

**GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES POLICY
IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Suburban centres policies in Greater Vancouver, metropolitan Melbourne, and Bellevue, Washington are examined to derive general lessons toward the improvement of this type of policy. It is found that two attempts to pursue the development of a regional system of suburban centres have been unsuccessful, while a municipally-based policy has achieved some success in terms of the physical design of a suburban downtown. Patterns of private sector development are found to have been very little affected by any of the case study policies. Further, several assumptions concerning the linkages between public transit and land use in suburban centres are found to require further careful examination before they should be used as a basis for future policy development.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

This thesis examines the Regional Town Centres policy in Greater Vancouver from its formulation in the early 1970s to the present. The policy is studied both in isolation and in comparison with two other similar policies: the District Centres policy enacted in Melbourne, Australia, and the Central Business District (CBD) policies of the suburban municipality of Bellevue, Washington. The research methodology has involved an examination of official documents and the academic literature concerning these particular policies and the phenomenon of suburban centres in general. The study of the literature has been augmented by many broad discussions with planners and academics, and by site visits to the suburban centres in Greater Vancouver and Bellevue. Unfortunately, a site visit to Melbourne was not possible during the course of the research. Ultimately, any conclusions regarding Melbourne, or drawn from the experience of the policy in Melbourne, have been based solely on a review of the literature, and rely very heavily on the judgement of other researchers.

The study of Regional Town Centres (RTC) policy is useful for several reasons. First, RTC policy has been a key element in the *Livable Region Strategy*, the overall plan for Greater Vancouver which has been in operation since 1975. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (the agency responsible for the promotion of the plan) is now involved in the widest re-evaluation of its plans and policies since the early 1970s. The regional *Creating Our Future* process solicited public input and set the broad goals. *Transport 2021*, a joint exercise between the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Highways, is studying the regional transportation needs for the

next three decades. Concurrently, the GVRD is developing the basis of a new strategic plan for the region. Some form of centres policy is likely to be a key component of any new regional strategy. An analysis of the success of the previous policy regime may provide useful comment toward the improvement of these modern initiatives.

Second, the recent election of the New Democratic Party (1991) to the control of the provincial government may bring a change in the structure of the regional planning mandate for both land use and transportation. An examination of policy which reflects the effectiveness of the current mandate is therefore pertinent.

Finally, suburbanization is one of the most important processes at work in the metropolitan regions of the western industrialized world. Much work remains to be done in the study of the basic phenomena of suburbanization, building on the large structure of work that has been done in the past, but also interpreting the latest wave of changes currently passing through these regions. American researchers have been interested for several years in the growth of suburban employment centres, which are generally located on highway interchanges. Suburbanization of employment is continuing in the Canadian context, and an examination of the results of policy which has attempted to shape that trend is timely. The comparative study of three policies allows the creation of a more general set of conclusions and recommendations about the creation of suburban downtowns.

The policies to be compared are similar in intent but quite different in scope. Melbourne is a much larger metropolitan region than either Vancouver or Seattle (which contains the City of Bellevue), and has attempted a much broader policy toward centres development. More centres are selected in a region which is less densely settled than the others. Further, Melbourne is the only region of

the three in which both land use and transportation planning are centralized under a single governmental authority. In contrast to the regional cases, the City of Bellevue is a municipality, and has pursued a policy in many ways isolated from wider regional considerations.

The differences between the two international case studies provide a good contrast on either side of the Vancouver situation, and a good range within which to place the study of Vancouver's suburban centres. The lessons derived from such a range may indicate the appropriate scale for action under a renewed centres policy.

The regions themselves are sufficiently similar to allow a comparison. Each is western in outlook, with market economies developed in modern industrial democracies. Each is a Pacific Rim port metropolis with substantial international and particularly Asian connections. The cultures of the cities are predominantly English-speaking, but with substantial multicultural admixtures. The regions are subject to many of the same international and local pressures, such as suburbanization, economic globalization, and the rise of the importance of service sector production.

Distinctions based on history and geography have made significant differences between the regions. Melbourne holds a well-developed rail network, while Seattle has an extensive highway system, and Vancouver has neither. Melbourne is a region of very low density residential sprawl in all directions around Port Philip Bay, while Vancouver and Seattle face severe geographic constraints (ocean, lakes, borders, mountains). Economically, neither of the other regions shares the reliance of Seattle on a single corporation (Boeing) for so much of its prosperity.

There are also differences in the original derivation of the suburban centres policies. Vancouver's policies were discussed throughout the 1960s, and the

eventual implementation was a result of municipal and provincial electoral victories for reform-minded political parties. In Melbourne, the District Centres policy was a reprise of a similar 1954 policy. The revival was a result of a shift from expansionary regional plans in 1960s and 1970s, toward better use of the existing urbanized area (urban consolidation). In Bellevue, the development of a traditional CBD had been intended since the amalgamation of the municipality in 1953. The actual implementation of the stated policy was a result of the desire of the community to prevent sprawling commercial development from interfering with the single family residential lifestyle of Bellevue.

1.2 CONTEXT

The development of modern suburban centres to control the negative aspects of suburbanization has been a common policy objective since at least the 1960s. Some authorities trace the history of the concept even earlier, to Howard's Garden City proposals of the 1890s (Hodge 1986, 290). The three centres policies under examination in this paper are direct results of the waves of suburbanization which have occurred in western industrial metropolitan regions in the post-1945 era.

