessed as much as ten times the pedestrian traffic as streets elsewhere in the core. For example, Clarence Street had only 2134 pedestrians on its west side and 1441 on its east side immediately south of Dundas Street. Despite being immediately adjacent to the highly-trafficked Dundas Street, these blockfaces had far fewer people. From this data it appears that customers were unlikely to leave the mainstreet even to travel short distances down the adjacent streets. Retailers thus had to carefully consider their location strategies at the micro-scale. The greatest number of pedestrians passed by mainstreet locations, each being a potential customer. These locations thus had the greatest profit maximizing potential.

The differences in pedestrian traffic are also dramatic across intersections on the same street. A notable example of this trend is the disparity between the blockfaces on Dundas Street east and west of Talbot Street (Figure 5.1). West of Talbot Street there were only 2123 and 1705 pedestrians on the north and south sides respectively, whereas east of Talbot there were 9009 and 12 254 respectively. Pedestrian traffic declined precipitously both across intersections along one street, as well as turning corners onto adjacent streets. Retailers were thus impacted by micro-scale location strategies, where locations less than fifty metres apart could see dramatically different customer traffic.

These pedestrian counts also indicate the compactness of the central retail district. Few pedestrians travelling along Dundas Street ventured west of Talbot Street or East of Wellington Street; nor did they venture much onto the side-streets. It was the three blocks of Dundas Street from Talbot to Wellington Streets where most of the pedestrians were found, a stretch roughly half a kilometre in length. Richmond Street also experienced significant traffic between Queens Avenue and King Street, a stretch one-quarter of a kilometre in length. The principle shopping area where much of the city's retailing occurred at the turn of the twentieth-century occupied less than a kilometre of street, and the retail streetscape totalled around 1.5 kilometres in total length. Although it was relatively small in size, this district serviced the entire city as well as the surrounding countryside and villages.



**FIGURE 5.2** Total assessed values by block-face in 1916.  
 Source: City of London assessment abstracts 1916

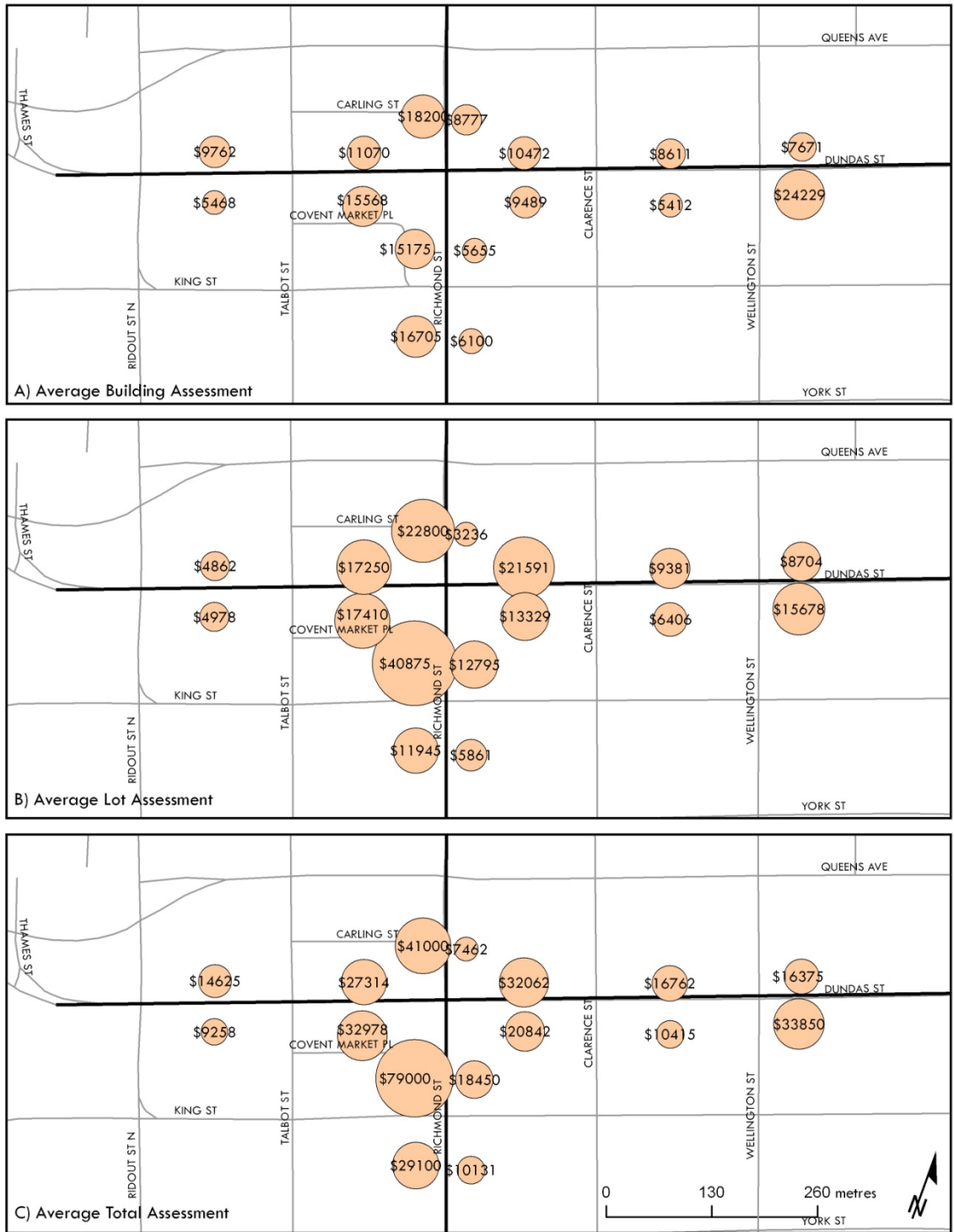
## LAND & BUILDING VALUES AT THE MICRO-SCALE

The limited space at the peak value intersection drove land rents to extremely high rates. Each retailer had to evaluate the trade-off between a location along the mainstreet and the cost of these desirable locations. A fine scale gradient of land values resulted in the core, with values dropping sharply with increased distance from the PVI. Values also dropped on the side streets. This allowed retailers to find a balance to the equation between accessibility and cost, the solution to which produced the greatest benefit, namely customers, within the confines of their budget.

The blockface on the northern side of Dundas west of Richmond Street had the highest total land assessment at \$379 500 in 1916 (Figure 5.2b). This contrasts with the block-face immediately to the west between Talbot Street and Ridout Streets which had a total assessment of only \$77 800. There were likely far fewer pedestrians on Dundas Street east of Talbot than to the west. The limited number of pedestrians is reflected in the assessed value of the land; the lower the traffic the cheaper the land.

The value of the land had a subsequent impact on the value of the structures which were built upon it. The total building assessments (Figure 5.2a) are associated with the total lot assessments by block-face (Figure 5.2b). In areas with high land values there was also large capital investment in the physical structures which were built on these lots. The buildings were larger, and covered a greater proportion of the lot. Owners maximized the built area when space was limited and demand was high. The buildings were also generally of better quality, with higher grade construction and elaborate ornamentation. The characteristics of the buildings are presented later in this chapter.

In general, block-faces on opposing sides of the street had similar land, building and total assessed values (Figures 5.2 a,b,c). This symmetry in value is related to their similar desirability of these parcels, which is a function of their accessibility. Pedestrian traffic counts were approximately equal on opposing block-faces; however, they could be dramatically different on adjacent block-faces (Figure 5.1). This pattern in traffic flows explains the radical differences in values between adjacent block-faces. Intersections were large barriers to movement, resulting in



**FIGURE 5.3** Average assessed values of lots, buildings and total by block-face in 1916. Source: City of London assessment abstracts 1916

large differences in land values across them. Similarly, due to their lower accessibility, land values on the side streets were much lower than on Dundas or Richmond Street.

In contrast to the total assessed value of the buildings and lots aggregated to block-faces, the average value of individual buildings and lots demonstrate much less of a gradient by proximity to the peak value intersection (Figure 5.3 compared with Figure 5.2). Average values of individual buildings located more distal to the peak value intersection were greater than those found closer to this important node. Furthermore, although the total assessment of block-faces along Richmond Street were less than those along Dundas Street, the individual buildings and lots were assessed much higher on Richmond Street. These findings must be contextualized by understanding the lot fabric and the building characteristics of the core. Buildings at more peripheral locations were on average more valuable since they were also much larger than those found in the centre. Demand near the peak value intersection caused the lots to be smaller, as they were subdivided to maximize the use of space. In 1916 there was a negative correlation between the width of a lot and its value measured in dollars per foot frontage ( $r = -0.147$ ). This allowed more retailers to physically locate in the desirable areas. The smaller lots also were more affordable, a strategy to deal with the high land values.

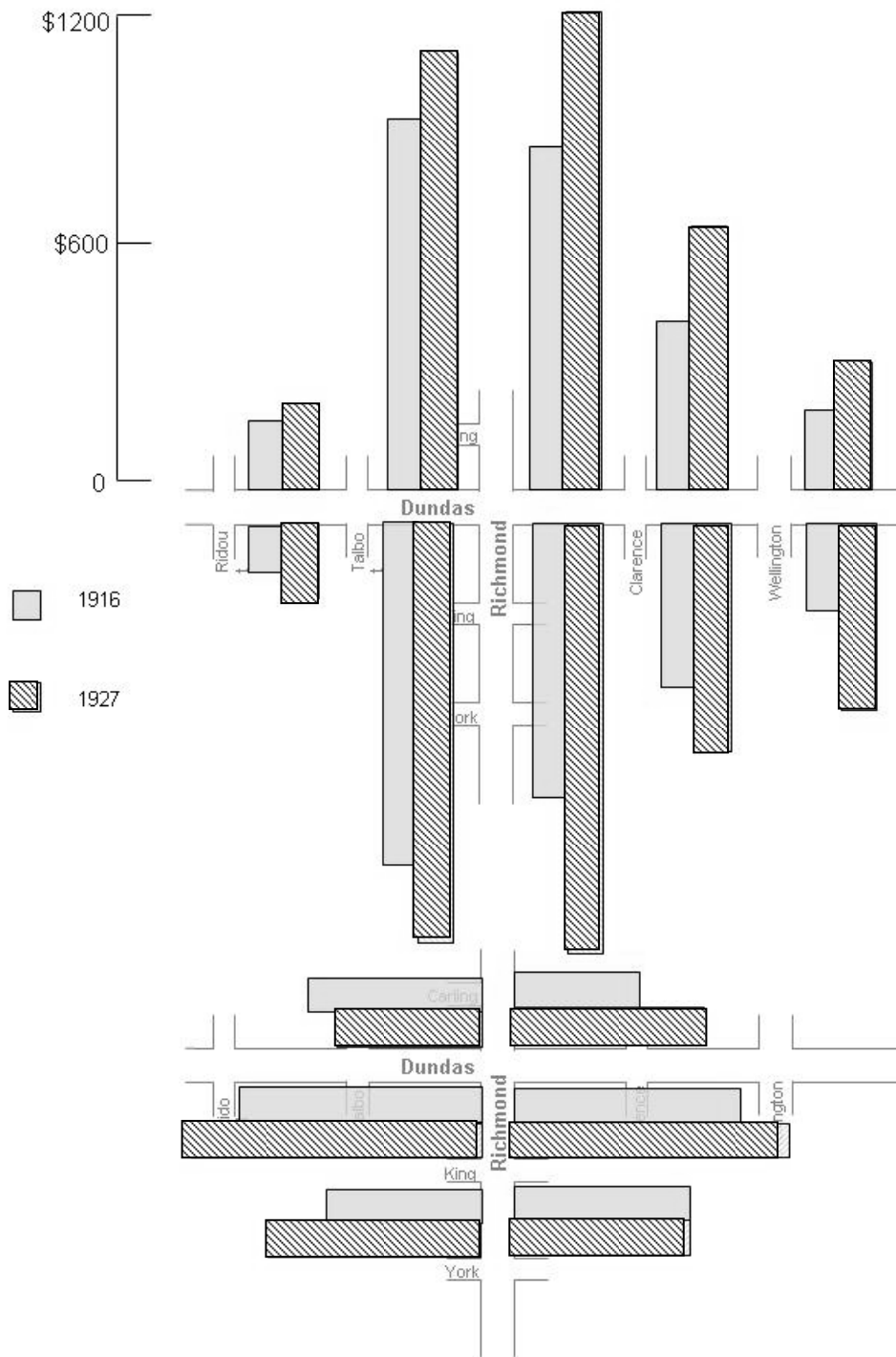
The smaller lots on Dundas Street near Richmond Street were less valuable individually than the larger lots at greater distances; however, their value per unit area was much higher and their aggregate values were much higher. The smaller lots resulted in buildings being constructed with smaller footprints, which subsequently had lower individual values. Likewise, the lower demand for space along Richmond Street resulted in larger lots. These large lots permitted large mixed-use buildings to be constructed on Richmond Street such as the Masonic Temple which were not found on the expensive Dundas Street frontages. These large edifices along Richmond Street were home to many more of the city's important institutional and service functions; it being the location of major banks, the former city hall and other significant organizations.

The corner lots were much more valuable than those found mid-block. In 1916 the average assessed value for a square metre of land found in a corner lot was \$51.07 whereas it was \$27.88 for the other lots on Dundas Street. These corner lots

were more desirable since they could attract customers from two directions even though the side-streets had far fewer customers. They were also far more visible. Corner lots are prominent aspects of the streetscape, standing out from their mid-block counterparts. Many of the buildings on these lots angled their corner to increase their prominence even further. Prominence is important in attracting customers, who are drawn to stores which are highly visible. Likewise, retailers apply high levels of ornamentation on their facades to draw attention. Banks often located on the corner lots due to their ability to pay the high rents (Parnassus Foundation, and Museum of Fine Arts 1990). As shown later, these lots were also frequently developed as hotels due to their morphological characteristics.

Changes in the land values over time in the core demonstrate that it was not a static environment. Land values were in flux as the rents garnered for properties changed to reflect changes in the desirability of lots as the heart of the retail district shifted eastward. Whereas the land value was greatest on Dundas Street immediately west of Richmond Street in 1916 at roughly \$900 per linear foot, by 1927 the most expensive land was immediately east of Richmond Street where it garnered \$1200 per linear foot (Figure 5.4). Furthermore, there was little change in the assessments of the block bounded by Ridout and Talbot Streets, whereas those blocks east of Richmond saw large increases from 1916 to 1927.

In the early-twentieth century, the focus of the core's retailing was shifting eastward as the city grew in that direction. The river caused a barrier to growth in the westward direction, while industry and residences continued to expand east of Adelaide Street. The peak value intersection had already moved to Richmond and Dundas Street from its previous location at Ridout and Dundas Streets in the nineteenth-century as a result of the eastward growth of the city. Furthermore, the crossing of the streetcar lines at Richmond and Dundas Streets also brought the focus of the core towards this locale from the West. In the early-twentieth century the central retail district continued to shift eastward, with the highest land values moving East of Dundas Street by 1927, demonstrating the dynamic nature of the retail landscape.



**FIGURE 5.4** Average assessed values of lots per linear foot frontage in 1916 and 1927.  
 Source: City of London assessment abstracts 1916

## **LAND-USES IN THE CORE**

In the decades last two decades of the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth-century the city centre was not solely populated by retailers; industry, commerce, professional and service establishments, as well residents shared the prime locations along Dundas and Richmond streets with the retail emporia. Like the retailers, various businesses and individuals were drawn to the prime accessibility afforded by the area. Other occupants were remnants of an earlier era, when a variety of uses were found throughout the core of the city. Intense demand for space had not yet driven up land values in the early stages of development, allowing all uses to compete for the space.

Although the core was home to many land-uses, they occupied different parts of the mainstreet landscape. Retailers could afford the high rents of the street-level frontages, needing these spaces to channel as many potential customers as possible from the sidewalks. The other uses were frequently relegated to the upper floors or the rears of the building; thus, not in constant view of the throngs of pedestrians walking along the streets. For the industries and residences of the core this lack of visibility was not an issue since they do not need to attract clients. It would have been a disadvantage for many of the services and professionals who served the public, but they were unable to compete with retailers for the highly visible street-level spaces. A notable exception was the banks, which often located at prime corner lots. Unlike lawyers or stock brokers, banks are much more like retail operations, requiring access to customers, and they could afford the steepest rents demanded at the corner lots.

## **FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Despite the high demand for space most of the addresses had only a single occupant in 1916. Of the 240 addresses in the study area, 142 contained one occupant and an additional forty had two occupants. With, fifty-one occupants the parcel on which the Dominion Savings Building on Richmond Street was constructed, was the parcel with the most uses. Most of these uses were professional offices on the upper floors of this large, four story building. Several retailers were present on its main floor.

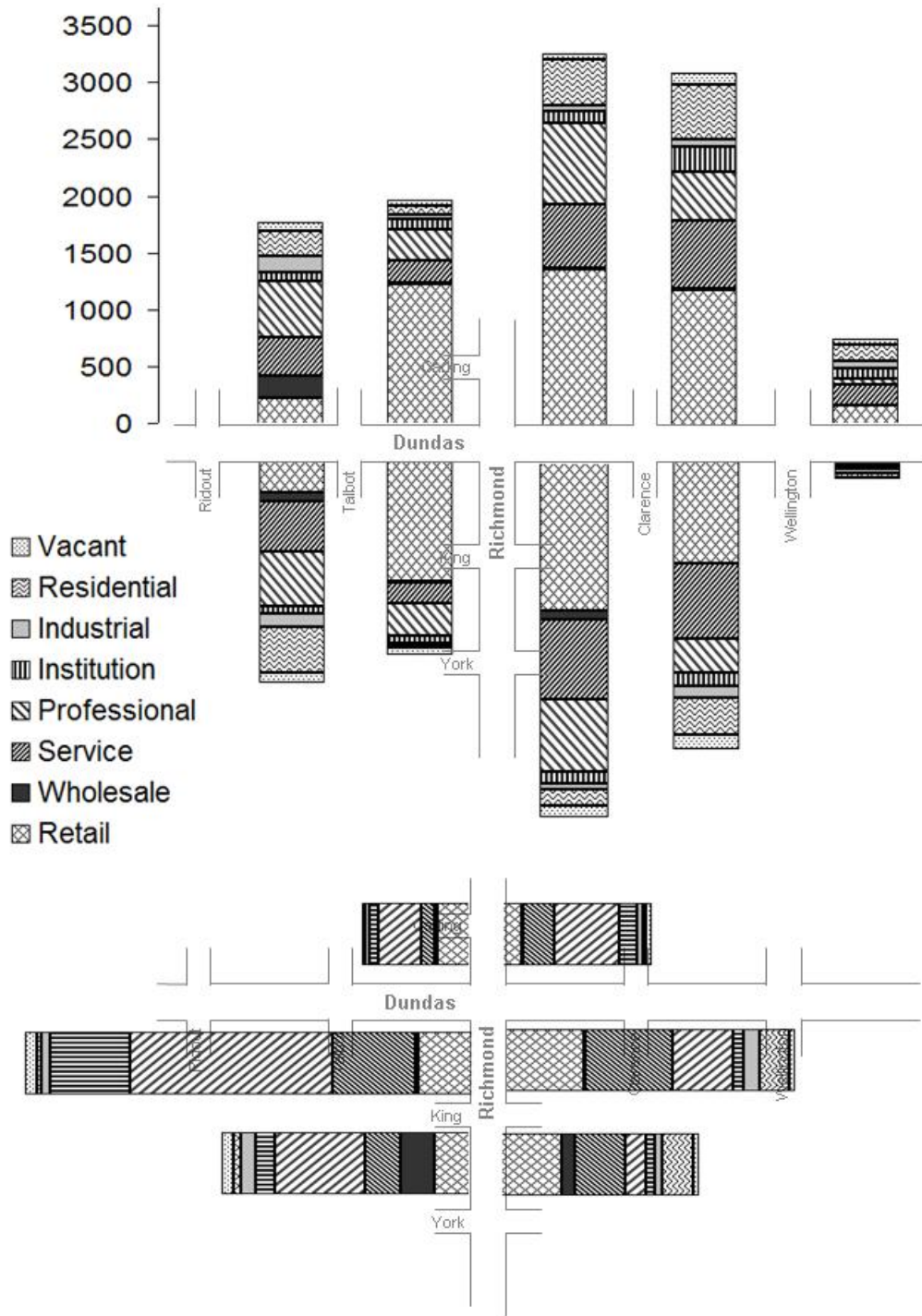


Retailers were particularly unlikely to share an address with another retailer, with only two such instances found in 1916. Retailers needed ground floor access to bring in customers from the street, and were thus unlikely to share a building with another retailer since this would require locating on upper floors, or splitting the already narrow frontages, rendering the space nearly unusable. When multiple uses were located at an address without exception the retailer would locate on the ground floor with the other uses – offices, services, residences – above.

The intensity of land-use in the core was related to the land values as shown by counts of the total number of land-uses along each blockface over the fifty-year study period, as recorded in the annual city directory (Figure 5.5). Some of the blockfaces adjacent to the PVI had a total of over 3000 listings during this fifty-year period, while the blockfaces along Dundas west of Talbot had roughly half this number. The small number of uses on the Richmond block-faces north of Dundas Street are due to its small size, roughly only half the length of the others. The blocks on Dundas Street between Talbot and Richmond Streets had fewer uses than those adjacent to the PVI since they were much shallower. The smaller areas of these lots resulted in smaller buildings, and did not allow for as many land-uses due to their limited size.

Opposite block-faces generally had the same number of land-uses as well as similar functional composition while adjacent block-faces could be considerably different (Figure 5.5). There were 229 listings for wholesale houses on Dundas Street between Ridout and Talbot Streets, while the block immediately east there were only thirty-four. The functional character of the district could change quickly with the crossing of an intersection.

The differences in land-use composition between Dundas and Richmond Streets are especially pronounced. Retailing predominated in the three blocks which stretched along Dundas Street from Talbot to Wellington Streets, comprising roughly half of all the uses along these segments (Figure 5.5). Along Richmond Street, however, the professional and service sectors were the largest components. These establishments were especially clustered along the west side of Richmond Street south of Dundas since this block contained both the Royal Bank and Dominion Savings buildings, which provided large areas of office space.



**FIGURE 5.5** Total number of land-uses on each block-face between 1880-1930.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.

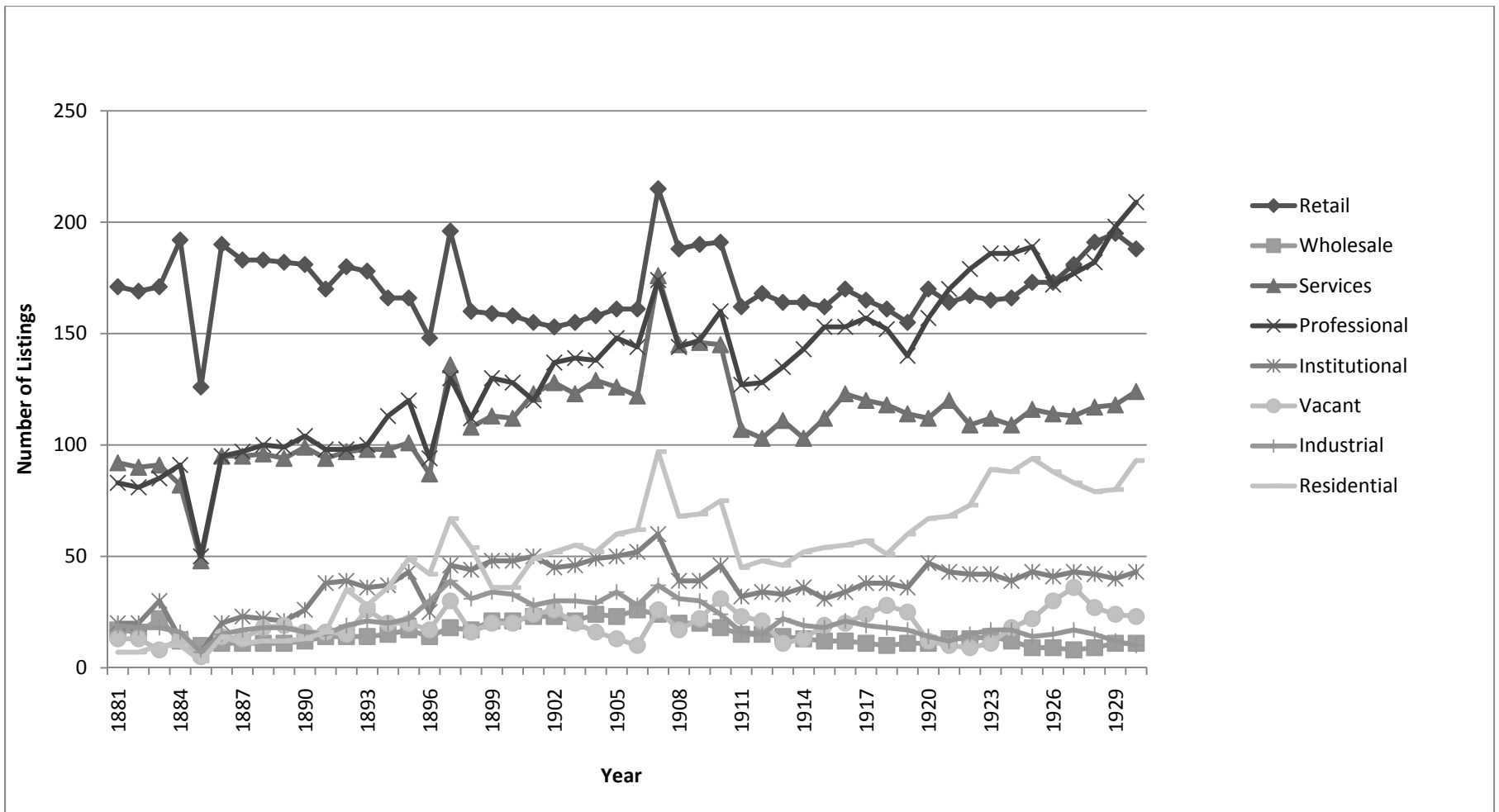
Wholesalers were almost non-existent in the study area except for the west side of Richmond between King and York, due to its proximity to the Grand Trunk Railway which ran south of York. A wholesale district had developed along York Street taking advantage of its proximity to the rail network (Baker 2000), but was not included in this study of the central retail district. Another small wholesale area existed at the intersection of Ridout and Dundas Streets which was a remnant of an earlier era when Dundas Street was the primary link across the Thames River, connecting the city to the western trade areas.

From 1880 to 1930, vacancies were scarce in the mainstreet area due to the high demand for space and the accompanying high land values. Residents were found along each of the frontages in apartments usually on the third or fourth floors of the buildings. Industries were sparse and were the smaller, cleaner type that did not require large amounts of land necessitated by the breweries and foundries. The production of textiles, wools and garments, as well as cigar production using locally grown tobacco, dominated the area during this era.

Over time land utilization in the central retail district was intensified. The number of unique occupants of the district listed in the city directory nearly doubled from 430 to 740 between 1880 and 1930. The number of retailers remained relatively unchanged over this period, averaging 180 listings per year (Figure 5.6)<sup>5</sup>. By 1880 nearly all of the street-level space in the district was occupied by retailers, leaving no room for growth in the number of retailers who were shy to locate in other areas of the streetscape. Where growth did occur was in the professional category, especially in the financial areas such as real-estate, insurance and stock brokerages. By 1930 the professional uses overtook retailing as the predominant land-use in the central retail district. It is not that these professions drove out the retailers, but rather were accrued into the area as the economy of London developed as a centre for Southwestern Ontario, filling the upper floors of buildings, especially along Richmond Street with new commercial activities.

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<sup>5</sup> The dramatic spikes and valleys that occur from year to year on the graph representing the number of city directory listings for each land-use are likely due to the fact that different companies made the directory from year to year, each with different methods of compiling the information. The year to year changes are thus less important than the general long-term trends.



**FIGURE 5.6** Total number of each land-use type from 1880-1930 as recorded in the city directory listings.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.

All other land-use types saw an increase between 1880 and 1930 except for wholesaling and industrial (Figure 5.6). Wholesaling remained an active component of London's downtown, but as mentioned earlier, it was located along York Street, across from the Grand Trunk Railway and thus not included in the study area of this chapter. Industries in the district had either closed or left for more peripheral locations where land was available for expansion, rail sidings for shipments of goods could be constructed, and in closer proximity to the workers who were living at greater distances from the downtown in the developing suburbs. The industrial sector of the city vacated the core in favour of peripheral locations, especially London East (Lutman and Hives 1982).

Throughout the study period, retailing dominated the landscape of the central retail district, especially along Dundas Street. Over time, the proportion of each land-use remained roughly the same, except for large growth in professional group. Within a small area, the core was home to a dense network of disparate activities.

### **RETAIL LAND-USES**

A closer examination of the retail land-uses reveals a highly structured, yet dynamic utilization of space within the city centre between 1880 and 1930. Dundas Street was the city's main shopping thoroughfare, and Richmond Street contained a lesser, although still significant retail component. Most addresses along Dundas Street were occupied by retailers (Figure 5.7). At times they shared the property with other land-uses, but almost never with other retailers. Addresses on Dundas Street near the peak value intersection were almost exclusively used for retail purposes, while those at more distant locations were of a greater mix of uses. Non-retail uses of the addresses were especially found west of Talbot Street. Richmond Street had many more non-retail uses than Dundas Street, reflecting the prominence of Dundas as the city's main shopping artery.

The main shopping district was linear, with the adjacent streets having substantially fewer retail outlets. Retailers lined Dundas Street, forming a continuous retail streetscape. Ridout, Talbot and Clarence Streets, despite, intersecting the mainstreet and being in close proximity to the major shopping



**FIGURE 5.7** Retail and other land-uses for each address 1880-1930.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.

district, had only a scattering of shops. They did not have the continuous frontages of retail stores, but rather their retailers dispersed amongst other land-uses even at the desirable ground level frontages.

The number of retail shops declined greatly not just on the side streets, but also at the eastern and western extents of the study area along Dundas Street (Figure 5.8). There were 1 000 fewer retail listings in the city directories over the duration of the 1880-1930 period in the block west of Talbot Street than its counterpart to the east. The retail district did not gradually taper off in intensity of use from the peak value intersection, but rather dropped precipitously across intersections. Whether it was turning a corner onto adjacent streets, or crossing the intersection on the same street, intersections were impediments to pedestrian flows (see Figure 5.1). As a result, disparate amounts of retail activity were found in close proximity at these nodes. Intersections were points of demarcation in the retail district.

Within the central retail district there was spatial differentiation by the type of goods sold. Apparel retailers, including men's, women's and children's clothiers, millinery shops and boots and shoe stores offered goods of the highest order. Apparel was, and remains today, a comparison good, where customers browse through a wide-variety of options in order to appease personal preferences. Shoppers usually browse several establishments in the search for their ideal garment. The apparel stores are often of high-quality construction and offer many services and carry a large amount of stock that changes rapidly with changing styles. Thus, they require large sales to cover the large overhead. Furthermore, they require a large number of potential customers since only those satisfied with the offerings in line with their personal style will make a purchase. As a result apparel retailers typically cluster together in the most accessible locations in order to attract customers as well as offer comparison shopping from one store to the next.

Stores selling apparel were clustered on the two blocks of Dundas Street, between Talbot and Clarence Streets (Figure 5.8). Apparel and other such high-order retailers could afford the high rents demanded for the prime locations by selling high-margin goods. The clustering of the stores served to draw customers to the area for the purpose of comparison shopping, each adding to and drawing from the large base of customers who shopped along mainstreet.



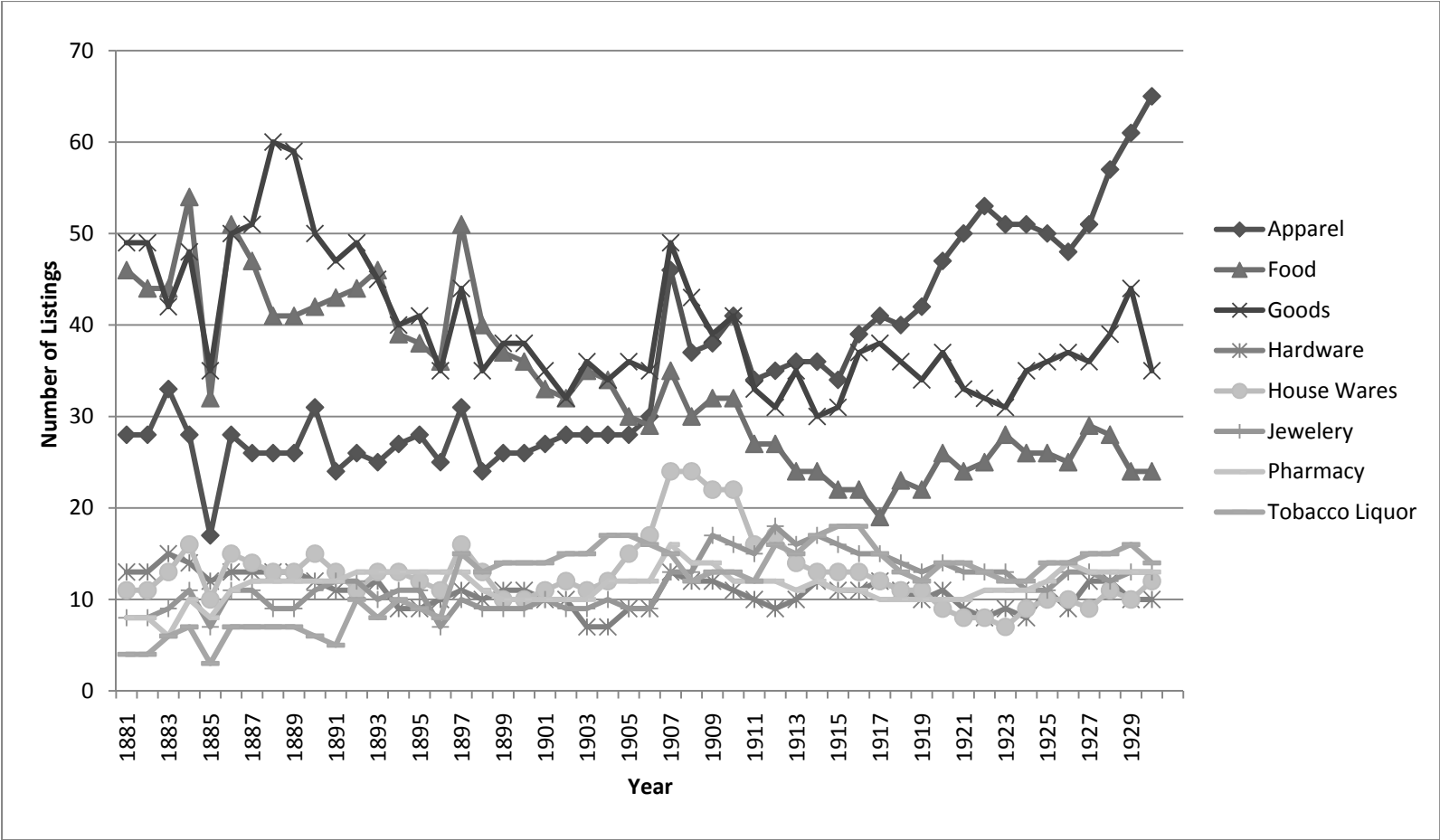
**FIGURE 5.8** Total number of retail types by block-face between 1880-1930.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.



In contrast to apparel retailers, those selling food, including butchers, grocers and fruit dealers were more likely to be found at the periphery of the district (Figure 5.8). Food stuffs are considered convenience goods; they generally do not need comparison between products. Profit margins for these goods are typically low. They thus did not need to be grouped together at the PVI to draw comparison shoppers, nor could they afford the rents in this area.

Over time the type of retailers operating in the core changed, reflecting the dynamic nature of the retail landscape (Figure 5.9). In the 1880s there were nearly fifty food retailers listed annually, but by the end of the 1920s the number of food retailers had declined by half to roughly twenty-five in the study area. This steep decline in food retailing is contrasted by the rise in apparel retailers, which in the 1880s numbered roughly twenty-five annual listings, but had nearly tripled to almost seventy by 1930. The number of other retail types remained relatively constant over the duration of the study period, each having roughly ten listings per annum (Figure 5.9).

This stark change in the proportions of food and apparel retailers found in the central retail district from 1880 to 1930 exposes changes to the functioning of the core. In the earliest days of London the core would have not only been a place for fashionable comparison shopping, but also where the staples of daily life could be obtained. Between 1880 and 1930 the number of food retailers in the central retail district decreased by half. As the city grew in both physical size and population, food retailing left the core, driven out by high rents and a desire to be close to the customers living in the newly-developing suburbs. Grocers typically attracted customers from short distances since their offerings were required frequently and comparison shopping was not necessary. So they relocated to the burgeoning residential communities outside of the core. Meanwhile, as the city grew, the core needed to service an increasing demand for fashion goods brought on by both population and income growth. Since fashion shopping involves the comparison of a number of options by the customers wishing to satisfy personal tastes, the cluster around the peak value intersection became increasingly aligned to such products. Furthermore, fashion retailers sold at a much higher mark-up than those selling foodstuffs, and thus drove up land rents in the core, causing food retailers to leave.



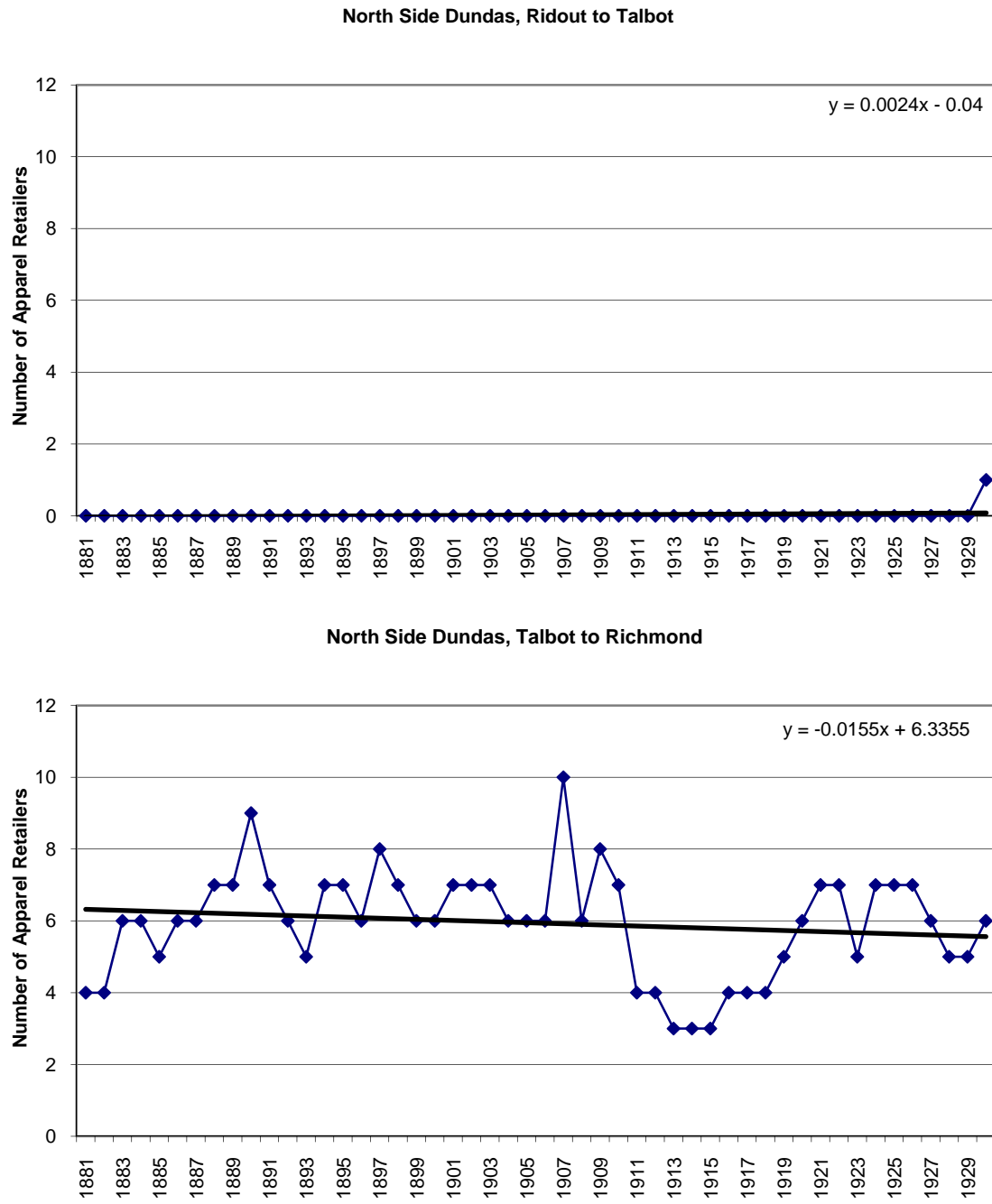
**FIGURE 5.9** The numbers of various retail types between 1880 and 1930.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.

In addition to its changing functional composition, the central retail district also witnessed a change in the spatial arrangement of its retailers. This shifting focus in the core is echoed by the changing property assessments which were previously discussed in this chapter. The most valuable lots in the city shifted eastward, across Richmond Street, between 1916 and 1927. Counts of the number of fashion retailers on each block along the north side of Dundas Street from 1880 to 1930 revealed an eastward momentum in their locations (Figures 5.10a-e). The blocks west of Richmond Street saw stagnation in the number of apparel retailers while those east of Richmond saw a large gain. This was especially pronounced in the block between Clarence and Wellington Streets, which in the 1880s had only one apparel retailer per year, but by the end of the 1920s contained eleven. Since apparel is high-order retailing, drawing many customers to an area in order to compare styles, the opening of new apparel stores in the east is indicative of the eastward shift in focus of the central retailing district over time.

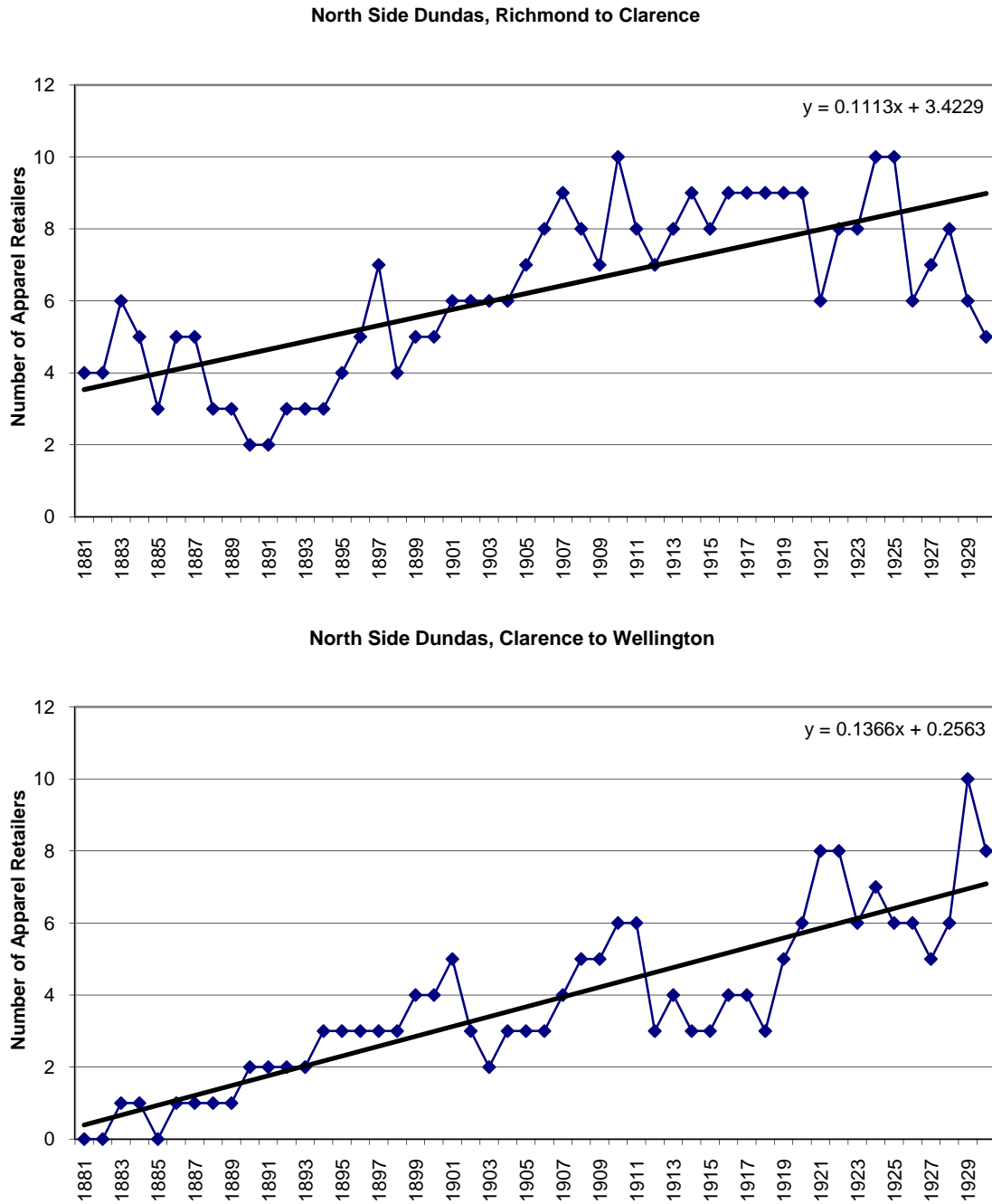
### **SUCCESS OF RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS**

The opening of a retail establishment was a perilous endeavour. A retailer had to strike the right balance of various market positions: the type and quality of goods, their price, and the services offered. The ability of a retailer to gauge the market and position himself or herself in this complex milieu can partially explain the probability of success. But even with these characteristics properly addressed, success could still be elusive. Both the location and type of products sold are evaluated to determine their impact on a store's success. Longevity is used as a proxy for success since financial figures are not available for most of the retailers. The length of time a retailer was in business is a strong indicator of his or her success in operating the business. Those that were not profitable would likely disappear.

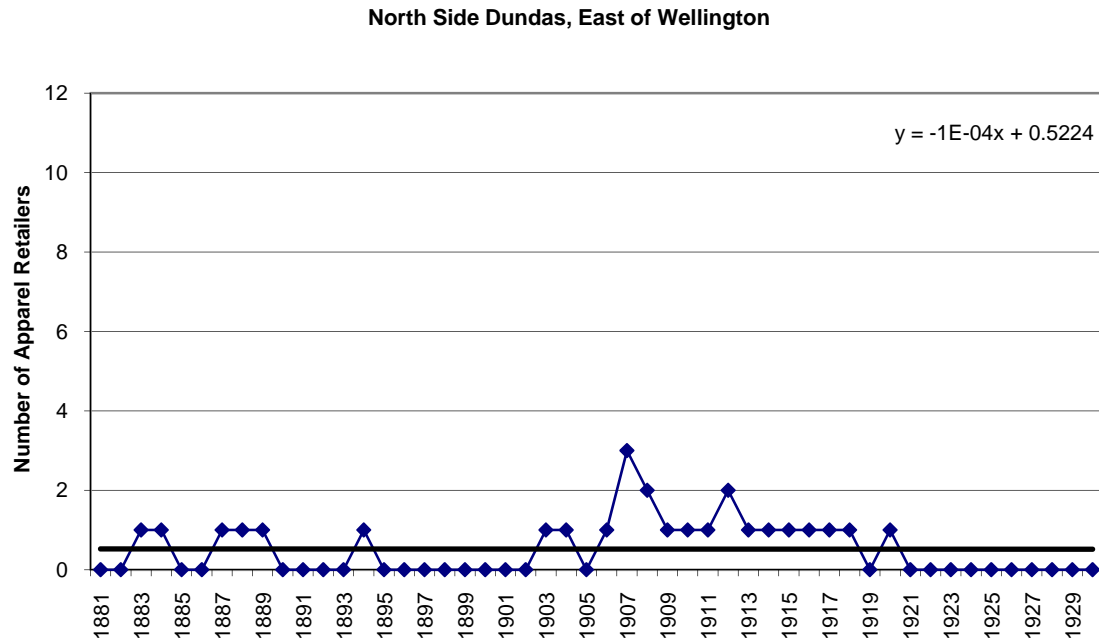
Of the 1151 unique retailers identified in the city directory listings from 1880 thru 1930, 293 were open only one year. The average length of time for a retailer to be in business was 6.0 years during this fifty year period. Only seven of the stores were in business for the entire fifty-year span. If a retailer beat the one in four odds



**FIGURE 5.10** The annual number of apparel retailers along the north side of Dundas Street grouped by block-face.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.



**FIGURE 5.10 (Continued)** The annual number of apparel retailers along the north side of Dundas Street grouped by block-face.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.



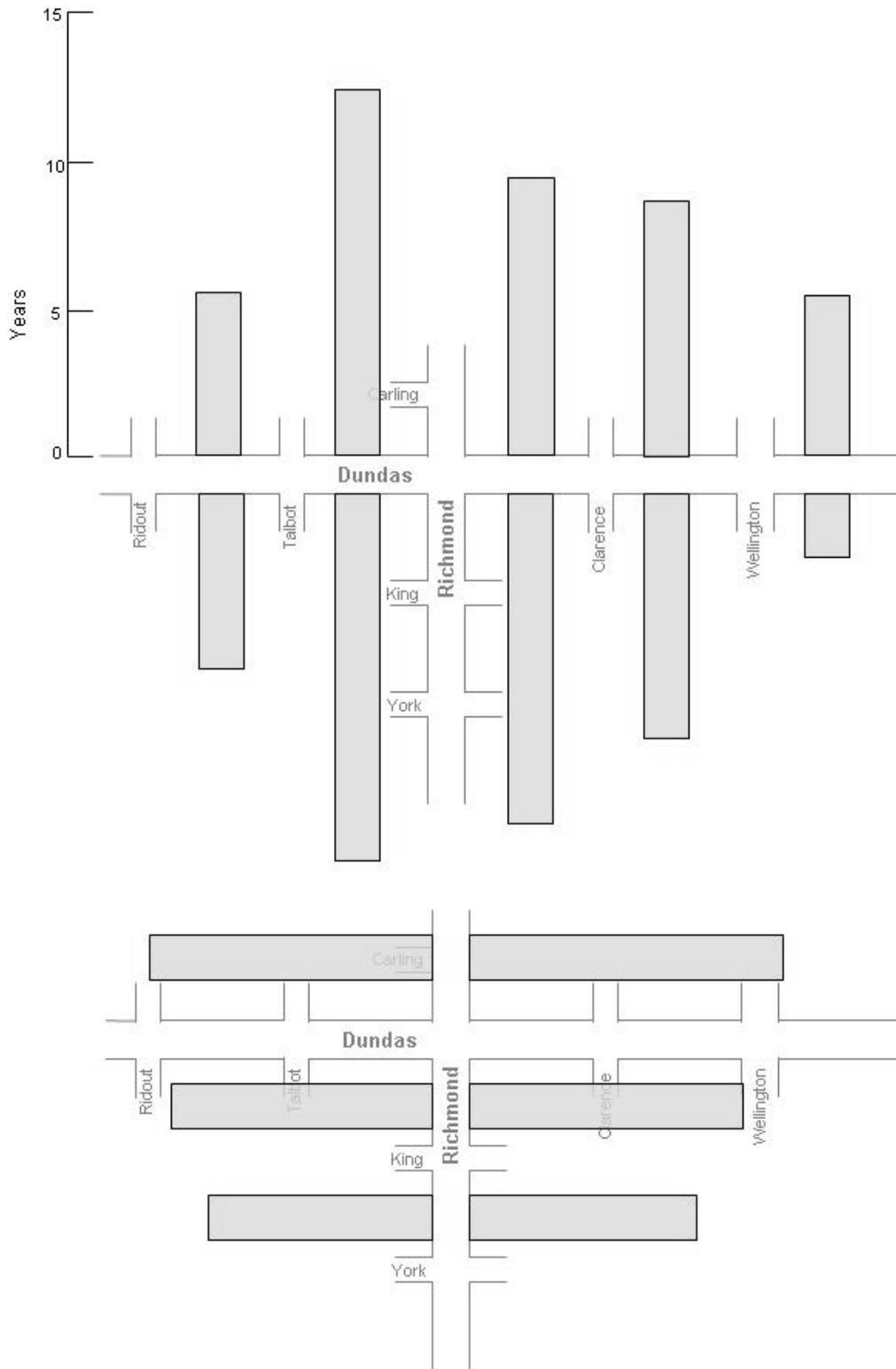
**FIGURE 5.10 (Continued)** The annual number of apparel retailers along the north side of Dundas Street grouped by block-face.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.

of failure during the first year of business, there was a relatively good chance of continued success.

The location of retailers along the mainstreet was an important predictor of their longevity (Figure 5.11). Those retailers along the block faces closest to the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets had the longest tenure in business, roughly ten years on average, whereas those at the most distant locations of the study area lasted on average only half as long. If longevity is used as a proxy for success, since failing businesses do not survive, it can be argued that being in the most accessible area increased a retailer's chance of success. It must be considered, however, that those stores which could afford the higher rents closer to the PVI were also likely more fiscally fit. Due to the higher land rents, these stores are expected to have been able to secure greater initial investment to pay these higher rents. They were also likely more fiscally savvy, as evidence by their resources; thus they were better able to create a successful enterprise. Furthermore, their greater capital would allow these retailers to weather tough times better than their ill-equipped peers.

Although it has been shown that the focus of the core was shifting eastward, it was the block west of Richmond Street that contained the retailers with the longest surviving retailers (Figure 5.11). It was in this block that the stalwart downtown retailers were located, such as Kingsmill's and Smallman and Ingram Department Stores, both of which were in business for the entire study period.

The type of goods sold also impacted upon the success of a store. Apparel retailers had the shortest longevity of all the retail types; the average store remaining in business for 5.5 years. Fashion retailing, by its very nature, was a risky venture as tastes and styles changed and getting the right product mix was essential. Reputation of the store itself as a fashionable place to shop was also important. Apparel stores had to properly judge trends and keep public attention or they would not survive as tastes were fickle. Food stores also had a relatively short lifespan. This can be attributed to their smaller capital reserves for start-up in the food sector, which did not require large investments in stock or fixtures. Thus food retailers were generally smaller players, who were without the means to weather downturns and less-likely to possess business savvy. Their small size, not the fickleness of the market, is likely the reason for their lower chance of success.



**FIGURE 5.11** The average length of time retailers were in business on each block-face.  
 Source: City Directories 1880-1930.



Pharmacies were the most persistent retailers, lasting on average 11.9 years. Their offerings were not fashionable; they offered many essentials for life. Prescriptions and ointments were constantly in demand, causing these operations to be much less risky business endeavours. Jewellers, although offering fashionable goods, were less prone to failure than apparel. Although they offered comparison goods, the styles of their offerings were much less prone to changes in fashions. Furthermore, jewellers required large capital investments in stock and furnishings in order to open a store, thus providing them with a sound financial footing on which to succeed.

To determine if retailers that disappeared from the central core went out of business or moved elsewhere in the city those retailers whose last years of operation were 1914 or 1915 were looked for in the entire 1916 city directory. In 1914 eighteen stores closed, two of which were found elsewhere in the city in 1916. In 1915 twelve stores closed, of these two moved elsewhere in the city. These numbers suggest that the vast majority of those stores which vacated their shops along Richmond or Dundas Street in the city's core did not move elsewhere, but rather went out of business.

A similar method was used to examine if stores which showed up in the study area in either 1917 or 1918 were located elsewhere in the city in 1916. None of the ten new stores in 1917 were found in the 1916 directory, and three of the seventeen new stores in 1918 were located elsewhere. Of these, two were located elsewhere in the central core and one, S. Badalato Fruits moved from 636 Dundas Street in East London. Thus, few stores came to the core from elsewhere in the city. Most new stores to the core were new to the city as well.

## **TOWN-PLAN**

The town-plan, initially set by Burwell in his survey of the city in 1826, framed all future development in the central retail district. The street network and lot pattern moulded the buildings that were constructed. All three townscape elements shaped the retail activities that took place within their confines. The lots and buildings were not only moulded the retail activities, but were continually

shaped by the retailers who were attempting to maximize their profits. Retailers had to conduct business within the confines of the built environment, which they subsequently moulded and adapted to suit their changing needs.

## **STREETS**

The street network is the stage on which many of the central retail district activities took place. The streets provided an essential circulation system bringing both customers as well as goods into the core and allowed them to circulate throughout. The streets were not just places for movement, however, as they acted as important social spaces for congregation. The streets defined the size and shape of the blocks, and in turn the lot fabric. The orientations of the buildings and the lots were set to the street network. Also facing the streets were the elaborate facades, including their display windows full of goods and advertisements to catch the attention of the passersby.

A significant amount of inertia exists in the street network; it is the most static of the town-plan elements (Conzen 1960). The street pattern is averse to change despite development pressures. This is largely due to any expansions of existing streets or the addition of new streets requiring expropriations of privately held lands. The appropriations would require large sums of capital in restitution, for both land as well as the building which would be taken for demolition. The mainstreet retail district had the highest land values in the city, making expropriations especially difficult in this district.

Expropriations were often met with political opposition, since many of the affected land owners, who were amongst the wealthiest and most powerful people in the city, were against giving up their land. Further, the general public were weary of spending the large sums on the project<sup>41</sup>. Despite the pressure from congestion on Dundas Street, the City of London did not have the financial resources or political backing to overcome these obstacles and invest in street opening or widening

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<sup>41</sup> Large cities often had the political power as well as greater access to capital allowing them to undertake the street widening projects, as well as much greater pressure due to traffic congestion inherent in the larger centres. Montreal undertook a series of widenings, which required the removal of entire streetscapes of facades. The unfavourable move caused many political issues, and even lead to the city's bankruptcy (Gilliland 2001).

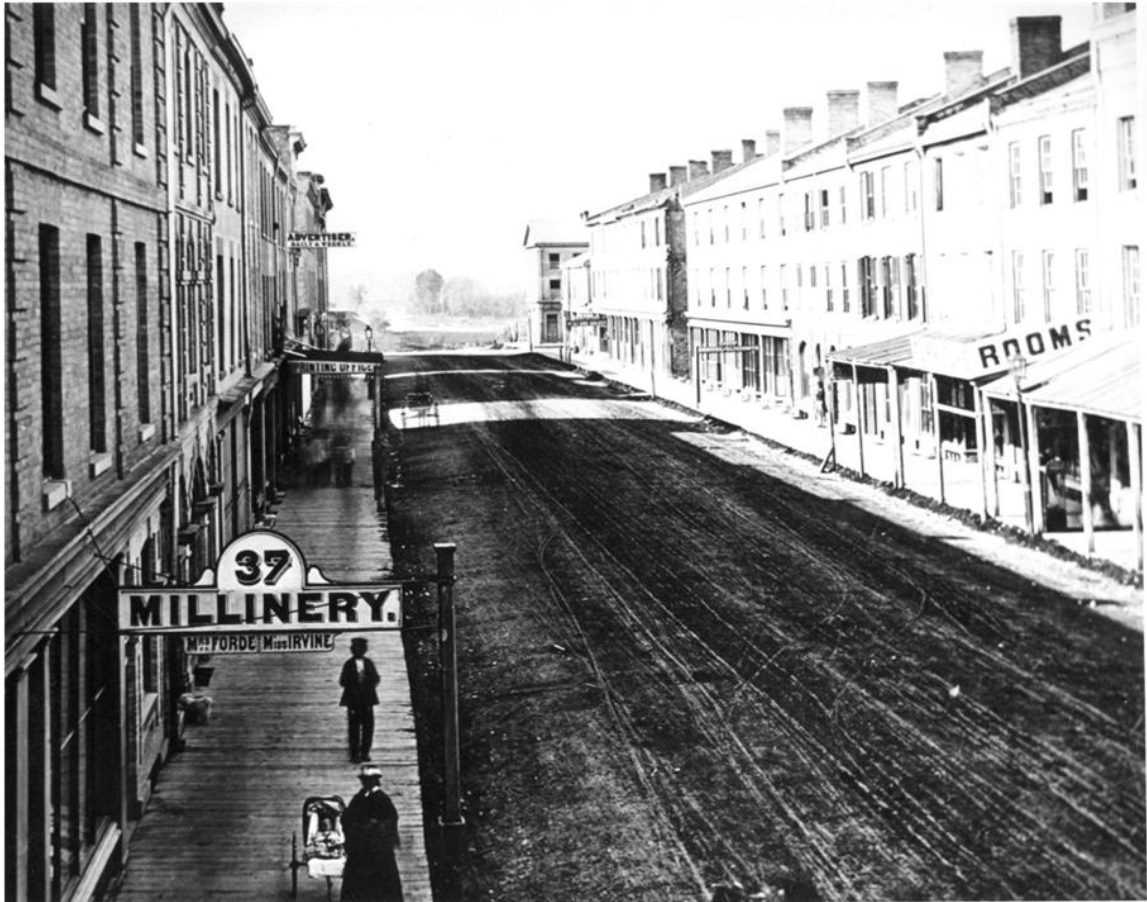
programs. Dundas and Richmond Streets remained the same width throughout the fifty-years from 1880 to 1930; even today they remain unchanged.

No changes in the street pattern were observed; neither openings of street segments nor closing of others occurred in the central retail district. Throughout the core of the city the entire grid was complete, with all of the surveyed streets opened even in the early years of settlement (See Figure 3.1). Today the grid of streets remains almost identical. The only differences being a few streets dead-ending at the Great Western Railway (now Canadian National) in the southern area of the core. Also Queens Avenue was reconfigured, cutting through a block in its approach to a bridge across the Thames at the western extent of the downtown in a mid-twentieth century modernist scheme to assist automobile flow (A.D. Margison and A.D. Margison and Associates 1960).

The streets in London were unimproved until the 1890s and early 1900s. Until then they were dirt roads which turned to mud when wet (Armstrong 149). As such they presented messy and uncomfortable conditions for mobility. Photographs from the 1860s through the 1880s showing Dundas Street and other major streets in the core attest to their poor state; wheel ruts are clearly visible in the dirt, making for a choppy ride (Figure 5.12). Manure would have been prevalent due to the large amount of horse traffic using the streets, compounding the dirtiness of the streets.

Gravel was applied in 1880s to help alleviate the problem, while cedar blocks and asphalt pavers were laid in 1895 (Environmental and Engineering Services City of London Environmental and Engineering Services Department 2005). By 1903 a program of street paving had begun, with Richmond Street, Queens Avenue, King Street and Dundas Street completed by 1905 (City of London Environmental and Engineering Services Department 2005). It is noteworthy that even in the premiere retail district; modernized streets were not present until the beginning of the twentieth-century. While retailers were continually advancing their operations and filling their shelves with many modern marvels, the streets remained unchanged from those found generations earlier.

Streets were a uniform 21 metres wide throughout the downtown core. They formed a regular grid of rectangular blocks 167 metres long in the east-west orientation and 121 metres wide in the north-south direction. Being rectangular caused more intersections along the north-south streets than the perpendicular east-



**FIGURE 5.12** The unimproved state of the roads in the core in the nineteenth-century; even Dundas Street, the city's mainstreet, contained wheel ruts and muddy conditions.

Source: Archives and Research Collections Centres (ARCC) - UWO

west streets. Distances between intersections were greater in the east-west direction, giving more room for retail sites along the Dundas Street corridor; however, this reduced the connectivity of Dundas and other east-west streets.

The gridded pattern of streets was superimposed over much of the city, making the central retail district undifferentiated from the others in terms of its street network, as well as block size and original lot partitioning. Dundas Street came into prominence as London's Mainstreet due to it also being the artery which connected London with points to the east (the port of Dundas near Hamilton) and west (Sandwich and Windsor). Dundas Street was no different in width than the other streets in the city due to the regularity of the survey. It was, however, among the first to be paved owing to its importance and traffic flows.

The public market was where farmers brought produce and many of the locals obtained their foodstuffs. Despite it being among the most important retail sites in the city, London's Covent Garden Market was not located along Dundas Street. Perhaps the property was too valuable to be given for a public entity along this street. As discussed in the previous chapter, the market lands were donated by the core landowners in an effort to bring the market back to the area when it had left for the periphery. They were generous, but not generous enough to give their best sites along Dundas Street. To facilitate this lack of frontage, a passageway connects the Market Square with Dundas Street midway between Talbot and Richmond Streets. This appears on the 1855 Peter's map and remains today. It allows for mid-block access from Dundas Street to the Market, eliminating the need to for pedestrians to walk to Talbot Street; a logical compromise to the Market Square not fronting onto the mainstreet.

There are only a few, small perturbations from this regular grid of streets in the downtown core. Carling Street runs midway through the block north of Dundas Street west of Richmond Street. This street, appropriately formerly known as North Street as denoted on the 1855 Peter's Map, was the northern extent of Burwell's original survey and ran along the edge of the Kent estate. Its deviation from the normal grid is the result of the lands of the estate not being included in the original

town limits. Also as a result of Kent's estate Richmond Street pivots eastward north of the core at Fullarton Street.

At 41.5 metres Streets east of Wellington are much wider than those to the west; they are similarly wide eastward of Richmond Street north of Queens Avenue. These areas were incorporated into the town of London later in the nineteenth-century and as such do not share the dimensions of their earlier counterparts. This deviation from the earlier grid causes problems where the two systems join, with some blocks having awkward bumps mid-way along their extents. It is likely that the newer survey, with its wider streets, was devised in preparation for increased traffic as the city grew.

The street supported many modes of transportation. Sidewalks, first constructed of wooden boardwalks and later of pavers or poured cement, were installed for pedestrians along both sides of Dundas and Richmond Streets. They afforded pedestrians some protection from the grime and unevenness of the streets (Figure 5.12). This was especially important for the act of shopping in the core, which was often the procurement of fashion – generally a refined activity. It was also one practiced extensively by women, so the protection that the sidewalks gave from the untidy streets was essential within the social pretences of the day.

Sidewalks gave shoppers a place to stroll while browsing the shops. Retailers took advantage of these spaces by actively trying to recruit customers into their shops. They fashioned large plate-glass windows along the sidewalks in order to display their wares, hoping to catch the eye of those who passed by on the sidewalk. Advertisements hung over the sidewalks, exclaiming the store's name and often the type of goods sold. Retailers also placed sandwich boards on the sidewalks, advertising the goods available. The sidewalks were also at times used as sites of retailing itself. Shopkeepers would bring merchandise onto the sidewalk in front of their stores, especially those items which they wished to move quickly, in order to hopefully make sales to the customers as they passed without even having to enter the store.

Pedestrians shared the street with other modes of transport. Horses were a common sight on the street, including those simply with saddle, as well as horses used to pull wagons or buggies in temperate weather, and in the winter sleighs and cutters. Bicycles were found on the streets in increasing numbers in the late-

nineteenth century (Herlihy 2004, 251). Several bicycle stores were found in the city directories, meeting the demand for this novel mode of transport. William Payne had a bicycle shop at 143 Dundas Street in 1881, but was out of business by 1883. In 1875 the first horse-drawn streetcars began to move passengers throughout London. The tracks ran down the centre of the streets, bringing customers to the shops from the residential areas surrounding the downtown core. A tangle of steel was found where the lines crossed, notably at the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets. The rails could prove dangerous to those who crossed them, especially for horse hooves and thin wagon wheels. The electrification of the streetcar lines in 1895 allowed for speedier and more reliable travel, not to mention a reprieve from the mess made by their equestrian predecessors.

While its physical configuration remained unchanged, the modes of transport which flowed along the street network steadily advanced. The streets increasingly became the domain of the automobile as the middle-classes began to be able to afford Henry Ford's horseless carriages in the 1910s and 1920s (Flink 1990). At first, automobiles, like the previous modes of transit, brought people to the core in great numbers; however, unlike the others, their continuing popularity would ultimately lead to the fall of the core. Although carriages pulled by horses were even more cumbersome to manoeuvre and park, their sparse numbers allowed them to be a viable mode of transit in the core. With many more cars than carriages, the downtown could not support the influx upon the mass adoption of the automobile. The core was too densely developed for the car, which requires large amounts of space for both manoeuvring and parking. The many intersections on the gridded street network were hindrances to the flow of traffic. Characteristics of the street network which first brought people to the core would later lead to its demise.

## **LOTS**

While the street pattern of the central retail district is regular and largely unchanging, the lot fabric is irregular and prone to modifications. As demands for space increased in the most desirable region of the city, the lot fabric was adapted to better utilize the relatively small area of land. Lot sizes and shapes in the core are variable; however, a typical lot was one that was long and narrow, maximizing the number of lots that could be located along short distances of street frontage. They

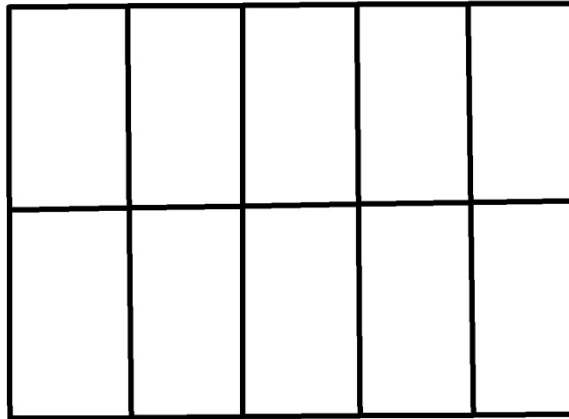
were also typically small, the older large lots having been carved up to allow for a more intense use of the space. Despite the development pressures in the core, past circumstances continued to impact the lot fabric. The obduracy of the original 1826 survey of lots remained.

Owing to their rectangular shape, the blocks were originally subdivided into two rows of five rectangular lots in Burwell's survey of 1826 (Figure 3.1). The longer faces of the blocks were along Dundas Street, which contained the row of five lots (Figure 5.13a). More lots were located along the mainstreet since it was intersected less frequently by cross-streets. These original lots were 1.5 chains (99 feet, 30.2 metres) in width along the street and extended 3 chains (198 feet or 60.4 metres) deep.

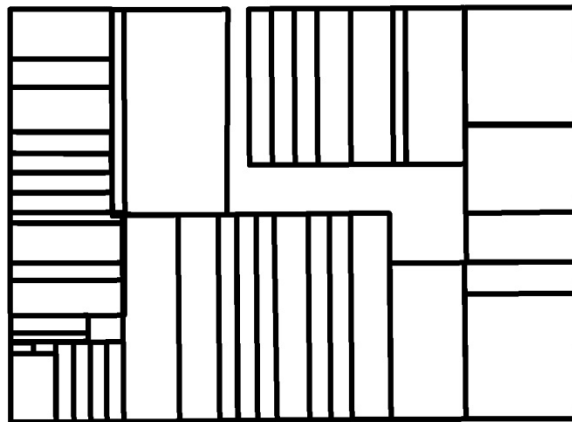
These original lots were large, at 2020 square metres and were found throughout the city in keeping with the uniformity of survey. At one-half acre each, they were suitable for early residents of the settlement to live comfortably; they could grow a garden, keep some livestock, and have a latrine a suitable distance from the living quarters. In the central core of the city, these generous dimensions were not, however, ideal to foster a dense cluster of retailers. The retailers wished to be close to one-another in order to draw customers. If each retailer were to locate on a lot it would mean a non-continuous streetscape, with spaces between the retail buildings. This would hinder customers' ability to stroll between the stores since the distances would be great. The low density would be very different from the dense developments that characterize many retail landscapes.

An 1839 map (Figure 3.1) shows continuous rows of buildings along the north and south sides of Dundas Street between Ridout and Talbot Streets. This indicates that the lot fabric had already been subdivided since the buildings are continuous rather than containing gaps as would be the case with the original lot fabric. The 1844 assessment lists fifty-six lots along these two blockfaces, whereas there were originally only ten surveyed, revealing the extent to which the lots had been split early in the development of the city. There are seven listings in the 1844 assessment for Lot Sixteen on the north side of Dundas Street, revealing it had been split six times in less than twenty years.

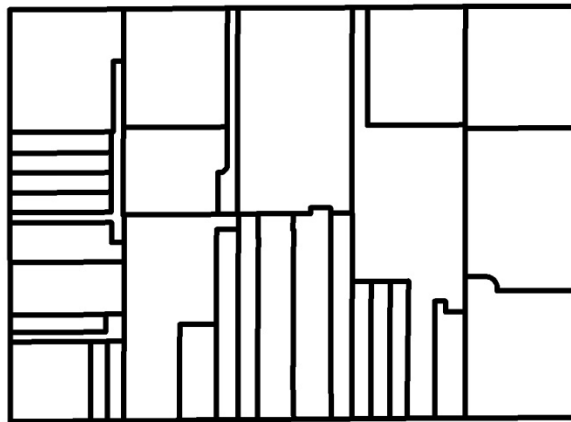




A) 1826



B) 1916



C) 2004

0 25 50 metres



**FIGURE 5.13** The lot fabric of the block along the north side of Dundas Street between Richmond and Clarence.

Sources: Peter's Map – UWO Map Library, City of London 1916 Tax Assessment Abstracts, City of London 2004 Parcel GIS layer

The 1916 assessment lists 189 properties along Dundas Street from Ridout to Waterloo Streets. As there were only 50 lots on the original survey, over the 100 year period from the city's founding in the early-nineteenth century to the peak of the downtown retailing in the early twentieth-century, the average lot was subdivided three times, resulting in four lots out of the original one.

These subdivisions or splitting of large lots into smaller ones almost exclusively produced long and narrow lots. Seldom were the lots severed at the rear, parallel to the street. Rather, the original lots were severed perpendicularly to the street, creating narrow frontages with essential access to the street. As recorded in the city assessment rolls, the average width of a lot along Dundas Street from Ridout to Waterloo in 1916 was nearly 33 feet (10.32 metres). The narrowest lot was only 10 feet (3.05 metres) across while the widest was 198 feet (60.35 metres). The average depth of a lot in 1916 was 153 feet (46.71 metres), with the shortest lot being 29.5 feet (8.99 metres) deep and the longest being 198 feet (60.35 metres). The long, narrow dimensions of the lots allowed as many retailers as possible access to the desirable street frontages near the peak value intersection. Lots outside the central retail district were still typically rectangular, but not nearly as narrow as their counterparts in the core.

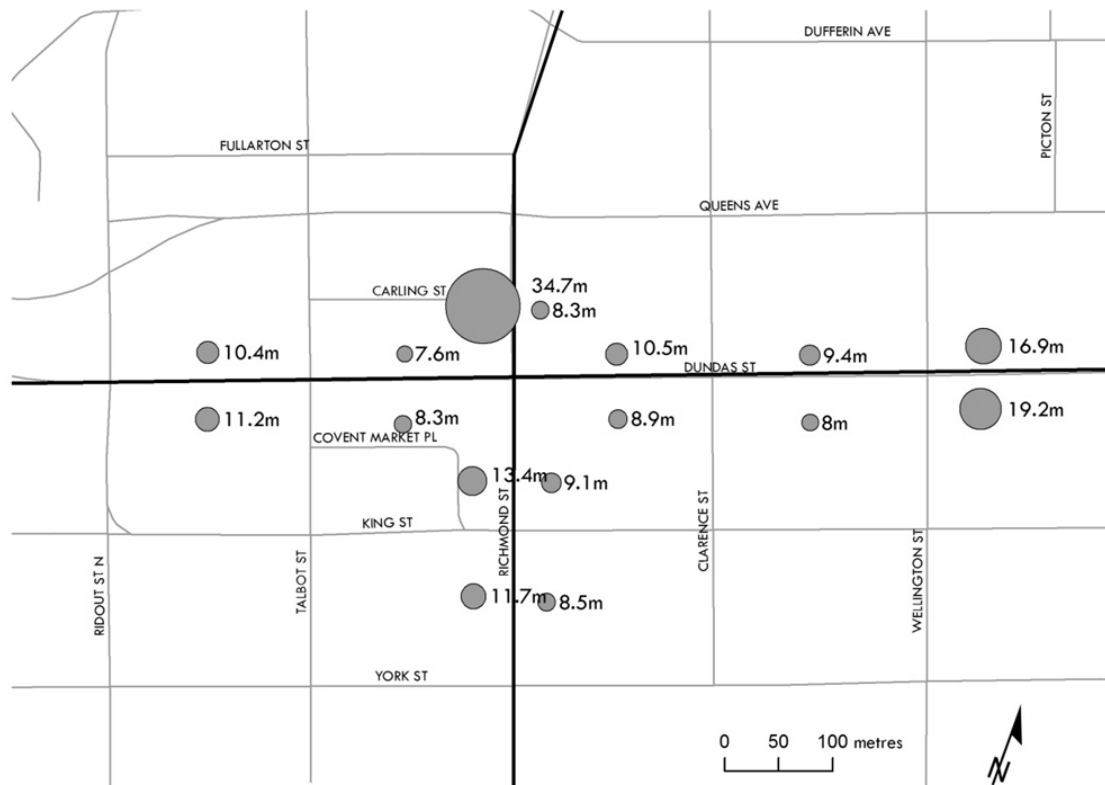
The maximum lot depth of 60.35 metres, or 198 feet was also the most common in 1916. This depth equates to half of the width of the downtown blocks, which were just over 120 metres wide. The original survey bisected the blocks, creating all lots with this depth (Figure 5.13a). Lots were seldom split at the rear, nor did they undergo amalgamation with those abutting their backs. One-hundred years later most of the lots retained their original depths (Figure 5.13b). The original survey framed future generations of development.

Due to their shallow depths, there are two blocks where the lots extend through the entire length of the block. The blocks on the north and south sides of Dundas Street between Talbot and Richmond Streets were shallow due to Carling (North) Street and Market Square respectively. These blocks which deviated from the regular, allowed for lots to extend through the entire block. These cases illustrate the interrelatedness of the townscape elements; the street network and the resulting block shapes impact upon the lot fabric, which in turn shapes the buildings which are constructed upon them.

These lots which extended the full length of the block were desirable since they had two street frontages, and subsequently two access points. As such they were more accessible to customers and had greater facade areas to display goods and advertisements. The lots facing the market were especially desirable since the market square was a busy public space crowded by customers shopping for goods at the market. Retailers facing the busy market square could draw customers into their premises through entrances. Smallman and Ingram's Department Store assembled what was perhaps the choicest lot in the city when they expanded their store in the 1892 (Dampier 1935). By occupying the lot at the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Street they could draw in customers from both of these busy streets, as well as at the rear of the store from the Market Square. The store's marketing program actually boasted of its accessibility, for example its 1911 Fall and Winter catalogue.

In general, the block-faces closest to the peak value intersection had the narrowest average frontages on the street (Figure 5.14). Lots averaged from 7.6 metres to 10.5 metres on these blockfaces in 1916, whereas the average frontages in more distant locations along Dundas Street east of Wellington and west of Talbot Streets ranged from 10.4 metres to 19.2 metres. Disaggregating the data to look at the correlation between every lot and its distance to the core reveals a positive correlation between these two variables, although small ( $R=0.1956$ ). When only the lots along Dundas Street were studied the correlation increased ( $R=0.2510$ ), whereas only a very weak positive correlation was found for the lots along Richmond Street ( $R=0.0316$ ). Thus, there is a positive correlation between distance to the peak value intersection and lot width; as distance increases from the PVI so too does the lot width. This relationship is especially pronounced for lots along Dundas Street, the primary shopping street in the city. Demand for space was great along Dundas Street, and subsequently land values were high. This high demand for space resulted in the lot frontages to narrow through a series of severances. Demand formed a gradient radiating out from the peak value intersection as recorded in the land values. As distances increased, demand decreased as did the pressure to split the lots into smaller pieces.

One blockface which notably does not keep with this trend in increasing lot size with increasing distance from the PVI is that immediately north of the PVI on



**FIGURE 5.14** Average lot width grouped by block-face in 1916.  
 Source: City of London Tax Assessment Abstracts 1916

the west side of Richmond Street, which contained the largest average lot width at 34.7 metres. This blockface contained only one lot, which extended the entire length of the segment, a result of the shallowness of the block. The one large lot on this block-face indicates that real-estate developers were amassing large parcels of the downtown retail district and built large buildings to be rented to individual retailers. This lot was given seven street addresses on the 1916 Fire Insurance Plan and contained five discrete units that were leased individually. The assessment records indicate that the structure was owned by the Palmer Estate and was worth \$18 200. The 1916 city directory lists twelve occupants of this building including Albert E. Ladell's Cigar Shop, Anthony Tillman who was a merchant tailor, Hambly's Stationary Store, Wallace Drugs, and several financial and service offices including a barrister and an architect. The retailers rented the ground floor units to be accessible to passers-by while the upper floors were occupied by the office functions which did not need to display their wares, and clients would be willing to ascend stairs to enter the premise. Thus, all 12 occupants of this structure were renting their units from a common owner much like the relationship in the contemporary shopping centres.

This example also illustrates how corners were dealt with within the lot fabric of the core. Lots created in the original survey from 1826 extended to the midpoint of the block, and were equally spaced along the east-west streets such as Dundas (Figure 5.13a). North-south streets such as Richmond Street had only two lots on each block-face, which were also accessible from the east-west streets. As previously discussed, these one-half acre lots were too large to allow for the density required in the central retail district and were consequently subdivided. The interior lots on the east-west streets were simply split lengthways, with each resulting lot having access, although narrow, to the street (Figure 5.13a,b). Meanwhile the lots on the corners could be split with many more options since they had access to two streets.

The corner lots were split to take advantage of access to the more prominent street. In the case of the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets, lots were subdivided to face Dundas Street (Figures 5.13a,b). This strategy created new lots along the more valuable frontage, rather than the secondary street. These new lots were usually much shallower than their midblock counterparts, affording additional

lots to be created with access to the secondary street. This pattern of narrow and shallow lots taking advantage of the principle street and others filling in the rear of the lot on the secondary street can be observed throughout the downtown core.

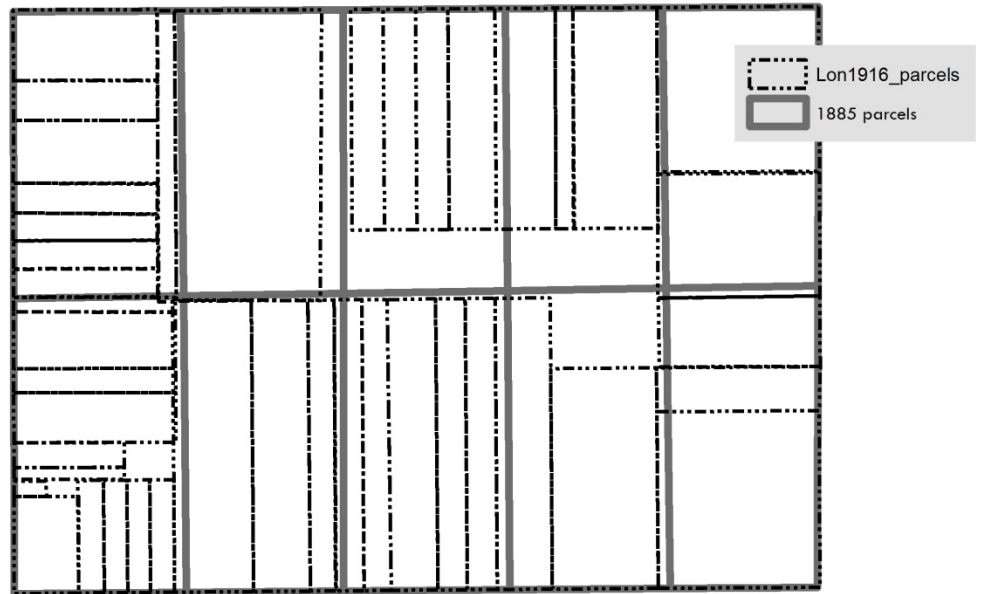
The block bounded by Dundas Street, Queens Avenue, Richmond Street and Park Avenue (now Clarence Street) is used to further study the lot severance/amalgamation process between 1826 and 2004. In 1826 the block was divided into the standard ten one-half acre lots found throughout the city (Figure 5.13a). By 1916 the assessment<sup>42</sup> shows that the block had been split into 45 lots. The average lots size accordingly went from 2020 square metres in 1826 to 409 square metres in 1916. Not all faces of the block were evenly subdivided. There were 16 lots along Dundas Street whereas only twelve on the Queens Avenue side, including two private lanes which were very narrow parcels that gave access to the rear of the lot. The Richmond Street face, originally only containing two parcel frontages had fifteen while Clarence Street had only five by 1916. This unequal splitting demonstrates the effect of demand for space on the lot splitting process. Space was in much greater demand along Richmond Street than Clarence Street, resulting in three times as many lots on the former than the later. Likewise, space along Dundas Street also was in greater demand than Queens Avenue, and subsequently had more lots.

Since the early-twentieth century the process of lot splitting has been replaced by lot amalgamation. The 45 lots found in 1916 have been reduced to 33 in 2004 (Figure 5.13b,c). Lot amalgamations have taken place over this period, causing the average lot size to increase from 409 square metres in 1916 to 608 square metres in 2004. The amalgamation process was not, however, equally applied throughout the block. In 2004, sixteen lots remain along Dundas Street, the same number present in 1916. Notably it is those parcels along Queens Avenue that were amalgamated, reducing the total number of lots in this block.

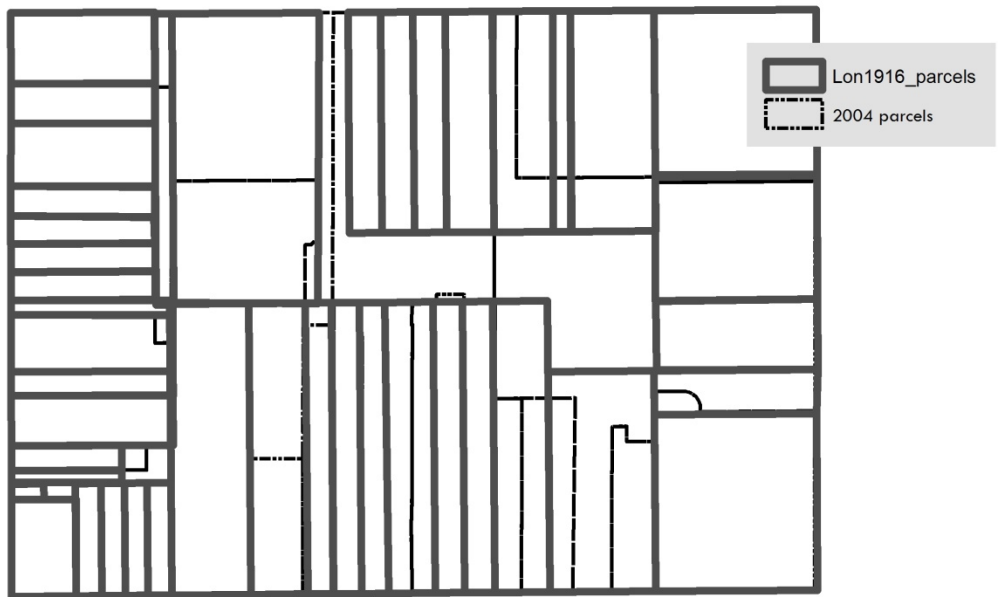
Dundas Street remained the city's foremost shopping area throughout most of the twentieth-century and its lots structure remained finely spaced. The demand

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<sup>42</sup> The lot fabric was recreated from the data in the 1916 assessment since cartographic sources showing the lot subdivisions are not available. Whereas other cities have the lot lines indicated on the fire insurance plans, London's sets did not have this data represented.