The original widespread residential suburbanization was the result of a combination of factors. In all three study regions, government policy toward the relaxation of home mortgage requirements put single family home ownership within reach of a larger number of families than ever before. Cheap land at the urban fringe (and beyond) could be developed and marketed because of the increasingly widespread use of the private automobile. Road building programs accommodated this increased personal mobility allowed by the automobile. Road construction was most extensive in the U.S., where a national system of interconnected highways and urban core bypasses was built. In Vancouver, the

road network was expanded through a major highway to the U.S. and the completion of the Trans Canada Highway which passes through the region (and the attendant bridges and tunnels which these projects required). In Melbourne, a complete radial arterial road system existed, and a ring road was planned around the urban fringe.

Although retail space, in the form of automobile-centred shopping malls and strips, had begun to follow the consumer markets to the suburbs, the economic life of these regions remained focussed on the traditional core. Interregional travel began to increase, particularly related to the daily commuting pattern between the central core and the dispersed suburbs. A growing imbalance between the location of work places and residences led to increases in times and distances travelled, and concomitant increases in the noise, pollution, scarce resource use, and stress associated with automobile use. Further, due to the isolation of suburban residential areas from the cultural heart of the region, suburban life was perceived to be a sterile residential monoculture, lacking the sense of community which was reputed to exist in older urban neighbourhoods.

Given these conditions, the logic of suburban centres becomes very attractive, and perhaps unavoidable when stated in its simplest terms. Interregional travel, and its attendant negative consequences, would be reduced by moving employment closer to the residences of the workers. Sprawl would be contained by concentrating these jobs into mixed use centres with retail and consumer services, and a denser (more "urban") pattern of residences. By concentrating the thinly spread out suburban culture, the benefits of an urban lifestyle would flow naturally.

This logical construct rested on the assumption that if the *attributes* of an urban downtown are provided (pedestrian scale; high-rise office buildings; retail concentrations; cultural activities; public transit; etc.), then the suburban

downtowns will take on the *characteristics* of traditional downtowns (lively pedestrian activity; concentration of employment, especially in modern service sector offices; CBD commuting patterns, namely less automobile use in favour of public transit; a cultural focus for the sub-region's community; and an economic generator for the sub-region). These centres were not intended to replace the existing core of the metropolitan region, but to augment it and perhaps to improve it by reducing the pressure of holding all of the region's important functions. The CBD would remain as the regional focus for high-order economic and community functions. Existing traditional neighbourhoods in the central area would benefit because fewer automobiles would be travelling between the core and the suburbs. Suburban municipalities would receive the economic benefits of growth and a focus for community life equivalent to the role performed by the CBD for the whole region.

1.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The original policy toward the creation of Regional Town Centres in Greater Vancouver reflected an awareness of the high level of public intervention that would likely have been required to shape the development of a system of suburban downtowns. Due to shifts at the political level in the provincial government and on Vancouver City Council, the policy which was eventually implemented was much less assertive, and relied more on individual municipal resolve than on regional planning and coordination. Perhaps as a result of this reduced effectiveness, Regional Town Centres policy cannot be shown to have caused more development, or different forms of development, than would have occurred in the absence of policy. Regional Town Centres policy was first developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and may have been an appropriate response to the suburbanization problems which existed then. The region of the

1990s is, however, substantially changed and a new form of policy response may be required.

District Centres policy in Melbourne was not as clearly conceived as the original policy in Greater Vancouver. As in Vancouver, the policy cannot be shown to have had any positive effect on the development of suburban downtowns. Those centres which had development potential prior to the policy continued to grow. Those centres without such potential did not. Indeed, the use of the negative statutory instrument of restricting office location may have had the perverse effect of curtailing the level of suburban economic development required to support a suburban downtown. There may not as yet be sufficient suburban office activity in all of metropolitan Melbourne to create a significant CBD-style employment and cultural centre.

The downtown of the City of Bellevue has grown very rapidly since the institution of CBD land use and design policies. The Bellevue CBD is an important office, retail, and cultural centre for the Eastside region. Due to its original importance in the region, and to the existence of powerful suburbanization trends throughout the United States in the 1980s, the CBD policies cannot be shown to have altered the *scale* of development in the Bellevue CBD. Conversely, the design guidelines and floor area ratio (FAR) incentives have had a significant effect on the *style* of development. The development of both the policies and the CBD may have been the result of a fortunate coincidence between the timing of a major development controversy and the wave of commercial (especially office space) suburbanization in the 1980s.

From these conclusions, general lessons are derived which state that (a) a regional policy is necessarily fragile, (b) it is difficult to influence commercial location decisions, (c) it is dangerous to make policy in ignorance of the forces of regional development, (d) suburban centres policy may apply only in a particular

period or set of circumstances, and (e) the importance of the provision of public rapid transit linkages to suburban centres is not as clear as has been previously assumed. Finally, general recommendations are provided for the subsequent improvement of suburban centres policy in general. The region and its development industry must be carefully studied, and the fruits of these studies should be applied directly to the formation of policy. Governmental resolve must then be shown to prevent undue pressure for the accommodation of the desires of the development industry.

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

This introductory chapter is followed by a literature review. Chapter 3 examines Regional Town Centres policy in Greater Vancouver, Chapter 4 examines District Centres policy in Melbourne, and Chapter 5 examines the Bellevue CBD policies. The conclusions of each chapter are cumulatively developed, then reviewed in the final chapter.

1.5 NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY AND FORMAT

Unless the word appears differently in the title of a paper or in a direct quotation, the word "centre" shall be spelled as shown. The alternate, "center," is not incorrect, but has in the past been considered a more American spelling.¹

Although the metric equivalent is more proper, the use of square footage as a measure of floorspace remains the standard in both Canada and the United States. Where Australian sources have given a value in square meters, the value in square feet is expressed parenthetically.² Similarly, acres seem to be a more common measure than hectares, even in modern documents. Where hectares are given in the original source, acres appear parenthetically.