A) 1826 - 1916



B) 1916 - 2004

0 25 50 metres



**FIGURE 5.15** Overlays of the lot fabric over time shows the impact of the past on subsequent patterns.

Sources: Peter's Map – UWO Map Library, City of London 1916 Tax Assessment Abstracts, City of London 2004 Parcel GIS layer

for space along Dundas Street held the amalgamation process at bay as the high land values prohibited many developers who did not have the financial resources needed to acquire the lots. Furthermore, the built capital invested in the structures occupying the lots along Dundas Street was significant. Thus, for amalgamation to take place, the value of the building, as well as the lot would have to be paid. With fewer buildings and lower land values lot amalgamation could be accomplished much easier on streets with less demand.

The lot splitting and amalgamation process was highly contingent upon past conditions. Although developed nearly two-hundred years prior, the lot fabric surveyed in 1826 still remains visible in 2004 (Figures 5.13 a,b,c). All of the lot boundaries created in the 1826 plan remain in 1916; the new lots were created by an internal splitting of these established lots (Figure 5.15a). By 2004 some of these original lot lines had been erased, but the majority still remained (Figure 5.15b). The residues of the past are thus felt on the contemporary development. The lot fabric can be traced back to the earliest survey, even in the core of the city where development pressures spurring change are most intensely felt.

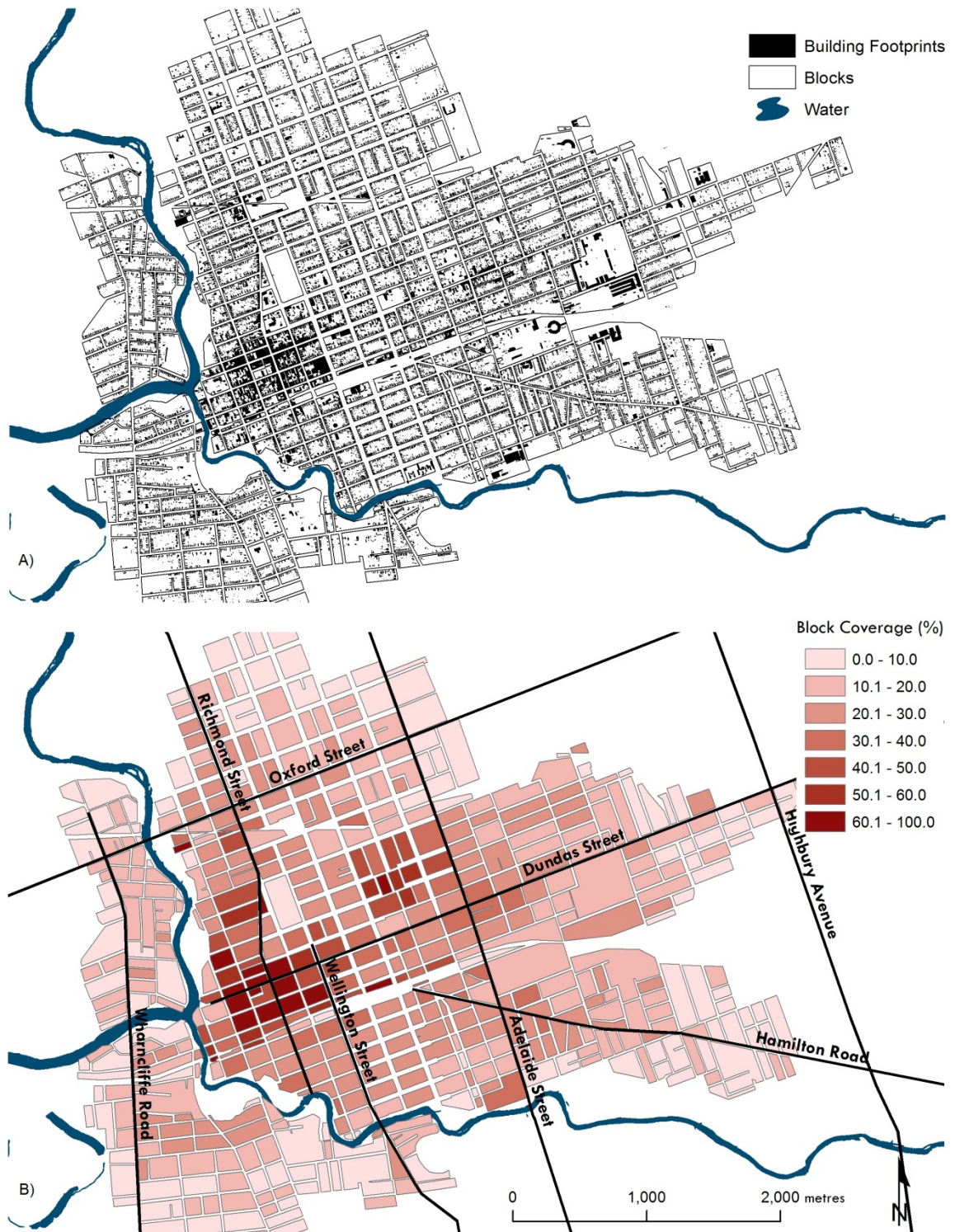
Lots are intangible features in the urban landscape. Their boundaries, recorded on paper or today in digital databases, correspond to relative places on the ground, rather than physical features. Their presence is, however, felt through several tangible elements in the urban landscape. Fences typically follow lot lines demarcating property boundaries. They also constrain the physical dimensions of the buildings which build upon them. Their qualities shape the functioning of an area, and in turn are shaped by the desires to better utilize the space.

## **BUILDING BLOCKPLANS**

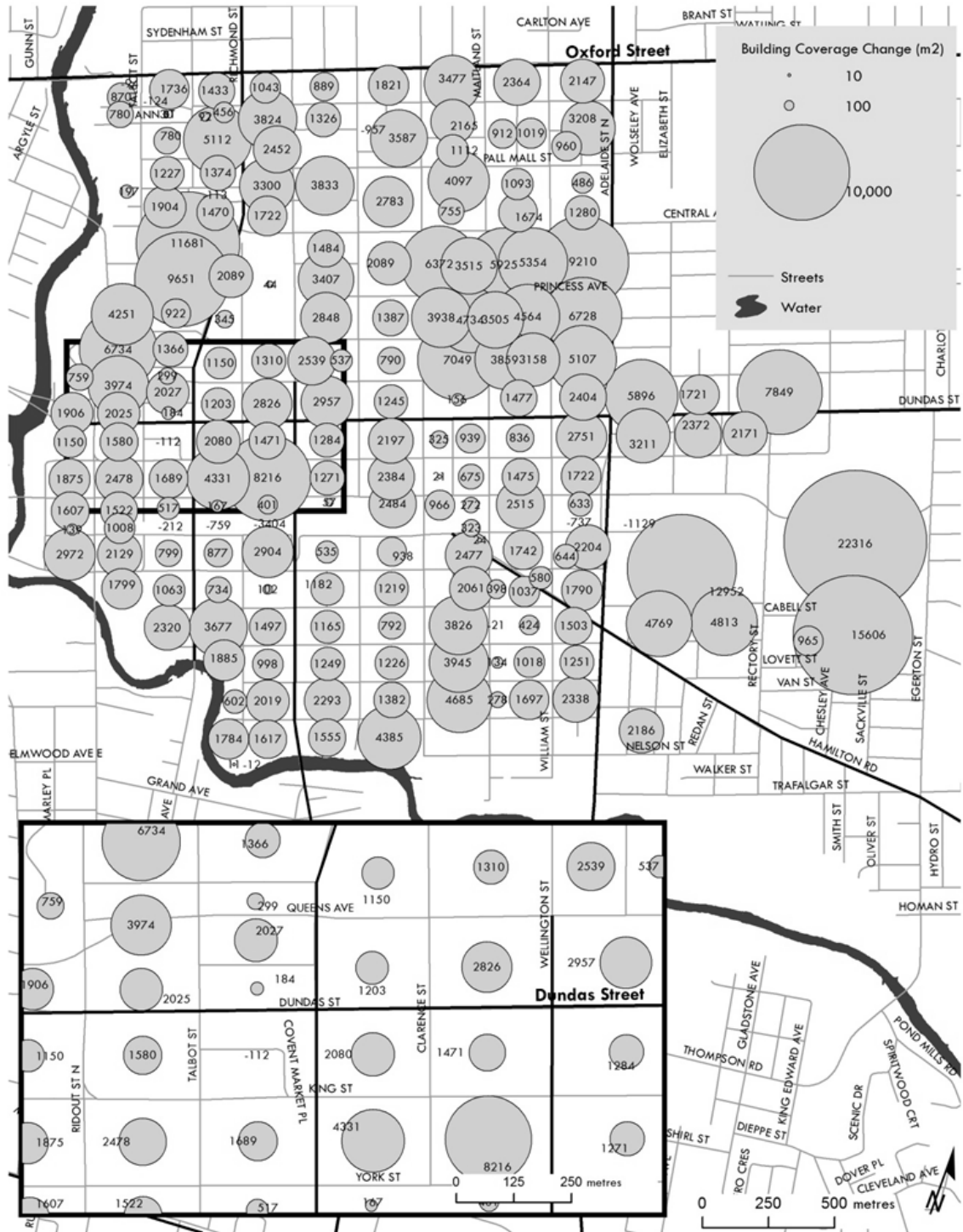
Demand for space in the core was great, and was accordingly put to much greater use than anywhere else in the city. Buildings covered an extensive area of the lots and blocks in the core, maximizing the limited space within the desirable mainstreet district. These large building areas allowed for greater selling floors, usually leading to greater sales and profits.

The highest building density in the city in 1915, measured by building coverage on each block, was found in the downtown core (Figure 5.16a). The three-





**FIGURE 5.16** Building footprints A) and percentage coverage by block B).  
 Source: Goad (1915) - Fire Insurance Plan for the city of London



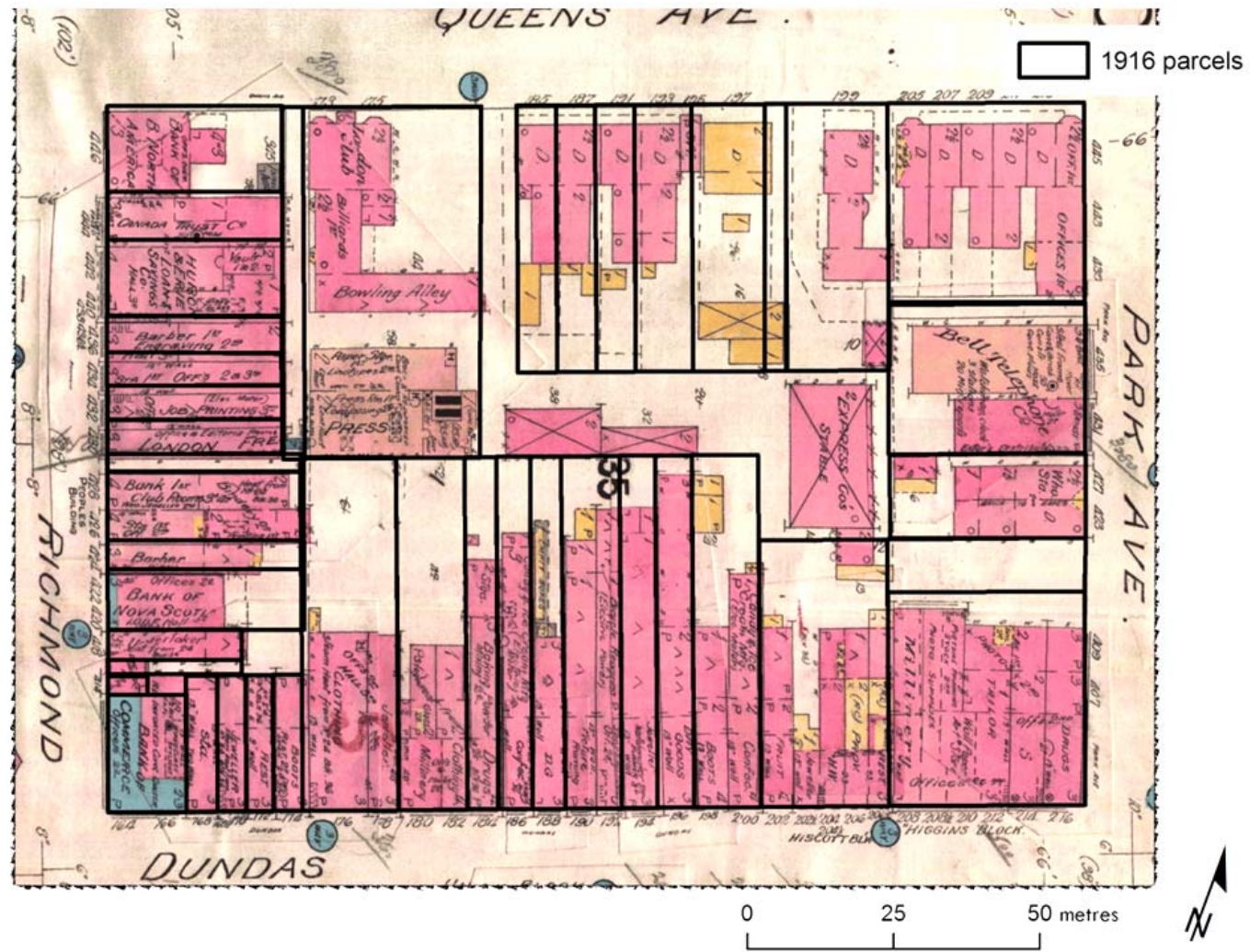
**FIGURE 5.17** Changes in total building coverage between 1888 and 1915.  
Source: 1888 & 1915 Fire Insurance Plans

dimensional representation of the relative density of the building coverage by blocks across the city clearly shows a spike at the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets. The densities tapered off significantly from this point as distance increased. Outside of the core densities remained relatively even, but low. The two-dimensional map of the area further illustrates this trend (Figure 5.16b). Most of the core of the city had over 50 percent built coverage by block, with some areas over 90 percent. Areas outside of the core had significantly lower densities, between 20 and 40 percent.

By 1888 the buildings in the central retail district covered nearly all available land. Thus little change was seen in the building coverage in this area between 1880 and 1930 (Figure 5.17). Greater increases in building density were found in areas at the fringes of the core since they offered areas for growth on undeveloped spaces and were in demand due to their proximity to the city centre. Despite being mostly covered in the 1880s, some growth did occur on the blocks along Dundas Street (Figure 5.17 inset). Between 1 200 and 3 000 square metres of space was added to the total built footprints on these blocks, mostly at the rear of existing buildings where space was still available; empty frontages affording new development could also be found on the less developed cross-streets. The block that contained the Covent Garden Market actually saw a decrease in its total built area since several outbuildings at the market were destroyed, and the rest of the block was nearly completely covered by 1888.

The sizes and shapes of the buildings are highly dependent upon the dimensions of the lot on which they were constructed. This is especially true for areas of the downtown core, where pressure for space was intense, and every inch of space was utilized. The buildings have no setback from their front and side lot lines (Figure 5.18). The buildings abutted each other, creating a continuous row of structures. The zero setbacks were first documented on the 1839 map of London, and remain throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries.

Buildings assumed the dimensions of the lot on which they were constructed. Thus, the buildings, like the lots, were long and narrow in shape. Buildings did not straddle the property lines (Figure 5.18). Whereas elsewhere in the early city buildings were at times constructed without regard to property lines and legal ownership, in the core where land was much more valuable, owners took notice of



**FIGURE 5.18** Lot boundaries superimposed on the fire insurance plan of 1915.

Sources: Goad (1915) - Fire Insurance Plan for the city of London, 1916 City of London Tax Assessment Abstract

infringing developments and therefore buildings strictly adhered to the boundaries of the parcel.

The long narrow buildings, a reflection of the underlying lot structure, were typically five times as deep as they were wide. In some instances, notably on the north side of Dundas Street in the block that extended through to Carling Street, buildings existed that were ten times as deep as they are long. The buildings located at corners were necessarily much shallower due to the shallow lots created in the aforementioned subdividing process.

The rear of the buildings typically did not extend to the lot boundaries. Whereas the fronts of the buildings were all uniformly set-back, abutting the street right-of-way, the rears of the buildings had a much more jagged appearance (Figure 5.18). This uneven pattern at the rear of the structure also gives indication of the continuous additions that were added to the structures. The rears of the buildings were usually the only spaces left for growth. Many of these rear extensions appear to be less substantial than the front of the structures, being constructed of wood and only one or two stories tall whereas the fronts were typically three to four stories high and of brick construction. This process of adding on to the rear of the long and skinny lots is

Several of the lots had more than one building. For example the lot at 202-206 1/2 Dundas Street has what appears to be multiple structures. The Fire Insurance Plan shows that this is called the Hiscott Block, but it is interesting that it does not appear to be one structure. There are numerous uses for this structure, with hardware, fruit and jewellers to name just three. Furthermore, the rear of the building is jagged, implying that it was built in stages.

The additions to the rears of the downtown buildings in this North American city parallels the process described in the burgage cycle that Conzen (1960) documents in medieval British towns. The burgages are long skinny lots found in early British town-plans, and are very similar to the shapes of the lots in London's downtown. In both examples of this process, the front of the lot is initially built up, forming a continuous band of buildings along the street. Successive additions are then added to the rears of the buildings, the only area left unoccupied. Since the study period was only the fifty year interval between 1880 and 1930, the culmination of the burgage cycle, where the lots are cleared and the process begins

anew, is not documented for London, but was for the much longer histories of British towns (Conzen 1960).

As it is questionable where to delineate distinct structures where they abut each other in the core, there are issues in calculating the areas of individual buildings. Further issues occur when multiple users share one contiguous structure such as a manufacturing plant at the rear of a retail establishment. Without being able to go into specifics, the general characteristics of the building footprints of structures in the central retail district were between fifty and one-hundred square metres. In contrast, the largest building in the core was the Smallman and Ingram Department Store which had a footprint of 1523 square metres, or ten to twenty times the size of the typical retail establishment.

## **BUILDING FORMS IN THREE-DIMENSIONS**

Although building footprints show interesting signs of the development process downtown, the three-dimensional qualities of the buildings must be evaluated to better appreciate the dynamic of retailing in the core. Retailers strove to build attractive buildings to entice customers into their shops while dealing with the confines of limited space along the mainstreet. The city's best retail houses expressed their prominence in the design of their facades, each attempting to outdo the other. The resulting streetscape was a variegated collection of ostentatious building facades; the mainstreet defining much of the overall character of the city at the turn of the twentieth century.

The structures of the central retail district were, as already mentioned, long and narrow as dictated by the shape of the lots which attempted to maximize the space in this high demand area. These dimensions caused some difficulties for the retailers who had to be creative in their building design. Frontages were essential for physically getting customers into the stores. The doors needed to be wide and appealing in order to funnel customers inside. An obscured doorway would have trouble drawing in customers. The frontages were also important for drawing attention of potential customers; the wider the frontage, the more visible the store. Space for signage was needed to advertise the name of the establishment, and if the

name was not recognizable, the types of goods that were sold. Window displays were desirable to exhibit the type and quality of the goods available inside, as well as to entice desires of potential customers through elaborate dioramas (see Leech 1994 for a description of Department store window selling techniques). Windows often took up all remaining space at the street level not dedicated to the doorways. Within the very modest street frontages available the retailer had to maximize the limited space available.

The buildings were exclusively of brick construction or concrete construction by 1916 as indicated on the fire insurance plan. The 1888 plan does show wooden structures at 191-195 and 252-254 Dundas Streets, which were replaced by 1916. Wood construction was still widely found in 1916 for the framing of additions at the rear of the main structures, and in small sheds also at the rear of the lots that provided storage. Also, a few instances of wood framed portions were actually located in the centre of the structure, likely artefacts of past updates and additions that were never replaced, but rather amalgamated into the structure.

Being of brick construction, these structures had a solid and arresting department, contrasting with the wooden structures found elsewhere in the city at the time. Their heights also deviated from the norm of the day. At a time when most buildings in the city were only one or two stories tall, the typical retail structure was three or four stories in height; the tallest was the Smallman & Ingram Department Store at five stories. The height of a typical commercial story was also greater than a typical residential storey, the former were approximately ten feet high while the later were approximately ten feet, adding to the overall height of the structure. Heights were further exaggerated by the additions of cornices and parapet walls.

The tall buildings were important for drawing customers' attention. Since widths were limited, the buildings maximized the vertical space in order to appear larger. This allowed more room for signage and ornamentation. The appearance of larger structures also indicated the size and durability of the retail premise which was housed within. The substantial facades gave the impression that a retailer was successful, being able to occupy a large structure, even if it did not occupy the upper floors, which were often let to offices or other uses.

The rear portions of the buildings were typically only one or two stories tall, shorter than the fronts lining the street. As these were often additions it is

interesting that the rear portions were not built to the full height of the original structure. This could be due to the space only being needed on the main floor for selling area; the upper floor areas were in less demand as they were occupied by offices and other uses.

Like the wooden structures, it was the shorter structures that were replaced between 1888 and 1916. Comparing the fire insurance plans from these years shows that all of the one and two story buildings along the mainstreet were replaced by 1916 with three and four story structures. The original two-story structures at 208-212 Dundas Street were replaced by the brick, three-story tall Higgins Block. At 227 Dundas Street the one and one-half story structure was replaced by three-story edifice. It is noteworthy that even by 1888 most of the buildings were substantial nature and few replacements occurred. Those that were replaced were unsuited the central retail district and surrendered to the pressure for intense development at the core.

### **THE RETAIL STREETScape**

The continuous rows of tall brick structures with elaborately ornamented facades made for an arresting streetscape along Dundas and Richmond Streets. In the decades between 1880 and 1930, these streetscapes were unlike any other in the city, which was predominantly a landscape inhabited by low density detached buildings of one or two stories. Large sums of capital were invested in these buildings, with the aim of drawing customers, making sales and ultimately turning profits.

Customers walking along Dundas Street at the turn of the twentieth-century were met by a striking pastiche of building styles, elaborate finishes and eye-catching signage. The retailers strove to draw attention to their buildings, and thus attract customers and their wallets. Buildings were constructed in the contemporary architectural motifs of the time. The choice of materials, colours, signage and other accoutrements were carefully selected to be eye-catching but not considered ostentatious or gaudy, hurting the image of the firm. Each owner tried to distinguish his or her building from its neighbours. In doing so, the streetscape became a lively affair of noteworthy buildings.

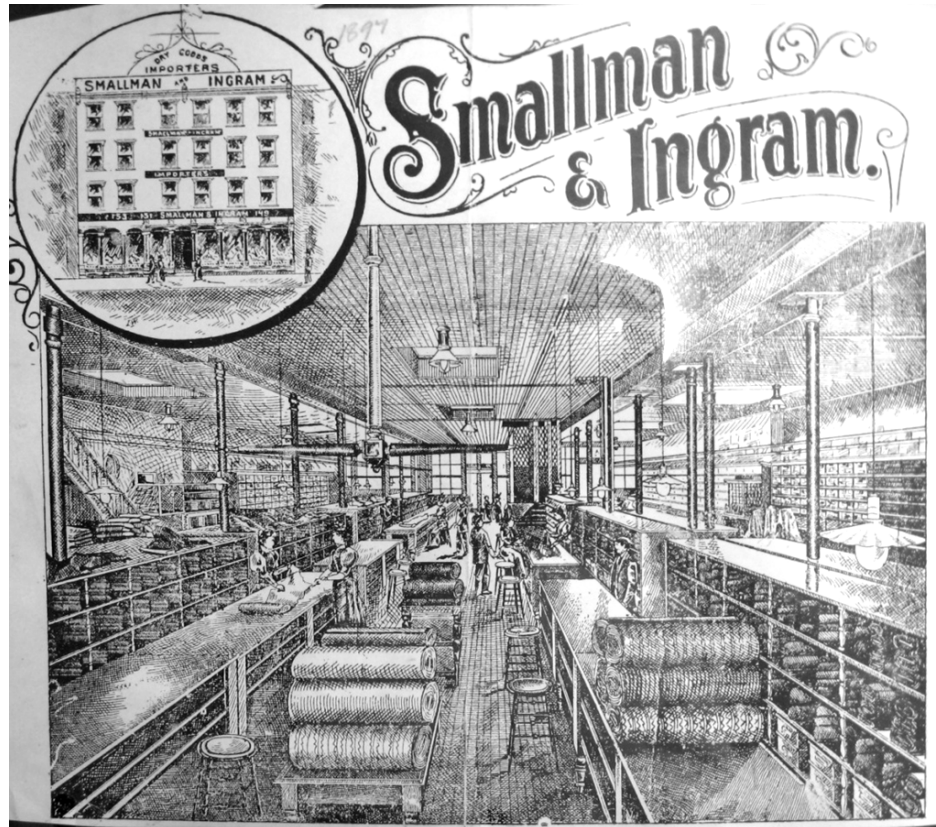


The streetscape was almost entirely continuous; few gaps were present besides where streets intersected it. Market Lane, providing access to the public square from mainstreet, was the most significant gap. Elsewhere, two small gaps of approximately 3.0 metres and 3.5 metres were found on the south side of Dundas Street between Richmond and Clarence. Two other small gaps were present on the block to the east. The streetscape east of Wellington had many continuity breaks. These gaps were of insufficient width to permit the erection of unique buildings. They could have allowed additions to the sides of the existing buildings; however, they remained in order to provide access to the interior portions of the block. They could also have been orphaned slivers, resulting from successive lot splitting and amalgamations over time.

Architectural style provided a recognizable feature for patrons in order to distinguish the stores. Many of the advertisements for these businesses included a picture of the building; campaigns for both Smallman & Ingram and Kingsmill's stores included representations of their buildings (Figure 5.19). Having notable architecture would allow the customer to recall the advertisement when later passing by the structure. In some cases the architecture was so important for marketing purposes that the businesses used the style in its name. B.A. Mitchell's Pharmacy at 114 Dundas Street was housed in a structure called the Gothic Hall, a building not surprisingly fashioned in the neo-gothic style, with tall arched windows. This pharmacy was known by its building style as often as by its proprietor's name (Figure 5.20).

Photos of the Gothic Hall in context along the street show how striking this building's style was in contrast with the austerity of its Georgian neighbours in the mid-nineteenth century. Its tall arched windows differed from the squat rectangular openings of its peers and the spires on the cornice added intrigue (Figure 5.21). By the late-nineteenth century it was a much less obvious component of the streetscape as the surrounding buildings had changed their facades, adopting more ostentatious architectural styles and ornaments.

As architectural fashions evolved, the buildings were adapted to keep up with the contemporary styles of the day. Facades were reconstructed, implementing new styles and materials in their design. The traditional brick facades were enhanced with glazed terra cotta tiles as well as elaborate ironwork. Changes to the



**FIGURE 5.19** Advertisement for Smallman & Ingram's Dry Goods Store shows the building's interior and exterior.

Source: The London Room, London Public Library

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# GOTHIC HALL.

(ESTABLISHED 1846)

Received, a full assortment of

**Nail Brushes.**  
**Hair Brushes.**  
**Flesh Brushes.**  
**Tooth Brushes.**  
**Clothes Brushes.**  
**Metallic Hair Brushes.**

From the Best Manufacturers.

---

## B. A. Mitchell & Son,

114 DUNDAS STREET WEST,  
 NORTH SIDE. LONDON, ONT.

A)

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## B. A. MITCHELL,

### Gothic Hall Drug Store,

114 Dundas Street,

Begs respectfully to remind his friends and the public that he has returned to his old business stand, where he has made extensive improvements on the premises, carefully studying the requirements of each department, as also the interests of his patrons, by keeping none but pure Drugs and Medicines in stock. He will be pleased to give his personal attention to customers requiring physicians' prescriptions accurately dispensed. Give B. A. Mitchell a call when you require anything in the drug line. G3-n-eod 11-k

B)

**FIGURE 5.20** Advertisements for the Gothic Hall or Mitchell's Drug Store.  
 Sources: A) London Advertiser January 2, B) London Advertiser May 28, 1885

facades were impelled by the need for retailers to keep up with their neighbours. If one shopkeeper decided to redo his or her façade, neighbouring shopkeepers would subsequently be pressured to redo their own in order to maintain an air of modernity and novelty in their retail operations. This often resulted in shopkeepers imprinting their facades with ever-increasing ornamentation in an effort to not just keep up with their competition, but to better it. Over time the facades were subject to increasingly elaborate and ostentatious displays of retail advertisement through architectural design and ornamentation.

The evolution in architectural styles can be read along the length of the streetscape (Figures 5.21 & 5.22). Older areas of development along Dundas Street, at the right of the image, are found at the intersection of Talbot Street. With their simple facades which border on austere, these early shops exhibit the Georgian style popular at the time. Traveling east along Dundas Street the styles change, reflecting the vogue contemporary architecture of the day. The austerity of the Georgian style has been replaced with embellishment. Now cornices thick with mouldings line the top of the buildings, and towers and other protrusions are found. Brickwork becomes more intricate. In the newer areas signage is also a much larger part of the landscape, taking up large areas of the facades. Over time the buildings become increasingly showy.

Italianate is the predominant style in the newer areas from the 1870s and 1880s, but second empire is also common, especially in the mansard roofs which add height to the structures. The designers often did not strictly adhere to one design philosophy; rather they applied liberal interpretations and drew cues from several style books. They created a façade with a pastiche of styles, taking the most flamboyant elements from each in order to create fanciful facades to catch the eye of the potential customer.

By the 1920s Art Deco was vogue and facades were being adapted to meet this new style. Kingsmill's Department Store refashioned their façade in this modern style when they rebuilt following a devastating fire in 1932; it remains today a landmark of London's mainstreet. This mishmash of architectural styles added interest to the passerby. Otherwise, the streetscape could have become monotonous due to the equal setbacks and few gaps in the rows of similarly proportioned buildings.



**FIGURE 5.21** The Gothic Hall stands out within the typically Georgian Streetscape.  
Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO



**FIGURE 5.22** Traveling eastward the buildings are built at a later period and have more ostentatious designs.

Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO

Although individual businesses occupied long and narrow structures, they were often grouped into more substantial buildings. An example of this is the previously discussed block of retailers on the west side of Richmond Street immediately north of Dundas Street (Figure 5.23). The Albion Block was a large structure, owned by one party and rented out to multiple tenants. The individual stores were the typical long and narrow format, yet their grouping of five in a row here made a much more pronounced element in the streetscape. The unified architecture of these larger retail blocks brought some conformity to the many different styles which were otherwise juxtaposed in short succession. Furthermore, occupying part of a larger premise would have been desirable for the retailers since it would give the impression to the passerby of a larger operation, and therefore be a desirable place to shop, since it was a successful business as well as containing a large selection of stock.

Windows played an important functional and aesthetic role in the three-dimensional form of the building. Aesthetically, they are essential elements, helping to define the overall architectural style of the structure. Windows were predominantly aligned horizontally, forming continuous ribbons between buildings along each of the stories (Figure 5.21). A notable exception to this is Smallman & Ingram's new large department store which opened in 1892. This structure towered over the others, and its floors were constructed much taller, resulting in its windows not aligning with its neighbours.

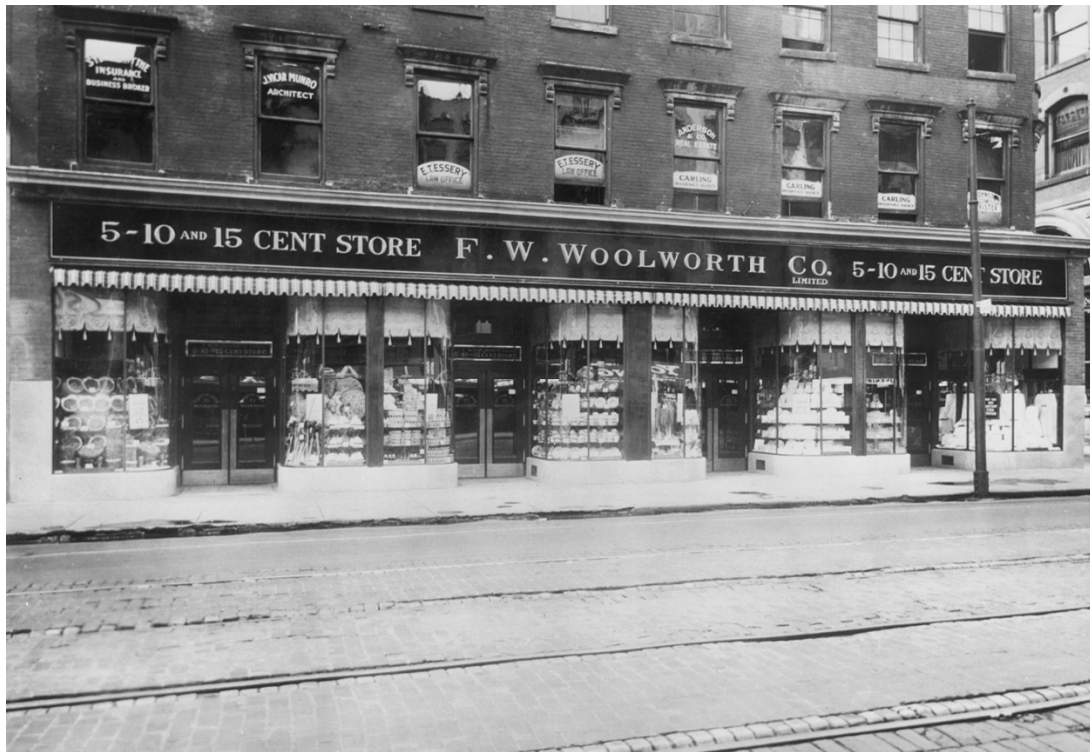
The functional roll of windows was to draw customers into the premise through the goods they displayed in their windows. Woolworth's discount store is the most notable example with its expansive and curving windows displaying large amounts in the hopes of drawing in customers (Figure 5.24). Further, being able to see into the store the customers would be more likely to enter. For these reasons many doors acted as additional windows, made entirely of glass, maximizing the window area on the limited space of the narrow facades. Windows also provided a much need source of light in an era before the mass adoption of electrified light sources. The early electric lighting was expensive to operate, and its intensity was weak. Windows provided light for the building's interior, a necessity in order that the goods may be examined by the customers as well as making the spaces more inviting and energetic.



**FIGURE 5.23** Blocks, or large buildings leased out to individual tenants, provide substantial elements in the streetscape with unifying architecture.

Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO





**FIGURE 5.24** Large display windows at the Woolworth's store beckoned customers (circa 1915).  
Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO



**FIGURE 5.25** Skylights brought light from the roof into the interior of the stores since the buildings abutted one another.  
*Source:* Discs of photos



**FIGURE 5.26** Doors were recessed to allow for greater area of window displays.  
Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO

The upper floor windows were usually very different than those found on the ground floor. Whereas the ground floor windows were needed to light the expanses of retail space, the upper floor windows served the needs of the generally office and storage functions found above the stores. In an era when large expanses of glass were expensive, the upper floors were implemented windows with a series of small panes of glass glazed into a grid of cells. In contrast, the ground floor display windows used large expanses of glass uninterrupted by panes to best show off the goods. These large areas of glass were fashionable, and showed off the prosperity of the retailer. A further difference between the ground and upper floor window styles is that those found on the ground were typically fixed while those on the upper floors were generally operable, allowing for ventilation.

Since the buildings were built abutting the next, windows were not located on the sides. Windows were placed at the front of the buildings, and had to take great advantage of this limited space. Thus, facades had a relatively large area devoted to window space.

Doors were typically located at the centre of the retail premise, flanked on either side by display windows (Figure 5.26). In the narrower buildings the door was off-centre, with only one display window due to the limited frontage available. Some buildings had a separate door to the side which lead to a staircase for accessing the offices and other uses on the upper floors. This created even narrower areas for the main display windows. Doors were often recessed in order that the display windows may be elongated in what were typically very narrow facades. This common design highlights the importance of the display windows in the retailers' marketing strategies.

The corner lots were much more visible, standing out in the streetscape. They offered two facades and views from both streets. Subsequently they were more valuable lots. Not surprisingly it was banks, with their access to large sums of capital, which generally occupied these prime locations. Banks were also generally in need of less ground-floor space than retailers who needed large showrooms full of stock. So the shallow depths afforded by corner lots were not an issue for the banks. The entrances to the banks and other corner buildings were often located at the corner, usually on a 45 degree angle across it. This strategic placing of the doorway allowed for customers to be attracted from both streets. Throughout the downtown

many hotels were also found on the corner lots, permitting the individual rooms to have windows. Hotels located mid-block would have only a limited number of rooms with outside windows due to only having a narrow frontage exposed, with buildings abutting both sides. Hotels located mid-block could also implement light wells to provide rooms with windows; however, this would require a wider lot than typical and was not as ideal as having exterior facing windows.

Where buildings abutted but were of differing heights there was the possibility for window space and ornamentation on the side of the taller structure; however, seldom did they utilize this space. Predominantly, these walls were left blank, or painted with an advertisement (Figure 5.27). The metal and wooden cornices that ran along the top of most of the buildings typically did not wrap around the sides. Windows were seldom put into these walls. This might have been done in case the abutting building was expanded vertically, covering the area wasting the investment in the windows and trims.

The cornices present on most of the retail buildings added visual height as well as interest to the building. The height was important indicator of a retailer's success, while the interest drew attention of the customers. Being exuberant could also indicate the success of the retailer. Mostly they were constructed of metal, but some were wooden as indicated on the fire insurance plans. Their design generally fit with the architectural style of the building.

Many buildings also had awnings that could extend across the sidewalk. Besides being a protector from inclement weather, they would have also provided shade, and relief from the sun in an era without climate control. The early awnings were permanent wooden structures covering the sidewalks (Figure 5.21). Later they became retractable, made of cloth (Figure 5.22). The covered walkways they create across continuous strips of retailers are reminiscent of the arcades in Europe (Benjamin 1999) and a precursor to the modern covered shopping malls.

Throughout the era of mainstreet retailing, advertisements littered the streetscape (Figure 5.28). Some were hand-painted, others professionally produced. Later the signs were electrified. One goal unified each type – arousing interest in the business, and pointing to its location. Many times they also often gave a quick summary of what was available. In the era before widespread chaining and global name brands, most of the stores took their owner's name. This made it necessary for



**FIGURE 5.27** The differing heights of these buildings allowed for additional areas on the sides for windows or architectural elements; however, they were seldom utilized.  
Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO



**FIGURE 5.28** Advertisements were liberally placed on the facades and hanging over the sidewalks.

Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO

the retailer to specify the nature of the goods if his name was not well known. In contrast to today's retail landscape, few temporary window signs were found in any of the photos of the 1880 to 1930 streetscape.

The advertisements were often affixed directly above the door in the space between the ground and second floors. This would allow for passerby to see the sign without straining upwards. Other advertisements were painted on the blank sides of walls where they exceeded the height of the adjoining buildings. Still others hung perpendicularly to the street in order that they may be seen by those travelling by.

The advertisements added to the riotous feel in the landscape of the central retailing district. They often contrasted with the architecture, placed on top of it to draw attention for specific store, rather than integrated with the design. They were also much more ephemeral than the buildings themselves. Existing businesses would go bankrupt and new ones would enter the landscape, each time bringing a new sign. Even those that were able to stave off bankruptcy would invest in new signage in order to stay contemporary, being much cheaper than alterations to the structure itself. The abundance of advertisements added interest and intrigue to the landscape and are a defining trait of a retail district not found elsewhere in the city.

## **BUILDING INTERIORS**

The way shopping was conducted at the turn of the twentieth century is very different from today. Most stores were full service, where clerks brought goods for inspection by the customers, rather than customers browsing at their own will. The interiors of the stores reflected these practices. Their floor plans generally consisted of one aisle with counters along either side. This layout, resulting from the long and narrow buildings, allowed abundant room for display cases along both walls. It also divided the goods from the customers at a time when clerks were extensively used to fetch and offer the products.

Shoppers in the traditional retail stores would ask for goods to be brought to the counters by one of the clerks. In some cases stools were found along the counters where the patrons, mostly women, could rest while browsing the offerings (Figure 5.29). The ample counter space that ran along both sides not only acted as





**FIGURE 5.29** The long and narrow interiors of the typical mainstreet store consisted of an aisle with display cases on both sides.

Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO



**FIGURE 5.30** All available space was used to display and store merchandise.  
Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre (ARCC) - UWO

showcases, but also as tables on which the goods could be inspected and prices determined through negotiation in an era before fixed and marked pricing.

Using photographs, and the architectural drawings created by the firm of Murphy Moore<sup>1</sup>, it is possible to understand the interior layout of the stores and the materials used. The goods were stacked along the walls of the store, often from floor to ceiling, for display and storage purposes (Figure 5.30). In the era before 'just-in-time' logistics, deliveries were made infrequently, and the shops had to store volumes of goods for future sales. Stocks also had to be kept on site since buyers from London would have traveled infrequently to the large wholesale houses in Toronto or Detroit, thus having to store goods from these large purchasing trips. The architectural drawings show that most establishments had basements which acted as storerooms. Also, storage was found at the rear of the buildings usually in the series of additions which had been built, as well as on upper floors when these spaces were not occupied by offices or residences.

Wood was abundant as a flooring material as well in the cabinetry of the counters and shelving behind (Figures 5.29 & 5.30). Glass was found in the counters to show off the goods and entice customers to buy. Ceilings were of plaster or tin. By examining the architectural and fire insurance plans, it is known that if stairs were present leading to upper or lower floors they were almost exclusively along the side walls, not in the open area of the store. Lifts and elevators, which were found in some of the large dry goods and department stores, were similarly situated.

The interiors were much darker than what is expected in today's retail environments. Since the buildings abutted there were no side windows, and the front windows provided the only natural light. There were a few overhead fixtures to provide light, at first energized by gas and later by electricity; they shone less brightly than today's lighting devices. Their light was also ambient, not the spotlights highlighting specific goods which are found throughout modern stores. In order to let light into the interiors, many buildings implemented skylights (Figure 5.25). In some retail premises light wells cut through the upper floors of the

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<sup>1</sup> The extensive collection of Murphy Moore plans and drawings is housed within the UWO Archives. Several of their commissions were for retail buildings.

buildings to bring light to the main selling space from above. The fact that retailers would sacrifice usable floor area on the upper floors caused by these light wells demonstrates the importance of proper lighting for their emporia, making the goods they were trying to sell more appealing.

## **DISCUSSION**

Between 1880 and 1930, the height of mainstreet retailing, there was an intense demand for space in the downtown core as all land-uses competed to locate in the most accessible area of the city. The limited supply of land escalated the values in the core, which climaxed at the peak value intersection; the best lots reaching values one-hundred times greater than those found in the periphery of the city just two kilometres away. Retailers won the competition amongst the various tenants vying for these sites, as they had the resources and the obligation to pay handsomely for the privilege of maximal accessibility to a steady stream of existing and potential customers.

Due to the demand for space near the peak value intersection and the ensuing high land values, space in the central retail district was intensely utilized. Built densities here were the highest in the city, with all blocks being over two-thirds covered by buildings. Structures were built abutting the next, forming continuous rows of buildings. Retailers were not the only use in the core; services and professional offices, as well as residences and industries were also found. These other uses were, however, typically relegated to the upper floors and rears of the lots since retailers occupied the prime ground-floor premises. Customers were shy of entering shops that were not directly on the street, not wishing to climb stairs or enter from an alleyway.

In contrast to its importance in the urban system, the area of the central retail district was quite small, less than a kilometre in length along Dundas Street, stretching from Talbot to Wellington Streets. Richmond Street also had a large retail segment, but was overshadowed by the concentration on Dundas Street. Frontages along Dundas Street west of Talbot and east of Wellington contained lots appraised at far lower values and fewer retailers were located here. Similarly, the streets adjacent to Dundas had substantially fewer retail uses, and much lower land

values despite being only metres away from the desirable shopping street. Within a distance of a few metres across intersections on Dundas Street, or turning onto adjacent streets, land values and pedestrian flows plummeted. Retailers strove to locate in a small area where the majority of customers were found, shunning other locations at even small distances away from the prime shopping district.

Despite the pressure of high land values, and high built densities, the central retail district saw little outward expansion between 1880 and 1930. The shape and size of district, and its stubbornness to expand, gives an indication of how it functioned. Customers came to the district by many modes of travel: foot, horse, buggy, bicycle, streetcar, and increasingly by the automobile as the twentieth-century progressed. Once in the district, however, most movement was by foot. Customers walked along the sidewalks, browsing the stores. Since the district was increasingly the place to procure clothing and other comparison goods, stores needed to be in close proximity, allowing customers to easily move from store to store in making their selections.

The customers were unwilling to walk large distances while browsing, resulting in the compactness of the district. This aversion to walking long distances between the stores was instrumental in preventing further outward expansion, keeping most retailers in a small area. While the district did not expand, its focus shifted eastward as reflected in the changing property values and fashion retailer locations. Intersections proved important defining features, with uses along one block being similar, but changing dramatically across the intersection. Even Richmond Street at the peak value intersection had fewer shops than along Dundas Street. The shops that were located here were smaller enterprises and usually selling lower order and lower quality goods.

### **THE LANDSCAPE OF SELLING**

The lots were long and narrow to allow for the greatest number of retailers to fit into the limited length of frontages along Dundas Street in the central retail district. Subsequently the buildings were long and narrow, most three to four stories tall to maximize the space. Their continuous massing along the street formed the most densely developed area of the city. The facades were highly ornamented in line with the architectural fashions of the time. Advertisements

made the scene riotous due to their abundance and seeming disorder against the underlying architectural discipline. Together, the numerous buildings, juxtaposing sizes and styles in short succession, formed a varied and imposing streetscape unique in the city

Due to their substantial size and elaborate details, the retail buildings were constructed using large sums of capital. Retailers invested considerably in the physical qualities of their shops in order to attract customers like moths to a porch light at night, with the ultimate goal of making as much profit as possible. The result was a retail landscape of buildings competing with each other for attention, each designed to outdo its neighbours. Having an imposing structure implied stability of the firm, making it a desirable place to shop. Retailers were pressured to keep up with the latest styles, updating their facades in order to stay relevant. The updating of one store pressured its neighbours to further add intrigue to their premises so as to not be outdone and to maintain the air of a modern enterprise.

Essentially, the mainstreet landscape was also a living organism, changing to meet evolving conditions in the city. Over time its limited spaces were intensified. The functional makeup shifted with more office and services locating in the core. Its retail composition changed from a district offering a wide-spectrum of retail outlets to one that specialized in apparel and other comparison goods. Its spatial focus also shifted, moving eastward as the city grew in that direction.

The central retail district was a chaotic place. Throngs of shoppers filled the sidewalks. Streetcars, horses, bicycles and later automobiles crowded the streets. The rows of shop fronts, their provocative display windows, and the elaborate facades above added to the variegation. It was, by far, the most chaotic and invigorating area of the city at the turn of the twentieth-century.

It was also a finely-grained landscape. With the narrow frontages of the buildings, walking a short distance one passed a large number of different occupants, usually retailers at the ground level, in quick succession. Their evocative window displays enticing the customers to enter. The landscape also changed quickly beyond the edges of the central retail district where printing, financial, government, wholesaling and residential districts abutted the retail area.

The downtown was the hub of retailing across the entire city and drew patrons from across the Southwestern Ontario region. It was where one went to

shop for a variety of luxuries as well as satiate daily needs. The central retail district was more than a place for shopping; it served as the civic heart of the city. The crowds who gathered there shopping, working and living caused this district to be a civic focal point.

### **THE LOGIC OF MAINSTREET**

Residues from its past were found throughout the core. These residues are especially strong since it was the first area to be settled. The original parcel fabric surveyed in 1826 was imprinted on the parcel fabric one-hundred years later. A series of divisions and amalgamations of the original lot fabric occurred in order to better utilize the desirable mainstreet space. The original plan was not erased, but rather altered. Even today, nearly two-hundred years later, the original survey of lots and streets remains largely intact, framing and shaping the city centre's development.

With limited space for expansion, dictated by the distance that customers were willing to travel in their journey from shop to shop, the central retail district was under intense demand for space. The original lot fabric was split into successively smaller fragments until the average frontage along Dundas Street was only a few metres in length. This allowed more retailers to locate close to the core, and also, for them to afford the extremely high land values.

The long and narrow lots dictated the size and shape of the buildings. They covered most of the lot, with only rear portions left undeveloped, making the most of the limited developable space. Frontages were carefully designed in order to draw in customers from the sidewalks. Doors were recessed to allow for window space to be increased for the display of enticing goods. Areas of glass were expansive to draw in as much light as possible since external wall areas were minimal.

The logic found in the town-plan was not master-planned, but rather came about organically and in a piece-meal fashion. The lot subdivisions were a function of many years of pressure for space in the capitalist system rather than a strictly enforced plan. Each of the buildings was built separately by either the retailer himself or by entrepreneurs who hoped to lease the space. Through experience, the buildings were adapted to better suit the needs of the retailer and his or her

customer. Light shafts were added to increase interior lighting, and shelving built to store large quantities of goods as product selection increased over time.

Each building was thus different, suiting the needs of its owner. However, together, they formed a cohesive whole by having uniform setbacks and aligning windows at similar heights. The rhythm in the streetscape was created by the rapidly changing facades rather than differences in buildings width and setbacks.

The logic was also inherent in the locations of various land-uses. Hotels were often found at corners to allow for windows in the rooms which would not have been possible in midblock locations. Banks also located on corners due to their need for visibility, and their ability to afford the higher prices land was valued at in these desirable locations. The retailers occupied the ground floors of the buildings to attract customers, relegating the offices and residences to the upper floors.

Thus, there is a trialectic in the townscape elements present in the downtown core: each element of the townscape, the town-plan, the building form and the land-uses impact the others. The demand for space by the various land-uses shaped the lot plans, which in turn dictated the shape of the buildings which were constructed. The form and layout of the buildings shaped the habits of their users. The density present in the urban fabric shaped the general shopping behaviours, which in turn demanded stylish premises in which to consume.

This logic in the town-plan came about as a result of desire of retailers to maximize their profits. They constructed buildings that were “machines for selling” (Zola 1995) and shaped the environments in order to accomplish this goal. The common goal of profit maximization unified the landscape of mainstreet, dictating its form and function.

By reading the landscapes of the central retail district, this logic has become obvious. It demonstrates that the intense drive for profit maximization resulted in the retailers applying a very rational level of planning their environments. It thus shows the importance of capitalist motivations in shaping the landscape of the city. Harvey (2003) has done so for Paris, but it is now obvious that similar processes were shaping the landscapes of much smaller cities, which were not capitals of modernity. London, Ontario, like countless other small cities, was nevertheless arenas where the games of capitalism were still played.

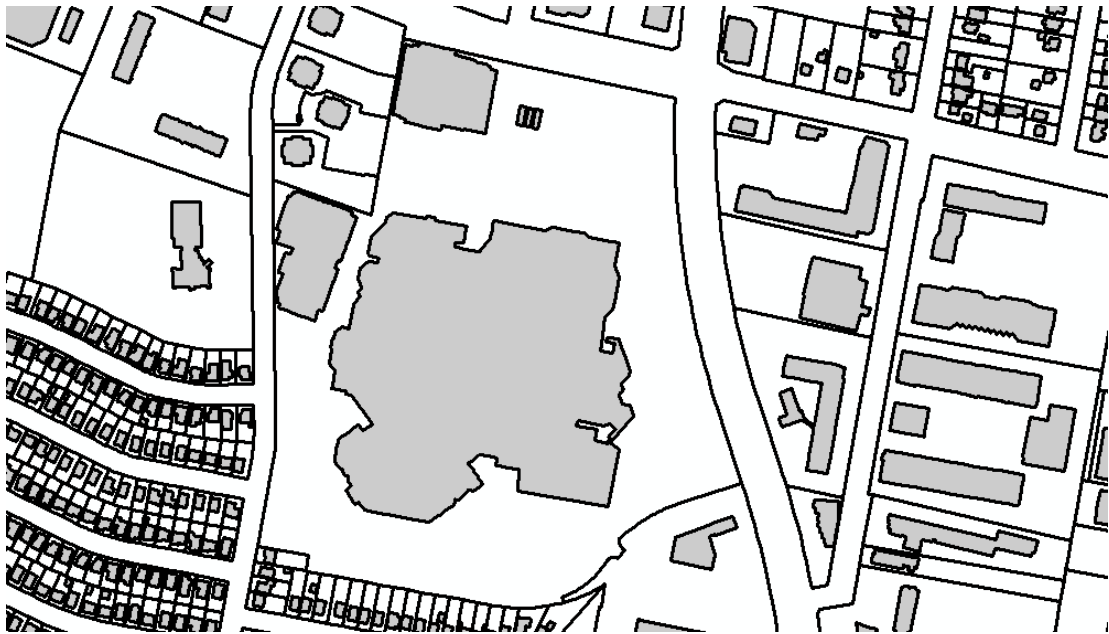


CHAPTER 6

# PLANNED SHOPPING CENTRES

*Retailing in stringent environments*

*(1950-2010)*



**WHITE OAKS MALL**

## CHAPTER 5

**PLANNED SHOPPING CENTRES**

The advent of planned shopping centres dramatically altered the retail landscape in the second-half of the twentieth century. Before their arrival in post-World War II urban areas, shoppers strolled along sidewalks, browsing the numerous stores that lined the street. These established retail areas were developed in a piecemeal fashion; most shops were housed within discrete buildings that were constructed and modified by the individual shop owners to suit their needs. The shopping malls, plazas and power centres, built in large numbers in the decades following World War II, are a radical departure from the traditional retail areas. The planned shopping centres have distinct development processes, ownership regimes, morphological forms and functions. They are typified by larger sites accessed by the automobile, and stores which share a common building. The centres are not built and managed by the retailers, but rather by separate development corporations. Despite the new formats introduced by planned shopping centres, there remains an underlying logic throughout most retail landscapes. The planned shopping centres exhibit characteristics found in the traditional retail areas in terms of the proportions of the stores, the clustering of businesses, and the application of prominent design details.

This chapter details the arrival of the planned shopping centres in the urban landscape<sup>44</sup>. The timing of the developments is shown, as are their locations within the expanding city. The ownership and management regimes of the centres are revealed to

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<sup>44</sup> As discussed in the Sources & Methods (Chapter 2), only those centres listed in the Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres (1980 thru 2010 editions) are included. Since the minimum size for a centre in these listing is 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> GLA, many smaller centres that are scattered throughout the city are not included. The two power centres on Wonderland Road South at Southdale were not in the most recent (2010) directory, but are included due to their fitting the characteristics of planned shopping centres, being large clusters of big box stores which are under the common ownership of Southside Construction of London.

change over time, with increasingly larger firms controlling larger portfolios of centres. Morphological analysis of the centres demonstrates much variability in terms of their town-plan, building form in three-dimensions and land-uses.

Attention is given to metrics of the success of the centre, with consideration of their built form as a determinant of why some centres succeed while others fail. This differs from most other work, which looks only at the successful centres, for example the West Edmonton Mall (Hopkins 1990) and Tyson's Corner's in suburban Washington, D.C (Goss 1993). It also differs in that it looks at the concrete forms and functions of shopping centres, whereas the majority of work on the subject looks at semiotic interpretation of shopping malls (e.g. Shields 1989; Hopkins 1990), the social constructions of these spaces (Miller et al. 1998; Lewis 1990; Voyce 2006), or their economic performance (Gould, Pashigian, and Prendergast 2005; Pashigian and Gould 1998; Filion and Hammond 2006; Allard, Babin, and Chebat 2009). The histories of shopping centers often discuss their forms in abstract terms (Longstreth 1992; Gillette 1985), as well as their general impact on the traditional urban retail landscape (Cohen 1996). The analysis in this chapter provides concrete figures detailing the physical characteristics of shopping centres, their development, and their uses, as well as their relationship with the overall retail landscape.

An overlying logic is found running through all shopping areas; the contemporary shopping centres have much in common with the traditional retail districts. This logic is driven by the drive for profit maximization realized through increased sales which is common among most retailers, past and present. In order to begin this analysis, a series of definitions must be established to discriminate shopping centres types from other retail environments.

## **DEFINING PLANNED SHOPPING CENTRES**

Planned shopping centres<sup>45</sup> include a variety of types distinguished by functional and/or morphological characteristics. The International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC) defines shopping centres as: "a group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned, developed, owned and managed as a single property, typically with on-site parking provided." The centres can come in variety of sizes, from under ten stores to

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<sup>45</sup> The term planned is used intermittently when discussing shopping centres. It is somewhat redundant since the definition of shopping centre is a highly planned retail environment.

several hundred. All are highly planned environments. A high level of advanced research usually goes into their construction, choosing sites, lot and building sizes, and type of structures to build. Once built, they are also highly regulated through the tenant mix, store design and maintenance, among other conditions.

Morphologically, there is the distinction between open air and enclosed centres, the former distinguished by access to the individual stores from the exterior, usually from the parking lot. The access points in the exterior accessed centres can either be completely exposed, or consist of awnings or an arcade along which the stores are located. Enclosed centres have access to the stores via an internal corridor, creating a more stringent environment. The internal corridor malls are almost always climate controlled and usually contain additional amenities such as benches, fountains, and temporary stalls. Open air centres include traditional strip plazas as well as the contemporary power centres while the enclosed centres are commonly referred to as shopping malls.

**TABLE 6.1** Classification of shopping centres by the size of their Gross Leasable Area (GLA).

Classification	Size (ft <sup>2</sup> )	(m <sup>2</sup> )	Examples
Convenience	10 000 – 39 999	929-3716	Ealing Centre
Neighbourhood	40 000 – 99 999	3717 - 9290	Adelaide Centre
Community	100 000 – 400 000	9290 – 37 161	Oxbury Mall, Oakridge Centre
Regional	300 000 – 799 999	37162 - 74 322	Galleria, White Oaks, SmartCentres Hyde Park
Super-Regional	>800 000		West Edmonton Mall

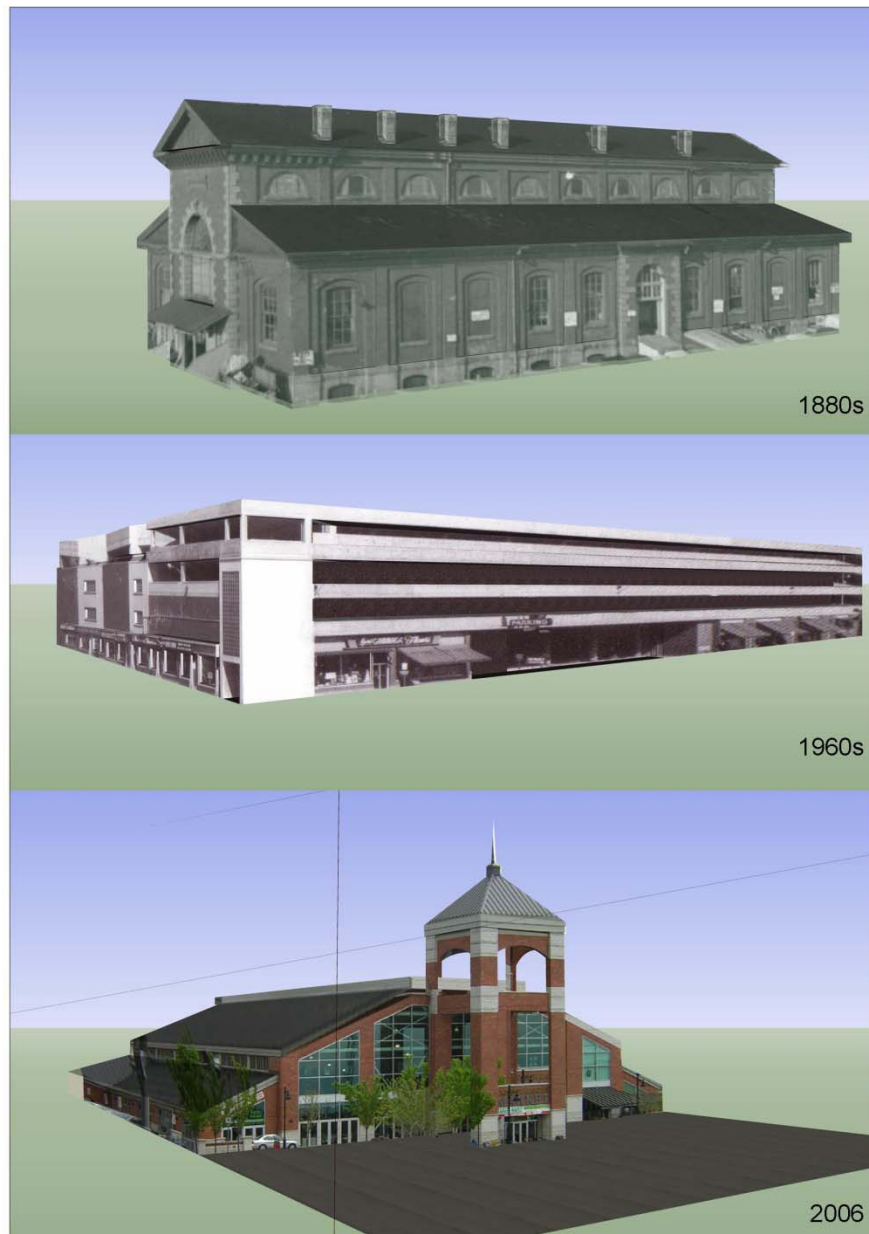
**Source: Monday Reports (2010) based upon The International Council on Shopping Centers**

The second physical classification of centres is by size, with groupings into convenience, neighbourhood, community, regional and super-regional types in order of increasing size (Table 6.1). These labels were first used by Berry (Berry et al. 1963) in his work on classifying Chicago's retail system, but have since been adopted by the International Council of Shopping Centres and are standard throughout much of the literature. The size of the centre is measured in square feet of Gross Leasable Area (GLA). These are the areas that are actually occupied by tenants; common areas such as hallways and service corridors are not included in this measurement. Although other sources use slightly different criteria to classify the centres, the sizes of GLA instituted are usually very similar (cf. Kramer 2008; Monday Reports on Retailers 2010).

Shopping centres are also classified by their functional type. Festival marketplaces began to appear in the 1980s as a way to revitalize older areas, especially those found in the city centre, which began to decline due to suburban competition (Sawicki 1989). They are often housed in unique or historical buildings and attract customers seeking specialized goods such as arts, crafts, farmers markets. The tourist segment makes up a large segment of a typical festival marketplace's customers. London, Ontario, has one festival marketplace, the Covent Garden Market, a project completed in 1999 to spur downtown revitalization. It inhabits the same site as the original Covent Garden Market from the mid-nineteenth century at the corner of King and Talbot Streets, but the structure itself is new; the original market was destroyed in the mid-twentieth century to be replaced by a modernist parking structure (Figure 6.1). The original market could itself be thought of as a very early incarnation of a planned shopping centre. The planning, construction and management of the market was centrally controlled much like the contemporary shopping centres. Like malls, plazas, and powercentres, the shopkeepers in the market did not own their own premises, but lease their outlets. Today's market, rather than selling staples to the general public, is now primarily a specialized leisure centre with craft studios, cafes, children's theatre and other amenities catering to a trendy urban market segment<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> The current Covent Garden Market is not considered in this chapter's analysis of the planned shopping centre although it contains many outlets in a centrally managed development. This is due to the distinct nature of the centre's tenants and market positioning, as well as being publicly owned. It is very dissimilar to the typical planned shopping centre found elsewhere in London.



**FIGURE 6.1** The Covent Garden Market's three incarnations represented in three-dimensional computer generated models. The current market shares many characteristics with the first market built in the mid-nineteenth century; whereas, the 'market parking garage' of the post-World War Two era is typical of modernist urban renewal projects.

Source: Novak et al. (2007)

Lifestyle centres, essentially regional shopping malls with the roof removed from the corridors, are a recent arrival to the urban retail landscape. These centres often locate in affluent areas and infuse a feeling of traditional shopping districts with their elaborately constructed storefronts along a recreated street, seating and other amenities which can even include outdoor fireplaces. They also often contain restaurants, cinemas and other leisure activities in addition to the typical retailers<sup>47</sup>.

Power centres are other recent additions to the Canadian retail landscape, many having been constructed in the last five years<sup>48</sup>. Despite their short incubation, these centres have drastically altered the urban retail landscape (Jones and Doucet 2001b). Power centres are groupings of big box stores and other retail and services in a single development. Big box stores are large format retailers that occupy cavernous but generally austere structures. One type of big box store is the category killer that specializes in selling one segment of products carrying a wide selection and offering them at low prices. Examples of category killers include office supplies, electronics and sporting goods. When several power centres locate together they form a power node, such as that at Wonderland and Southdale Roads and Hyde Park and Fanshawe Park Roads in London's south and north sectors respectively.

## **TIMING AND LOCATION OF SHOPPING CENTRE DEVELOPMENT**

### **TIMING OF CENTRE OPENINGS**

Planned shopping centres are a relatively recent phenomenon in the North American retail landscape. Although there were several developments in the early-twentieth century, most notable of which is J.C. Nichol's Country Club Plaza in Kansas City (Longstreth 1986), the planned shopping centres are a product of Post World War II urban development processes (Vance 1990; Jackson 1985). Few centres were built in the 1950s; those that were built in this era were largely experimental forays into a new form of development. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that large booms in malls and plaza

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<sup>47</sup> London does not yet have a lifestyle centre, although Sifton, a local developer, is planning one in their new River Bend development on Oxford Street West. The closest example to London is the reconfiguration of the Don Mills Mall in Toronto into the Shops at Don Mills lifestyle centre.

<sup>48</sup> Like most retail innovations, power centres appeared in the United States decades before their arrival to Canada.



construction occurred in order to service the growing suburban populations, cementing the shopping centres not as experimental retail environments, but serious selling machines.

In London the first shopping centre opened in 1953 on Hamilton Road at East Street (London Free Press May 20, 1961 “City-Wide Shopping Centre Boom Continues”) <sup>49</sup>. The Ealing Centre was a small centre built to service the neighbourhood. It remains in operation today with several small retailers; it does not have the large anchors that most other shopping centres contain. In 1955 the first major shopping centre was built with a “modern supermarket” and about ten stores (London Free Press May 20, 1961 “City-Wide Shopping Centre Boom Continues; Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres 2010). The former London Plaza, now the aptly named First London Centre, is an open air plaza located at the intersection of Huron and Adelaide Streets. When built, it was at the periphery of the city and serviced the burgeoning population in the area. Like nearly all the centres that followed, it was designed to be accessed by the automobile, contrasting with pedestrian orientated central retail district.

The First London Centre heralded the advent of the typical planned shopping centre. It differs from the Ealing Centre although there was only two years separating their opening. The Ealing Centre is situated on a small lot, orientated along the street with only a row of parking out front; most parking is to the rear of the structure. The First London Centre is situated at the rear of a large parcel with space for hundreds of cars with dedicated access from the street (Figure 6.2). Whereas the Ealing Centre was a tentative first step from the traditional downtown, the First London Centre exemplifies the characteristics of the planned shopping centre development.

London’s first enclosed mall, the former Wellington Square, later known as Galleria London and currently rebranded as the Citi Plaza, marks a first in North American retailing. It was the continent’s first indoor mall located in a downtown; it was also Canada’s first enclosed shopping centre (Fry 1961). At its opening in 1960, the mall contained an Eaton’s Department Store, a Woolworth’s discount store as well as thirty smaller retail outlets lining an interior corridor connecting these two anchors.

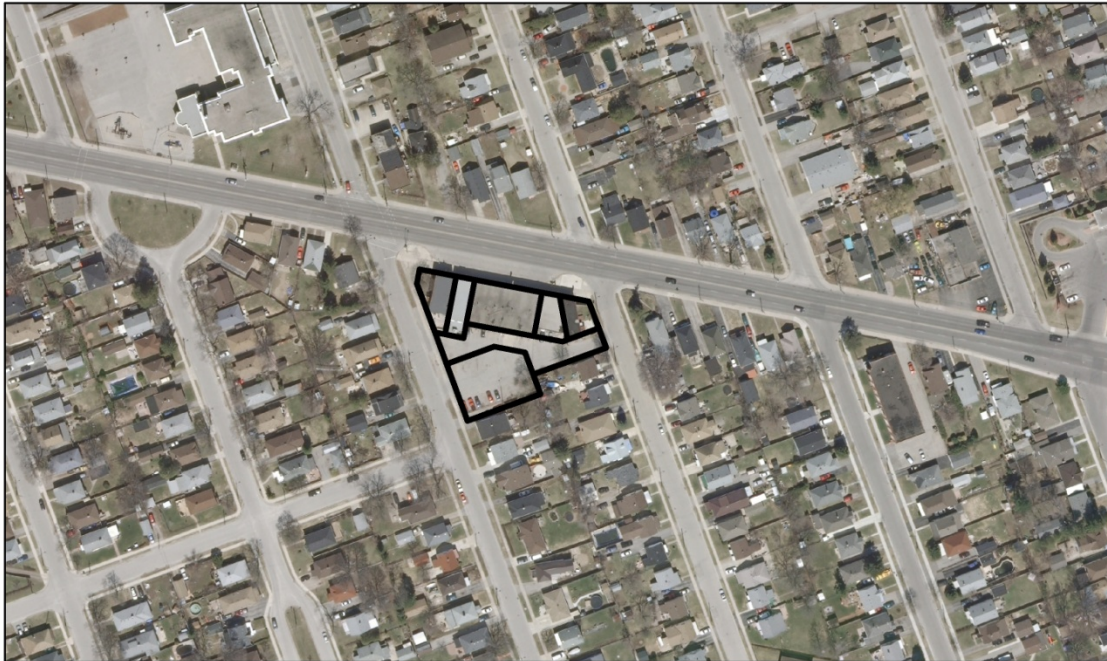
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<sup>49</sup> The Ealing Centre is not listed in the Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres due to its small size. The earliest of the listed centres is the aptly named “First London Centre” which opened in 1955.

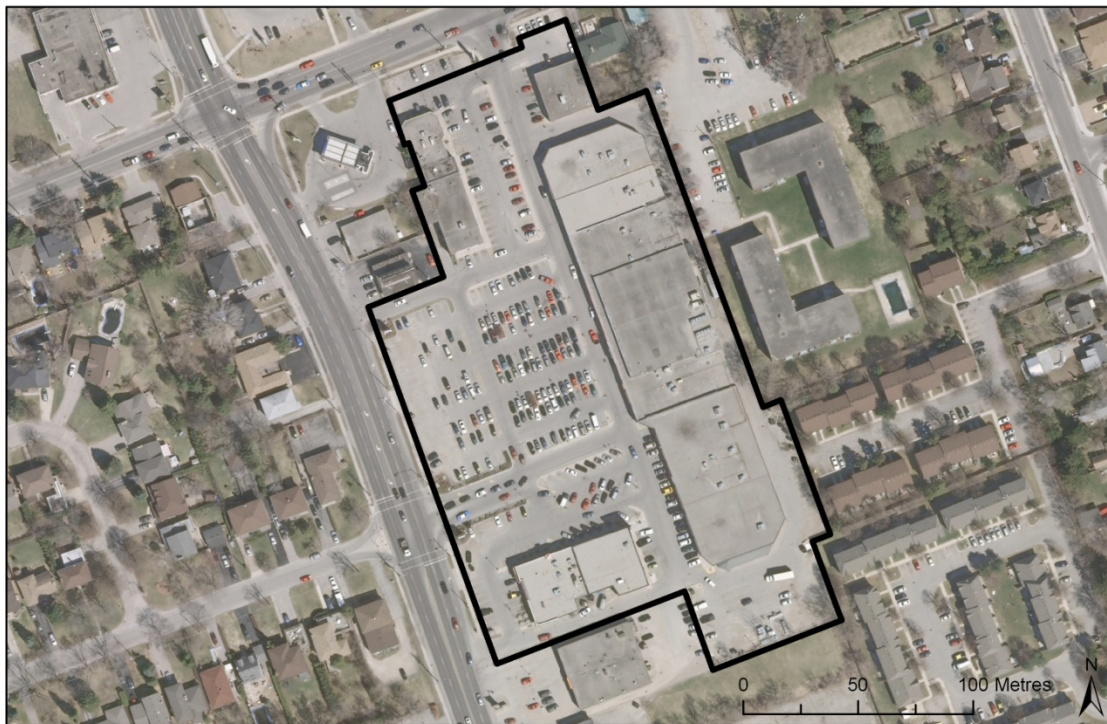
From the opening of Wellington Square in 1960 to 1985 there was a steady stream of new centre developments, averaging one per year and only eight years where no centres were opened (Figure 6.3). From 1986 to 1990 there was an explosion in centre openings, with 14 during this four year period. A significant portion of London's sixty-one centres were constructed in only four years. From 1991 to 2003 only six additional centres were opened, demonstrating the saturation in the marketplace. Since 2004 there has been another increase in new centre openings; these have almost exclusively been in the new format power centres.

National trends in shopping centre development are very similar to those found locally in London. In 1956, the first year that Statistics Canada enumerated the shopping centre industry, there were 64 centres nationally. The number of centres steadily increased until 1973, the last year for which this data was collected (Figure 6.4). By 1960 there were 231 centres and by 1970 Canada had 541. On average 38 new centres were built per year during this period. The majority of the centres constructed in this era were small, from five to fifteen stores. As the years progressed, however, the relative proportion of large centres increased, from under ten percent in 1956 to over fifteen percent in 1973 (Figure 6.4).

As the number of centres rapidly increased between 1956 and 1973, so too did the total retail sales conducted in these premises; however, the increase in sales was even more striking. While the number of new centres increased linearly each year, the total sales exhibited exponential change (compare Figures 5.4 and 5.5). In 1956 less than 2%, or \$234 million, of the total retail sales in Canada were conducted in shopping centres (Lacey 1983). Every year between 1956 and 1973 saw an increase in shopping centre sales, with an average increase of \$327 million per year (Figure 6.5). By 1973 nearly eighteen percent of all retail sales were in planned shopping centres, totalling \$6.7 billion worth of transactions. In a period of less than two decades shopping centre sales increased by thirty times in absolute value and the proportion of their share of the retail market increased tenfold.



A) Ealing Centre



B) First London Centre

**FIGURE 6.2** Aerial photographs of the Ealing Centre (A) and First London Centre (B) with their parcels highlighted.

Source: City of London Planning Department (2009)

The proportion of centres in each size category shifted dramatically as larger centres become more common, drawing more customers and spurring greater sales. In 1956 both small centres of five to fifteen stores and large centres over thirty stores had roughly the same sales totals, \$60 and \$54 million respectively (Figure 6.5). Medium sized centres accounted for roughly fifty percent of the sales in the early stages of development. By 1973 the small centres were conducting \$2.0 billion in sales, remaining relatively constant in proportional sales, while the large centres were conducting \$3.2 billion, a large increase. Thus in just under twenty years the proportion of sales occurring in the large centres nearly doubled to fifty percent while the proportion of total sales in mid-sized centres shrank from over half to less than one quarter during this period (Figure 6.5).

The types of centres constructed changed over time. Most of the enclosed centres were constructed in the early period of shopping centre development (Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres 1980 thru 2010). From 1960 to 1974 eleven enclosed shopping centres were developed in London (Figure 6.3). Only four enclosed centres opened after 1980, one of which was the redevelopment of Wellington Square as Galleria Mall after a major renovation and expansion. The last enclosed centre, opening in 1990, was the Pond Mills Centre; none have been built since in London. Similarly in the national landscape few enclosed centres have opened in the last two decades, perhaps only a handful across Canada<sup>1</sup>.

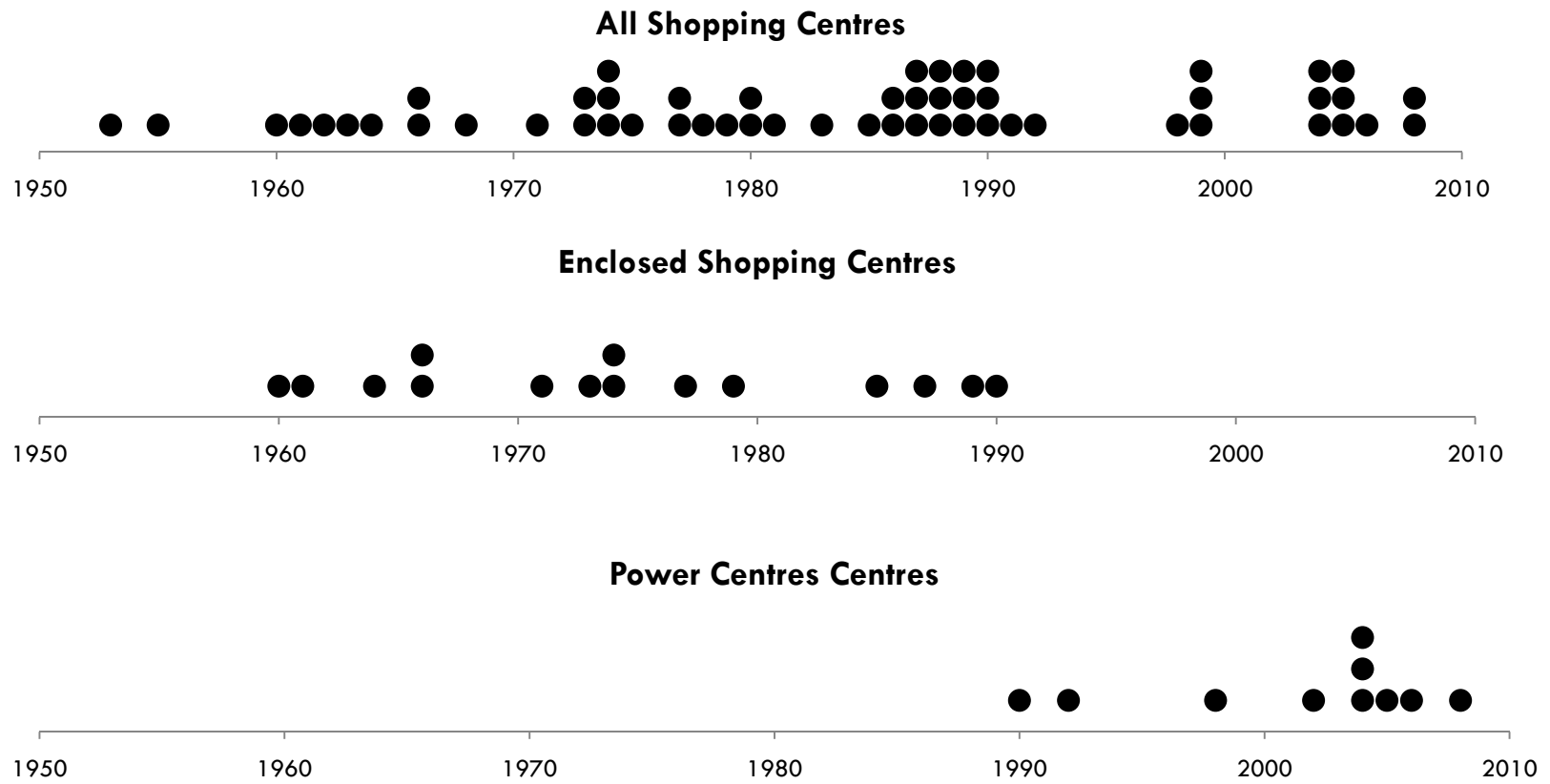
Despite a lack of construction of new enclosed malls, London's existing regional malls underwent a series of renovations and expansions during the late 1980s and 1990s. At times multiple projects have occurred in the same centre. Wellington Square underwent a major expansion which enlarged it to 600,000 square foot (55,000 square metres) of GLA which is the current Galleria Mall in 1989. Masonville Mall, having just opened in 1985, underwent a series of

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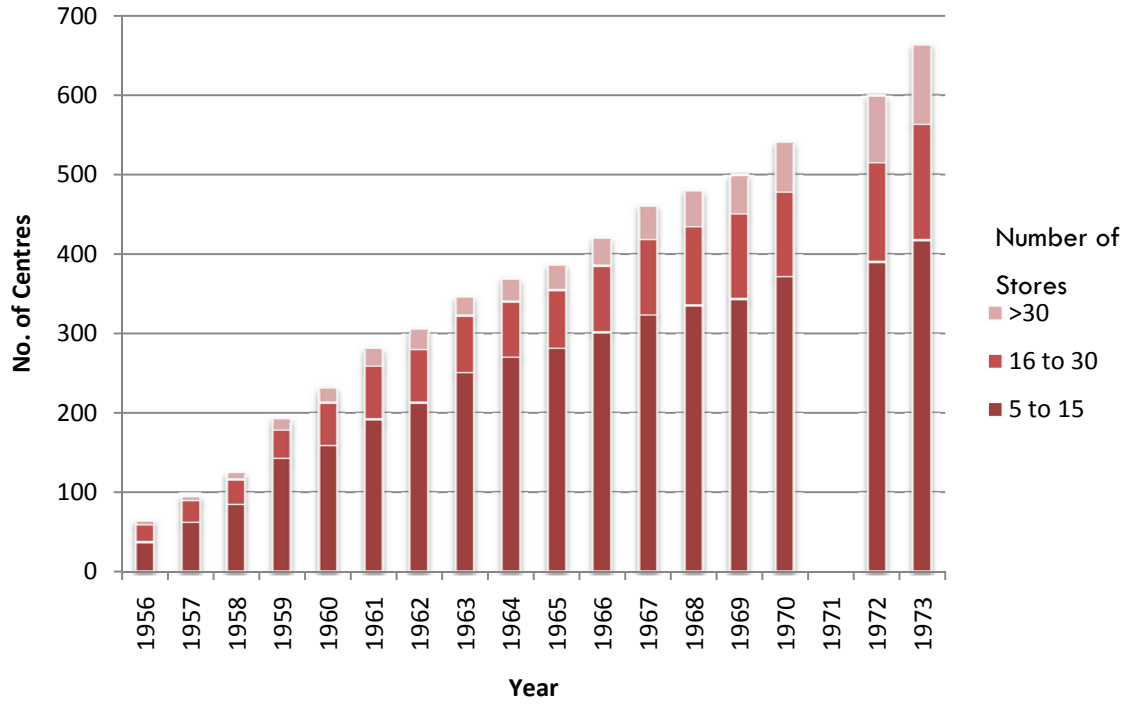
<sup>1</sup> One exception is Vaughn Mills, an enclosed centre that opened north of Toronto in 2004. It differs from most traditional malls in that it does not have department store anchors; rather it incorporates many big box outlets in an enclosed mall environment, many of which have their own exterior access to the parking lots.

expansions in 1991, 1994, and 1999. The successive remodelling and expansion projects soon after its opening demonstrate Masonville's immediate and continued success as a shopping destination. Westmount Mall underwent a large redevelopment and expansion in 1989 creating its current configuration. White Oaks Mall, opened in 1973, underwent a series of expansions in 1976, 1985, 1988 and 2006 becoming a large regional player. The opening of new enclosed shopping centres declined significantly after 1980, and none have been opened in the last two decades; however, the existing centres, especially the largest ones, underwent a series of renovations to meet a growing demand for space.

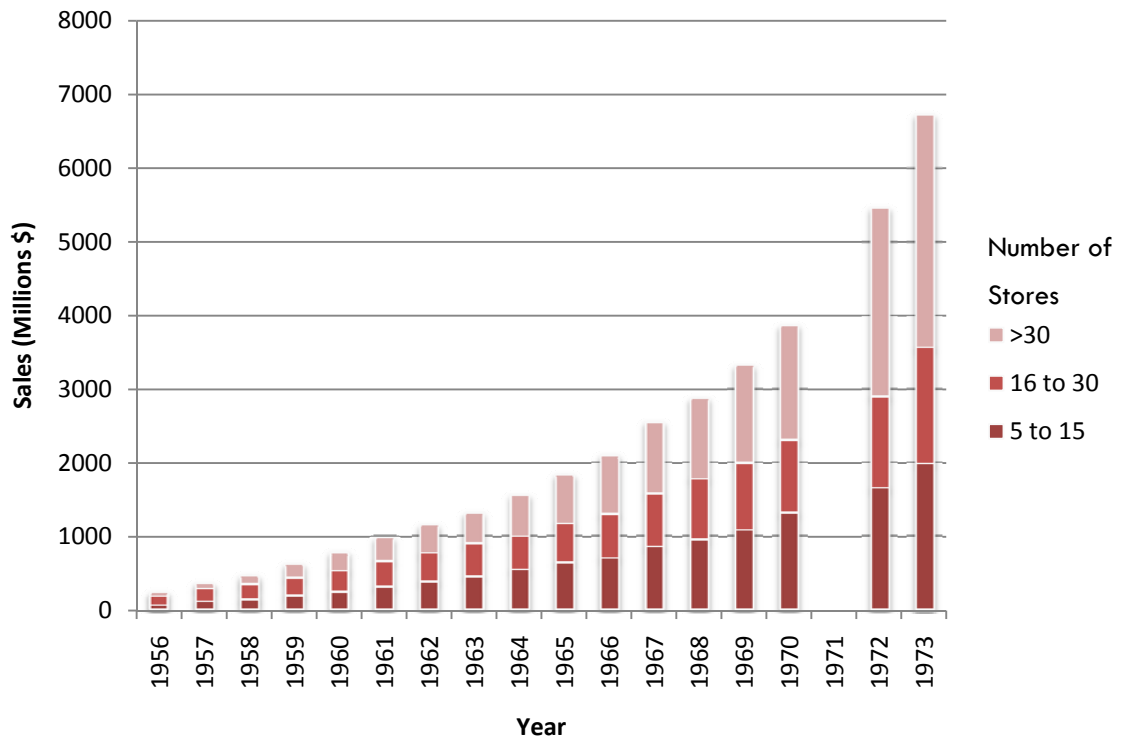
Since 1990 the predominant format of new shopping centres is the power centre (Figure 6.3). They have a large gross leasable area, matching the regional malls in scale. When completed the two neighbouring SmartCentres at Fanshawe Park Road and Hyde Park Road are anticipated to contain over 1,000,000 square feet (93,000 square metres) of selling space. While construction of new enclosed shopping centres have all but ceased, power centres are rapidly taking root, changing the contemporary urban retail landscape.



**FIGURE 6.3** Timelines of shopping centre openings in London.  
 Sources: Monday Reports (1985-2010).



**FIGURE 6.4** The number of shopping centres, grouped by number of stores, per year in Canada.  
 Source: Lacey (1983)



**FIGURE 6.5** The annual total sales occurring in Canadian Shopping Centres. The data is grouped by number of stores per centre.