A very extensive list of terms has been used to refer to suburban centres. In this paper, the usage is restricted to "suburban centres" or "suburban downtowns." Some authors may have special or technical meanings for these terms, or may make a distinction between them. This paper, however, treats the terms as interchangeable generic references to any relatively dense concentrations of land use and activity (although they are distinguished from "corridors," which are less dense or linear concentrations). The term "edge city" seems to be gaining acceptance as a term of reference for large suburban centres in the United States. The use of that term is used to make a distinction between the centres under study in this paper and the slightly different American phenomenon. (In some cases, where a particular researcher's work is discussed, the term used by that researcher may be included. For example, Cervero studies "suburban employment centers.")

The term used to refer to a region with many suburban centres in addition to a traditional core is "multicentred." As with the individual suburban centres, there is a very extensive list of alternative terms. "Multicentred" is used generically, and no technical meaning should be assigned.

The terms "Vancouver" and "Greater Vancouver" are used interchangeably to refer to the region. The municipality of the same name is always referred to as the "City of Vancouver." Similarly, "Melbourne" always refers to the entire region of that name. (There is a City of Melbourne, which is not specifically named below in this paper. The City of Melbourne contains much of the regional CBD, but a better descriptive area of the entire regional core encompasses the several municipalities which form the Inner Area or "Central Melbourne.")

The citation style used in this paper is as follows: (Name Date, Page), e.g. (Ley 1985, 3). Where several texts by one author are referenced simultaneously,

the dates are separated by semicolons, as in the following example: (GVRD 1974a, 4; 1975a, 2-3).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter examines the literature relevant to the study of multicentred regions and suburban centres in Vancouver, Melbourne, and Bellevue. In each case, the review considers some government documents and relevant newspaper coverage in addition to the analytical papers on policies toward multicentred regions. First, however, the general literature on North American suburban centres is examined.

2.1 *GENERAL LITERATURE*

There is a wide-ranging literature on the theoretical and empirical aspects of suburban employment centres and multicentred regions, primarily in the American context. Within this body of work, there are three streams of discussion.

2.1.1 Suburban Centres and Public Transit

First, a number of authors discuss the interaction between suburban centres and public mass transit or rapid transit systems. Much of this work stems from concerns about energy efficiency resulting from the "energy crisis" in the United States in the early 1970s. Because suburban centres of employment were not very much developed by that time, authors such as Schneider and Beck (1974), Roberts (1975), Rice (1977), and Peterson and Keyes (1977) discuss the questions theoretically, largely through the use of urban transportation models, with the general conclusion almost always being that a multicentred region would be more efficient than a dispersed region of urban sprawl. Concurrently, though, Ward and Paulhus (1974) and Muller (1976, 1980, 1986) question the assumption that the

provision of public transit to suburban centres would have a definite effect on individual travel behaviour, especially if the public transit system was radially connected to the original metropolitan downtown. Later empirical work by Cervero (1989, 54-69) points out that most of the actual suburban centres to emerge have been automobile-oriented, causing endemic suburban traffic congestion problems. The automobile is the primary mode of travel in suburban centres because most public transit and freeway systems are core-oriented, radial networks and are not conducive to serving the increasing amounts of suburb-to-suburb travel (Muller 1976, 14; Cervero 1984; 1986).

While most authors concentrate on using the public transit system to encourage the development of suburban centres (e.g., Huth 1983), Schneider (1981) and Schneider and Smith (1981) suggest that the growth of a "polycentric" city would provide the best urban form to allow the creation of suburban public transit networks (which could not arise spontaneously due to the lack of a sufficiently dense clustering of riders). Schneider (1981) analyzed cities throughout North America, describing policies toward the "polycentric" model in Baltimore, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver, and many other places.

2.1.2 Suburban Centres Models

The application of economic and other mathematical models to urban form provides a second stream of discussion about multicentred regions. Odland (1978), for example, discusses the theoretical and empirical limitations of monocentric economic models of urban growth and attempts to deduce formal conditions for the existence of single-centre versus multicentred regions based on idealized commuting costs, production costs and income losses due to crowding (Greene 1980). Griffith (1981) extends a monocentric density-distance model to include multicentred regions.

Economic modelling, despite the early efforts of Odland (1978) and Hartwick and Hartwick (1974), has been generally unsuccessful at saying anything meaningful about multicentred regions. Richardson (1988) states with dissatisfaction that "the standard monocentric model of urban land use [...] has dominated urban economics, and urban models within regional science, for a generation or more." As late as 1985, at least a decade after the phenomenon of suburban centres was being taken seriously by other urban disciplines, Muth (1985, 598) demonstrates how unrealistic the model-based research had become by questioning "whether non-CBD concentrations of unemployment are important enough in the typical U.S. city to produce noticeable effects" in an economic model.

2.1.3 Empirical Studies of Suburban Centres

The final and largest stream in the study of multicentred regions in the American context attempts to describe empirically the development and characteristics of suburban centres. Voorhees (1963) cites a very early policy example in Baltimore, in which "metrotowns" of concentrated suburban employment were being promoted as a means to combat the trend to urban sprawl. Muller (1976) and Hirsch (1977) describe the decentralization of employment to suburban centres as the result of successive waves of suburbanization in residential, retail, and manufacturing. Muller (1976, 1980, 1986) extends the discussion to the interrelationships between the location of suburban "minicities" and the location of circumferential highways in metropolitan areas. Daniels (1974) offers an early description of the phenomenon, and notes differences based on mobility between American and British suburban centres.