Source: Lacey (1983)

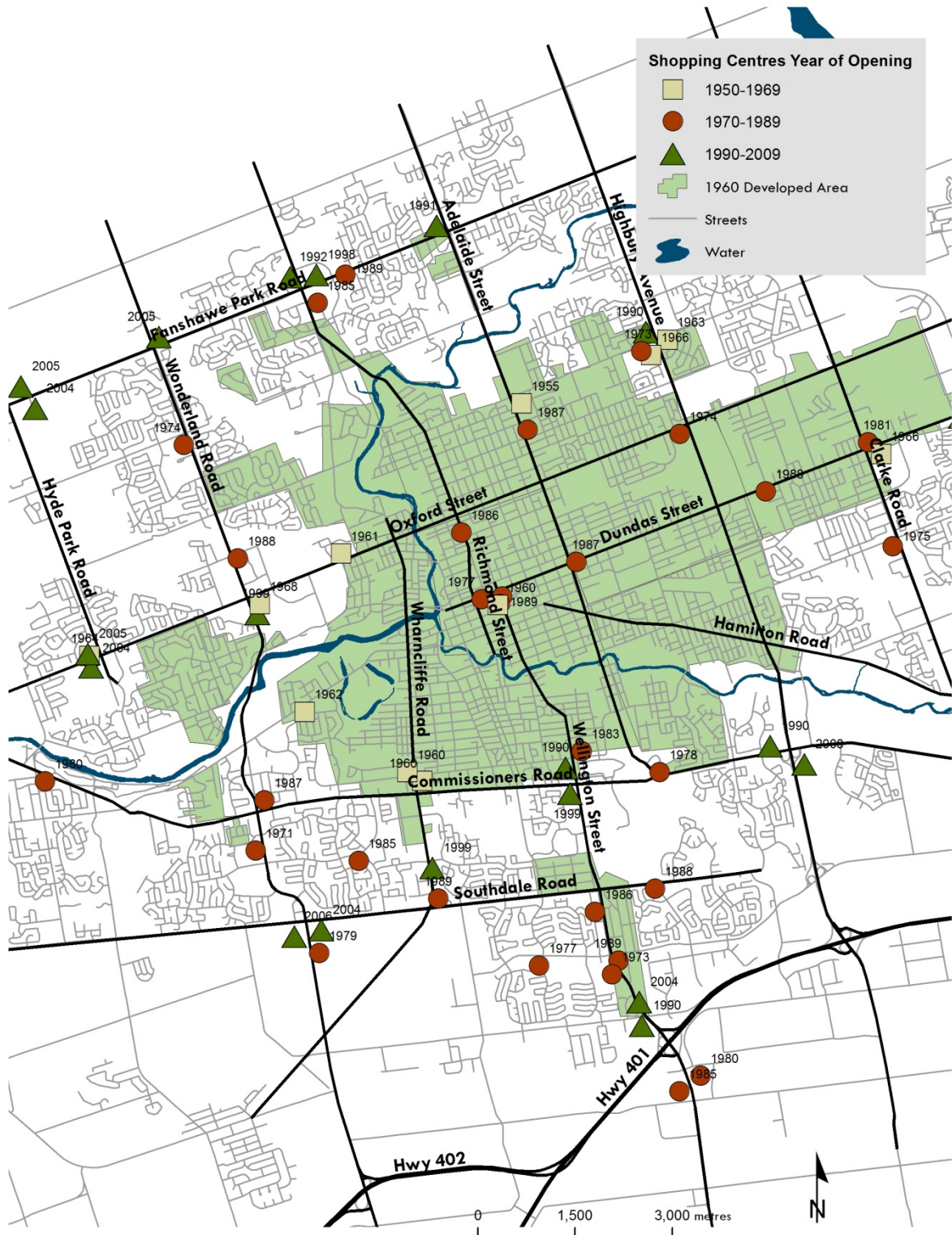


### **LOCATIONS OF CENTRES**

Although London's first enclosed shopping centre was located in the urban core, the majority of shopping centres were developed at the urban periphery. During the first two decades of shopping centre construction, 1950 to 1969, Wellington Square remained the sole shopping centre in the urban core. The other centres were built at the edges of the growing city (Figure 6.6). In fact, all of the remaining centres constructed in this era were located outside of the built-up area of the city as of 1958 – none were constructed in already developed areas of the city.

Developments during the second era, from 1970 to 1990, were scattered throughout the city (Figure 6.6). This period included three developments in the core of the city: The London Mews, City Centre and Richmond Square. The latter two were part of larger office-tower developments, meant to service the workers in the core with a mixture of retail and services. Several others were built in already established sections of the city such as the intersection of Adelaide and Cheapside Streets and Oxford Street and Highbury Avenue. Others were developed on the urban periphery. The third wave of development occurred almost exclusively at the urban periphery (Figure 6.6). These centres, built since 1990, are located at the further extents of the city; none were constructed in the inner core, and only several at the edge of the developed city as of 1958.

Except for several downtown enclosed centres, most planned shopping centres are located further than three kilometres from the traditional peak value



**FIGURE 6.6** Locations of shopping centres and their date of construction. Also shown is the extent of the built-up area of the city as of 1958.

Sources: Monday Reports (1985, 2010), Goad (1958), City of London – Geomatics Division (2009).

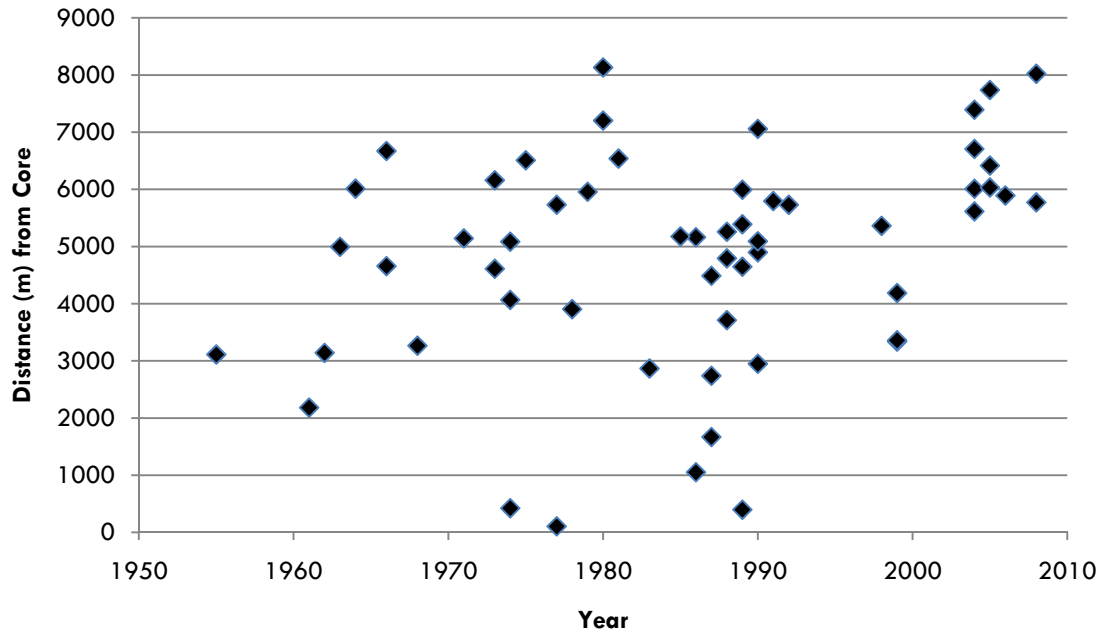
intersection at Richmond and Dundas (Figure 6.7)<sup>1</sup>. This distance relates to the built-up extent of the city in 1958, the early stages of shopping centre development (Figure 6.6). Most centres are located between four and seven kilometres from the core. Over time the centres were generally constructed at increasing distances from the core, locating at the edge of the continually expanding city (Figure 6.7). They typically did not, however, locate further than the edge of the city at the time. That is to say, developments did not occur in farmers fields one or two kilometres from the edge of the city. The most distal shopping centres located south of Highway 401 on Wellington Road, in an area disconnected from the edge of the city by the highway. Being situated here, the mall could take advantage of shoppers coming to London from the communities to the east and west via the 401, as well as St. Thomas to the south.

Choosing locations at the fringes of the city allows developers to take advantage of large lots that are not typically found in the inner areas of the city, while remaining relatively close to their customer bases. The centres are typically built on Greenfield sites since they offered several advantages. Lots in the existing area of the city were typically much smaller, already carved up for previous uses. Moreover, even if they could agglomerate several of these smaller lots, the lots of the inner-city were typically extensively built upon. Thus, developers would have to also buy the buildings, increasing their capital investment, only to destroy them to make room for the master-planned shopping centres.

Residential neighbourhoods surround most shopping centres, typically consisting of low density single detached homes. These areas provide an ideal base of customers from which the centres can draw. The centres are exclusively located along major streets in the city; no planned shopping centres are found on side streets. They choose arterial roads for both their accessibility, and also due to zoning regulations which dictates their position along these corridors (City of London 2006). They typically locate at the intersection of the major arteries,

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<sup>1</sup> Although city-wide assessment data is not available for the contemporary period, it is expected that the traditional PVI is no longer the most valuable real-estate in the city; rather, many nodes of high-value are found in the polycentric city while the once dominant core has seen a decrease in its value and is no longer the sole highly valuable locale.



**FIGURE 6.7** The distance from the peak value intersection of shopping centres plotted against their year of construction.  
 Source: Monday Reports (1985-2010).

drawing customers from two directions. These locations also give better accessibility and site-lines, as will be discussed later.

No area of the city is left underserved by the shopping centres. The locations of shopping centres are generally dispersed evenly across the entire extent of the city. Inner areas built before 1958 have fewer centres, but remain within two kilometres of at least one. No correlation exists in either 1961 or 2006 between the number of centres and the income of the area, as reported in the Canadian Census. There were actually more centres in the below average income census tracts than in those with greater than average income in both 1961 and 2006.

Developers are not biased in terms of locating their centres only in wealthy areas. Rather, they choose to best service the entire city. Since access to the centres is primarily by automobile rather than by pedestrian movement, the trade areas can be quite large. Thus, demographic characteristics of the immediate neighbourhood, notably income, are not essential in positioning the centres. Masonville and White Oaks Malls, the two successful regional shopping centres, are located in opposite socio-economic areas; the former in a very wealthy area and the later in areas dominated by public housing and low household incomes. In fact, land values are higher in wealthier areas and shopping centres require large amounts of land. Thus they tend to locate where land is most affordable, that being in poorer areas of the city. Also, except for the regional malls, the centres typically offer goods for all income levels, with a supermarket and a discount department store as anchors. Thus, they draw both rich and poor customers.

## **OWNERSHIP REGIMES**

Planned shopping centres are typically owned by a single entity that controls the development and management of the centre and leases space to individual retailers. This model differs greatly from the fragmented ownership found in traditional shopping districts. In traditional retail areas many retailers own the premises in which they conducted their business or lease from individual landlords with relatively small holdings. Most retailers in the contemporary shopping centres

lease their property from the owner of the centre, whose portfolios may be measured in the millions of square feet of GLA.

Shopping centre ownership is dominated by large companies; few small players are involved due to the large financial resources needed to either develop a new centre or purchase an existing one. Substantial sums of capital are needed to purchase the large parcels of land and build the sizeable structures, some of which are over one-half million square feet, that comprise the contemporary centres. Nationally the two largest shopping centre owners are RioCan REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) and SmartCentres which controlled 49,978,583 and 48,015,774 square feet of gross leasable area respectively in 2009 (2010 Monday Reports Volume III). SmartCentres manages a further 34,313,942 GLA. The portfolios of these large companies have expanded significantly in recent years. SmartCentres added nearly eight million square feet between 2008 and 2009 alone (2010 Monday Reports Volume III).

The centralized ownership of the centres offers new profit generating mechanisms in the retail landscape. While traditionally profits were made in retailing by individual retailers, contemporary retailing sees profits being turned in the leasing of space to retailers. The majority of the companies that own the centres have no traditional retail interests. They simply manage the space, dealing with retailers rather than customers. A notable exception is Loblaw's, whose supermarkets occupy much of the 6,984,750 square feet of GLA in its portfolio (Monday Reports 2010).

The management of the centres, including their maintenance, cleaning, promotion, leasing, has also been corporatized. Some owners choose to do the management tasks in-house while others contract out these services, adding another level of profit making in the retail landscape. Whereas the ownership of the centres is largely exclusive to large national companies, management tasks can be taken on by smaller, locally-owned companies. Although most of the centres are owned by companies located outside of London, many contracts for their management aspects are signed with smaller firms local to London. These firms handle the day to day operations of the centre and may be involved in negotiating leases. The largest developers, however, usually have in-house management of their centres, wishing to standardize practices throughout their portfolios.

The majority of London's shopping centres are owned by companies outside of the city. In 2009, only nine centres were locally owned, while 36 were owned by companies in Toronto. There were also a scattering of companies located in other cities such as Montreal, Hamilton, and Winnipeg. Only 16 percent of the centres were owned by companies based in London, while the majority (63 percent) were owned by those based out of Toronto. The two largest national players are present in the London landscape: RioCan currently owns nine centres while SmartCentres owns three in the city (Monday Reports 2010). These patterns are not unique to London. Nationally, most centres are now owned by non-local companies.

Over time the ownership structure has become more centralized, notably moving to the Toronto area<sup>2</sup>. In 1980, the earliest year for which shopping centre directories are available, half of London's shopping centres were owned by companies in Toronto, while nearly one-third were based in London. By 2009, local ownership has been reduced by half, with only 16 percent of the centres being locally owned. Nearly all the centres that have changed hands have been acquired by companies in Toronto. Although shopping centres have traditionally been controlled by large non-local developers, this trend has been intensified in recent years.

The concentration of centre ownership in a few large companies is even more pronounced when the success of the centre is taken into account. Today, the locally-owned centres are usually the older, struggling developments, such as The London Mall which lost its grocery store anchor and is plagued by vacancies. The successful centres in London are almost exclusively owned by companies based outside of the city (Monday Reports 2010). In the very successful Masonville area, Cadillac-Fairview owns the Masonville Mall and RioCan owns several of the adjacent plazas; both companies are based out of Toronto. The only exceptions are the newly constructed big box outlets on Wonderland Road south which are owned by The Southside Group, a local developer. This trend has intensified over time. In 1980 the two largest shopping centres, Westmount and White Oaks Malls, were locally owned. In 2009 all of the large regional shopping centres were controlled by outside

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<sup>2</sup> Much like the decentralization of the retail outlets, many of the head offices of the shopping centre owners are themselves in the urban periphery. SmartCentre's head office is located in Vaughn, a suburban area north of The City of Toronto proper.

companies. The centres that remain in local hands are the small, generally unsuccessful shopping outlets.

Despite the concentration of power in a relatively few, non-locally controlled developers, there is quite a lot of dynamism in the ownership regimes of the shopping centres. Between 2000 and 2009 there were fifteen sales in London, and a further nine between 1997 and 1999 (Monday Reports 1998 thru 2010). Unfortunately data is not available for the years before 1997. Much of this dynamism is due to adjustment in the portfolios of the owners, who refocus their assets into different geographic areas or types of centres. The frequent ownership changes are facilitated by the large capital reserves and borrowing opportunities that such large players can muster. The large sums the shopping centres are valued at, some in the hundreds of millions of dollars, precludes many of the local firms from their ownership.

### **OWNERSHIP OF STORES**

Large companies with many outlets are not just found in the ownership structure of the centres, but also the stores which locate within them. Most stores in the shopping centres are part of chains, with few being locally owned. In 2009, 87.7 percent of the stores in Masonville Mall and 85.7 percent of the stores in White Oaks Mall were part of chains (Kramer 2008). RioCan, Canada's largest shopping centre owner by amount of GLA in its portfolio, saw 84.5 percent of its annual rental revenue in the fourth quarter of 2009 coming from anchors and national tenants, essentially large retail chains (RioCan 2009). Local ownership has likely been driven out of the most desirable centres due to high rental rates for the space. Further, many centres exclude local chains from their centres, signing leases only with chains which are often more desirable due to their brand recognition amongst the public.

Westmount Mall, a large regional centre in a state of decline as demonstrated in its high vacancy rate and low rental rates, contains only 63.2 percent chain stores (Monday Reports 2010). It has become an undesirable location for many of the large chains due to its lack of customers and poor sales figures. A snowball effect has taken place, as desirable stores leave, there is less incentive for people to shop there,



further reducing traffic, thus causing even more stores to leave. The result of Westmount's undesirability among large chains is that local independent stores can move in where they once could not compete in a thriving mall for the expensive lease rates. The mall management, desperate for income from rents, will sign leases with most retailers regardless of their desirability.

The newest power centres are even more dominated by chain stores, some having exclusively large chain outlets with no local stores present, as is the case in both the Hyde Park and the Wonderland Power Centres. Many of these centres are built with the retailers already in agreement for space. The buildings can be constructed for a particular store to its specifications. An example is the Future Shop store in the Hyde Park which was specifically built by SmartCentres for the electronics retailer in order to suit its functional needs as well as match its corporate identity which remains consistent throughout the chain.

The relationship between centre developer and the retailer is impacted by the presence of large retail chains. Multiple leases can be signed with a single party, negating the need to bargain individual agreements. This gives increased bargaining power to the retail chains, who can demand better rates or other provisions since they are consuming more space. Developers are inclined to give preferential rates and locations to established chains over independent stores in order to keep their business. They also know that the chains are more stable entities with less chance of bankruptcy. There is the possibility, however, that chain does go bankrupt, at which point the owner has large amounts of surplus space to fill. Such was the case when Linens 'n Things, a large housewares big box chain went bankrupt in 2008, leaving two large big box stores in London and numerous other outlets across North America vacant and impacting the portfolios of the large shopping centre development companies.

These new ownership regimes of the developers and the retailers, as well as their resulting relationships, are imprinted in the built environment. The most significant feature of the chaining is the homogenization of retail landscapes. The chain stores use similar design in all of their stores. This allows for brand recognition. The styles of the store, its signage, colours and other features are consistent so that customers instantly associate the structure with the brand. Thus, a Staples store in London looks similar if not identical to one found in Calgary or

Halifax. The chaining of the shopping centre developers also causes homogeneity in the landscape. SmartCentres uses similar design in its centres.

Beyond the homogenization, the centralized control of the planned shopping centres is also impacting the built environment through the ways in which they are created and changed. The centres are typically built all at once rather than in a piecemeal fashion. Thus what was once an empty lot is master planned into a shopping centre which can appear in as little as a few months. The centralized control means that the centres are typically the same throughout the complex. Continuous change and adaptation is absent. When a centre does update it is usually all at once, and on a massive scale. The results of the centralized control on change and adaptation are elaborated upon later.

The centralized control of large retail areas results in course-grained landscapes in the shopping centres. Unlike traditional retail districts, they do not contain the small individual pieces, controlled by many competing interests, which come together and create the intricacy of the fine-grained environments. This coarseness is perpetuated by the lack of piecemeal change. Shopping centres are large-scale and stringent arenas for selling, the morphology of which is detailed in the following sections.

## **TOWN-PLAN**

The town-plans of shopping centres vary significantly. Whereas the city centre contains standard lots and buildings placed on a uniform gridded street network, generalising the shopping centres by their morphological characteristics is difficult. As discussed earlier in defining their different types (see Table 6.1), shopping centres vary greatly in size and shape. A power centre has a very different form than that of the strip plaza or an enclosed mall. There are further structural differences between the enclosed and open-air centres.

There are, however, underlying similarities in the town-plans of shopping centres. Although the building sizes vary, they are all typically large structures. Even the smallest centres have much larger footprints than traditional retail outlets. Likewise the parcels are also large. They are located exclusively on the

major arteries, and have become a dominant aspect of the contemporary urban landscape.

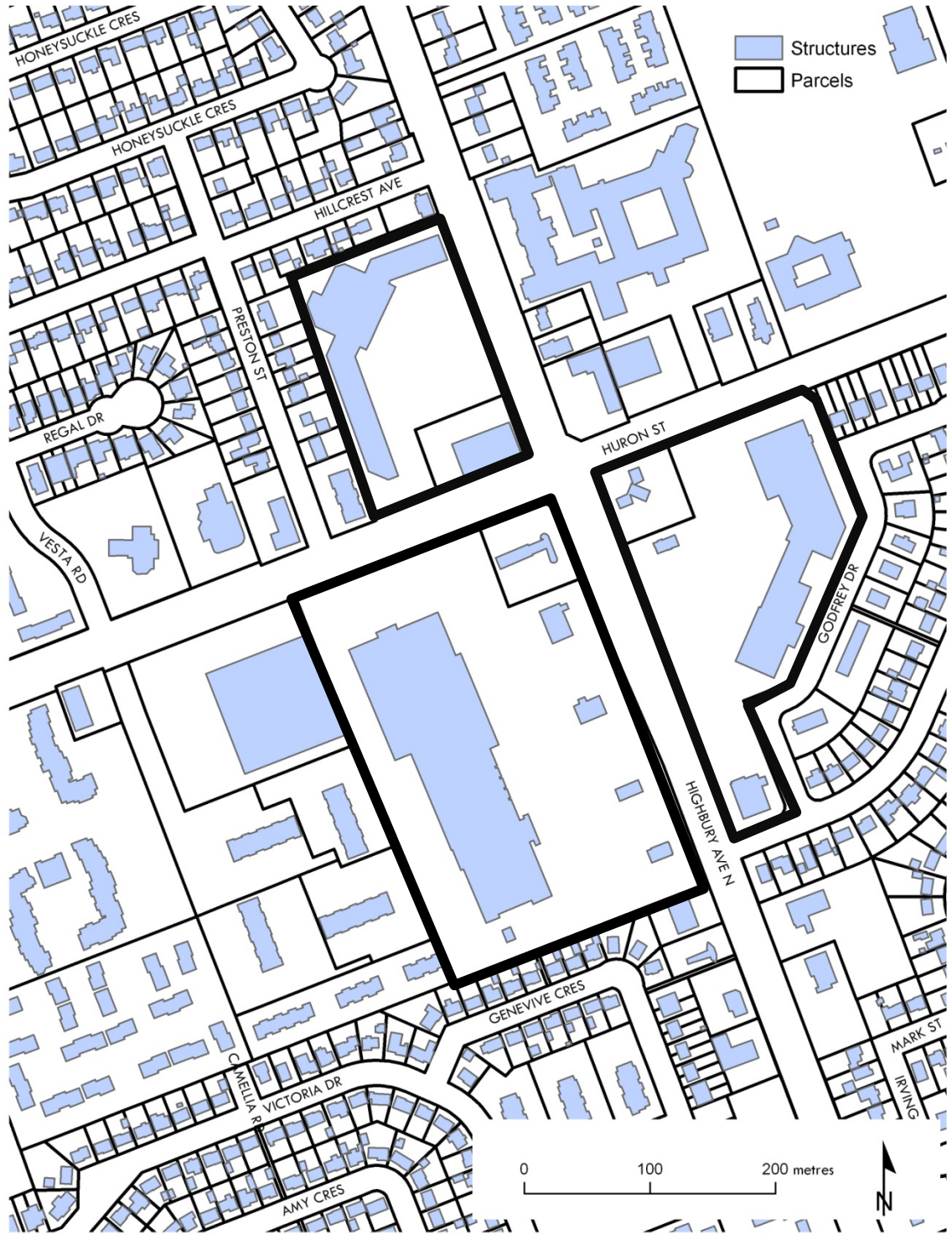
### **STREETS**

For most patrons the automobile is the primary means of accessing the shopping centre. Many accommodations are consequently made for automobiles in the design of the planned retail environments. Shopping centres are exclusively located along the major streets in the city, striving for maximal accessibility and thus drawing as many customers as possible. These arterial roads are often public transit corridors, allowing customers to arrive at the centre by bus if they do not own a personal automobile. Centres are mostly located at major intersections, being the most visible locales, as well as accessible from four directions.

Although built in an era characterised by a curvilinear street pattern (Southworth and Owens 1993), the shopping centres are generally located on rectilinear streets. This is due to their location along the major arteries which form a super-grid throughout the city. These arterials generally follow the established concession roads of the early surveys, for example, Oxford, Cheapside and Huron Streets.

Although they occupy large sites, most centres are only accessed from one or two sides by the street network. The remaining sides typically do not abut the street network, but rather the rears of other lots (Figure 6.8). This makes the centres cut off from adjacent areas. For example, the shopping centres at the intersection of Huron Street and Highbury Avenue are facing the major arteries and are not connected to the street network from the other two sides of the lot (Figure 6.8) The rears of these large developments abut the residential lots that surround them. As a result the centres are disconnected from their neighbourhoods, facing the intersection and neglecting the areas to their back. Some of the largest centres, especially the shopping malls, are accessed from all sides by the street network; however, these roads often act as service lanes, and are still often faced by the rears of the abutting residential areas.

The streets which service the centres are generally two lanes in each direction, typical of arterial roads in London. Several have only one lane of traffic in each direction, however they are the exception. The width of the street can vary



**FIGURE 6.8** The town-plan of the area at the intersection of Highbury Avenue and Oxford Street. The shopping centres typically have access from the major arteries; their remaining two sides abut other lots, typically the rears of residential parcels.  
 Source: City of London – Geomatics Division (2009).

substantially when boulevards, sidewalks, medians and other features of the circulation system are taken into account. Further, the turning lanes present at many of the intersections also add width to the streets. The road right-of-ways are generally 37 – 42 metres wide, or roughly double what is found in the downtown of the city. Most of the roads contain a strip of land that is owned by the city in the boulevards but is not yet developed. These areas permit future road widening projects to accommodate increased automobile traffic.

Most centres have multiple entrances. If the centre is located at an intersection, it usually can be accessed from both streets. In order to facilitate traffic flow, many of the centres have dedicated turning lanes from the street into their premises. Some of the large centres can even have dedicated traffic signals at the entrances of the centres to assist in moving the large amount of automobile traffic that enters and leaves these centres on a daily basis. For example, two light-controlled intersections give access to both Masonville Mall and the Hyde Park power centre.

The shopping centres also have internal measures to manage the automobile traffic accessing the sites. These come in a hierarchy of capacities. There are lanes to access the rows of parking stalls. Most also have larger '*streets*' that do not give direct access to the parking stalls, but rather are used to direct traffic channel the large properties. These internal roadways can contain many of the features of public roads, including stop signs and turning lanes.

Sidewalks are present along most of the arterial streets on which the centres are located, but are not generally used by the customers to access the centres. In most centres there is no direct pedestrian connection between the public sidewalk and the shopping centre which is usually built at the rear of the lot. Pedestrians are left to traverse through the parking lots without dedicated pathways. Some centres do contain sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian features; however, these usually are installed to bring people to their cars, rather than to connect with the public sidewalks running along the streets.

Parking areas take up significant amounts of space within the confines of the shopping centre parcels. Almost all of the lot which is not covered by the building is dedicated to parking areas and the internal street network. The structure of Masonville Mall covers 29.2% of lot on which it is constructed; almost all of the



**FIGURE 6.9** Shopping centre parcels come in a variety of shapes and sizes.  
Source: City of London – Geomatics Division (2009).

remaining area is paved for parking and internal flow of vehicles. This pattern remains throughout most shopping centres developments, which typically have two-thirds of their lot area under tarmac.

## **LOTS**

The lots that contain shopping centres are generally large, and come in a wide array of shapes and sizes (Figure 6.9). Typically the edge(s) facing the street network is straight, matching the linear nature of the arterial streets (Figure 6.8). The rears and the backs of the parcels are typically jagged, with many vertices present. Some even contain curves, such as the lot on which Masonville Mall is built.

The smallest lots that contained a shopping centre building were 1808 and 1873 square metres which contained the Richmond Square and former Centretown Mall respectively. These parcels are not much larger than the typical suburban residential lot. They are located in the inner city and are atypical of shopping centre developments. Both are instances of malls being placed in traditional retail districts; attempts to replicate the successful shopping centres at the periphery in the struggling urban core.

The largest lot was that of White Oaks Mall at 186 504 square metres. This massive eighteen hectare lot supports the largest shopping centre in London containing almost 200 stores and services (Monday Reports on Retailers 2010). The average lot size for all shopping centres is substantial at 38 315 square metres, while the median parcel had an area of 26 284 square metres. In comparison, the average size of the retail parcels in the core is less than 1000 square metres. Shopping centres occupy dramatically larger parcels than their predecessors in the traditional retail districts.

The total area of the lots in London's shopping centres in 2009 was 2 988 532 square metres<sup>3</sup>. To put this sum into perspective, the total area of parcels in the

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<sup>3</sup> Only those lots that contained the actual shopping structure were included, as well as those containing associated parking areas. Adjacent lots that contained free-standing retail structures were not included since it was not possible to discern if they were part of the shopping centre complex.

(cont)

central retail district along Richmond and Dundas Streets, which was the focus of the last chapter, was 158 690 square metres. Thus, the new shopping environments built since the mid-twentieth century are twenty times the size of the traditional downtown retail district that flourished before the rise of malls, plazas and big boxes.

Some shopping centres are built upon multiple parcels. This can be due to the agglomeration process of the smaller lots to create the larger parcels. It also allows multiple owners of the land or may be done for tax reasons. The Ontario Property Assessment Corporation distinguishes parking lot uses from the shopping centres, themselves broken into regional, community, and neighbourhood centres. At times the lot divisions bisect the buildings. For example the cinemas at Masonville Mall are located on a separate lot that cuts through the structure where the theatres join the mall.

### **BUILDING FOOTPRINTS**

Shopping centre buildings vary greatly in size and shape. They are generally rectangular, but often have multiple protrusions from this basic shape (Figure 6.10). The total area of all shopping centre footprints in London in 2009 was 856 140 square metres. The average building is 4 156 square metres in size, while the biggest is many times larger than the average at 72 415 square metres. The median size of the 206 buildings in shopping centre compounds is 885 square metres.

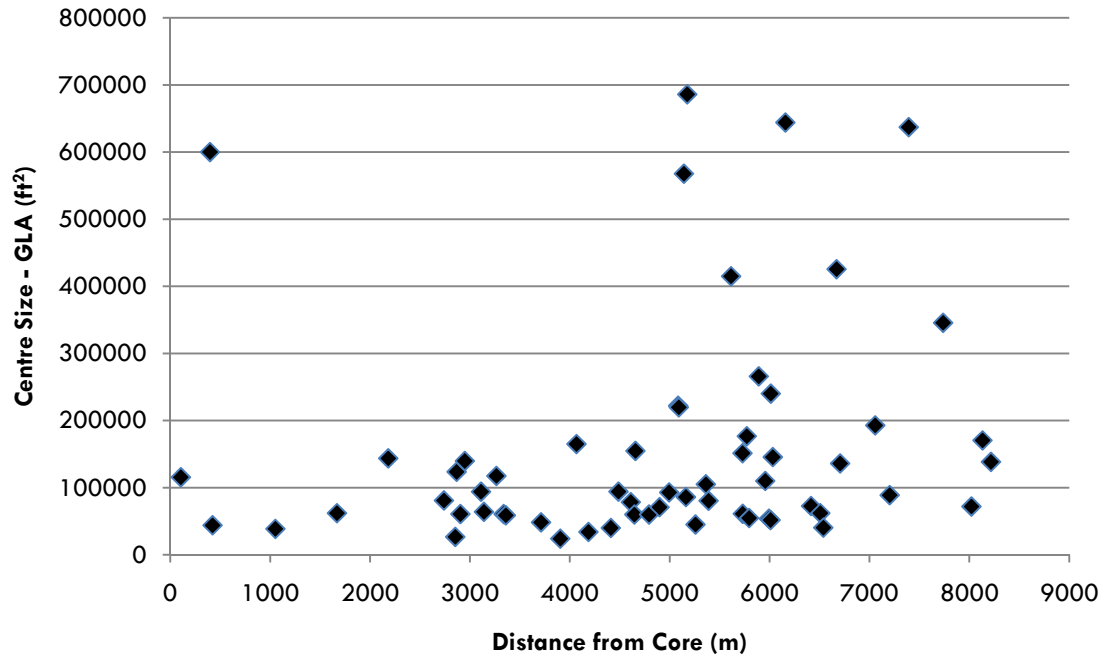
The large variation in building sizes can be attributed to the numerous independent buildings that often make up the shopping centre. Although a shopping centre usually contains one or two main structures, there are often several additional outlying buildings which are much smaller. Recently 'pad' developments have been added to many centres. These stand alone outlets, not part of the original centre, are added to the older centres. They are especially found in those centres struggling to fill their traditional spaces since they offer a way to make extra income for the developer. The pad sites are usually constructed for automobile dominated uses such as gas stations, drive-thru fast food and drive-thru banking.

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**FIGURE 6.10** The footprints of shopping centre buildings also exhibit a wide variety of sizes and shapes.  
Source: City of London – Geomatics Division (2009).



**FIGURE 6.11** Gross Leasable Area of shopping centres plotted against their distance from the core.

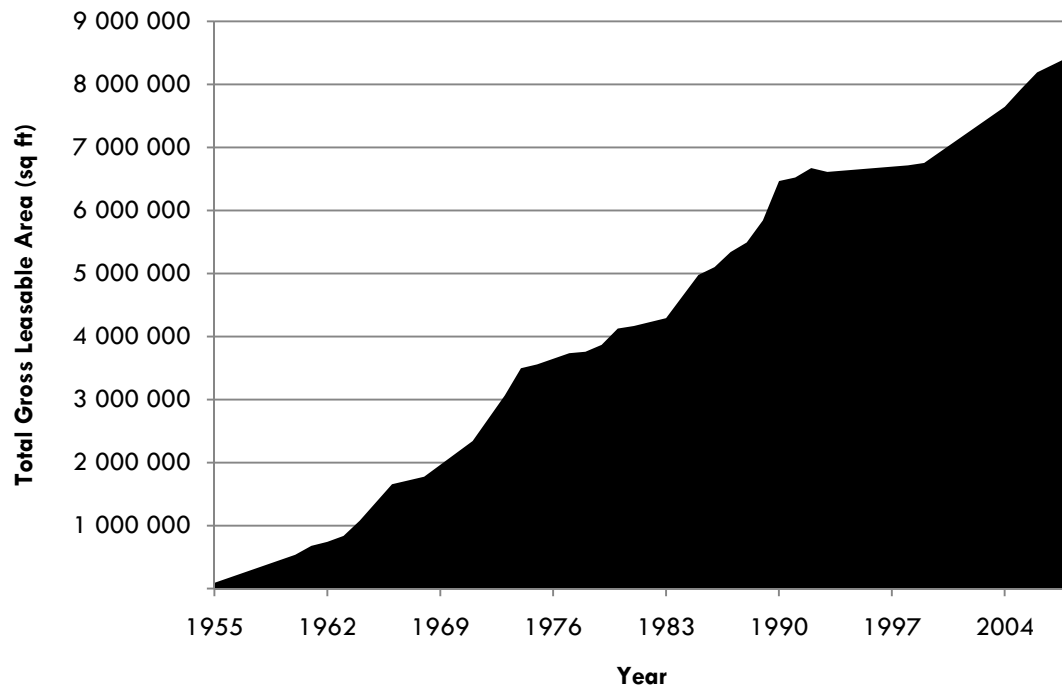
Source: Monday Reports (1985-2010).

The building footprint is not frequently used to describe shopping centre characteristics. Rather, the Gross Leasable Area (GLA) is commonly used to measure shopping centre size. This areal measurement, usually recorded in square feet, includes only those areas used occupied by retailers: the selling floor as well as stockrooms and offices. The common elements, such as walkways, washrooms and seating areas are not included in this measurement. The two largest centres in London in terms of their GLA are White Oaks Mall at 694 449 square feet (64 516 square metres) and Masonville Mall at 686 000 square feet (63 731 square metres). Using the GLA measurement is especially useful when considering enclosed malls that typically have much larger common areas.

The size of a centre is typically related to its location in the urban fabric. Centres located at increasing distances from the peak value intersection tend to be larger in size (Figure 6.11). The centres within 4 000 metres of the intersection of Richmond and Dundas Streets are nearly exclusively under 150 000 square feet of GLA – the notable exception being Galleria Mall at 600 000 square feet. The large centres, those over 400 000 square feet GLA are found at distances over 5 000 metres from the core. Also at this distance are many medium-sized centres between 150 000 and 300 000 square feet.

Two factors are likely involved in the predominance of large centres at further distances from the core. First, the lot sizes increase with increasing distance to the core. Lots near the centre of the city have undergone more intense development pressures over a longer period and thus are typically cut into smaller segments. Distal lots are larger, having had less development pressure; many have only recently become urbanized, such as the development of farmer's fields which allow for the large shopping centres. Second, the more distant centres are typically newer, and the newer centres are generally larger in size. Centres built in the 1960s have an average GLA of 176 924 square feet, while those built in the 2000s are much larger at 231 835 square feet.

Since the first shopping centre in the 1950s there has been a brisk increase in the total Gross Leasable Area available for retailing in these environments across the city (Figure 6.12). The total area remained under one-million square feet until the mid 1960s, when a large wave of building emerged, lasting until the mid 1970s. A second wave of building starts in 1985 and lasts until 1990. During the 1990s few



**FIGURE 6.12** Annual total gross leasable area of all shopping centres in London.  
Source: Monday Reports (1985-2010).

centres opened, and the total GLA did not change much during this period. A third wave beginning in 2001 corresponds with the advent of the power centre.

Nearly every year saw an increase from the previous year in the amount of space available in the planned shopping centres (Figure 6.12). Only once in 1993 did the total GLA decrease, in this case as a result of a mall closing; even so it was a small proportion of the total GLA. Almost all centres that were built have remained for retail purposes and more continue to be built<sup>4</sup>. At times centres are shuttered, but are typically redeveloped into another format within a short time frame.

Both large and small centres were built in each decade since the 1950s. The majority of centres in any decade, however, have a GLA under 200 000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Recently there has been a trend towards larger centres, with four being built over 200 000 ft<sup>2</sup> GLA between 2004 and 2006. These are the new power centre formats. Overall, approximately three larger centres, those over 200 000 ft<sup>2</sup> GLA were built per decade from 1960 to 1990; their openings relatively evenly spaced. Few centres of any size were constructed from 1991 to 2001.

London's two most successful malls are huge; each encompassing an area equivalent to the entire retail space of the traditional downtown core in one centre. The block-plans of all the buildings in the Central Retail District totalled 80 519 square metres in 1915, which is only slightly larger than the 72 415 square metres that makes up White Oaks Mall. The malls, at least in their size, rival the once bustling city centre. London's malls are, however, far from the largest shopping centres nationally. In 2009, there were thirty-nine centres in Ontario alone that surpassed White Oaks Mall in size (Monday Reports 2010). In total, eighty-five centres in Ontario contained over 500 000 square feet of Gross Leasable Area. The West Edmonton Mall has an area over 570 000 square metres.

### **LOT – BUILDING INTERACTION**

The low built-to-open space ratios in shopping centre complexes allows for a variety of placement options of the buildings on the lots (Figure 6.13). The average building coverage of a lot in shopping centres is only 28.6%. This contrasts to the

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<sup>4</sup> Some have become repositioned such as Galleria; however, the Shopping Centre Directory 2010 still lists its GLA as all retail. More detailed figures are unavailable to show the retail component within the centre.



**FIGURE 6.13** The situation of shopping centre buildings on the parcels.  
Source: City of London – Geomatics Division (2009).

core, where the buildings occupy the majority of the area on most lots, negating the ability to place the building in different positions on the lot. Having over two-thirds of the lot uncovered allows for much variability in the positioning of the centres.

Despite this flexibility, there is a general typology of placement of the structures (Figure 6.14). The principle building is usually located at the rear of the parcel; it can also be located along one side, which is especially the case in long and narrow lots. Some of the buildings are L or U shaped, extending along the sides and rear of the lot. In all of these cases the building is not randomly placed on the lot, but located near the edge; however, room is left between the lot line and the building footprint for service corridors and also as a result of planning regulations dictating the minimum set-backs required (City of London 2006, Section 4.3.4; 2007, Section 21).

This typical configuration of the building situated along the edge of the lot allows for large areas of parking in front of the buildings. Having the parking in front of the buildings indicates to potential car-bound customers that there is ample space to park their vehicles. Seldom are all the spots taken; extra space is almost always available except for the busiest shopping days, notably in the Christmas season. By-laws stipulate an abundant number of spots per unit area of retail space. Shopping centres with over 2 000 square metres of total GLA are required to have at least one spot per 30 square metres in the central city, and one spot per 20 square metres in outlying areas (City of London 2007, Section 4.19). Beyond regulation, however, developers ensure a large number of places to be attractive to customers. They want to be ensured an easily accessible parking space.

Some developments place the building at the centre of the parcel to allow for parking on all sides (Figures 5.13 & 5.14). Typically this placement is found in the largest centres and for enclosed malls. Both Masonville and White Oaks Malls are islands in a sea of parking. This arrangement allows for access to the centres from all sides. Since the sizes of these parking areas are so great, if parking spaces were all in the front of the building the distances traveled across the lot would be too large to be traversed by the typical shopper.

**FIGURE 6.14** Typical relationship between structures and lots in planned shopping centres. The standard layout is at the rear of the lot, with variations on this stretching along the side, or forming an L or U shape. Enclosed malls are typically larger structures, with many vertices, and sit as an island at the centre of the lot.



## **BUILDING FORMS**

Great attention is paid to the design of shopping centres in an attempt to attract customers and keep them on the premises as long as possible. Attracting and retaining customers provides opportunities for increased sales and maximizing profits. Just like great department stores were machines for selling (Zola 1995, 16) geared to their time and place, the shopping centres are built to accommodate and the contemporary market and stimulate spending.

Both physical layout and ornamental flourishes have been carefully designed in the pursuit of customers. Buildings are constructed to be comfortable and evocative, the former to ensure shoppers remain while the latter in order to attract them in the first place. Just as there are a myriad of town-plan characteristics in the planned shopping centres, there are also a wide variety of building forms. Many, however, share general qualities. They also reflect the styles consistent with their era of development. High-modern design of the 1950s through the 1970s has been gradually replaced with post-modernist pastiche and ornamentation beginning in the 1980s.

## **EXTERIOR**

Where the mainstreet buildings are tall and narrow the massing of the planned shopping centres is typically squat and wide. The buildings hug the horizon, usually having only a single floor of selling space. Some of the larger indoor malls have two or even three floors such as Masonville and Westmount Malls in London. Nearly all of the plazas and power centres are one story. A few have associated office blocks above the retail areas, but these are the exception rather than the norm. Centres one-quarter of a kilometre in length are not uncommon; most are at least one-hundred metres long.

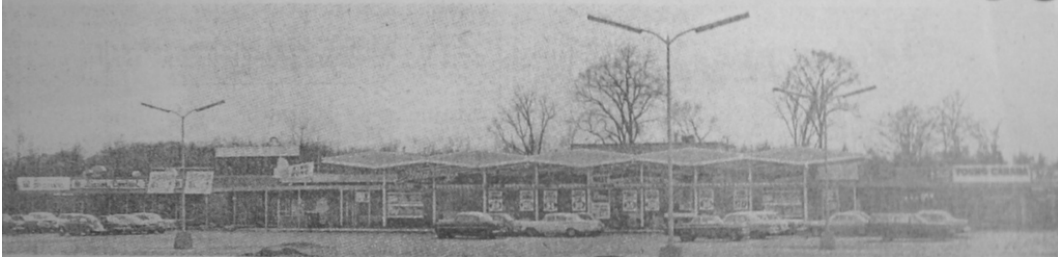
Although most are only one story tall, the height of the structures is considerably higher than that of the standard one-story commercial structure. This allows for inside volumes to be large as well as the needed mechanical work such as heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC). Whereas a typical retail floor is around three metres in height, shopping centres can be two to three times as tall. To add to the vertical massing many contain facades that are taller than the roof

line. These parapets add substance to the building as well as hide mechanical systems on the roofs.

The massing of a building is related to its era of development and the type of the centre. Early centres, those from the 1960s and 1970s, are typically one long building constructed along the edge of the lot, while more contemporary centres from the 1990s and 2000s are characterized by more variety in the buildings. The later developments often have several structures in the complex, including both stand alone stores, as well as multiple outlets sharing one building. The long, homogenous buildings of the high-modern period have been superseded, mostly as a result of the increase in size of individual stores, notably the big boxes. The contemporary centres are less likely to offer many small stores, focusing rather on several large outlets.