Baerwald (1978) presents a four-stage model of suburban centre development, similarly based on highway interchange locations, and provides an

example from the I-494 area of Minneapolis. In Baerwald's model, residential suburbanization influences highway interchange location, which in turn draws industry and commerce (due to cheap land and easy automobile access). Next, real estate speculation and site assembly take up most of the vacant areas around interchange locations. Finally, these large sites are developed (or redeveloped). Erickson and Gentry (1985, 22-29) use Baerwald's model to study an example of suburban development along the Baltimore beltway.³

Greene (1980) investigates the "existence and significance of employment concentrations outside the CBDs of large metropolitan areas" for five American cities. Greene uses an index of spatial concentration (adapted from the concept of Lorenz Curves) to rank the significance of employment concentrations, then displays the zones of greatest employment concentration on metropolitan maps. The analysis reveals a multicentred pattern in all five cases (i.e., employment is not dispersing evenly throughout the regions). Greene notes that these zones developed without the benefit of any metropolitan planning policies.

In the most extensive empirical investigation of American suburban employment centres, Cervero (1989, 4-6) recognizes the speed at which this phenomenon occurred. In 1980, in the average metropolis, downtown office space accounted for 57 percent of the metropolitan total. Six years later this portion had fallen to only 40 percent. Cervero cites cases in which suburban centres with over 10 million sq. ft. of office space developed in less than five years. Cervero (1989, 44-45) also provides an average composition (from a sample of 56) for American suburban centres: 57 percent office space, 15 percent retail space, 10 percent residential, 8 percent manufacturing, and 5 percent warehousing.

Hartshorn and Muller (1986) describe the evolution of six American suburban employment centres, concentrating on the internal structure and employment consequences of the centres. Hartshorn and Muller argue that, while

these centres have focussed high density commercial activity in previously sprawling and economically dependent suburbs, the centres have also magnified the spatial mismatch between housing, employment, and transportation. The more affluent suburban workforce is found to benefit from the proximity and accessibility of jobs, housing, and commercial and leisure opportunities. The blue collar and low-skill service workforce has remained in the less expensive housing of the older city, and is thus found to be at a relatively long distance from the new economy. The lack of effective public transit between the central city and the suburban employment centres in most metropolitan areas therefore creates a significant barrier to economic opportunities for these less affluent workers.

Cervero (1984; 1986) provides a comprehensive study of the growing problems of traffic congestion and pollution associated with the growth of suburban employment centres. Knack (1986), Fulton (1986), Barron (1986), and Baerwald (1989) describe the increasingly apparent consequences of more diversified suburbs, especially with regard to the growth of downtown-style office tower clusters being built along the beltways of metropolitan America. Baerwald (1989) also notes the growing public, media, and governmental recognition of the phenomenon of suburban employment centres, and discusses (as does Cervero 1989, 74) the varied terminology used to describe them. Matthew (1992) asserts a lack of rigorous planning principles or guidelines for suburban office clusters or centres, particularly in the Canadian context. Matthew also notes that Canadian metropolitan areas lag behind those in the United States in the magnitude and nature of "office deconcentration."

Hughes and Sternlieb (1988) and Baerwald (1989, 54) discuss the alarming increases in vacancy rates for office space in many suburban locations. Hughes and Sternlieb astutely point out the connection between the large scale of suburban office developments of the 1980s and U.S. federal policy toward financial

deregulation (e.g., Savings and Loans institutions were allowed to invest in speculative real estate ventures). They further assert that the saturation of the suburban office markets, the vast amount of money committed, and the lack of success in many suburban locations will foreclose development options in other places (i.e., the banks and other lenders will be reluctant to support projects aimed at revitalizing traditional downtowns -- Hughes and Sternlieb 1988, 286).

Garreau (1991) asserts that suburban employment centres represent a fundamental shift in the urban pattern of not just America, but the world. Garreau (1991, 6-7) provides a list of the required characteristics for a "full blown edge city" as follows: five million sq. ft. or more of leasable office space; 600,000 sq. ft. or more of leasable retail space; more jobs than bedrooms; and is perceived by inhabitants as "one place." According to a reviewer (Jackson 1991), Garreau's point is that diversified suburban employment and retail centres "represent a creative and optimistic solution to the requirements of a modern, automobile-centered civilization."⁴ Jackson (1991) complains, however, (a) that Garreau too cavalierly dismisses racism as a motivating factor in suburbanization, (b) that Garreau makes unsubstantiated claims (e.g., that "edge cities" are more efficient than traditional downtowns), and (c) that Garreau does not mention "the savings and loan fiasco that financed the building, and overbuilding, of so many outlying office and shopping complexes." Blemishes aside, Garreau's readable book is aimed at a popular audience and is a reflection of the growing importance of suburban centres to American residential and business life.

In a comparative examination of the suburban centres policy in Vancouver and Melbourne, Davis and Perkins (1992) hypothesize that the creation of a suburban downtown through policy will be contingent upon four factors. These are: (a) reflection in the policy of a good understanding of the operation of the regional land market, especially as it relates to private sector location decisions; (b)

centralized control of changes to the regional transportation network; (c) effective coordination of regional policy with municipal implementation; and, (d) a functional differentiation of the suburban centres.

2.2 VANCOUVER

There is a short list of academic publications dealing with Greater Vancouver's Regional Town Centres policy, offset somewhat by a large number of analytical documents produced by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (or for the GVRD by consultants). In addition, there are a multitude of official documents at the municipal and regional level which pertain to Regional Town Centres.