The exterior of the early centres, keeping in the high-modern style of the day, are typically finished with clean lines and lack ornamentation. They exemplify a unified whole. Centres built in the 1980s and onward contrast in their post-modern style. These centres have more ornamentation, including decorative columns, arches, and other details. The changes in architectural style are reflected in the renovations which took place at Cherryhill Mall. The former Westtown Plaza was a clean and simple design (Figure 6.15a). When the centre was renovated in the 1990s, stucco was applied to cover up the sleeker materials, and create many decorative arches balustrades and other ornamentation (Figure 6.15b). The outdated styles were updated as the centre attempted to remain fashionable with contemporary tastes.

The homogeneous facades of modernist centres have also been replaced in the post-modern era. Following modernist ideologies of simplification and unification, stores were not distinguishable from each other in the shopping centres. No large signs were placed on the facades, and the building materials and colours were kept the same throughout. At times the anchor outlets did distinguish themselves from the other outlets, but this owed to their importance in the centre and the numerous other small stores remained unremarkable. Recently this has changed, with each store not only placing signs on the facade, but also painting the façade using their branded colours and adding different heights and other visual cues to draw attention and distinguish each store from the others. Stores in the contemporary shopping



A)



B)

**FIGURE 6.15** The original Westtown Plaza (A) in 1960s exhibiting typical high-modern design ideologies. The current Cherryhill Mall (B) refashioned the earlier plaza using post-modern elements.

Source: A) London Free Press Dec 9, 1966.

centres are expressing brand recognition through the buildings they inhabit whereas the earlier shopping centres maintained homogeneity throughout their designs.

Today's newest big boxes developments have individual stores with contrasting exterior facades; little unifying theme is maintained throughout the centre. This brings the most recent centres back to the traditional mainstreet townscape, where uniqueness was heightened for each of the stores rather than stifled. Further similarities are found in the application of awnings in some of the contemporary centres, along with cornices and hints of traditional architecture. Still their massing, being much larger, wider and shorter, contrast greatly with the traditional areas. The fine-grained canyons of the core have been replaced by course-grained big-boxes in the contemporary shopping centres, which might draw cues from the downtown, but remain entirely distinct shopping environments.

The exterior access centres are of two general types. The first, typically found in the centres of the 1960s, has a covered arcade that is usually supported by a series of columns. This gives protection to the walkway, and also connects the stores, encouraging pedestrian movements from one store to the next. The arcade also helps unify the centre's design, tying each store to the next. Other exterior access centres have no arcade. Nearly all have a sidewalk or paved area connecting the stores; however, the enclosed feeling of the arcade is lost. Feelings of connectedness promoted by the covered arcade are lost in these centres, and pedestrian movement between stores is exposed to the elements. All centres were designed to be accessed by the automobile, however, the centres of the 1960s and 1970s with their arcades were designed for the shoppers to park and browse between stores by foot. The more recent power centres are designed for travel between stores by automobile rather than by foot. Travel between big box outlets which make up the contemporary power centres is often expected to be conducted by automobile; many do not have sidewalks connecting the large stores which float on the lots surrounded by large amounts of parking.

Whereas the exterior access centres give direct access to the stores from the outside, the enclosed malls have an internal corridor from which the stores are accessed. This format has fewer entrances, and most stores are not directly accessed from the parking lot, but rather from the corridor. The larger stores often have exterior access, notably the anchor department and grocery stores. The enclosed

nature enhances pedestrian flow once inside, as does the climate-controlled conditions.

Many enclosed centres have struggled to survive and have adapted by reformatting to become exterior access. The exceptions are the large regional malls which are greatly successful retail environments. In renovations to the interior access centres access is created for a number of the stores from the exterior. The successful big box centre model is being applied in retrofits to the interior access malls, providing stores with direct access to the parking areas, exterior signage, and the provisioning of larger floor areas. For example, Sherwood Forest Mall in the northwest quadrant of London has converted its former department store anchor into a series of smaller stores which are accessed directly from the outside, without any interior corridor access. These stores are larger than the typical mall outlet and are given room for advertisements on the mall's façade.

With fewer entrances the interior corridor centres funnel pedestrian traffic through specific areas. Customers enter the corridors at select points, and follow the prescribed routes of the corridors in a more rigid fashion than found in the exterior access centres, where customers may enter only one store, walk between stores, or drive from store to store. The entrances are often focal points in order to draw attention and make clear where they are located. For example, the entrances to Masonville Mall are highlighted by towers to draw attention to their location. Flags and other decorative features are also prominent at the entrances. This acts like a beacon to customers to enter the shopping facilities. Furthermore, the parking spaces are typically angled towards the entrances, and the height elements of the towers are easily visible. Customers are then comforted in that their walk to the centre is not as long since the psychological distances are shorter when the destination is visible (Shoup 2005). All are carefully thought to make the trip as reassuring as possible for the customer.

Shopping centre roofs are almost always flat and not visible, having no role in the exterior appearance of shopping centres. Windows are only used sparingly on external facades. In the enclosed corridor centres, exterior windows are almost non-existent. While some stores in exterior access centres have windows, they are often reflective glass or blanked out; used only to break the homogeneity of the building's mass. If window displays are present they are usually for advertising boards or

basic displays which are rarely changed. They differ from the intricately crafted displays of the downtown outlets, notably those of the department stores (see Leach 1993 for a description of department store windows).

There are many different facing materials for the planned shopping centres. Some are faced in brick while others in exposed concrete. Others are stuccoed while still others are faced with corrugated metal sheeting. The early centres are typically of one material and one colour whereas the modern centres contain a variety of materials and colours, each store having its own facing to distinguish itself. The large shopping centre developers typically chose to finish the exterior of all their centres in a similar style, making them recognizable. Thus, much homogeneity is seen in the landscape, with centres looking similar between cities. The homogeneity of centres is furthered by their predominance of chain store outlets, which express similar styles for all of their stores in order to heighten brand recognition.

Signage styles differ greatly between centres. Some, especially those from the modern period, contain little to no visible external signage for stores. The centres that contain arcades often have simple overhead signs underneath the arcade directing pedestrians to the individual outlets, but usually have no visible façade signage. This keeps with their clean and cohesive modern styling. The interior corridor malls also have little exterior façade signage, except for the larger anchor stores. In updating the older centres, signage has been applied to the facades in keeping with more contemporary style ideologies as well as the branding of stores in a chain. More recent exterior corridor centres contain large signage applied to their facades, often being a defining feature of their exterior design. The text can be several metres in height, making them visible from the larger distances while driving between the stores. Parapet walls are often employed to handle the large signage, also increasing the visual height of the store.

Tall sign posts are usually positioned at the entrances to the centres from the streets. These large vertical poles list the stores found in the centre. Typically the larger the store's floor space, the larger its sign in these collective groupings. Since they can contain a large amount of information pertaining to numerous stores they are often useless to the passerby who is entering the facility by automobile. Drivers have little time to take in such quantities, which can have twenty different store listings. Perhaps they attract some pedestrians, but since the planned centres are

typically structured for the automobile customer their utility for attracting customers is questionable.

## **INTERIOR**

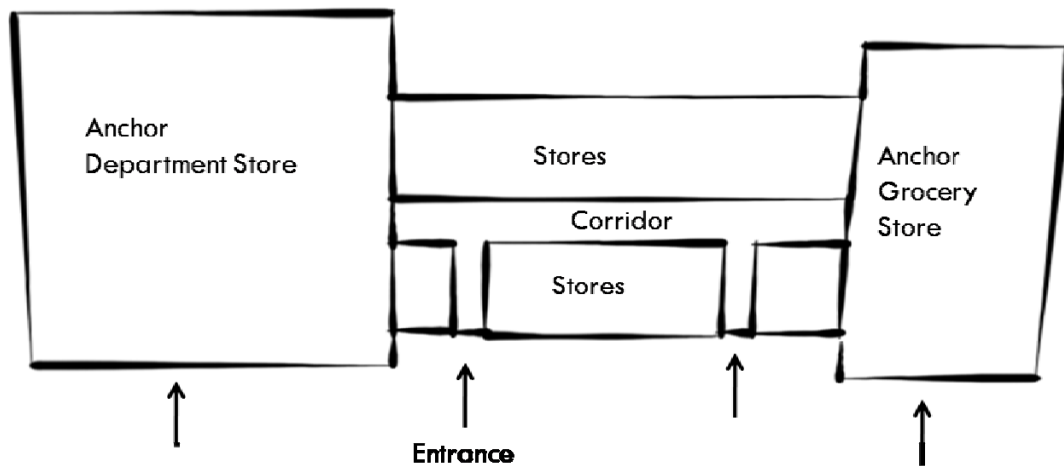
The interiors of the enclosed shopping centres possess similar structural characteristics, namely numerous small stores fronting on both sides of wide corridors that connect major anchor tenants<sup>5</sup>. It is in the details, however, that much variety exists. Large regional centres such as Masonville and White Oaks Malls have very different styles and amenities than their smaller, less successful neighbourhood and community shopping centre counterparts such as the Oxbury and Northland Malls. The interiors of the malls also reflect the era in which they were built. Those built in the era between 1960 and 1980 were constructed in styles defined by modernism, that is typically clean and sleek design. Since the early 1980s malls have increasingly been characteristics by more ornate finishes and drawing upon a myriad of references as part of post-modernist ideals.

All malls share in common an enclosed hallway lined on both sides with retail outlets. Having stores on both sides of the corridor maximizes the amount of selling space while minimizing the need for internal hallways, which are expensive to build and maintain. Anchor stores, such as supermarkets and department stores, typically are located at the ends of the corridors. Their placement is deliberate to allow for maximum traffic flow between these two magnets. Customers, in traveling from one anchor to the next pass, numerous small retailers on their journey. The basic layout of malls may be described as a barbell, with the two anchors as the weights at both ends, and the corridor the shaft between them (Figure 6.16).

In small malls there is generally only one corridor; however, the larger regional and super-regional malls have a more complex layout (Figure 6.17). The numerous short corridors facilitate additional anchors and eliminate long walks along one elongated corridor. Customers are less likely to walk in a long line

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<sup>5</sup> Several papers have critically examined the interior architecture, design and layout of shopping malls (Goss, Shields, Knox, etc.) and thus this section will be kept brief, focusing on their predominant features that facilitate profit maximization in keeping with the overarching theme of this research.



**FIGURE 6.16** The basic layout of an interior corridor shopping centre.



without an end in sight. Mall designers thus place notable landmarks at the ends of short corridors, easing the customers' minds in their movement. Furthermore, one long corridor would be monotonous. The layout of the corridors in these large malls takes on various configurations; however, the corridors generally form continuous loops, facilitating pedestrian movements by reducing the need for customers to backtrack. When dead-ends are present, they are much less traversed, and as a result, the stores along them usually pay lower rent and are not the destination stores found elsewhere.

Whereas the mall entrances are deliberately made highly visible from the exterior, the exits from the interior of the mall are much more obscure. As Goss reveals (1993), a conscious effort is made by mall developers to keep customers inside as long as possible, thus potentially increasing the money they will spend. Mall designers obscure the exits from the corridors in order to encourage customers to stay on site for longer periods. In this regard, malls are designed much like casinos. One must search in order to find the exits. A further similarity, as Goss (1993) discusses between malls and casinos is the lack of time-focusing devices such as clocks and windows that allow customers to track the passage of time. Losing track of time, customers are more likely to stay shopping for longer periods.

Not concealed are the flourishes and ornamentation found throughout the interiors of shopping malls. The common mall areas, as well as the individual storefronts, are highly ornamented. The corridors are often finished with marble or granite floor tiles, brass railings, and stained glass lighting. Furniture and fixtures include comfortable benches, and even leather massage chairs, arranged in groupings for casual conversation. Live trees grow indoors and planters contain exotic foliage and flowers.

The individual storefronts are designed by the retailer, but they must abide by strict guidelines imposed by the mall management. The mall developers enforce standards in the design of the individual retailers in order that they meet minimum standards of aesthetic quality and not lower the overall impression of the centre. They are so minute as to dictate whether a store can post temporary banners advertising sales, and include acceptable provisions for material qualities and colour choices. The intention of these regulations is to maintain a high overall image of the centre. They do not permit much deviance from prescribed norms. Also, these

regulations do not permit overdue attention to be paid to any one store, such as one that chose to paint its façade in lime green to attract attention.

The stores, working within the guidelines of the mall management, create facades that reflect the ideals and personalities of their brand. Having an attractive and identifiable image is desirable for drawing customers. For example, Roots, the clothing chain that relates its fashions with Canadiana, created mock log cabins for their store façades within malls. They draw on Canadian images to instil pride and make a noticeable statement with the intent of attracting customers. In a similar way, The Bombay Company, an upscale home décor store, uses sophisticated architectural design reminiscent of a Georgian manor in its facades and store interiors. This air of elegance reinforces the brand image and is used to attract customers to the wares inside and spur spending.

The store interiors are usually of high-quality finishes like the corridors and facades. Stores maintain the theme found on their façade into their interiors, furthering the branding through the physical surroundings. Spotlights focus shoppers' attention on displays of goods. Stockrooms and service areas are kept out of sight at the rear of the stores. Fixtures of wood, glass, and moulded plastics are prevalent. Most stores play music keeping with their image, heightening the sensory appeal of their environments. Some have even instituted fragrances to heighten the desirability of the store's image, and can even have signature scents to match the brand.

Nearly all facades of the stores in the malls contain large display windows. Much like the display windows in the traditional department store (Leach 1993), they are used to showcase products, create desire and draw in customers. A recent strategy among some retailers is the creation storefronts without the windows, choosing instead to have blank areas. These areas might display the store's logo and associated colours, drawing on the association of the brand rather than the product. Another strategy utilized by a clothing retailer is draping the windows in voluminous curtains, thus producing a theatrical effect which heightened the intrigue of the store's contents. The lack of windows adds an air of mystery and exclusivity to these establishments, who are working to distinguish themselves from the monotony of the other storefronts.

The ultimate goal of each store's façade design is to draw in customers. The presence of large chains operating in the malls brings the design to a higher level. Chains have the resources to fine tune their store design through marketing and focus groups, finding the right combination of elements to fit the image they wish to project. They also rely heavily on name-recognition and branding, which is extensively used in their facades, at times more important than the window displays themselves of the products being offered.

Taken together, the facades lining the interior corridors can be interpreted as a reformulation of the downtown streetscape. Shoppers walk the corridors past the varied storefronts. Overhead are many skylights, letting in natural light, and trees often abound. Furnishings not uncommon in traditional retail streets are scattered throughout; wooden benches, iron refuse containers, and fountains all enhance the effect. There is the general impression of walking outside when traversing the corridors of the malls. Yorkdale Mall in Toronto has taken this mainstreet atmosphere to the extreme, with a massive glass roof above the corridor and individual tenants occupying storefronts that mimic individual buildings with varied traditional architecture.

The interiors are impeccably maintained. Garbage is nonexistent in the corridors; even the parking lots are free from refuse. Litter and spills are quickly attended to by the janitorial staff. Floors are kept washed and highly polished; so too are the windows. There are no burnt-out light bulbs and furniture is kept in good repair. It is reported that a mall in suburban Washington D.C. completely repaints its interior walls every fortnight (Goss 1993).

Although this level of maintenance is very costly to mall owners, it is also essential for their success. Customers wish to shop in pleasing environments, impeccably clean and well-maintained. Trash, dirt and an unkempt physical plant not only make the shopping area less desirable to shop, they also imply a sense that the shopping centre is in decline. Imperfectly maintained shopping environments imply that the stores and their products are inferior; it also shows that the centre is outdated. Shoppers perpetually scout for the new and better, not the old and stale. Consumers read cues in the physical environment as to the suitability of the goods that are on sale.

The interiors of the big box stores are markedly different than the interiors of the shopping malls. Finishes are of an industrial nature; exposed structural elements are common. Rather than marble or granite found in the malls, big boxes typically have unfinished floors of exposed concrete. The structural steel girders supporting the roof are left uncovered. Light fixtures are typically the large, high-powered industrial style, providing general light rather than the spotlights highlighting displays found in the shopping malls.

These spartan finishes are fitting for the image that the big boxes wish to convey. Big box stores are premised upon low-priced goods. They advertise that margins are kept low to keep prices low. Expensive finishes would allude to higher mark-up, negating the image that the big boxes wish to convey. They keep the interiors simple in order to purportedly pass on the savings to the customer. The actual cost associated with providing more refined environments might be negligible for individual goods; however, doing so would counter the big box image for value. As such the stores are purposely kept minimalistic.

As their name suggests the interior spaces of the big boxes are voluminous. Whereas the typical outlet in a mall is around one thousand square feet, the same brand in a big box outlet can be several times larger. This allows a larger variety of goods to be offered. More importantly, the extra space allows for more of each good to be displayed, continuing the image of value due to volume sales. The ceiling heights found inside big boxes tend to be much higher. Whereas stores in shopping malls are typically one story tall, the equivalent of approximately three metres, the ceilings in the big boxes are 1.5-2.5 stories in height. Like the Spartan finishes, the loftiness of the big boxes infers price competitiveness since bulk shipments are typically thought to be cheaper.

The two Tommy Hilfiger outlets that operated in London around 2005 illustrate the contrast between mall and big box environments. Tommy Hilfiger, a mid to high range clothing store with strong brand recognition, operated outlets at Masonville Mall and the Wellington Commons power centre on Wellington Road in the White Oaks area. Each had very different design characteristics. The mall outlet had an ornate frontage in painted white wood with elaborate windows displays. Inside were hardwood floors, display tables of ties and neatly folded shirts, and spacious fitting rooms. It evoked a classic Georgian style with simple elegance



**FIGURE 6.17** The layout of White Oaks Mall is contains many corridors connecting several anchor stores.

Source: [http://www.whiteoaksmall.ca/usr/doc/whiteoaks\\_map.pdf](http://www.whiteoaksmall.ca/usr/doc/whiteoaks_map.pdf)

and a decidedly bourgeois atmosphere. The power centre outlet had a much simpler, less ostentatious image, although many of the same elements of Georgian design, colour choice and logo application remained. Store windows were not elaborately decorated for the season but rather display large signage advertising the current promotions. Inside were bare concrete floors, simpler fixtures and few tables of neatly displayed goods. Clothes are hung in larger quantities on utilitarian racks along the walls. The floor area is much bigger, and feels even more so due to the ceiling heights.

Both stores offer the same products under the same brand; however, each had a very different method of attracting customers and making sales. The image portrayed at the mall outlet was stylish and expensive, while the big box store, although it sold the goods at the same price, had a much cheaper feeling. Unfortunately store sales data is not available to compare the success of each disparate strategy. Both stores did not last, suggesting one was not profitable. The mall outlet, despite its attention to detail and elaborate surroundings that should attract customers, was not able to survive, suggesting that it was not profitable. Perhaps the mall rents and expensive finishes were too much to sustain. The survival of the big box outlet must at least be partially attributed to the suggestions of value in the products due to the store's spartan appearance which spurred sales amongst a market keen not only for brands, but also for savings.

## **LAND-USES**

The shopping centre owners and managers attempt to compile a tenant mix that will bring in as many customers as possible. Tenants are carefully selected that compliment the image of the centre, be it high or low brow. In the case of fashion-focused shopping centres they attempt to attract the most popular brands, and offer many retailers so that customers can comparison shop. The tenant composition is also carefully managed to draw a wide-variety of audiences. Electronics and sporting-goods stores are added, for example, to attract male customers. Where comparison is not needed the centres limit the outlets to one type, such as stationary or convenience stores, ensuring that the stores do not compete for limited business, and freeing up room for other retailers.

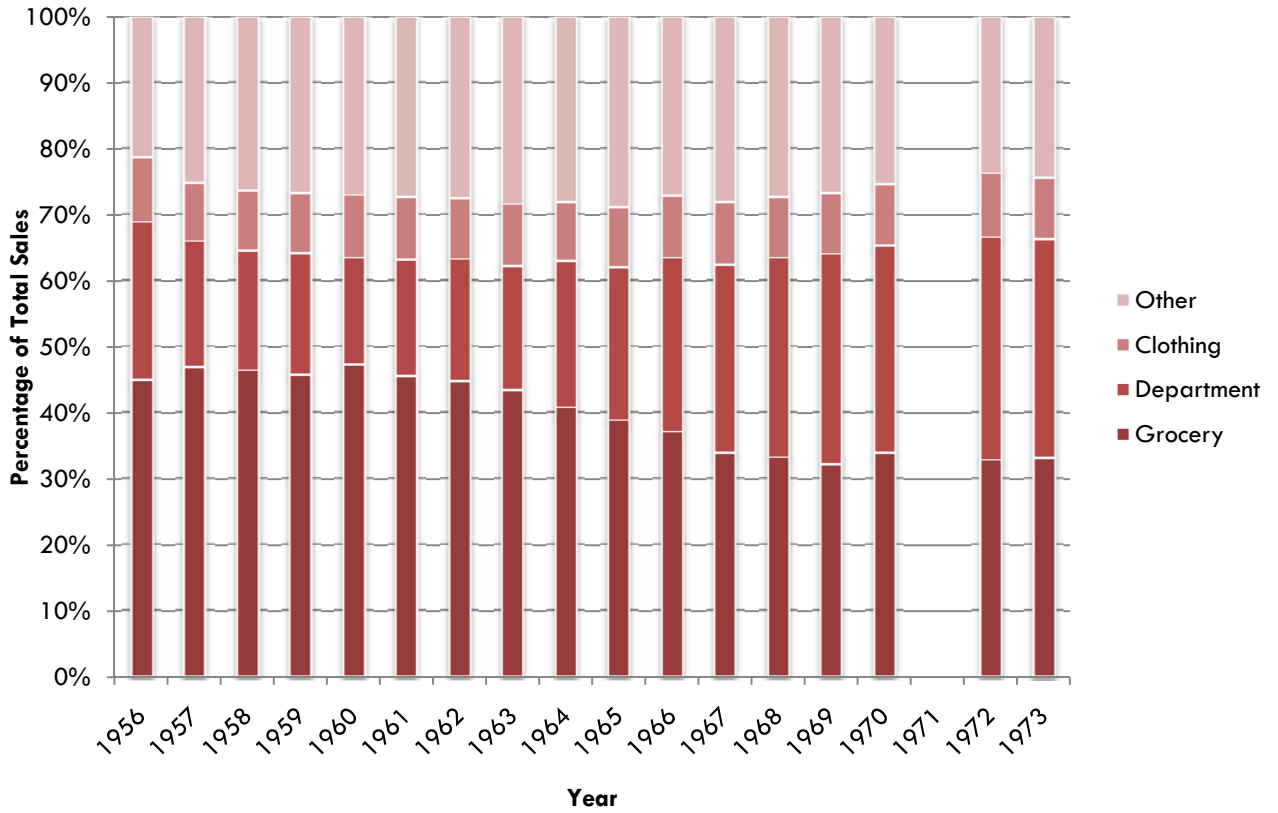
Of course it is only the successful centres that can be choosy in their tenant make-up. In these centres large retail chains vie to locate due to their access to large numbers of customers. The struggling centres, desperate to fill empty storefronts, will accept a far greater range of outlets. In these deteriorating complexes are found second-hand stores, laundromats and import emporia selling rather than the name-brand chains of the successful outlets.

### **FUNCTIONAL COMPOSITION OF SHOPPING CENTRES**

The number and composition of retailers and other services varies dramatically by the type and size of the centre. Some of the small plazas, especially those built in the early eras of shopping centre development, have fewer than ten outlets while the regional malls can have hundreds of stores and services. London's two largest centres, Masonville Mall and White Oaks Mall have 178 and 185 stores respectively (Monday Reports 2010). Although the number of stores is typically correlated with the gross leasable area of the centre, some centres have a large footprint with few stores. For example the SmartCentres London North has only 44 stores, but a GLA of 637 149 square feet. This power centre is roughly the same size as Masonville Mall, which is 686 000 square feet, but contains only one quarter of the stores.

A recent trend is for centres to have a large GLA, but fewer stores. Thus each store is larger, usually the big box outlets. These power centres usually have between twenty and forty outlets, which are usually exclusively chains; few locally-owned stores are found in these complexes. They typically attract 'category killer' stores that dominate specific sectors of retailing such as electronics, office supplies or craft materials (Jones and Doucet 2001a).

All types of shopping centres, from strip plazas, to shopping malls to power centres generally contain at least one anchor store. In the plazas this is usually a grocery store; some have a second anchor, usually a discount or junior department store. The modern big box outlets typically have one or two superstores such as a large discount or moderate range department store, a supermarket or a building supply store. The small enclosed malls typically have a grocery store anchoring one end and a discount department store at the other.



**FIGURE 6.18** Percentage of annual sales in Canadian shopping centres by store type. Source: Lacey (1983).



Nationally, the first shopping centres were dominated by their grocery stores which accounted for roughly forty-five percent of the sales in the shopping centres between 1956 and 1963 (Figure 6.18). By the early 1970s supermarkets, however, accounted for only one third. While grocery store sales fell in shopping centres, the proportion of sales in department stores increased, from under twenty percent before 1963 to thirty-three percent by 1972. The relative proportion of sales in clothing stores, as well as all other categories stayed approximately the same during this period at roughly ten and twenty-five percent respectively.

Large shopping malls were typically opened with a grocery store, but many of these have since closed as the centres shifted from offering nearly all types of goods to a focus on fashion outlets. The grocery stores also vacated the large shopping centres due to their typically high rental rates, in favour of cheaper locations in the low-margin grocery market. For example, the Loblaw's supermarket at Masonville Place left the centre after the renovations in the late 1990s, making room for a large multiplex theatre, signifying the centre's shift from practical everyday shopping to a focus on leisure and lifestyle. Similarly, the Loblaw's supermarket at White Oaks Mall shuttered in 1984 as the mall recalibrated its offerings.

The large indoor malls were built with department stores as anchors; their presence remains today. The mall-based department stores typically offer low to mid-range goods. The department stores in London's malls, like most malls across Canada, are large chains. Zellers and Wal-Mart dominate the low order goods sector while The Bay and Sears are mid-range stores. Canada does not have the high-end department stores that still remain in the United States where Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom's and Neiman-Marcus are all present. Holt-Renfrew, the Canadian high-end department store chain, operates in the larger centres, but usually in their urban cores<sup>6</sup>. Most high-end department stores no longer offer the traditional department store selection. Rather they have become a specialized fashion retailer that carries only a limited selection of house-wares and other traditional department store wares.

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<sup>6</sup> Holt Renfrew is found exclusively in the largest markets, including Toronto Ottawa and Calgary. The smallest city to contain an outlet is Winnipeg. Small and mid-sized cities do not have the market to support these high-end outlets.

While the traditional department stores have struggled, as demonstrated by the collapse of the Eaton's empire, the shopping centres have seen the rise of a new format that is smaller than the department store but larger than the typical outlet. These outlets usually specialize in a specific segment such as fashion, sporting goods or electronics. Examples of these junior anchors include Winners, SportCheck, H&M and Old Navy. While they are several times larger than the typical mall store but still much smaller than the department store. Still, they act as anchors, and are strategically located at the focal nodes of corridors.

London's two successful malls are dominated by chain stores. Eighty-eight percent of the stores in Masonville Mall are chains and 86 percent in White Oaks Mall. Westmount Mall which is currently in a state of decline has only 63 percent of its store compliment occupied by chains. The two successful malls have very high rental costs, forcing out local smaller businesses which typically do not have deep pockets like the large chains. Furthermore, the successful malls are able to selective in choosing which tenants to sign leases with. They typically look for national chains due to their popularity and brand recognition. Even if a local merchant was capable of paying the high rents in the successful malls he or she would likely be unable to garner the coveted space from the mall management.

As a result of the chaining of the retail stores and their ability and desire to locate in the thriving shopping centres, there is a significant degree of similarity in the offerings of the successful shopping centres. Comparing the directories of Masonville Mall and White Oaks Mall reveals that over 50 percent of the stores in Masonville were also present in White Oaks in January of 2010. The two facilities share eighty-six stores and services in common, thus imparting a similar feel between the centres. Centres in different cities also have very similar tenant compositions, resulting in a homogenization of retail environments provincially, nationally, and now internationally with the appearance of large global brands such as H&M and The Gap.

The quality of the stores reflects the success and desirability of the centre. The centres that are failing to attract customers generally have lower quality stores,

selling cheaper goods in more basic environments<sup>7</sup>. In these cases the stores are more often locally owned. The successful centres contain more national chains, selling higher value goods in more luxurious atmospheres. Seldom are the stores incongruent with the quality of the centre. When a centre begins to struggle its desirable tenants are quick to leave, at times vacating despite having signed long-term leases.

The quality of the stores is also correlated with the type of centre. The older external corridor centres typically contain a mix of low to medium order retailers. The small indoor malls, nearly all of which are fairing the worst of all shopping centre types, contain almost all low quality stores, selling inexpensive goods. The newest power centres contain both low to medium quality stores with very few high quality outlets. Some mid to high quality stores are present in these types, such as the fashionable retailers Mexx and Liz Claiborne; however they are the exception. Regional and super-regional enclosed shopping malls typically have the highest order retailers of any shopping centre environment. These centres contain many well-known and coveted brand-name stores. Masonville Mall contains practically no discount stores, and only 11.9% low-med merchandise price category stores (Monday Reports 2010).

While they do not contain many low-order retailers, the large indoor malls are shopping environments for the middle class. The stores are predominantly in the medium-upper category, comprising 66.5 percent of the total outlets (Monday Reports 2010). Only 4.2 percent of the stores in Masonville Mall offer high-end goods. The malls cater to primarily to the medium wealth individuals since this is the largest market in most suburban areas where they locate. The high-end outlets that are found are added cache for the centre, but not the primary market they are servicing. In some larger markets than London, one or two high-fashion malls offer high-order retail outlets selling very expensive fashion brands. Examples include Yorkdale Mall in suburban Toronto and the Somerset Collection in suburban Detroit.

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<sup>7</sup> The Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres groups stores into price categories: Discount, Low, Low-Medium, Medium, Medium-Upper, and Upper.

**FINANCIAL MARKERS: SALES & RENTS**

Financial data pertaining to shopping centres is revealing and valuable information; it is also hard to obtain such data due to its value. The sales figures for a centre, usually measured in dollars per square foot of gross leasable area, directly show how well it the centre is functioning. Higher sales usually equate to more customers using the facility, but can also be due to fewer customers spending more on any given trip, for example on higher priced goods. The rental rates also indicate the success of the centre, however indirectly. A centre with high rents generally implies high demand for space in this centre due to its success in creating high sales numbers.

The Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres 2010 edition has very little financial details pertaining to individual shopping centres. This data may be used by competing shopping centre developers in order to gauge where potential is high for new development due to an underserved market. Stores who wish to build and occupy their own premises outside of shopping centre umbrellas may also use this data to find hot and cold areas of retail sales in the city. Further, underperforming centres do not wish to publish their figures since it would further add to the negative associations of that centre, making its turn-around even more difficult.

The increasing competition in the retail environments is demonstrated by the decreasing availability of financial data. Data has become scarcer in the four years between the 2006 and 2010 editions of the Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres, signalling a tightening of the marketplace. At one time the competition was solely between the stores, but it has now become between the developers of entire shopping centres. When data is listed it is generalized rather than specific, such as sales between one hundred and five-hundred million dollars at White Oaks Mall. Since the figures are scarce it is not feasible to compare the success of centres by type in London: open versus enclosed, plaza mall and power centre, and by size. Aggregate data is available for the United States, showing that centres differ by type in their sales figures and rental rates (Table 6.2). The American figures should be applicable for Canada since the ICSC uses a similar classification scheme and retail environments are similar on both sides of the border.

In general, medium sized centres, the regional and community centres, are the most successful as measured by sales figures and vacancy rates (Table 6.2).

**TABLE 6.2** Average Tenant Sales (\$/Square Foot GLA) and vacancy rate in various shopping centre formats in the United States.

<b>Centre Type</b>	<b>Store Type</b>	<b>Sales 2008</b>	<b>Vacancy (%)</b>
Super Regional	All	\$295.36	10
	Department Store	\$187.44	
	Other	\$355.95	
Regional	All	\$275.41	5
	Department Store	\$164.82	
	Other	\$320.25	
Community		\$286.10	6
Neighbourhood		\$326.13	9
Convenience		\$272.60	14
<hr/>			
Open Air		\$295.78	7
Enclosed	All	\$289.24	10
	Department Store	\$178.46	
	Other	\$348.29	

Source: Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centres (2008) Tables 1-1 to 1-11; 1-15

Regional and community shopping centres have vacancy rates of five and six percent respectively while the very large super regional centres have an average vacancy rate of ten percent and the very small convenience centres have a vacancy rate of fourteen percent. Convenience centres were also the poorest performing in terms of sales per square foot of GLA, while the best performing were the neighbourhood centres (Table 6.2). The good results for neighbourhood centres are likely due, at least in part, to the presence of grocery stores within most of these centres. Grocery stores have high sales figures and are immune to the economic conditions of the time or place since they sell essential products that are constantly in demand.

Performance of community centres is middling at \$286 per square foot GLA. These centres include power centres, town centres, lifestyle centres and outlet/off-price centres (Kramer 2008). Unfortunately the data is not disaggregated to show how each of these types perform individually. It would be interesting to see if the traditional community shopping plaza fares differently than the contemporary lifestyle centres and big box power centres. One reason why community centres may

appear to be under-performing is that they typically contain stores with much larger floor areas. Space in the big box outlets is not as intensely utilized for sales as in the other centre types due to its abundance and relatively low cost per square foot.

The regional and super regional shopping malls have sound returns except for a high vacancy rate in the super regional segment at 10 percent. The small stores located in the large shopping malls have the highest sales figures of all shopping centre types. The department store sales, however, are very low at under \$200 annually per square foot GLA. North American department stores have been performing poorly in recent decades, posting sluggish sales growth. Many chains have gone bankrupt, the most notable example in Canada is the former Eaton's dynasty; others have been bought by more profitable competitors and amalgamated in larger national chains such as Macy's in the United States. Despite their lacklustre returns, the department stores are essential components of the malls. They draw many customers to the centres who then patronize the other smaller merchants that would not be able to draw customers on their own. In order to keep the anchors, mall owners charge much lower rents to the large department stores, which would not be able to pay the same high rents per square foot that the smaller stores are charged.

Open air centres perform better than their enclosed counterparts (Table 6.2). They have both a lower vacancy rate, seven versus ten percent, and higher sales per square foot. The small stores in the enclosed centres incur higher sales than their counterparts in open centres when department store sales are not factored in the analysis.

These aggregated figures fail to show the variability of success between shopping centres within any one category. While large regional and superregional malls perform well on average, there are many others which are failing and lifeless. These have become a curiosity in the urban landscape, drawing some popular attention. The website [Deadmalls.com](http://Deadmalls.com) chronicles the plight of many malls across North America that have not fared well. The deterioration is documented through photographs and text that reveal deserted corridors, deteriorating infrastructure, refuse scattered and rows of empty storefronts. Some commentators have proposed reformatting the malls into public, mixed-use spaces including the addition of

residences, libraries and the addition of proper streets through the large lot areas (Sobel, Greenberg, and Bodzin 2002; Jossi 1998).

Across North America there is disparity in the success of shopping centres. There are large regional and super regional malls that are very successful and will likely continue to be so, for example Fairview Park Mall in Kitchener and Devonshire Mall in Windsor. Other malls are struggling to fill vacancies and draw customers. Notable examples of unsuccessful malls from Ontario are the numerous downtown Eaton's Centres that were constructed in cities such as Peterborough and Sarnia. Most have deteriorated; their retailers and customers fleeing. Suburban examples of failing malls also exist. The Honeydale Mall in the suburban Toronto area of Etobicoke has collapsed, although it is just across the highway from the very popular Sherway Gardens. While there is variability in centres of each classification, the enclosed regional and super regional malls have the most dramatic range of success; some are thriving while others lay dormant.

As in most North American cities, London has both well-performing and poor performing centres. In general, the newest power centres have little to no vacancies and a desirable mix of stores. The traditional neighbourhood and community strip plazas are generally performing well with a low vacancy rate. The enclosed malls show much variability with two very successful regional centres at White Oaks and Masonville Place. The other large regional malls, Galleria and Westmount, are not performing well as retail environments and are undergoing a process to convert much of their upper floors into office uses. Many of the small, enclosed community and neighbourhood centres are also performing poorly. More detail about the flux in the contemporary planned shopping centres is provided later.

There is much variability in sales figures amongst the nine centres in London for which the information is available (Monday Reports 2010). Sales at White Oaks Mall were the highest, between one-hundred and five-hundred million dollars, while Northland, Oxbury and Pond Mills Square Malls all had sales of only thirty to fifty million dollars (figures for Masonville mall are unavailable) (Monday Reports 2010)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The large range in sales figures reported, at times ranging in the hundreds of millions of dollars is a result of the hesitation by the owners of centres to expose this sensitive and valuable data.

Although White Oaks Mall is much larger, not all of the variation is a result of size. Normalizing the totals by centre size, White Oaks Mall has sales between \$400 and \$500 per square foot of GLA while the smaller centres are in the \$200 to \$300 range. The successful large centres produce much greater sales even on a per-area basis.

Over time the sales figures show the divergent paths of the shopping centres. In the 1985 Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres, Westmount Mall had sales of \$70 million, similar to those of White Oaks Mall which were \$75 - \$100 million that year. Twenty-five years later sales in Westmount Mall have stagnated, remaining virtually unchanged, while sales at White Oaks have roughly quintupled. Similarly stagnate were sales at Northland Mall which increased only slightly from between \$25 and \$30 million in 1985 to between \$30 and \$50 million today. When sales figures are held in constant dollars to account for inflation then sales in these struggling shopping centres actually decreases over time. The \$30 million in sales that Northland had in 1985 would be the equivalent of \$54 million in 2009.

Rental rates show similarly large variability between centres. The highest rents per square foot are found at White Oaks Mall, resulting from its success as a retail destination. Here rents are \$50.00 per square foot with an additional Common Area Maintenance (CAM) fee of \$11.65 (MONDAY REPORTS 2010). The lowest listed rental rates are at the Superstore Mall, a failing small indoor mall located on Wellington Road south of Highway 401. Rents in the Superstore Mall are only \$6.00 with a CAM fee of \$4.07, lower than many residential rental rates in the city. Overall, the average rents were \$16.00 per square foot for the twenty centres reporting, with all but four centres having rates between \$10.00 and \$20.00.

Comparing rental rates is difficult since there are multiple ways in which rent is charged. Some rents include taxes while others do not. An additional charge of a percentage of all sales is also often levied on the outlets, further complicating the comparison between centres. The CAM fees further the discrepancies, since they can include an array of services, for example utilities, taxes, marketing, HVAC and maintenance among others. The CAM at Masonville is \$40.00, while it is only \$11.65 at White Oaks, despite both centres offering similar shopping environments. The average CAM for the twenty-one centres which reported this figure was \$8.07 with all but three under \$10.00.



Over time the rental rates of individual centers has changed with their relative performance. Some centres have been able to increase their rental rates while others decreasing in order to attract more stores. In 1984 the Superstore Mall had rents of \$10.00, nearly double the rent twenty-five years later even without accounting for inflation (Monday Reports 1985, 2010). Westmount Mall charged \$20.00 in 1984 while today this has increased only slightly to \$25.00 (Monday Reports 1985, 2010). This contrasts to White Oaks Mall which charged the same as Westmount in 1984 but has doubled to \$50.00 in 2009 (Monday Reports 1985, 2010). The successful centres have been able to charge higher rents due to the demand for the limited spaces, while the failing centres are resorting to keeping rents low in order to maintain and attract tenants and turn a small profit.

### **VACANCIES**

Another indicator of success in the retail environments are the vacancy rates. Most of the successful shopping centres have a low to non-existent vacancy rate. Unfortunately, vacancy rates are not available from the Shopping Centre Directories, but informal site surveys of the various planned shopping centres shows a relationship between a centre's age and its vacancy rate, with higher rates typically found in older centres. The newest big box power centres have virtually no vacancies. Vacancy rates also differ by the type of centre, with the small indoor malls having the hardest time filling their spaces. The two successful regional malls, Masonville and White Oaks also have practically a zero-vacancy rate. When a space does become vacant in these two large malls, it is quickly filled by another store.

When a store shutter in the successful centres it is usually rapidly replaced by others waiting to get into the lucrative space. Immediately after closing, the vacant space is covered with boards and painted to match a blank wall; decorative banners or advertisements are usually applied. This provides the illusion that no store has closed and that the space has not recently been vacated<sup>9</sup>. The mall

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<sup>9</sup> The strategy is now being implemented in some mainstreet locations. The North Tyneside Council, an English municipality, has a program to install 140 fake storefronts in vacant buildings on its traditional retail districts. It is hoped that this will make the areas more attractive for customers. (BBC 2010)  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/tyne/8548069.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/tyne/8548069.stm)

management does not want it to appear that the store is vacant, thus preventing any negative images in the pristine shopping environment. When new stores have been signed for the lease the advertisements usually change to proclaim the new exciting store and its expected opening date. The new and the novel are strategies instituted by those who control retail landscapes in order to enhance their appeal and spur sales, while the old and the lifeless are quickly removed from the scene.

Vacancies plague two of the regional malls in London – Westmount and Galleria. In an attempt to curb this problem they have closed entire sections to concentrate the retailing in specific areas. Galleria was first to do so, turning most of its upper level into office space and public service outlets, moving the retailing to the bottom floor. Westmount Mall is currently in a similar process to consolidate its retailing on the lower floor and change the upper floor into offices and service outlets. This prevents shoppers from having to pass large stretches of vacant store fronts and attempts to save what retailing remains. It is also hoped that the upper floor conversion to other uses will draw in new customers to these outlets, which will then use the stores on the main level.

The small indoor malls typically have a high vacancy rate. In an attempt to draw stores, and the accompanying customers who shop at them, these struggling centres charge very low rents. They also accept temporary tenants in the closed stores. These ephemeral stores create shops in the previously vacated outlets, using the existing layouts, architecture and design elements, and even using any furnishings that were left behind. The only defining element of these stores is the temporary banner that hangs above their entrance. A common example of these is import businesses and wholesale book outlets. Both types of outlets can be found in the faltering Oxbury Mall at the corner of Highbury Avenue and Oxford Street. These temporary outlets will simply strew out goods on long tables and post a sign outside on a temporary banner. They are a result of low rental rates and large amounts of available space in the struggling centres.

The recently built power centres are nearly completely occupied, showing the immediate success of these new retail formats<sup>10</sup>. Due to the size of each individual store, when vacancies do occur in these types it leaves a much bigger hole in the tenant mix. Many of the stores have been built to the specifications of the retailer, thus confounding the vacancy issue. The spaces must be reconfigured to suit the needs of the new tenant. Since power centres are typically much less image conscious than shopping malls they often do not go to the lengths that the malls do when a store does close. Rather than masking the vacancy, many closed outlets in powercentres are obviously empty.

The large players in shopping centre development typically operate the best performing centres with the lowest vacancies. They are able to select centres that are successful, eliminating the poor performing centres from their portfolios. RioCan, Canada's largest shopping centre developer, had a national retail vacancy rate of 2.6% in the fourth quarter of 2009 (RioCan2009). Due to its size, success and deep financial resources, RioCan was able to amass a portfolio of properties that have few vacancies, despite the severe recession hitting the Canadian and international economies. The large developers shed their under-performing centres, which typically then fall into smaller developers' portfolios, including those locally owned.

### **CUSTOMER TRAFFIC**

Shopping centres attract large numbers of customers. Even unsuccessful centres such as the Northland Mall and Oxbury Mall receive a significant number of customers, 12 500 and 34 615 per week respectively (Monday Reports 2010). Both Masonville and Westmount Malls report about 130 000 weekly patrons. These numbers are questionable, however, since Westmount is failing while Masonville is thriving, and the former is expected to have far fewer customers than the later. Furthermore, the figures in the 2001 directory are the same, indicating that they have not been updated. As such they should not be regarded as exact, but rather used to illustrate the general traffic patterns of the shopping centres.

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<sup>10</sup> It will be interesting to look at the vacancies in the power centres in ten or twenty years, to see if they continue to be successful, or if their format begins to decline like the other shopping centre types.

What these numbers are able to illustrate is the large number of people who patronize shopping centres. Roughly one out of three people in the City of London visit Masonville Mall each week; a similar number visit White Oaks Mall. Although the numerous other centres, including plazas and power centres, do not disclose their figures, significant traffic exists in these environments. Taking the combined traffic of all the centres into consideration it is expected that most of the population of the City of London visits a planned shopping centre at least once a week. Shopping at planned centres has become a ubiquitous part of everyday life. Most supermarkets in the city are found within shopping centres. It is also where one goes to browse for fashionable goods, often whiling away an entire afternoon.

## **CHANGE WITHIN THE SHOPPING CENTRES**

Change is pervasive throughout the contemporary retail landscape. Once successful shopping centres struggle to survive while others have completely reinvented themselves in order to meet the demands of the contemporary consumer. New format powercentres have been constructed in the last decade which are challenging older centres for business. Like retailing in general, the planned shopping centres must keep abreast with changing markets. They are forced to recalibrate in order to suit contemporary needs, while working within the confines of their existing forms.

Tenants are the most frequently changed component of planned retail landscapes, coming and going as expansions and bankruptcies ripple through the corporate chains. In contrast, the physical environments go through long periods of stagnation. This is due to the centralized ownership and management of shopping centres. Individual stores do not control their premises and are forced to live with the status quo rather than make incremental changes to suit their needs. These stretches of similarity are punctuated by rapid redevelopment schemes where the centre undergoes major changes once pressure is sufficient to warrant them.

Redevelopments are undertaken to refresh and reformat the centres. They range from cosmetic to structural. Centres may undergo superficial renovations to update their design, replacing outdated finishes with the latest fashionable styles. Floors may be replaced, colour palettes changed and new facades added. The

structure itself may also be altered. Additions create more space for sales, and reconfiguration of existing layout are undertaken to increase the efficient use of space. Deletions can also occur, removing existing areas. The removal of space is typically found in the underperforming centres which cannot support the existing floor areas. Most dramatically entire centres are demolished and rebuilt when more minor changes are not sufficient to reposition the centre to contemporary needs.

Westmount Mall, for reasons discussed in the next section, exemplifies the changes that the centres can undergo due to economic pressures. Bentail, the owners of the centre, have struggled to keep it a thriving retail destination. Vacancies have plagued the centre over the last decade; so much space is available that an entire section of the mall, 80 000 square feet in size, is being demolished to convert into additional parking stalls (DeBono 2010). Mall tenants are being displaced because of this demolition and the conversion of the upper floor from retail to office spaces. Pad developments are occurring along the street in the parking areas creating big box outlets. These new formats of retail space are in demand while the traditional mall spaces suffer.

### **FAILING REGIONAL MALLS**

London's four enclosed regional malls illustrate the divergent status of centres in the contemporary retail landscape. White Oaks and Masonville Malls currently are extremely successful, attracting millions of customers annually to their desirable array of name-brand outlets. Each mall produces hundreds of millions of dollars in annual sales and generates large profits for its owners through the high rents its tenants pay for space in these locations. Contrasting this success are the other two large malls in London, The Galleria and Westmount Malls, which are struggling to reinvent themselves as mixed use office space.

Galleria Mall was heralded as an impetus to downtown revitalization in the 1980s. Mimicking the success of the suburban shopping malls that were a large part of the downtown's decline, it was argued that locating a large mall in the core would draw customers back to the core, leading to success by proximity of the other stores in the area (Fleming 1989). At first the mall was successful, drawing in many prestigious retailers. Fashionable brands such as Polo Ralph Lauren and Harry Rosen had outlets in the Galleria. The mall's success was fleeting, however, with

both customers and stores steering away from the centre shortly after it opened. The unfulfilled promise of the centre is demonstrated by the fact that early plans for a third floor never materialized. Vacancies began to plague the centre and sales were poor as customers continued to shop in the suburban centres, evading the Galleria shortly after its novel attractiveness had dimmed.

The expected associated benefits for mainstreet also did not materialize<sup>11</sup>. Successful mainstreet stores, especially the chains, were lured into the new shopping centre, vacating their existing premises. This left gaps in the mainstreet retail provisioning, which were not filled as expected since the mall did not produce the spin-off customers along mainstreet that were anticipated. It was expected that the mall would give reason for people to shop downtown, thus helping the mainstreet retailers. Most shoppers, however, did not leave the confines of the mall which was built like a fortress. They entered the underground parking lots, took internal elevators, and never went onto the street. When Galleria began to falter it left many gaps in the mainstreet, and shoppers fled the area.

Galleria failed for several reasons. Adopting principles of the successful suburban malls in the confines of downtown caused severe problems. Accommodating the automobile was a significant problem for the downtown mall. The city centre was surveyed and largely developed in a pre-automobile era, and as such is not suited for the needs of the automobile user. Suburban centres, owing to the generous amounts of land they could consume, were built specifically to be accessed by the automobile. Further hindering automobile use in the core are the numerous four way intersections that impede traffic flow; so do pedestrians crossing the streets and on-street parking, making navigation by car tedious. Even more of an issue is the parking problems in the core. On-street parking is often difficult to find and most parking downtown usually has a cost in contrast to the free parking in the periphery. Galleria attempted to accommodate the automobile by incorporating large parking garages in its design. Unlike the suburban centres, however, parking was not free. Pay parking is a necessity in a downtown environment to both

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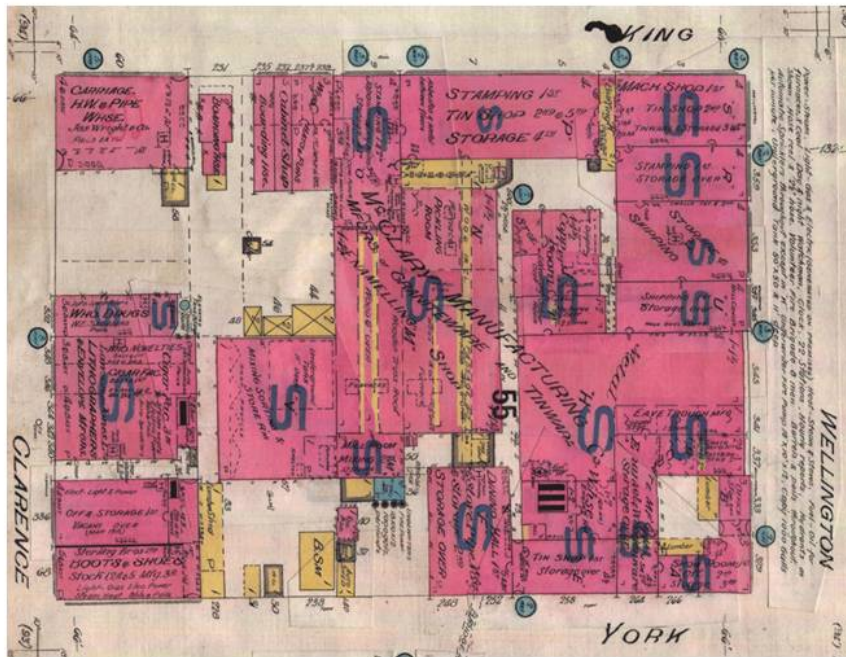
<sup>11</sup> A bachelor's thesis produced in the UWO Geography Department at the time of the Galleria development predicted its failure and negative consequences on the downtown core (Fleming 1989).

recuperate the expense of constructing and maintaining parking structures, as well as to prevent other downtown users from taking advantage of the free parking opportunities.

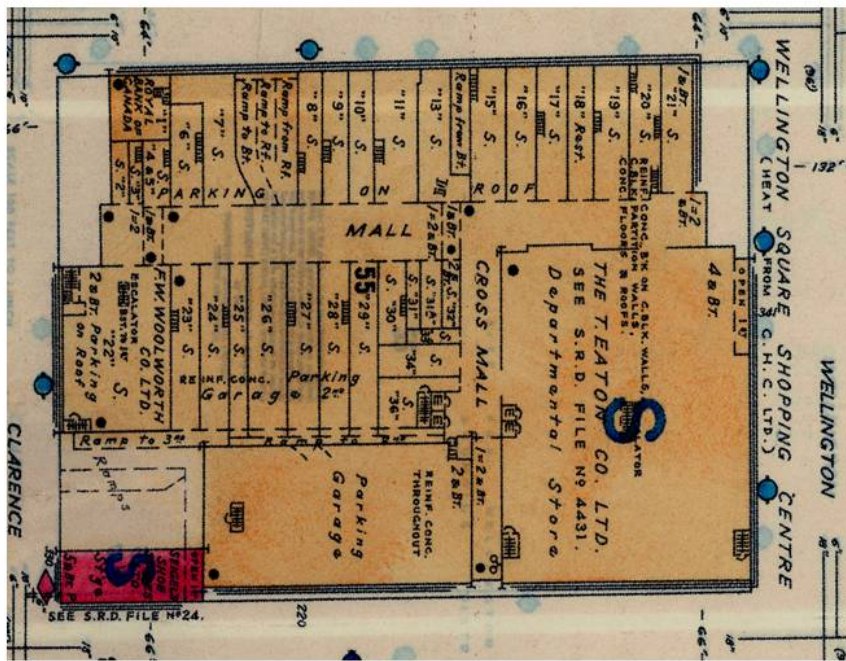
Downtown malls often instituted a parking validation program in which customers who make a purchase are refunded part or all of their parking expenses. This does make the parking more attractive, but there still is the aggravation of dealing with rebates and vouchers. Most customers of shopping centres access the premises by automobile and demand ample free parking. If it is not easy to get to the centre by car, or if parking is not readily and freely available, customers are unlikely to patronize the centre.

In addition to accessibility issues for the automobile, the built form of Galleria was also a factor in its demise. The original Wellington Square occupied the block bounded by York, King, Clarence and Wellington Streets. This was the site of the former McClary's manufacturing company (Figure 6.19). When it opened it was the first enclosed mall in Canada, and the first in a North American downtown (Fry 1961). It contained the Eaton's department store as an anchor as well as an internal arcade lined with shops. The site was chosen since the McClary's factory had vacated the property, providing a large parcel of land; a rarity in the densely developed core of the city with a fine-grained patchwork of lots and buildings which did not permit the large scale planned shopping centres.

When the mall was expanded by the Campeau Development Group it chose the block to the immediate North. Area on the existing block was nearly completely covered by the original mall and as such the properties to the north were amassed by the developer. While it would have been possible to expand vertically, creating a multi-story mall, this was not feasible for London. Vertical malls are usually only found in the largest of urban centres where demand for space is extremely high.



(A) 1915



(B) 1958



**FIGURE 6.19** Fire Insurance Plans of the site of the Wellington Square Mall in downtown London in (A)1915 before the mall and (B) 1958 as the mall was being built.

Source: Goad 1915, 1958.



Examples include the Times Square Centre in Hong Kong and Water Tower Place in Chicago, both having large total floor areas on a small footprint due to their multi-story layouts, some reaching over ten floors of shopping. Vertical designs use less land, but they also are more expensive to build. Even more profound is the problem of getting customers to move upwards, which requires careful design, placing draws on the upper floors and banks of escalators and elevators to encourage the upward flow of customers.

Even with nearly two full blocks of land on which to build, Galleria had a space shortage. The entire area was used for the structure with no surface land for service ways or parking. The mall was built two stories tall to fit on the space. A major issue for its design was the fact that King Street ran through the site, bisecting the main floor in two and disrupting customer flow. The upper floors had a continuous circuit for customers to walk around the entire mall facilitated by two overpasses across the street below. Further impeding traffic flow was the fact that the two anchors, the original Eaton's store to the south and a newly built Hudson's Bay Company store in the northern sector were not equally spaced; thus it was quicker to take the eastern path between the two stores which was much heavier trafficked, while the other path to the west was longer and thus did not see the flow of customers.

The built form of a shopping centre is very important to its success. Galleria had to work within the confines of the highly developed and rigid town-plan of the core, which dictated the size and shape of the buildings. The small blocks forced the mall to straddle a street. The bottom floor corridors were split, preventing the continuous flow of shoppers through the circuit. Even on the upper floor the placement of the anchors caused the flow to be disproportionately high on the eastern bridge at the expense of the stores on the western side. Mall developers are very cognizant of pedestrian flows in their layout of the centres, and determine rental rates based on these figures (Pashigian and Gould 1998). The confines of the downtown disrupted the normal patterns of flow which work well at the periphery of the city where land is abundant but ran into difficulties in the core. The case of the Galleria vividly demonstrates the importance of the form on successful shopping environments.

In order to ameliorate the impact of its failure as retail centre, Galleria is currently refocusing itself as a mixed-use centre. In addition to retail outlets, it now contains a broad array of services and office space. Most of the upper floor has been converted into offices and community spaces such as the continuing studies department of UWO, as well as large call centres and a private medical college. Retailers have been moved to the main floor, which is also where the food court has been relocated. The old Hudson's Bay department store was demolished and the site used for a new central branch of the London Public Library which opened in 2002.

Galleria has been successful as a mixed-use centre. Its spaces are occupied and people are filling its corridors once again. It was, however, a disastrous failure for its developer, the Campeau Group. The poor performance of the project was a major reason for the international developer to file for bankruptcy. Galleria cost Campeau \$175 million to build, but was sold only seven years later for only \$51 million (Daniszewski 2009). It not only hurt the developer, but also the viability of downtown as a shopping district. Its reincarnation as a mixed-use centre provides several benefits, including a destination for people to come downtown to use its services as well as a captive population of workers. The additional office space, however, is exacerbating the high office vacancy rate found in the downtown core (Lawson 2001). The mall also destroyed large number of heritage structures which would be valuable assets for today's rejuvenation efforts in the core.

Although Westmount mall was built in a suburban locale with a relatively large lot area which accommodates the automobile and allowed for the construction of an optimal layout of corridors, stores and anchors, it has recently been in a state of decline. It is now apparent that London cannot support all of the floor space found in its four large regional malls. In the late 1990s, Westmount began to fail while White Oaks thrived, despite both being of similar sizes and offering many of the same stores and services. Using many measures, Westmount should be the more successful of the two centres. It is more modern with a better layout, having been designed from the start as a large regional centre whereas White Oaks Mall has grown over a series of additions and renovations.

While Westmount possesses many of the physical qualities of a thriving suburban shopping mall, its location is a primary problem. Westmount Mall is too close to White Oaks Mall, the southern area of the city unable to support both

outlets. Furthermore, it lacks access to the highways and surrounding markets. White Oaks became the sole successful south end centre due to its ideal proximity to Highway 401 which brings customers from locales to the east and west of the city. White Oaks Mall also intercepts people coming from St. Thomas and other points to the south via Wellington Road. Westmount is located on Wonderland Road, which carries a similar amount of traffic as Wellington Road, but lacks the necessary connections to the highway system. Furthermore, White Oaks is located along both a north/south artery (Wellington Road) and an east/west artery (Bradley Avenue) while Westmount is located only along the north/south Wonderland Road artery; its midblock location doesn't allow for direct access from the east/west arteries.

Westmount is trying to replicate the success of Galleria in its functional repositioning. It has recently constructed a new freestanding movie theatre, as well as several other pad developments occupied by banks and restaurants. Inside the existing mall the upper floor has been emptied of most of its retail outlets, with those retailers wishing to remain in the mall relocating to the first floor. The mall management is recruiting offices and other activities for these vacated spaces, with some medical offices and community groups already moving in. Becoming a mixed-use centre is a good compromise since people using the newly created services as well as those working in the offices are expected to patronize the remaining retailers and services. Rather than providing comparison fashion shopping, the redevelopment into mixed-use centres will draw retailers that offer basic goods for people to pick-up while on break from their job or after visiting their dentist.

### **SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL MALLS**

London's two successful regional malls are located at opposite ends of the city. Masonville and White Oaks Malls have sufficient space between them; their market areas do not overlap unlike Westmount and White Oaks Malls. Masonville is also accessed by major east/west and north/south arteries of Fanshawe Park Road and Richmond Street respectively. It has good connections to the outlying areas, especially for people entering the city from the North, another feature that Westmount lacked. Furthermore, the Masonville area is amongst the wealthiest in the city, providing a large market potential for the retailers to tap.

As successful centres, Masonville and White Oaks have undertaken expansions in the last decade. Adding floor area allows for additional stores and more rental income. The expansion projects produce positive externalities; the greater the number of stores the greater the draw for customers who want to browse the increased selection. Thus the existing outlets benefit from the expansion projects, seeing an increase in customer traffic in the centre. Fashion retailers are especially drawn to the large centres since they require large numbers of customers, who typically browse through a variety of stores. Both the needs of the retailer and the customer are satisfied in these large centres.

The process of 'cumulative causation' (Myrdal 1957) is occurring in the regional and super-regional shopping centres. Although Pred (1965) used the concept to look at industrialization and urban-wide development, it is aptly usefully for understanding the functioning of the retail landscape of planned shopping centres. The successful regional malls are those that have continued to expand. With added size they become bigger draws for customers, who are attracted to the additional selection especially in the fashion goods. The already big centres grow bigger, at the expense of the smaller ones as they are better able to succeed in the competitive retail landscape. Using Darwin's principle of natural selection, the retail landscape is evolving where the biggest centres are best able to compete for the scarce resources of the customers.

The large shopping malls almost exclusively cater to comparison shopping. They have become centres of fashion and style. Originally the large malls offered a host of convenience goods alongside the fashion outlets and other comparison goods retailers. Both Masonville and White Oaks Malls originally had grocery stores, which have since been replaced<sup>12</sup>. Gone too are all but a few stores selling electronics, house wares, books and other non-fashion offerings. In their place are clothing and shoe stores, jewellers and cosmetic purveyors.

The functional repositioning of the regional centres is associated with changing uses of these facilities by their customers. No longer do people make frequent trips to the regional malls to secure daily needs; many of these needs are

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<sup>12</sup> The Wal-Mart store in White Oaks does contain a grocery section, however, it is not a full-scale supermarket.

now being fulfilled by big boxes as well as more traditional strip plazas. People head to the regional malls for leisure-time shopping, to pursue fashionable goods as well as to idle away time. Customers attend the large indoor malls to see and be seen, and are essentially the new public spaces of the city. The plush surroundings of these centres, including their fountains, benches and expensive finishes heighten the desirability of these utopian locales for the middle and upper classes. The stores which do not sell fashions often sell goods for the pursuit of heightening the shopping experience. These include ice cream stands, outlets where one can build a customized teddy bear, candy stores, cafes and tea shops. Customers can now consume while they consume, drinking sugary beverages and lounging on comfortable chairs in between browsing for the perfect pair of pants.

## **DISCUSSION**

The planned shopping centres have become the dominant place of retailing. Their rise has been rapid, only appearing in the retail landscape in the second-half of the twentieth century. Within two decades they accounted for nearly one-fifth of all retail sales in Canada. Today Canadian shopping centres have sales in excess of \$280 billion, over 65% of retail sales in the country (International Council on Shopping Centers 2010). Construction of new shopping centres has been steady and brisk since their appearance in the retail landscape in the mid-1950's. By 2008 there were over 2 500 centres nationally, with a total Gross Leasable Area in excess of 450 million square feet (Lambert 2009). SmartCentres, the nation's largest shopping centre developer, boasts that over 30 million Canadians are within fifty miles of one of their centres – that is nearly every citizen in the country with access to just one chain of shopping centre (SmartCentres 2010).

With two-thirds of all retail sales, planned shopping centres have eclipsed traditional retail areas. The success of the shopping centres has largely been at the expense of the older retail areas, notably the city centre. Downtowns in cities across North America are suffering. At best city centres are now only one of many shopping options, no longer the pinnacle shopping district. At worst the downtowns have been emptied of all but a few retail functions.

In large cities traditional downtown retail districts remain, but they are in vigorous competition with shopping centres in the suburbs. In Toronto exclusive suburban malls such as Sherway Gardens and Yorkdale offer high-end fashion goods that traditionally were only found downtown. Shopping centres have also encroached within the traditional areas. The Eaton's Centre takes a significant portion of the city centre's retail activity. The state of the downtowns of the small and mid-sized cities is especially bleak. Cities such as Hamilton, Saskatoon and Moncton all struggle to keep a vibrant central retail district. London is no exception, its downtown streets are often deserted on a Saturday afternoon while its shopping centres bustle with customers.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF LARGE DEVELOPERS**

Chaining is a significant process in modern retailing, a result of the drive for increased profits accomplished through the economies of scale and financial stability that chains provide. Chains are now found not just in the retail outlets, but also in the shopping centre developers. The two biggest shopping centre developers, SmartCentres and RioCan have extensive national presence. Large development companies own and manage a large component of the contemporary retail landscape.

The centres themselves are now part of the process of wealth creation in retailing. Centres are built and owned by development companies, not the retailers. Profits are generated from the lease of space rather than the sale of goods. Although there were landlords in traditional retail districts who rented to retailers, they often only owned a few stores, and were not widely invested in cities across the country. Today's large shopping centre developers are unprecedented in history of North American retailing.

The large development companies and their portfolios of desirable properties are unique to retail land-uses. Such large holdings are not typically found for the other land-use types in the city. While much office space is controlled by development companies, each firm usually controls only a few properties. Several companies are invested in both retail and office spaces, with the mall developer Cadillac-Fairview and RioCan two notable examples. Although there are large residential developers, they primarily develop large tracts and sell the properties to

individual homeowners, making profits from sales rather than leases and do not remain in control of the physical capital. Several large chains exist in residential rental properties, such as Tridel and Transglobe; however, their holdings are regional and pale in comparison to the large shopping centre developers.

Despite not being directly part of the retail business, the shopping centre developers must be cognizant of contemporary retail trends. They must offer environments that suit both the retailers and customers' needs. If customers dislike a centre they will not go there to shop. If retailers dislike a centre they will not chose to rent space in that complex. Centres must locate in desirable areas and offer amenities to attract customers. They must also work closely with retailers in order to develop where retailers wish to locate.

The difficulties in developing centres to meet the demands of both retailers and customers are ameliorated by the chaining process. The large national shopping centre developers establish working relationships with the retailers. Their large portfolios offer stability, since they have large resources to carry through difficult times. Chains add stability to the relationship between retailer and developer, since signing a contract with a large company is less risky than with a small start-up. Furthermore, customers are aware of the brand of the centre, and the expected level of service and amenities they can expect. The large chains of centres are able to draw upon their deep financial resources to offer more attractive shopping environments. They can also apply their resources to understand the market. Large shopping centre developers employ in house retail analysis, using modern strategies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to gauge the market, chose optimal locations and update their portfolios.

### **MORPHOLOGICAL FRAME**

The morphological characteristics are important factors in the ability of a centre to attract customers. Buildings are constructed to accommodate the latest trends in the marketplace. Internal layout of malls are highly planned to encourage pedestrian flow. Consideration of a shopping centre's location within the urban fabric is central for explaining its profitability. Location was shown to be a driving force in the divergent paths of Westmount and White Oaks Malls. All of these

morphological characteristics are impacted by the morphological frame which exists in varying degrees throughout the city.

The morphological frame is "an antecedent plan feature, topographical outline, or set of outlines exerting a morphological influence on subsequent more or less conformable plan development, and often passing its features on as inherited outlines" (Conzen 1960, 127). The essence of the morphological frame is that the past impacts the current and future developments. Areas with longer histories and those that incur more intense development pressures usually have a more pronounced morphological frame. Lots in the downtown are small, with fragmented ownership. Most core areas are densely built upon and the street network is rigid and forms small evenly sized blocks. Thus, the frame in the downtown is much stronger than that found in peripheral areas of the city.

The morphological frame can inhibit the drive for profit maximization which retailers and shopping centre developers continually strive to attain. Areas with a strong morphological frame are usually more expensive to develop and are also less flexible in the type of developments that can be built. Thus areas are chosen that have a weaker morphological frame; areas where the past has less impact on the present.

Since the morphological frame in the core area is strong, most developers choose to locate their centres at the fringes of the city where the impact of the frame is much less pronounced. At the periphery there are larger lots on larger blocks. If structures are present on the lot, they are typically much less substantial than those found in the core. The street network is also more flexible, with wider right-of-ways offering more opportunities for turning lanes and blocks that are larger. Agricultural fields and single-detached homes on large lots are much less of a burden for developers to deal with than the intensely developed core areas. Furthermore, they are often free of the environmental residues left from past uses that can require expensive remediation and halt the development process once discovered.

Similarly, when developers are compelled to situate in the downtown core or other previously developed areas of the city, they select locations with the weakest morphological frame. To illustrate this point it is useful to revisit the example of the Wellington Square and Galleria developments in downtown London. One reason



that the developers of Wellington Square chose the former McClary's factory site was that it had the weakest frame of any parcel downtown. It was a large lot, covering nearly a whole block and had one owner. Furthermore, the old factory buildings had outlived their utility, thus having lost much of their value. The site was close enough to the existing mainstreet to draw customers, which was still thriving in the late-1950s when the mall was built.

Even though it was the Wellington Square site was the area with the weakest morphological frame, the downtown site still had many limitations. The total area of the development was still small, forcing parking to be provided in an expensive to build and maintain parking garage. There was little room for deliveries, and pedestrian flows were not ideal. These problems were magnified when the centre was expanded in the late 1980s to form the Galleria Mall. This involved crossing King Street to obtain land on the next block since the existing block was nearly fully developed. This caused many logistic issues, not the least of which was having customers flow properly through the center. Arguably the imposing morphological frame of the downtown was a large contributor to the failure of this centre.

The strong morphological frame in established areas also explains why these locations are underserved by shopping centres. It is true that there are large markets of potential customers at the periphery due to the suburbanization of residences, but many still live in existing areas of the city which do not contain shopping centres. There are many people living in the established urban areas of London: Old North and Old South are both wealthy and desirable areas and there remains a working class district in Old East with a large population. Yet, despite the high populations and market potentials of these areas, they are underserved by shopping centres. No power centres and only a few small plazas service these large markets. It is the strong morphological frame and the associated difficulties in these existing areas which are contributing to a lack of shopping centre development.

Thus, it is not only for access to suburban customers that shopping centre developers have evaded previously-developed areas. Developers are choosing areas that have a weaker morphological frame, allowing them to build with fewer restrictions. In the periphery they can obtain large parcels of land much easier, and

do not have to destroy the invested capital in existing structures, or pay for their demolition and remediation. The history of the area is also felt through policy and regulations that protect heritage structures in the core. The Official Plan (City of London 2006, Chapter 13) has an entire chapter devoted to heritage issues in planning, including the designation of heritage buildings which cannot be altered. Many designated buildings are found within the downtown core and elsewhere in the older areas of the city (City of London Planning Department 2010), frustrating the development process.

The morphological frame concept can also be used to understand the changes that shopping centres undergo. While centres do not change often, they do go through times of wholesale transformation. Additions provide extra space in existing buildings and infill developments add entirely new retail outlets to the properties. At times they are completely demolished and rebuilt in a new format. The weak frame of the shopping centres, with their shallow history, large lots and ample open spaces allow for large-scale changes to occur.

### **STAGNATION & RAPID CHANGE**

Planned shopping centres undergo long periods where very little adaptation or change occurs. Individual stores may come and go, but they operate within the confines of the shopping centre complex. Rarely do the individual outlets change the physical structure of the centre; rather they simply modify its surface. Stores must also abide by the covenants of the centre, building facades, hanging signs and finishing their stores within the confines of the standards of the centre. The overall building footprint remains unchanged, as do the shopping centres' corridors and their finishes.

The lack of piecemeal changes to the physical structures of shopping centres is due to their rigid design and centralized management. Stores do not own their premises, but rather lease them from a central company that dictates how and physical changes can be made. The shopping centres are highly planned environments, which typically are efficient machines for selling. This high level of planning also makes them rigid; it is difficult and expensive to change the centres once they are developed. They do not take well to small incremental changes.

The long periods of stagnation in the shopping centre environments are punctuated by periods of intense change. If sufficient pressure builds shopping centre owners may opt to update their centres. When demands for space change they may add or remove floor area. Additions add new stores and ultimately GLA to the successful centres, while underperforming centres may level parts that are not viable. If sufficient positive or negative pressure is there, the entire centre may be levelled, to be either updated with the newest trend, or the land sold for a different development. When styles become outdated they might apply new design to their interior or exterior surfaces.

Such changes are typically done rapidly and completely. This maintains unity and coherence throughout the complex. New facades are applied across the entire frontage of the centre, finishes are updated throughout the interior and furniture replaced all at once. Maintaining unity and coherence within the centres is important to ensuring traffic flows are balanced and to not discriminate against retailers in particular areas. Further, only focusing on one section would make the other older areas feel out of place and not cared for, devaluing the efforts for improvement. The developers wish to maintain a high level of fit and finish throughout their properties to ensure pleasing shopping environments for their customers.

The presence of large companies acting as shopping centre owners facilitates these massive changes. Rather than micromanaging small piecemeal changes as would independent retailers of their own premises, the large companies do not deal with small issues. They wait for the many small issues to accumulate, putting pressure on redevelopment. Once developers do initiate change, they have the financial resources to institute them. The companies have the large amounts of capital, at times tens of millions of dollars needed to perform wholesale redevelopment schemes of their centres. When the redevelopments are undertaken it is in the development company's best interest to do so as quickly as possible to minimize disruption to their businesses operations.

The characteristics of change in the shopping centre environments whereby long periods of stagnation are followed by times of rapid change are analogous with the theory of punctuated equilibrium in evolutionary biology. Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould (1972) use the term to describe a theory of the evolutionary

process in the living world whereby organisms remain relatively unchanged for long periods of time; each generation nearly identical to the next. This equilibrium is punctuated, however, by periods of rapid change, wherein the organism undergoes many changes to its genome. At times the changes are so large that an entirely new species are formed. Following these short spurts of monumental change the organism goes back to a long period of relative stasis until the next tantrum of change.

Much like the living organism, shopping centres remain constant for long periods of time which are punctured by short periods of rapid change. These periods of change are when the centre owners succumb to the pressure to change inflicted by changing environments, albeit retail environments rather than natural. The changes are so intense at times that an entirely new type of organism is formed. Outdated shopping centre complexes are reformatted into ones suiting the contemporary marketplace. The most common cases of this speciation are the dying malls which are torn down and replaced with new big box outlets. Argyle, Wonderland and Oakridge Malls are all examples of this process in London.

### **THE LOGIC OF SHOPPING AREAS**

Despite their apparent difference, a common logic is found in both the traditional shopping areas as well as planned shopping centres. Many of the morphological characteristics found along mainstreet are also found in suburban shopping centres. Although most do not think of the central core and the suburban mall share much in common, there is a large degree of similarity. Mall designs apply the successful characteristics of traditional areas to make their centres appealing retail environments, and maximize selling levels.

Typically the stores in shopping centres are long and narrow, maximizing selling space, while minimizing the distance between them. This allows more stores in a shorter distance, increasing traffic flow while decreasing the expense of the public areas. A continuous, fine-grained streetscape of store facades with great ornamentation and inviting windows is found in the shopping mall. Mall designers realize customers wish to walk through appealing environments, which change

rapidly to keep interest. Distances are kept manageable for a leisurely stroll. Outdoor elements heighten the appeal. Skylights, trees, and benches all enhance the feeling of the traditional retail street. What worked in the city centre at the turn of the twentieth-century is now being implemented with great success at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Most outdoor plazas share many of these characteristics with the enclosed shopping malls. The stores are narrow, deep and continuous along the exposed walkway or arcade. They form continuous rows, with each frontage highly visible, although now with branding rather than architectural detail as was used in traditional retail areas.

Reading these similarities reveals that there is an inherent logic in retail morphology. Stores wish to be close together to allow easy browsing. Frontages are narrow and buildings are deep to facilitate as many stores within a minimum distance. Customers wish to be in attractive environments. Much attention is given to building facades in order to draw customers. Displays lure and signage denotes the goods and services available within. Service areas are kept hidden to keep the image of the store intact.

These similarities hold for all pedestrian retail environments, whether they are the mainstreet, the retail strip, the outdoor plaza or the enclosed shopping mall. Recently, the big boxes aggregating in power centres have changed this pattern. They are primarily automobile environments, where individual stores are accessed not by foot but by car. Although the older shopping centres were built to be accessed by the automobile, it is expected of the customers that they walk from outlet to outlet once on site. In the power centers one is expected to drive from outlet to outlet, and the morphology differs accordingly. Stores are now much larger, and float on the lot. Parking needs to be right at the front door. Cars require large amounts of space, and designs have become enlarged and simplified to be viewed at a distance from the windshield rather than the fine-grained details observed while walking. The logic driving the contemporary power centres is no longer centred on the pedestrian, but rather on the automobile.

## **PROFIT MAXIMIZATION**

The logic inherent throughout shopping environments is a result of the drive for profit maximization. Shopping centres have created new retail landscapes that are finely tuned to maximize profit, updating many elements from traditional retail areas. The successful planned shopping centres are great profit generators, amongst the best in the post-war North American city. They take elements from traditional retail areas, and update them to the needs of the contemporary market. This formula has been wildly successful. In London alone, shopping centres attract millions of customers and billions of dollars in annual sales.

Profits are maximized by attracting as many customers as possible. Shopping centre designers create environments with customer attraction as their primary goal. They provide ample conveniences for the automobile-bound customer, creating accessible environments for the large segment of the population which relies upon the automobile for transport. They are also striking environments that use architecture and design elements to spur sales. Some invite people to stay and linger, with the hopes that more dollars will be spent the longer one is on site by the implementation of comfortable and appealing environments. Others take the opposite strategy, creating spartan environments in the hopes that they will stimulate sale by giving the impression of value pricing. Both types are examples of 'atmospherics', a marketing strategy that designs spaces to with the intent of changing buyers behaviour (Kotler 1973).

Shopping centres also embody a new way of generating profit in the retail landscape. Profits are now not only generated from the sale of goods, but also from the lease of space. Most retailers in shopping centres do not own their premises, rather the centres are owned by large development companies. This arrangement is agreeable for the retailers since they do not have to invest the capital in a building, and also have the flexibility to relocate once their lease expires.

Shopping centre developers have grown much larger in recent years, amassing valuable property portfolios. SmartCentres, the second largest shopping centre developer in Canada, expanded its portfolio by nearly eight million square feet between 2008 and 2009 alone. It and the other top developers are amongst the largest private land-owners in urban areas, amassing properties worth billions of dollars. Their size allows the shopping centre developers to employ advanced

analytical techniques such as GIS and other demographic information in order to gauge the market. They also have the resources to build elaborate environments attracting customers and their dollars.

Perhaps no better machine for profit maximization has been seen in the retail landscape. The nineteenth-century department stores that were found in the downtown cores of most cities were able to draw many people and spur large sales; however, they pale in comparison to the two-third market share that today's shopping centres have captured. Although not all centres have been successful, they are the exception rather than the rule. When failure does occur, the centre is usually revitalized through a reformatting to meet contemporary markets, and is able to return to profitability.

CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSIONS

*Comparing retail landscapes &*

*A trialectic when reading the city's morphology*





## CHAPTER 7

**CONCLUSIONS**

Tracing the evolution of the urban retail landscape over time has revealed much change, but also elements of continuity. The stores that serviced the first settlement formed a rudimentary urban core when the rest of the city was sparsely developed. It was the seed from which a vivid and varied central retail district emerged that was the principle shopping area for the next 150 years. In the post-World War II city there has been a dramatic shift in the retail landscape with the advent of planned shopping centres which have come to dominate the market, leaving the traditional downtown retail district floundering. Despite their differences, the traditional retail districts and contemporary shopping centres share many characteristics which are the result of all retailers' drive for profit maximization.

The primary goal of any retailer is to improve its bottom line through maximizing sales while minimizing costs. One instrument through which these goals can be achieved is the built environment. This strategy forms the basis of the model that was presented in the introduction was used to frame the analysis found in the subsequent chapters. It describes how retail landscapes are created and altered over time by retailers, wishing to maximize profits, while working in a complex milieu of social and economic conditions including the state of technological development. The model is dynamic, with changes in any one component rippling through, and ultimately being manifested in the built environment. The analysis found in the previous chapters read these environments, producing a narrative of how they have evolved over time.

Although their tactics and resources may differ, the desire to create appealing environments is found in the corner stores, big box outlets, and designer boutiques. Retail landscapes are constructed to attract customers and spur sales; the emotions of pleasure and arousal are especially implicated in these

environmental strategies (Donovan and Rossiter 1982). Creating these environments might be costly, but their ability to attract customers and encourage them to spend, more than compensates for their expense. As a result, the morphology of the city, including its town-plan, building forms and land-uses, is shaped by retailers and developers wishing to best utilize space and ensure that the sites are accessible.

As theorized in the model, and shown throughout the preceding analysis, customers also shape the landscape, although indirectly through the retailers who respond to their demands. As social-economic conditions of the consumers change, the retailers must adapt their practices. Free time and disposable incomes are two of the many socio-economic variables that have changed over the last two-centuries; contemporary two-income households have more of the former but less of the latter. The cultures which are adopted by the society are also fluid, shaping the retail landscape. Fashions and tastes are perpetually moving and retailers must adapt to meet the current trends. For example Veblen's (2007) theory of the leisure class shows how emulations trickledown through the social classes. The most noticeable impact of fashions, beyond the goods that are actually sold, is in the store itself. The finishes and the façades are carefully designed by the retailers to present the appropriate image of the store. Many try to stay desirable in the eyes of their customers by keeping a fashionable facade and interiors appropriate to the time. Architecture that is out of date can make it appear that the goods offered inside, and the business practices in general, are also beyond their desired shelf-life.

In turn, the environments shape the practices of both the retailer and the customer. The retail landscape is not just mirror, but also a mould (Meinig 1979). Just as Soja (1980) draws our attention to the way society is shaped and shaping the spaces in which it inhabits, so too is the retail landscape shaped by retailers, who are simultaneously shaped by the environments they inhabit. Retailers must adapt to the confines of the environments in which they conduct their business. The most significant example of the landscape shaping retailers are the problems facing the traditional downtown district as the retailers there struggle to adapt to its various heritage structures and the rigid town-plan. The circumstances in which the downtown was developed over a century ago led to its forms; these forms now shape the retail practices going on in the core although in very different market conditions.

The consumer, through the prompting of what to buy, and how to behave, is also shaped by the retail landscape. The public spaces in malls, for example, shape the consumers behaviour in these highly regulated environments.

Finally, the model informs, and the results indicate the importance of technological innovations on the evolutionary trajectory of the retail landscape. New construction materials and techniques are incorporated in the buildings themselves. Elevators were employed to bring customers to the upper floors of the downtown department stores and steel-framing allows for the vast expanses in the current big-box stores. Business practices are also changed through technology, from the type of goods sold, to the logistics which get them to the showroom. Phonograph dealers entered the landscape as the new technology was adapted by the customers, and shopping plazas are built to accommodate the large tractor-trailers which deliver the goods from centralized distribution centres; the just-in-time logistics negate the need for large stock rooms.

No technology has shaped the retail landscape more than advances in transportation. Transportation impacts how both the customers and the goods get to the stores. The arrival of the train in the 1850s dramatically increased the selection of goods on store shelves in London. Throughout the development of the city, consumers have been able to increase their mobility through new technologies. In the early settlement walking and horse-power were the only means of transport. Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, streetcars brought customers from greater distances to the core, and focused activity where the major lines crossed. The advent of the automobile in the early twentieth-century, and its mass adoption following the Second World War, dramatically altered the landscape. No longer was the core the most accessible areas of the city. The friction of space was greatly reduced, allowing people to move further in less time and on their own schedules. The dominance of the core was thus eroded, and a 'city of realms' came into existence (Vance 1970; Vance 1990). The planned shopping centres grew out of this change in mobility, opening in peripheral areas accessed by the automobile.

## COMPARING RETAIL LANDSCAPES

### MORPHOLOGY

Traditional and contemporary retail landscapes have distinct morphologies, resulting from the conditions of the era in which they were constructed. The social, economic, political, and technological circumstances are all implicated in shaping the retail landscape. Age is also important; older areas have undergone longer evolutionary periods during which the layers of adaptations are applied.

The town-plan of traditional retail areas is characterised by a gridded network of streets forming evenly sized but small rectangular blocks. A long history and intense development pressures on these areas have caused the lot fabric to be persistently split and amalgamated. A patchwork of lots results, generally within a small range of sizes and shapes. Lots in the core are typically narrow and deep to fit as many businesses as possible along a short street frontage. Development on the lots is expansive; built coverage is at least half of the lot area and three-quarters coverage is typical. The small lots and high building coverages results in the buildings conforming to the shape of the lots, being narrow but deep; setbacks from the lot edges are zero for both the sides and the front. Only at the rear of the lot is open space available. Throughout much of the city's development, there was an intense demand for space in the core due to its accessibility in the pre-automobile era. The core was the centre of the urban area, thus entailing the shortest travel distance. Furthermore, the city's transportation network was focused on the core, drawing customers to the peak value intersection where the streetcar lines crossed.

Contemporary retail areas are dominated by planned shopping centre complexes. They are built on large parcels of land scattered throughout the urban fabric, each usually being built at what were the fringes of the city at the time of development. Automobiles have facilitated this radically different landscape to occur since they increase mobility, thus decreasing the demand for space in intensely utilized central areas. The automobile released the pressure of the core, allowing for the decentralization of shopping throughout the city. At the same time automobiles require large spaces for movement and parking which negates the utility of the densely developed core.

The parcels in shopping centre complexes are large and come in a variety of shapes; rectangular is common but not exclusive. They are found on the major arterial roads, usually at their intersections. The structures in which the stores and services are found are also large, some containing over one-half million square feet of Gross Leasable Area (GLA). Like the lots, the building footprints come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some complexes contain both very large and very small structures on the lot. Due to the large lot size and variety of buildings styles and sizes, there is little relationship between the lot and the structure. Structures are built with large setbacks from the lot lines, but are typically located along the edges or rears of the lots to provide ample room for parking at the front of the structure. Built coverage is low; under one-third of the area is typically developed. The low coverage is due to the lack of pressure for space within a small area accessed by foot as was the case in traditional retail areas. Remaining lot areas are typically devoted to parking spaces, which can number in the thousands of stalls. There is typically little greenery despite their large areas.

The building forms differ greatly between the two types of retail developments. Tall and narrow buildings line the mainstreet, a result of the demand for space and fine-grained, narrow parcel fabric. Traditional retail buildings are typically three to four stories in height, short compared to the skyscrapers reaching hundreds of metres into the air in the downtowns of today's cities; however, they were exceptional in the 1880s when the remainder of the city was one to two stories in height. Buildings abut each other, forming a continuous streetscape which contains few gaps. Facades are highly ornamented; applying liberal interpretations of architectural styles. It was an imposing yet lively area, unlike any other in the city.

In comparison, the buildings in the shopping centre complexes are long and low. Space demands have been overcome so the buildings no longer need to grow upwards or abut one another. Most are one story tall; however, the heights can actually be much greater than the typical one story structure in order to create large volumes of space inside. The early centres were built using modernist design principles reflecting the fashion of the era. Many have since been updated using more recent post-modern designs, eroding much of the past simplicity. Still, the centres typically have large areas of simple finishes punctuated by large decorative

features such as towers and arches. Their facades are expansive yet austere, no longer dripping with embellishments as are found on the traditional structures.