Several authors provide context for a discussion of the Regional Town Centres (RTC) policy. Nader (1976) describes conditions in metropolitan Vancouver just prior to the inception of the *Livable Region Strategy* and the RTCs. Nader (1976, 386-389) states that "[t]he Vancouver metropolitan area has always had a multiple-nucleated structure," with long-standing settlements at New Westminster, North Vancouver City, and elsewhere. Kingsway is recognized as one of four major growth corridors for the city, and a 1970 map of the GVRD shows all of the original RTCs, plus Richmond, as already existing commercial centres. The growth management philosophy of the Vancouver city council is also noted, with reference to the 1973 interim zoning by-law which sharply reduced permitted densities for development in the downtown area (and made traditional downtown densities subject to negotiation over design issues).

Gertler and Crowley (1977) present an early and optimistic appraisal of the *Livable Region Strategy* in general and the RTC policy in particular. The policy is outlined in its original terms, with the purpose of "achieving a radical change in the balance of employment between Vancouver, particularly the downtown, and outlying areas, which otherwise would be predominantly dormitory in function."

Gertler and Crowley also describe the activist role and expanded powers which it was assumed were going to be given to the GVRD toward implementation of the plan.

In the course of a comparison of two major corporate head offices in Greater Vancouver, Ley (1985) outlines the conditions under which BC Telephone Co. was forced to abandon a downtown location in favour of the suburbs because Vancouver City Council refused the company a development permit in 1974 (Ley 1985, 33-34). Though this action occurred prior to the formal adoption of the *Livable Region Strategy* it was seen as an expression of support for its principles by Vancouver's TEAM-dominated city council (and an example of how the city and the plan did not adequately consider the economic consequences of decentralization faced by firms -- Ley, 41). Gutstein describes the political history of the TEAM government in Vancouver, including TEAM's initial support for decentralization in the early years of its electoral success and its subsequent abandonment of those principles immediately after the formal adoption of the *Livable Region Strategy* (Gutstein 1985, 213). TEAM eventually sided with the Non-Partisan Association in its declaration that the city could not afford to lose development to the suburbs. Gutstein (1985, 214-215) also describes several of the unilateral regional transportation decisions taken by the Social Credit provincial government of the early 1980s (which had an effect on the development of Regional Town Centres).

Ley and Hutton (1984, 143-144) and Hutton and Davis (1984, 6) both recognize the importance of office space location and office employment in connection with the RTC policy. Ley and Hutton describe the expectations that the policy would increase suburban office growth by decentralization (as opposed to *in situ* growth of a population-serving nature) and that public sector decisions would affect private sector location decisions; both expectations were severely tested in the reality of RTC development.

Hutton and Davis (1984) examine the distribution of office space over time in municipalities containing RTCs, versus Vancouver and the non-RTC municipalities. Between 1971 and 1982, the dominant position of Vancouver city generally and the downtown in particular was unchallenged by the inner suburbs. Further, it is noted that the rate of growth in the period 1977-1982 was greater for Vancouver than for the inner suburbs, suggesting a trend counter to that expected under the RTC policy. The fact that municipalities without RTCs were adding office space just as quickly as those with RTCs also suggests the ineffectiveness of the policy. Hutton and Davis (1984, 24-30) propose several reasons for the weakness in the RTC policy, including (a) a misperception of the evolving regional economy, (b) a miscalculation of the behaviour of the office market, (c) a failure to designate priority centres, (d) ineffective policy approaches by municipal governments, (e) competition from non-RTC commercial centres, and (f) inadequate core-periphery transportation linkages. Hutton and Davis also note the difficulty in promoting a multiple suburban centres policy in a consensual framework (in that there is no ability to make trade-offs when necessary between competing municipal interests).

Prior to the adoption of the *Livable Region Strategy*, the GVRD was very active in discussions with other levels of government and in consultation with business interests and the general public. Background studies to Regional Town Centres were conducted (Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners 1973; GVRD 1974d), seminars were held with public and private stakeholders (GVRD 1974a; 1974b), and corporations were surveyed (GVRD 1974c). A final report was produced which outlined the final format of the original version of the RTC policy (GVRD Planning Department and Spaeth 1975).⁵ The desired size and scale of the RTCs were stated (one million sq. ft. of office space, 700,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 7,000-10,000 jobs, etc. -- GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 10). A time frame was proposed for staging RTC development, with Metrotown and New Westminster to be

completed by 1980 and with yet to be defined RTCs in Surrey and in the Northeast Sector to be developed by 1986. Reasons were given for the rejection of RTCs in Richmond and North Vancouver (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33). Finally, a programme of public sector actions and acquisitions was described (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 34-38).

In 1975, the *Livable Region Strategy* and Regional Town Centres were adopted (substantially in the form described above) as regional planning policies (GVRD 1975a; 1975b). When the GVRD gained responsibility for the Official Regional Plan from the disbanded Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, the directions were reaffirmed (GVRD 1980a). Major restatements and reaffirmations of the principles behind the *Livable Region Strategy* and the RTC policy occurred in 1980 and in 1990 (GVRD 1980b; 1990b). Each municipality containing an RTC has, over the years since the adoption of the plan, included some form of the RTC policy in municipal Official Community Plans and other planning and promotional documents.

The GVRD has relied on both internally produced status reports (GVRD 1976; 1981; 1982; 1983; 1987) and on the work of consultants (e.g., Coriolis Consulting Corp.⁶ 1986 and Artibise, et al. 1990) for appraisals of the RTC policies and the effect of those policies on suburban development. All of the documents produced after 1980 have commented upon the failure of the RTCs to develop as planned. The character of the existing RTCs more closely resembled shopping malls than urban downtowns (GVRD 1983, 26; Coriolis 1986, 4; Artibise, et al. 1990, 27). Employment has been decentralizing to suburban locations in a dispersed rather than concentrated manner (GVRD 1981, 18; 1982, 3; 1983, 8; 1987, 24-25; Coriolis 1986, 8-9; Artibise, et al. 1990, 8). The growth which has occurred in RTCs is attributable to the firms which serve the growing populations in the RTC trade areas (Coriolis 1986, 4; Artibise, et al. 1990, 8).

The activist role originally assigned to the GVRD is replaced by a passive acceptance of municipal prerogative, of the continued strength of the office market in downtown Vancouver, and of a new role for the GVRD which consists of attempting to focus the attention of municipalities and the provincial government (GVRD 1983, 22; 1987, 4-5; Artibise, et al. 1990, 28). The RTC policy has been modified to include the originally rejected areas of Richmond Centre and North Vancouver Lonsdale (GVRD 1983; 1987). The most recent recommendations toward amending RTC policy include defining new specialized roles for each RTC, and accepting and adapting to the existing regional hierarchy of commercial space (GVRD 1987, 53; Artibise, et al. 1990, 39-40), as well as directing attention to the urban design problems associated with the suburban character of the existing RTCs (Artibise, et al. 1990, 45-49).

2.3 *MELBOURNE*

The background literature on Melbourne is much more extensive than for the other two cities under study. There is a wider debate into the political and distributional effects of policy decisions (as opposed to the North American focus on transportation and regional economic efficiency) and many of the discussions include the role of State and Federal governments in the formation of urban policy (a dimension also lacking in the North American context). Melbourne is much larger than either Seattle or Vancouver. Though all three metropolitan areas are primate for their State or Province, Melbourne is much more significant to its region than the others are. Melbourne contains 70 percent of the total State population, is the seat of the State government, and is the centre of most of the economic activity of the State (especially in the manufacturing and transportation sectors).

M. Logan, et al. (1975) and Neutze (1978) outline the major urban issues which obtained in the period immediately preceding the development of the District Centres (DCs) policy. Neutze (1978, 172-185) discusses the control of scattered development, the debate surrounding the planned form of urban expansion, and the inequitable distribution of jobs and services among the various sections of the city. M. Logan, et al. (1975, 105) discuss the socioeconomic differences between suburbs, the differing levels of public services, high population growth into low density suburban sprawl, and the overconcentration of specialized facilities in a single core area.

Morrison and Richardson (1977) present discussion papers for a series of national seminars on the concept of suburban centres. Richardson (1977, 6-7) and Morrison and Winter (1977, 18) assert that the key elements in the development of suburban centres is office employment beyond the amount needed to service the residential population. Morrison and Winter also note the lack of development of any suburban employment concentrations up to the 1970s. Morrison (1977, 41) notes that Melbourne lacked an obvious single secondary location for concentrated development, and de Monchaux (1977, 48) repeats the often expressed argument that suburban centres must develop gradually (i.e., without much public sector regulation). During the debate in the late 1970s, Bunker (1976, 169-177) discusses the lack of knowledge regarding suburban centres and mentions the growth of office employment districts just outside the existing metropolitan cores of Melbourne and Sydney.

The history of urban development in Melbourne up to the adoption of the District Centres policy is comprehensively considered in T. Logan (1984), Maher (1988), and Beed (1981). Among many other topics, Beed describes the distinctions between the prosperous residential south and east and the industrial north and west in the 1970s (Beed 1981, 149-156), the shift in population and

employment to the outer suburbs of the metropolitan area and the resulting reliance on the automobile for most transportation needs (Beed 1981, 131-133), and the relative ineffectiveness of the corridor-oriented regional plans of the 1960s and 1970s (Beed 1981, 83, 157-158). This failure is attributed to the lack of public sector powers to influence private sector decisions (Beed 1981, 160-169).

Several authors (in papers which focus on wider topics) comment on issues relevant to the development of the District Centres policy. Sandercock (1977, 149-151) discusses the lack of public sector support for the original 1954 suburban business centres plan and the lack of consideration of suburban centres as an option during the planning exercises of the 1960s. Thompson (1978, 133-135) describes the general urban form of Melbourne (small, high density urban core surrounded by low density sprawl; white collar east and southeast; blue collar north and west) and the automobile dominance which resulted. O'Connor and Maher (1979) outline the autonomous growth of suburban employment in Melbourne and the associated patterns of commuting, where employment clusters in the central suburbs and takes advantage of wide commuter sheds in the outer suburbs. Edgington (1988, 7) cites this argument as one rationale for the creation of the State government's suburban development policy which identified and concentrated on five economic sub-regions.

Bunker (1983, 9, 31) discusses the outward redistribution of Melbourne's population in the 1970s, and the resulting interest in urban consolidation which led directly to the District Centres plan of 1981. Sandercock (1983, 55, 60) describes the Australian federal government's support for metropolitan office decentralization and the lack of any mechanism to affect private office location decisions during the office boom of the early 1970s. B. Logan (1986, 131) describes the inconsistencies regarding the promotion of suburban development that existed between the 1971 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works

(MMBW) regional plan and the Melbourne City Council plan of 1974. T. Logan (1986a, 177) examines the determining effect of rates of population growth on the style of regional planning in Melbourne, especially the reduced growth projections of the late 1970s which influenced the 1980 plan focussing on the redevelopment of the existing urban area.