### **NAVIGATING THROUGH THE RETAIL LANDSCAPE**

Big box stores, the most recent additions to the retail landscape, are a radical departure from the previous types. Although there are many differences between the other planned shopping centre formats and the traditional retail areas, they are fundamentally both accommodating of the pedestrian. Just as customers strolled along mainstreet, they traverse the corridors of malls or shop under the arcades of plazas. Customers might access the shopping centres by automobile, but they are expected to park their cars and travel from store to store by foot in the older format centres.

The power centres are groupings of big box outlets. Like other shopping centres, customers usually arrive by car; however, unlike the older shopping centres, customers typically traverse from store to store also by car. Patrons of big boxes outlets expect to park near the entrance, pick up many goods in the large outlet, then go to the next outlet via automobile to secure a different segment of articles. These centres are not designed for access between stores by foot. Long distances separate each of the big boxes, sidewalks are sparse, and pedestrian conveniences such as trees and benches are typically absent. Many of the big boxes are separate structures, floating on the lot rather than in the congruent rows found in earlier plazas. The big boxes are a fundamental departure from all earlier retail forms. Arguably, malls have more in common with the downtown retail district than with the big box outlets, although they both fall under the umbrella of planned shopping centres.

Careful readers of this monograph will have noticed an apparent contradiction between the flows of pedestrians through the downtown cores and the regional shopping malls. It was shown that shoppers in the central retail district tended to stay on mainstreet, traveling in a straight line and avoiding turning onto adjacent streets. In contrast, mall designers purposely design facilities with a series of looping corridors that turn after only short distances to facilitate traffic flow. The difference between these patterns is that customers in shopping centres turn corners

since they have no other options; there is only one path to take through the shopping malls. In the downtown district there are many choices; each intersection provides an opportunity to change direction or continue in a straight line.

Given the choice, most people choose to keep going in the same direction. By forcing customers to change directions frequently in shopping malls, the designers break up the trips into smaller segments. Each small segment is easily traversed, and a focal point always visible in the distance give the impressions that total distances walked are minimal. This is part of ensuring a pleasurable experience for the customers, who wish to while away the afternoon in leisure rather than toil. It is interesting to note that both the mainstreet retail district and the total length of the corridors inside Masonville Mall are approximately the same length, roughly three-quarters of a kilometre<sup>1</sup>. This appears to be the optimal distance for customers to be expected to browse across a series of stores. Longer distances would be fatiguing, while shorter ones make the trip too short and do not offer as much selection.

In both retail landscapes shoppers wish their destinations to be visible. In the downtown they walk a straight line, not taking the side streets in order to reach their destination. Turning down the adjacent streets would also be backtracking, veering from the destination point and adding extra length to the trip. The indoor corridors adopt a very different strategy, creating not one long, straight corridor but many small segments at various angles to each other. If malls were built in one long segment nearly a kilometre in length it would be both monotonous to traverse and difficult to build. Being indoors this distance would feel much longer than it does outdoors due to differences in perception of space indoors and outdoors. It would also be more monotonous, and distant focal points would not be visible due to the low roof lines unlike the unlimited vertical vantages outdoors. Fundamentally, one long corridor would also be unfeasible since a lot three-quarters of a kilometre long would be difficult to amass and develop. Thus, mall designers bend the corridor to produce a loop around which customers walk. This provides many more destination

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<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of mall walkers, usually elderly people who exercise by traversing the mall corridor circuit, is testament to the distances traveled inside these large complexes. They choose the controlled indoor environments of the shopping centres over the exposed streets, liking its security as well as temperate conditions.



points, reassuring the customer and making the journey seem shorter. This strategy is enhanced by the strategic placing of anchor stores at the vertices of the corridors.

### **OWNERSHIP**

The land-uses found in retail landscapes as well as the ownership structure of these environments have undergone profound change. Retailing in the pre-World War II era was locally controlled, usually consisting of family-owned enterprises even in the largest of emporia. The Smallman & Ingram Department Store, a mainstay of London's core retailing, was owned by prominent local families until the 1940s when it was bought by the Simpson's chain based in Toronto. Most enterprises consisted of a single outlet; chain stores were rare. The buildings in which business was conducted were owned locally as well, many times by the retailers themselves. There were some larger land owners who controlled several properties throughout the core and rented to individual retailers; however, they were the exception.

Chains of stores were exceptionally rare throughout the nineteenth-century. More common were businesses types that ran in families, for example grocers were often related. In the early-twentieth century there were a few local chains in London such as the Taylor Drug Co. pharmacies with five outlets scattered throughout the urban area. These chains remained small, limited by the local market. Non-local firms were rare. The first likely being Grafton's clothing store, which was based out of Hamilton and opened in 1898 (Baker 2000). Other than F.W. Woolworth's a five and dime store, no other chains were apparent in the 1916 city directory. By the 1920s non-local chains had arrived, including Loblaw's and A&P in grocery retailing and a Woolworth's discount department store.

By the mid-twentieth century the number of retail chains had expanded greatly, including both local and national firms. As mentioned, one of the mainstays of the core, the Smallman & Ingram's department store, was sold to the Simpson's company of Toronto and rebranded under that nameplate. The successful local stores were prime targets for purchase by outside firms, absorbing profitable businesses from local families. Still, the chains were in competition with numerous

outlets that remained independent and locally owned. Chains had not yet come to dominate the landscape in the mid-twentieth century.

Today, chain stores are the leading actors in the retail landscape. National and international name-brand stores operate successful outlets in all areas of the city and in all product categories and price segments. They have successfully outcompeted most local players in businesses ranging from office supplies to clothing to home furnishings. Local retailers do exist, however, they have been largely relegated to the margins of the market. Local firms typically offer specialized products in either the very high or very low price points. London-based stores remain selling items such as designer suits and used books, but are generally absent from mass-market merchandise.

Chains are the principle tenants of shopping centres, especially the successful centres. Both Masonville and White Oaks Malls are made up of over 85 percent chain stores. The new power centres also largely consist of chains. For example, the SmartCentre located at Hyde Park and Fanshawe Park Roads is totally occupied by non-local firms. Locally-owned stores are found in some of the less successful centres due to the lower rents and acceptance of non-chain stores in the centres which struggle to fill vacancies.

The proliferation of chains is now not limited to the retail outlets themselves, with the ownership of the shopping centres increasingly being controlled by large firms. Today's shopping centres are predominantly owned by large development companies and real-estate trusts based out of major cities, notably the Toronto area. Few of the centres are owned locally, and those that are owned locally are typically the struggling centres. Profits are now made in the retail landscape not just from the sale goods, but from the leasing of space.

## **ADAPTATIONS**

The disparate ownership structures of the traditional and contemporary retail areas results in dissimilar processes of change over time. The traditional downtown cores had scattered ownership, each lot and building typically owned by unique parties, often the retailers themselves. This resulted in a steady occurrence of adaptation as each retailer acted upon changes to the market. The shopping

centres primarily consist of retailers who lease the space, thus unable to change it without the consent of the shopping centre owner. In the shopping centres it is usually the developers rather than the retailers who instigate the changes, thus reducing the occurrence of change.

Retailers that own the premises in which they conduct their business are able to adapt the structure as they see fit. In the traditional areas, where most stores were independently owned, there was a continual process as each retailer adapted their structures to suit the changing needs of their business. When times were good a retailer could build an addition to the rear or open up floors above for additional retail space. They could also refashion their stores to keep abreast of the latest trends. In terms of the entire district, each change was small; however, they created a continual adaptation process throughout the core which in aggregate resulted in significant adaptations over time.

This continual process of change was cyclical in its intensity, impacted by economic cycles. When times were good and the economy in a boom period, more changes were occurring due to the availability of capital and the presence of heightened demand. When times were bad, however, less capital and lower demand reduced the rate of adaptation. Yet, with numerous individual retailers there was a perpetual state of change even when times were tough.

The slow but constant process of change in the older areas is contrasted with the less-frequent but more dramatic changes that occur in the planned shopping centres. A punctuated equilibrium is found in shopping centre developments whereby they undergo long periods of stagnation followed by short periods of intense change. Individual stores in the shopping centres come and go, but they generally fit within the existing confines, having little control over the physical structure itself. When sufficient pressure for change mounts, the shopping centre developers enact wide scale change. They update the entire centre at once, replacing furniture, choosing new finishes and refashioning facades. If the centre is struggling it may elect to demolish entire sections, while those that are booming may expand for additional retail space. When pressure is so intense, an outdated centre may be completely demolished and rebuilt in a more suitable style. Shopping centre developers wish to keep coherence throughout their complexes, and thus undertake

changes all at once. Being large companies, they have the capital to accomplish these immense changes.

### **CONTROL**

Although planned shopping mall environments often mimic many aspects of the traditional downtown, these two landscapes greatly differ in the level of control found in their respective spaces. Shopping centres are highly controlled environments, while the traditional mainstreet retail areas have much higher entropy. Malls, plazas and power centres are private property, and thus are able to ban uses they do not see as appropriate. Security guards patrol the hallways, keeping out those who are not desired, which in most cases are those who are not there to purchase goods. This fact is lamented by many social scientists, who argue for the return of public space, which has been lost to privately controlled shopping environments (Cohen 1996). In contrast public spaces are abundant in traditional retail areas. Although individual stores are private property, the streets, sidewalks, plazas and parks that connect them are communal, free for use by all regardless of whether they are spending money or not.

Centre owners not only control the people admitted to their properties and their actions, but also the stores themselves. They disallow stores deemed undesirable, such as those selling pornography or second-hand goods, while actively recruiting others regarded as assets to the centre's image such as high-end clothiers. This control of tenants is not found in the traditional street, where ownership is piecemeal and a wide-range of types and classes of stores are found. Once admitted to a shopping centre, a store must abide by strict covenants pertaining to the style and upkeep of their outlets, their hours of operation, level of music played and even the dress of their employees. Such encompassing covenants are not found in the traditional retail areas, although individual stores may have strict policies pertaining to their operation.

The environmental conditions of mall spaces are also stringently controlled. Due to their internal corridors, malls can control their climates, maintaining a comfortable temperature for the shoppers. They also control the air flow, humidity and even the smells making for as pleasurable an environment as possible. Lighting is used to enhance the sale of products. The flowers and trees are carefully tended

to in order that they not are seen as dying, drawing comparisons to the mall itself. Similarly no refuse is found and surfaces are kept cleaned and freshly polished. The exposed street in traditional shopping areas is subject to the weather. It is also typically much grittier, with discarded litter, and an uneven level of upkeep due to the fragmented ownership structure and the reliance upon the public sector for the maintenance of its communal spaces.

## **AN UNDERLYING LOGIC IN RETAIL FORMS**

Despite significant differences, there remains an underlying logic throughout the disparate retail landscapes. Stores cluster together in small areas, allowing for comparison shopping. Generally the more stores the more desirable an area and the bigger the draw due to its variety of offerings (Reilly 1931). The stores of both traditional retail districts and shopping centres are aligned with small frontages and deep depths in order to minimize distance between the outlets while maximizing selling space. They form continuous strips to reduce the length of trips between stores and encourage browsing. All shops create appealing environments that encourage sales, from their lighting to signage. Although many characteristics may be different, all retail formats are united in that they are highly manipulated environments in order that they appeal to potential and existing customers alike<sup>2</sup>.

Further continuity in the retail landscape over time is found in the treatment of facades not just as structural or even decorative, but as advertisements in and of themselves. The facades are important elements for drawing attention, and over time retailers have continued to make striking facades to attract customers. The early stores exaggerated the architectural styles they drew from, applying copious amounts of ornamentation. They also exaggerated their height using fake fronts, cornices and parapet walls. Towers, flag poles and other appliquéés were also installed to enhance height. Height not only drew attention, but gave the

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to infer that the environments are manipulative, as Goss argues in his analysis of shopping malls (1993). Retailers and designers manipulate the environments in order to be attractive to consumers; however, the agency of the consumer must not be neglected in understanding their choice of retail environments and consumption patterns.

impression of a larger retail outlet. Larger stores offered more selection; they also had a more solid business. Many of these techniques continue to be implemented today. Heights are still exaggerated in the shopping centres to imply more selection and bigger opportunities to shop. Masonville Mall has towers and flag poles marking its entrances. Although architectural details have waned, what is left is still exaggerated to draw the attention of the passer-by. An increase in size and decrease in detail of the ornaments and features is necessary since most customers are arriving by automobile, from which only the grandest elements are observable (Tunnard and Pushkarev 1966).

In effect, the facades of stores are giant advertisements, signalling what the store offers to potential customers. An ornate façade suggests products of quality while a simple façade suggests value. The facades of dry goods stores along mainstreet were precious in their details. A firm that was able to spend large sums on its exterior meant that its products were of quality and desirable. Today many big box outlets adopt an opposite approach, creating spartan facades with inexpensive materials and a lack of details. Such facades imply value in the prices of the goods inside since mark-up is not being wasted on fine facades.

Recently the concept of facades as advertisement has been taken to a new level with the branding of entire buildings to match the brand of the store within. As retail chains have grown, brands have become more important, becoming ingrained through advertisements and other media. Chains actively work to promote an image, and use the facades of their stores to do so. Most chains use a common façade in their outlets, signalling the brand and what is found within. In many cases the signs on the façade are less telling than the colours, design features and other elements that retail chains implement. Best Buy, a big box electronics retailer, has a blue façade with a giant yellow notch protruding from it representing its signature yellow price tags used in its stores across the country. On the other hand high-end retailers wishing to distinguish themselves purposely use different facades in each of their outlets. No two Holt-Renfrew stores across the country look the same; however they share a, simple and clean design language that is instantly recognizable as a high-end outlet. Some even employ famous architects to create fashionable and much-discussed facades. The Neiman-Marcus store in San Francisco, for example, was designed by the great Phillip Johnson.

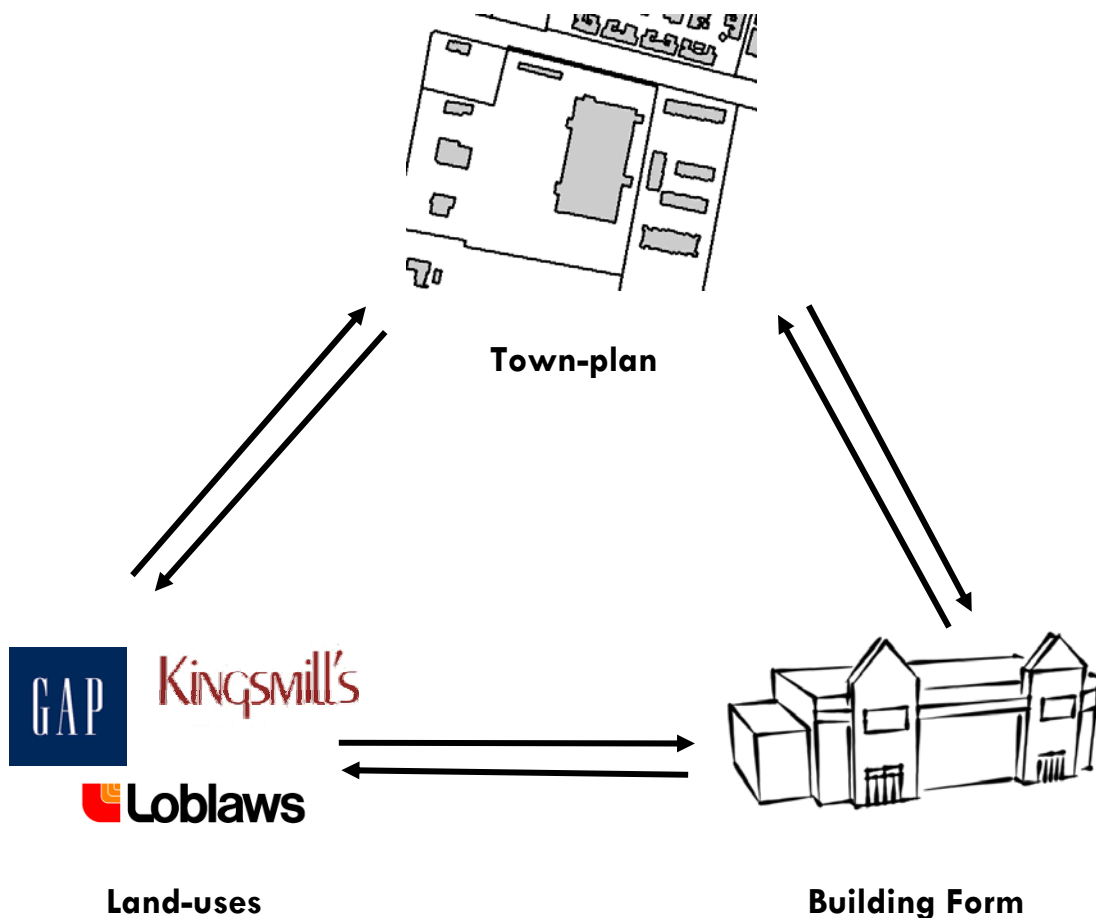
Over time there has been a remarkable continuity in the form of retail stores. The market stalls in the Greek Agorae were enclosed on three sides, their fronts, however, being open to the busy agora to draw customers (Vance 1999, 53-54). By the fourth-century B.C. there were specialized retail buildings along covered colonnades (Vance 1999, 54). The stores of both mainstreet and the shopping centre continue this same basic form. They are enclosed on three sides, but open at their fronts, with wide doors and expansive plate glass windows, to draw in customers from the busy public areas. The shopping malls also show remarkable continuity with the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul and the arcades in Paris (see, Benjamin 1999).

The many similarities in the retail landscape over millennia are due to the stable drive of the retailers to maximize their profits by attracting customers and selling more goods. This results in an underlying logic, to which retailers throughout history have adhered. Although modern marketing techniques may have advanced this logic through carefully crafted environments tested by focus groups and advanced locational analysis using GIS capabilities, the early retailers cannot be thought of as primitive or having not displayed rational thought. Rather than a retail revolution brought on by the shopping centre, there has been an evolution in the retail landscape, as shopkeepers continually adapt their practices to keep abreast with the changing market environment.

## **UNITING TOWNSCAPE ELEMENTS**

The townscape is composed of the town-plan, building forms and land-uses of an urban area. Each offers defining qualities of the townscape, for example the architectural details of the buildings and the types of occupants found within. These elements in the urban retail landscape have been documented throughout this thesis. Singularly, they are important and telling pieces of urban form; together they unite to form the townscape. The close examination of each prompts an understanding of their inter-relatedness.

The townscape elements are held within a trialectic<sup>3</sup> – each element impacting the other two while simultaneously being impacted (Figure 7.1). The elements are in a perpetual discourse which is shaping the physical features of the city. Each element enables and constrains the others while simultaneously being acted upon by the others.



<sup>3</sup> Although trialectic is not a commonly used term, it is implemented here to refer to a specific type of dialectic relationship involving three actors. Soja (1996) uses the term to in a more abstract manner to describe the incorporation of space in traditional Marxian dialectics; however, it is used here in terms to refer to a relationship amongst three actors each simultaneously shaping and being shaped by the other two.



**FIGURE 7.1** A trialectic in the town-scape is present; each element constantly shaping and being shaped by the other two.

The findings of the analysis of retail landscapes illustrate this trialectic in the townscape. The size and shape of the lots physically constrain the buildings. For example, the long narrow lots found along mainstreet shaped the buildings that were built upon them, creating narrow and tall structures with only their facades exposed. In contrast, the demands of the building owner for a specific type of structure, incorporating his or her needs, can cause lot splitting and amalgamation to overcome the limitations of the parcel boundaries. In these cases, the requirements for the buildings shape the parcels, such as seen in the amalgamation of lots downtown in the second-half of the twentieth century in order to provide for large office buildings. Relationships exist between the building forms and their uses. For example, the architecture of the mainstreet buildings was often Italianate, while classical motifs were seldom used. As Domosh (1998) points out, this was due to the connotations of regal palaces that the Italianate style conjures, whereas classical buildings are associated with powerful institutions, unwelcoming to customers. The building forms shape their use. The contemporary shopping malls bring in people and act as a social centre; as Goss (1993) discusses they also entice people to stay longer and buy more. The third relationship between use and town-plan shows similar discourse. The various demands of the land-use shape the town-plan, notably the parcel fabric as seen in the long skinny lots in the downtown core and the large lots of the shopping centres. The shape of the blocks and streets found in the town-plan enables and constrains their uses, a phenomenon also witnessed in the retail patterns in the central core.

These are but a few of the many discourses which are perpetually shaping and reshaping the morphology of retail areas specifically, and the city in general. All of these relationships are occurring simultaneously in forming and reforming the urban landscape or townscape. Thus, it is impossible to fully understand one element of the townscape without considering the others.

In order then to properly understand the townscape, all the elements must be analyzed. This has not been the case, however, in most existing urban morphology literature. M.R.G. Conzen, who first divided the urban landscape into these three elements of townscape, was aware of this discourse between the elements:

“Everywhere in the townscape these categories are closely associated, since every building and every unit of land-use is accommodated on one or other element of the town-plan, usually a land parcel or plot” (Conzen 2004, 42). His seminal work on Alnwick, England is, however, exclusively concerned with analysis of the town-plan, with sparse mentions of the other townscape elements (Conzen 1960). He had hoped to analyze the building forms and land-uses of this English market town, however, this work was never completed.

The town-plan analysis tradition has remained throughout most of the British urban morphology literature. As such, few studies examine the building-forms and land-uses of the townscape. Among the works that most closely come to evaluating all three townscape elements is Whitehand and Carr’s (2001) work on twentieth-century suburbs. Although all-three elements are discussed in this comprehensive volume, their inter-relatedness is not fully addressed.

Since each of these elements has different rates of change their relationship is quite complex (Conzen 2004, 42). Land-uses change the most rapidly, much quicker than the buildings themselves. This causes friction between the building’s use and its form since buildings may be used for a new purpose other than what it was constructed. If enough friction occurs, then redevelopment will happen. Similarly, the uses and the lot patterns are often unmatched due to their different rates of change. Harvey, in his Marxist interpretations of capitalist processes in the city, uses the notions of exchange value and use value in referring to similar issues (Harvey 2001, 1985). This conflict between a buildings use and the one which it was built for only become evident by looking at the townscape elements together; tracing their histories helps explain the discourse.

In reading the urban landscape each element must likewise be considered to arrive at an accurate interpretation. Each element is important in the landscape, and failing to consider all three might lead to inappropriate conclusions. For example, looking at the downtowns of London, Kitchener and Windsor, three similar Ontario cities, it appears that they are nearly identical (Figure 7.2 a,c,e). Although there are some defining features, notably the Detroit River in Windsor (the Thames River in London is not seen in this small area), there appears to be great amounts of homogeneity if only the town-plan is considered. Each area is surveyed in a grid plan, with generally the same size of rectangular blocks. Likewise, the buildings are

generally of the same size and shape, and densities are uniformly high. In comparison, examples of planned shopping centres in each of these cities have contrasting town-plans (Figure 7.2 b,d,f). Their street networks vary greatly, from highway interchanges, to a single artery, to a mixture of arterials and side streets. There is a wide range in buildings sizes and shapes, and their coverages also vary, from relatively high to low densities. There is much variation in the orientation of the buildings on the lots and to the streets.

Thus, by comparing only the town-plans of these different retail environments, it appears that the traditional downtowns are homogenous, while each planned shopping centre demonstrates unique characteristics. This result contrasts with the prevailing notions of the downtown as the area of the city which is the most unique, displaying local characteristics, while the planned shopping centres are bland and cookie cutter between urban areas (see Cohen 1996). It is only when considering the land-uses of these areas and their building forms that the full qualities of the landscape are revealed. The downtown is where many of the local stores and services locate while the planned shopping centres are full of chain stores found in every major city. Likewise, the architecture and design of the downtown buildings is varied, implementing a mixture of styles, both formal and vernacular while the planned shopping centres are typically built with modernist or post-modernist design language. If looking solely at the town-plan, a very different landscape is described than if all three elements are considered simultaneously.

### **AESTHETICS OF THE TOWN-SCAPE**

The three elements of townscape are also valuable in comparing the aesthetic appeal of these differing landscapes. In North America the building forms in the core are usually older, and more varied, displaying architecture which is commonly venerated among the populous, while the modernist and post-modern styles of shopping malls are typically praised only by the 'architectural intelligentsia' (who, however, usually disdain the architecture of these retail environments). Similarly, the aesthetic appeal of the uses is also very different. For some, the control of the planned shopping centres is desirable; their highly controlled climate and social conditions are sought by many as a comfortable place to consume. For others, these

are dull and bland landscapes, while the local businesses found in the core and the diversity in its users offer vitality.

Aesthetics are also found within the town-plan itself. Although the lots cannot be seen (except where fences demarcate their boundaries), they are important boundaries for the establishment of buildings. In the core the town-plan is rigidly laid out, as demonstrated by the gridiron of the street network, while in the periphery the roads are much less uniform and the relationship of the building to the road and the lot much looser (Figure 7.2). The rigid patterns in the core are largely symmetrical which can actually be a benefit to the aesthetic interpretation of an area: "Symmetry may be desirable as a background for asymmetrical elements, just as plain white walls may look attractive as a background for colourful furniture that breaks the symmetry" (Lorand 2000, 204). In the downtown core, the uniformity of the town-plan elements creates an underlying symmetry. Rather than being dull and boring, this gives beauty to the area by allowing the other elements of the townscape to attract attention. The land-uses and building forms of the core can thus be seen as radiant, the works of art hanging on the white symmetrical walls of the town-plan.

Furthermore, breaks in this symmetry "create distinctions, and thereby a sense of vitality" (Lorand 2000, 204). The Thames River slicing through the downtown core disrupts the symmetry and in so doing creates a beautiful landscape. The planned shopping centres lack this underlying symmetry in their town-plans; there is little conformity in their buildings, lots or street networks. They do demonstrate symmetry or homogenization, however, in those elements where it should not be found. Most of the planned shopping centres possess largely the same land-uses and architectural styles, making them un-aesthetic components of the urban landscape for many observers.

DOWNTOWN



A)

PLANNED SHOPPING CENTRE



B)



C)



D)



E)



F)

**FIGURE 7.2** Aerial photographs depicting urban forms of downtown and planned shopping centres in three similar cities: A&B) Windsor, C&D) London, E&F) Kitchener

Source: Google Maps 2010

## **IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH**

The narrative presented in this monograph has answered the objectives of the research put forth in the introduction. It has described the spatial, functional and morphological characteristics of the retail landscape as it evolved from the first settlement to the contemporary city. This was accomplished by examining a series of time-slices in a HGIS that was constructed using numerous data sources which detail the city. In so doing, it has shown the power of applying GIS to research in urban form and history. A model of retail change is proposed, and used to contextualize the results of the analysis. Comparing the landscapes reveals similarities and differences over time. The model proves capable for explaining the divergence and continuity in the landscapes by accounting for the social and economic conditions, and state of technology in each era. As a result, this research makes clear that retail sits at the confluence of many disciplines, and a holistic approach is needed when documenting and understanding retail practices in general, and the landscapes which they inhabit and create specifically.

Although a comprehensive picture of the retail landscape, its origins, and evolution has been provided, there is still much left to be studied pertaining to the development, form, and functioning of the retail sector of London, and other cities. As discussed in the introduction, London is a typical mid-sized Canadian and North American city. As such, the results found here should be relatable to the other centres; however, future research looking at the development of other similar cities would help to substantiate these findings.

Using similar morphological analyses, the development of retailing in Windsor, Kitchener, Hamilton, St. Catharines and other such cities could be undertaken. This would provide comparative analyses, and isolate localized conditions, while allowing for general models of retail development to be produced. A further comparison would be of interest between mid-sized centres and the large conurbations. Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver all have maintained city centre shopping, while it has been decimated in many of the mid-sized cities like London and Hamilton. The similarities and differences across the Canadian-US border are also of interest, elaborating on the work of Burns and Rayman who describe a lag in retail innovation as it diffuses north (1995).

For London, missing years could be added to better pinpoint the timing of change and the processes which surrounded these years. Notably a deeper analysis of the 1970s and 1980s, the era of the height of planned shopping centre development, should be added to understand the dynamic going on in the landscape at this time. The 1930s are also of interest to show the early stages of decentralization and its impact on the downtown core.

New sources could be added to paint a more complete picture of those landscapes already documented. The ledgers of many of the retailers indicate business practices and would be a valuable asset to use in future research. Success as measured by sales in the ledgers can then be related to the built environment. The relationship between increases in sales and the refurbishing or expansion of the store can be elucidated. The ledgers can also be used to study locations of customers and employees, allowing for the delineation of market areas and an awareness of travel patterns in the developing city.

This research is admittedly cursory in many areas, since the intent of the thesis is to survey and document the evolution of the retail landscape across the entire history of London, and in all locations of the city. It is unfeasible to be both expansive as this work is, as well as examining each issue within in great detail. With the general landscape now documented, more probing analysis of specific aspects of how retail environments are constructed, and their impact on the general urban conditions can be undertaken. It was shown that retail landscapes are in a perpetual state of change. This finding can be elaborated upon to see the relationship between change and the economic cycles. Another avenue would be to interview shopping centre developers to more deeply understand their decision making process in designing and locating centres.

The extensive description and analysis this research provides of how the retail landscape is created can be used as a framework on which to elucidate how the retail landscape functions. Looking at the functioning of the retail landscape includes consideration of the practices of the retailers themselves, as well as their customers. The distances people travel from their home to shop, for example, can be calculated in the GIS for each the different eras. Also, the locational decisions of retailers can be queried using the strategies to define market areas. It is essential

to first understand the makeup of the landscape, and describe how and why it evolved, before being able to properly understand how it functions.

The expansiveness of this survey of the retail landscape is also valuable to our understanding of past and present urban areas. It shows the changing relationship of retailing within the urban fabric over time. It adds concrete figures to describe retail environments.

In general it responds to the lament that there is little historical retailing research (Benson and Shaw 1992), which is especially acute for North America. Few other studies look at the various retail landscapes present across time and space, preferring rather to examine specific types such as shopping malls (Shields 1989; Hopkins 1992), usually within a limited period of time, such as the downtown department stores in the late-nineteenth century (Leach 1993). Similarly, it is not biased towards only the successful, but also the struggling environments.

By comparing and contrasting the different retail environments, this research has shown the morphological characteristics common throughout most, if not all, retail landscapes. These are a result of the drive for profit maximization by the retailers, who shape their environments in order to attract customers and spur sales. It also reveals the continuing and intensifying impact of capitalism on the urban landscape, such as Knox (1991) shows in the suburbanization process of Washington D.C. in the late-twentieth-century, and Harvey (2001) in nineteenth-century Paris. Whereas these are examples of large capital cities, this research has shown that similar processes occur in much smaller, and indeed less-important cities like London, Ontario.

Also, these and other studies usually read the imprint of capitalism on the landscape in terms of the architecture it produces, for example, the skyscraper (Domosh 1988). This work advances this assessment, by examining the imprint of capitalism on all elements of the townscape. Not only is the architecture a reflection of the profit maximization process as seen in the elaborate facades, but so too is the actual underlying town-plan. The parcels, building footprints and road network are shaped by capitalistic processes in order to increase efficiencies. Land is divided into the parcels that make use of this scarce resource, and buildings cover as much of the land as possible when it is in high demand. Land-use types quickly appear to take



advantage of new markets, and are just as quickly pushed aside when they do not make best use of a location as possible.

By looking at many different time periods and areas of one city, the processes of capitalism are found to be common throughout the development of the city. Across all the spaces of the North American city, and in all eras of its development, retailers, among the many other actors of capitalistic enterprises, have shaped their environments in order maximize their profits.

For the field of urban morphology, this work demonstrates the need to examine all the elements of townscape to properly understand its form and function. It also shows the value of applying GIS to the traditional morphological analysis, creating more and better results than was possible using manual methods.

One of the most important implications of this work is to suggest ways for downtown revitalization. By understanding how successful retail landscapes function, strategies can be suggested for revitalizing the struggling downtown area of London, as well as other North American cities.

## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

The final decades of the twentieth-century were a time of decline in the central retail districts of many cities, primarily due to competition from retail districts at the urban periphery. Planned shopping centres were more effective selling machines – malls offered climate control and big boxes offered value pricing through economies of scale. Confounding this, the traditional retail areas were built in an era of walking and trolleys and are not suited to the spatial demands of the automobile. Shopping at the periphery accommodates private automobile use, the preferred method of transit for the majority of shoppers<sup>4</sup>.

Looking at how the central retail district functioned when it was thriving from 1880 to 1930 provides insight into the contemporary situation both in London and in the many other similar North American cities. Recommendations for current revitalization can be formed based on past experiences. Reading the townscape of the core demonstrates how the area functioned as a vibrant shopping district.

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<sup>4</sup> The 2006 census shows that 87.7 percent of commutes in the London Census Metropolitan Area were conducted by private automobile. Although the data does not exist for shopping trips, it is expected to be generally the same as trips to work.

Although circumstances have changed, basic prerequisites for a healthy downtown are not transitory.

Fundamentally, mainstreet will no longer be the focus for the entire city and region's retail sector. Traditionally, the central retail district was the biggest and most sought after retail district in the city, unrivalled in its dominance. The contemporary retail landscape, as was shown in the previous chapter, is much more complex, with competition coming from many other retail groupings, notably those found at the urban periphery. There is no longer just one, but many shopping options in the polycentric city (Vance 1970).

Even when the central business district was successful, the greatest number of pedestrians, the highest land values and greatest demand for space was found in a small area. The mainstreet area was roughly three-quarters of a kilometre along Dundas Street from Talbot to Wellington Streets, as well as a small segment along Richmond Street. As was shown, this area was where most retailers located; the adjacent areas had far fewer retailers, far fewer customers and much lower land values. The area for potential revitalization in the core should thus be small, focusing efforts on just one part of the downtown rather than the entire district. The traditional wholesale, financial and printing districts found in the downtown were never retail areas, and they should not be considered as such today.

The City of London has shown its dedication to the core through large investments in facilities including the John Labatt Centre (JLC), the Covent Garden Market, the Forks of the Thames, and a new central library; well over a hundred million dollars has been invested so far (City of London Planning Department 2009). These facilities, although each a desirable feature of a vibrant downtown, are spread across the city centre, rather than being concentrated in one area identified for revitalization. This becomes even clearer when the older performing arts centres of Centennial Hall and the Grand Theatre are included. As a result there is no central focus, no critical mass of public institutions which would create a significant draw of people to one area, and the business that they would bring. If the performance venues were situated in close proximity to one another then cafes, shops, restaurants, and galleries would be enticed to locate nearby, since a large number of customers would be attending events on a regular basis. As it is, each venue is only used once or twice a week on average, and thus is not able to draw enough

customers to the area to create the mass needed for the businesses to draw from. The result is that people drive in from the suburbs, park near the facility (in the case of the library underneath), take in the show or game, and then leave since little life exists in the surrounding area.

The John Labatt Centre is the exception, being large enough to stimulate a cluster of fashionable eateries and bars at its main entrance. The Covent Garden Market also draws customers to this locale. On the micro-scale, the placement of the main entrance to the JLC on the southeast of the building, at the intersection of Talbot and King Streets, and the market's front entrance across the street, impacts the location of the accompanying shops and services. Not surprisingly, the shops have chosen to locate along King and Talbot Streets to draw customers who are entering or leaving these edifices. Vacancies remain along Dundas Street, while this area at the intersection of King and Talbot has become sought after. This example demonstrates the need for not only a concentrated focus on one area, but also the significance of micro-scale forms in stimulating development.

The revitalized district needs to be dense, with a mix of land-uses in close proximity, creating a fine grained streetscape that is appropriate for strolling. Pedestrians wishing to engage in a trendy shopping environment other than the sterility of the modern shopping mall would then be drawn to the core. Having multiple uses adds interest. Ground level should be reserved for retail and other services that attract the passerby such as salons and cafes. The City of London has recently agreed to move its planning department to prime space along Dundas Street, in the former Capital Theatre building. This is neither a draw for customers, nor presents pleasing ground level vignettes for the passerby. To the city's defence, this strategy has stayed the demolition of a historic structure, and will bring more people into the core, albeit for work rather than leisure.

Lessons can also be learned from the success of the planned shopping centre. Most customers arrive at the centres by personal car, and they are welcomed by ample parking and other devices to suit their needs; potential downtown customers are no different. Over 87% of commutes are made by automobile in London (Statistics Canada 2006), and a similar percentage of shopping trips are expected by this mode. Thus, the core needs to be accommodating to the automobile, rather than hostile to it. This is a challenge due to its history and forms that do not readily

match the needs of the car; however, creative methods can be devised. Expansive parking lots would detract from the aesthetic draw of the core, but carefully designed parking structures need not. Another consideration is that shopping mall environments are meticulously maintained. Although it is not expected that the downtown core should be able to keep such standards, there should be more attention paid to cleaning refuse and patching decay found in the core, both of which scare away shoppers.

The facades of the buildings are very important for making a harmonious streetscape. Thankfully the aesthetically displeasing corrugated metal that covered many of the traditional facades has recently been removed; however, many of these facades have been bastardized through the current rejuvenation program. The traditional brickwork has been covered with a layer of stucco, the durability of which is dubious. Brick is a traditional construction material in London, especially the yellow brick that was made locally and found throughout this city but in few others. Furthermore, the placement of windows has been altered, and much ornamentation has been removed or covered. The coherent architectural styles have been largely eroded with a combination of stucco, new windows and general disregard for the past. It is noteworthy that the City of London has not only tolerated this practice in its most important streetscape, but actually funded the endeavours through a façade restoration grant program (City of London 2002, 2010)<sup>5</sup>. Fortunately, The City has recently tightened its requirements for the facade restoration grants. It should go further, however, enacting strict guidelines to maintain the heritage of this district. At least the metal facades did not destroy, but merely covered, the underlying facades.

The strategy for the core should not be to make it the pinnacle for the regions retail sector, but rather, act as a niche player, serving specific needs within the confines of the history of the area. It will not be a suitable location for a big box electronics retailer; however, small independent stores and even chain clothing stores would be drawn to a downtown that is teeming with pedestrians. The

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<sup>5</sup> A prime example of this problem was the issuing of grants for the painting of the stonework a bright red colour on the former Bank of Montreal branch at Queens and Richmond when it became a nightclub. The paint has since been sandblasted off as the nightclub closed and a Moxie's restaurant opened in its place.

historicity of the downtown should not be thought of as confining, but actually as advantageous, giving a unique sense of place not found elsewhere.

The core offers a niche retail environment, especially for goods and services not available elsewhere. Being a historical area, the core lends itself to selling antiques and other remnants of the past, along with books, trendy personal and home fashions. These stores should be interspersed with a mixture of services, restaurants and cafes. Having a focused cluster of public and private institutions would create a cultural draw for those across the city and surrounding region. Their clustering would create a mass of customers, and each store and service would further draw in customers, supporting each other as was done in the traditional mainstreet environment. Downtown can succeed, but only if it is flexible and dynamic, adapting to the changes which confront it. Despite the setbacks in recent history, the city's core is showing signs of rejuvenation, and its future as an alternative retail area is promising.

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CURRICULUM VITAE  
**MATHEW NOVAK**

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

- The economic and social geographies of retailing
- Applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Disasters (floods and fires) and their effects on urban environments
- Urban morphology and the built environment
- Urban development & history

**EDUCATION**

2006-2010    **Ph.D.**, Department of Geography  
The University of Western Ontario, London ON

Thesis Title: *“The Evolution of the Retail Landscape”*

2004-2006    **M.A.**, Department of Geography  
The University of Western Ontario, London ON

Thesis Title: *“Fire and Urban Morphology: A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Destruction and Reconstruction in Early-Twentieth Century London, Ontario”*

1999- 2003    **B.Sc. (Hon.)**, Genetics, Department of Biology  
The University of Western Ontario, London ON

**ACADEMIC AWARDS & NOMINATIONS**

2007            Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
2006            Dean’s Award for Research Excellence, Western Research Forum  
1999            University of Western Ontario Entrance Scholarship

**RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Lecturer**, Department of Geography  
The University of Western Ontario, London ON

2010            Land Use and Development Issues (3461f)  
2009            Land Use and Development Issues (3461f)



2004-2009 **Research Assistant**, Department of Geography, The University of Western Ontario

- Contribution to the “Imag(in)ing London” project, a digital collection of sources pertaining to London’s historical development.

**Teaching Assistant**, Department of Geography  
The University of Western Ontario, London ON

2010 Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning (2162b)  
 2009 Social Geography (2401b)  
 2008 Land Use Development Issues (3461f)  
 2008 Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning (178b)  
 2007 Urban Development (277g)  
 2006 World Cities (155a)  
 2006 Land Use and Development Issues (328b)  
 2005 Housing (376a)  
 2005 World Cities (155b)  
 2004 Housing (376a)

## REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

Novak, M. and J. Gilliland. FORTHCOMING. “Trading Places: A Historical Geography of Retailing in London, Canada.” *Social Science History*.

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## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Novak, M. 2010. "Tracing the Shelf-life of Shopping Malls." *Western Research Forum*, London, Ontario (February 27, 2010).

Novak, M. and J. Gilliland. 2009. "Retail's Changing Place and Face in the Urban Landscape." *International Seminar on Urban Form*, Guangzhou, China (September 6, 2009).

Novak, M. 2009. "Gone with the Flow: Rebuilding a Community after Flooding in London, Canada." *World Congress of Environmental History*, Copenhagen, Denmark (August 8, 2009).

Novak, M., and J. Gilliland. 2009. "Form, Function and Fluidity in the Central Retail District in London, Canada: 1880-1930." Presented to a special joint session "Addressing the Archives" at the annual meetings of the *Canadian Association of Geographers* and the *Canadian Historical Association*, Ottawa, ON (May 27, 2009).

Hayek, M.G. Arku, M. Novak and J. Gilliland. 2009. "Brownfield Redevelopment in the City of London, Ontario: Identification of Sites using Historical GIS and Evaluation of Policy Measures." Annual meeting of the *Urban Affairs Association*, Chicago, Ill. (Friday, March 6, 2009).

Novak, M. and J. Gilliland. 2008. "A Historical Geography of Retailing in London, Canada." *Historical GIS 2008*, University of Essex, UK (August 21, 2008).

Novak, M. 2008. "The Rise and Fall of the Small Indoor Mall." Annual meeting of the *Canadian Association of Geographers*, Quebec City (May 22, 2008).

Novak, M., J. Gilliland, and E. Paddle. 2007. "Advancing Urban Morphology with GIS." *International Seminar on Urban Form*, Ouro Preto, Brazil (August 30, 2007).

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- Novak, M. and J. Gilliland. 2007. "Assessing the Impact of Fire on Urban Form Using Historical-GIS." Annual Meeting of *The Association of American Geographers*, San Francisco California (April 20, 2007).
- Gilliland, J., Larsen, K., and M. Novak. 2006. "GIS Research in the Human Environments Analysis Laboratory." *Social Science Research Day Presentation*, University of Western Ontario, London, ON. (January, 16, 2006).
- Novak, M. 2006. "Modeling a Historic Flood With GIS." Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Association of Geographers - Ontario Division*, Hamilton ON (October 14, 2006).
- Novak, M. and J. Gilliland, 2006. "'Burning Down the House': An Analysis of Fire in Early-Twentieth Century London Ontario." Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Association of Geographers*, Thunder Bay ON (May 30, 2006).
- Novak, M. and J. Gilliland, 2006. "Fire and Urban Evolution: Destruction and Reconstruction in London, Ontario, 1915-1929." Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Historical Association*, Toronto ON (May 29, 2006).
- Novak, M. and J. Gilliland, 2006. "Buried Beneath the Waves: Examining London's Great Flood of 1883." Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Chicago IL (March 9, 2006).
- Novak, M. and J. Gilliland, 2005. "The Morphogenesis of Residential Landscapes in London, Ontario." Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Association of Geographers*, London ON (June 2, 2005).
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