Regarding the actual implementation of the District Centres policy (which was adopted in 1981 in Amendment 150 to the MMBW plan of 1980), Bunker (1987, 8) reiterates his earlier contention that the promotion of suburban centres is being attempted without adequate knowledge of regional structure. Edgington (1982, 234) and Moser and Low (1986, 1450-1454) both comment on the support for CBD development given by the State and Melbourne city governments, and the potential conflict this causes with the promotion of suburban centres. Daniels (1986, 35) asserts that the strength of the CBD and nearby office development areas limits the potential of suburban concentrations of employment.

Carter (1982, 3-7) also discusses the contradiction between support for the CBD and support for the District Centres, and the further contradiction between the stated intention of the policy to respect market preferences and the need for government intervention in the office market for District Centres to succeed. The perspective of the office development industry is given by the Office Development Advisory Committee (ODAC 1986, 1-6), which was established to advise the State government on the concerns of the office development industry. The Committee points out several perceived disadvantages to District Centre locations, such as traffic congestion, lack of match between DC boundaries and functional activities, and an inadequate consideration of the actual operation of the office development market. In a general discussion of the importance of suburban employment, O'Connor and Blakely (1988, 12) assert that the District Centres policy has actually

impeded the decentralization of medium-sized office buildings (by restricting the areas where they may locate).

T. Logan (1986b) critically examines several assumptions underlying the District Centres policy, namely that it undervalues strong locational preferences and bargaining power of firms, that it exaggerates the possibilities for substantial change in people's mode of travel, that it overestimates the economies to be gained in the provision of utilities, and that it fails to acknowledge the limited resources and varied commitment of public agencies responsible for policy implementation. T. Logan contends that the policy does not possess a sufficient relationship to the realities of urban development processes and, therefore, cannot hope to harness or influence those forces to provide progress toward policy objectives.

Kilmartin (1986) and King (1991) examine the political process at work in the relocation of a major Melbourne head office from the core to a suburban setting. Both researchers conclude that the State government, which is responsible for the District Centres plan, has been willing to ignore the plan to satisfy the locational requirements of major corporate and development industry interests.

In 1987, the Ministry for Planning and Environment (MPE) released a comprehensive planning strategy for the Melbourne area called *Shaping Melbourne's Future*, which contained the State government's general policy objectives regarding District Centres. The primary objectives are stated as (a) the retention of Central Melbourne as the prime metropolitan focus for administrative, cultural, retail, commercial, and tourist activities and (b) the reinforcement of the "well-established" pattern of centres in which retail, office, and public services are grouped (MPE 1987, 17-20). District Centres are differentiated into categories based on proximity to the Central Melbourne.

In separate background reports on suburban office development, Fothergill (1987, 28) and Jones Lang Wootton Wolinski Planners (1987, 2)⁷ note the lack of any significant office development other than in the near eastern suburbs. Edgington (1988, 8, 11), in a discussion of the economic sub-regions of Melbourne, notes that little suburban office growth could be attributed to deflection from the CBD. Edgington concurs with the assessment that the suburban development pattern is skewed in favour of the south and east.

The current version of District Centres policy is presented in *Metropolitan Activity Centres* (MPE 1989). This document reiterates the rationales for DCs policy, such as savings from shared facilities and infrastructure, ease of access by public transport more equitable access to services in all regions, etc. In outline, the policy calls for 15 DCs throughout the region, subordinate to the downtown in specialized services and employment, but at the top of a suburban retail and employment hierarchy which includes over 50 suburban centres of various size and composition. Presumably in response to the problems identified by the Office Development Advisory Committee (ODAC 1986), the policy also states that the boundaries of District Centres will be "flexible" to allow the maximum opportunity for suburban development.

Moodie (1991) presents the most comprehensive empirical examination of the District Centres policy. Moodie describes the background to policy development, and District Centres (DCs) are evaluated in terms of their composition (retail and office space, employment, community services, etc.) and qualitative character. Few DCs are found to provide the broad spectrum of activities and different regional roles that the policy was intended to foster. Further, these few successes are found to be less a result of policy than of prior development and of external economic factors unaddressed by the policy.

2.4 *BELLEVUE*

Prior to 1980, the core of Bellevue was a relatively typical American suburban retail district, with a large shopping mall, very little local employment, and an almost total reliance on the automobile for transportation. Schneider (1981, 248, 250) asserts that downtown Bellevue "has developed as an automobile-oriented retail, office and residential concentration with virtually no appeal to or provision for the pedestrian" and discusses the disincentives to other forms of development, most notably the large amount of parking required based on developed floorspace. Daniels (1982, 59) also notes the automobile dependence of downtown Bellevue in the early 1980s. In a discussion of Central Business District policies in Seattle, Daniels expresses doubt as to the potential of downtown Bellevue to develop into a major competitor for prime office space.

Throughout the 1980s, however, several policies and regional conditions combined to allow the development of a new kind of downtown area in Bellevue. The 1981 Land Use Code, by which Bellevue restricted large scale development to the core and created a high density "wedding cake" development pattern, is described by many researchers (Noguchi 1982, 2; National Cooperative Highway Research Program 1987, 77-79; Miles and Hinshaw 1987, 222; Whyte 1988, 307; Cervero 1989, 172; Kay 1991, 6). Noguchi (1982, 4) and Cervero (1989, 173) describe an agreement between Bellevue and the regional public transportation service to link the provision of public transit in the core to increasing density and reduced parking requirements.

The several aspects of the new code which pertain to improvements in the pedestrian character and urban design of the core of Bellevue have also received attention (Noguchi 1982, 3; Miles and Hinshaw 1987; National Cooperative Highway Research Program 1987, 77-79; Whyte 1988, 307-309; Cervero 1989, 169-171). Welch (1989, 33-71) provides a readable treatment of the historical

development of Bellevue's downtown and the factors which led to its success, such as the support of the general public and the business sector, the leadership of the Freeman family, the importance of the wider regional economy based on the success of the Boeing company, and the confrontation over the Evergreen East proposal.

The next three chapters present case studies of the suburban centre policies in Greater Vancouver, metropolitan Melbourne, and the City of Bellevue, Washington. The conclusion (Chapter 6) applies the lessons derived from the case studies to the improvement of suburban centres policy both generally and in the particular circumstances of Greater Vancouver.

CHAPTER 3

GREATER VANCOUVER: REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES POLICY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The suburban centres strategy which has been adopted in the Greater Vancouver region is called the Regional Town Centres policy. This chapter presents the historical development, implementation, and results of the policy.

In the policy context section of the chapter, the background of the Regional Town Centres (RTC) policy is found to be a combination of growth pressures in the 1970s and a convergence of political will among the governments in the City of Vancouver, its suburban neighbours, and the provincial level. The policy development section describes the planning process which led to the *Livable Region Strategy*, the goals eventually expressed in the strategy, and the details of the original Regional Town Centres policy. Aspects of the policy which are discussed include the selection of RTC sites, the criteria by which RTCs could be judged, and a five-element implementation procedure. It is argued that changes in the political context around the time of original implementation had significant consequences for the policy.

The policy evaluation section of the chapter describes, in detail, the consequences for the RTCs resulting from the altered political environment. A review of evaluative comments from the academic literature and from policy documents is used to support the analysis. This section includes a discussion of the inadequacy of RTC performance criteria in view of the adopted implementation style in the RTCs, and a criticism concerning the ways in which office floorspace is used as a key indicator. The progress and prospects of each RTC is examined in turn.

In the concluding section of the chapter, it is found that the policy cannot be demonstrated to have altered the pattern of development or redevelopment which has occurred in the designated RTCs. It is further asserted that the historical moment when RTCs could address regional problems is past, and that a new policy direction is required.

3.1 POLICY CONTEXT

The Regional Town Centres (RTC) policy was an element of the 1975 *Livable Region Strategy*, a general metropolitan response to urban growth patterns in the Greater Vancouver area in the post-1950s period. Regional population had grown throughout the 1950s and 1960s at an annual rate of slightly less than four percent (Gertler and Crowley 1976, 176), nearly doubling the GVRD total population from 562,000 in 1951 to 1.02 million in 1971 (GVRD 1981b, 6).

Such rapid growth raised three major interrelated concerns for regional planners, politicians, and citizens. First, there was a perception that commercial development was over-concentrated in the central city. By the early 1970s, the City of Vancouver contained 62 percent of regional employment, 60 percent of regional leasable office space (plus over 60 percent of the office space under development), and almost all of the major cultural and entertainment facilities for the region (GVRD 1974d, 7; Gertler and Crowley 1977, 176). The downtown area alone contained 36 percent of regional employment (GVRD 1974d, 6). Second, the balance of the residential population was shifting to the suburban municipalities (Gertler and Crowley 1977, 176), causing concern about the inefficiencies of suburban sprawl and about the lack of local jobs and facilities available to employ and serve the growing population. Third, the primary mode of commuter transportation in the region was the automobile (only 10 percent of commuters used transit -- Gertler and Crowley 1977, 176) and, since there were no major

freeway connectors between the downtown core of the City of Vancouver and the suburban residential areas, it was expected that major increases in traffic flow (and the accompanying noise and pollution) would seriously harm the quality of life in the intervening City of Vancouver residential neighbourhoods (GVRD 1974b, 2; GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 23).

Regarding suburban centres, there were two notable policy responses prior to 1975. In 1967 in the City of Vancouver, a city council decision was made to solve the perceived traffic flow problems between the downtown and the suburbs by constructing a freeway connector. The resulting citizen backlash against the decision, called "The Great Freeway Debate," led to the formation of a reform-minded civic political party, The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) (Tennant 1980, 14; Gutstein 1985, 202). TEAM eventually supplanted the business-minded Non-Partisan Association (NPA) as the governing party on Vancouver City Council and ruled throughout the formative years of the *Livable Region Strategy* (1972-1976 -- Tennant 1980, 17). TEAM had come to power on a platform of controlling growth to preserve the quality of life in the City of Vancouver, and this anti-growth commitment was expressed in the Interim Zoning By-law of 1973 (Bureau of Municipal Research 1976, 14; Nader 1976, 410-411; GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 38). Under this by-law, outright allowable densities of downtown development were sharply reduced, making the traditional scale of core development subject to negotiation between developers and city planners. In addition to a desire to control the design of downtown built space, "there was a general wish to discourage downtown office growth and at the same time to encourage a decentralization of growth" (Bureau of Municipal Research 1976, 22). Since 1967, the downtown of the City of Vancouver had experienced a boom in office space construction (Nader 1976, 411), the negative effects of which TEAM wished to ameliorate by moving office development out of the downtown and out of the city.

This policy was enforced in 1974, when the B.C. Telephone Company was denied a development permit and was thereby forced to move its headquarters out of the City of Vancouver, eventually to relocate in Burnaby, near Metrotown, in 1977 (Ley 1985, 30-34). TEAM's concerns also found expression in the stated 1972 policy of the GVRD Board "to regionally control and develop office centres or regional town centres outside of downtown, and decentralize some downtown growth to these centres" (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 23).

The second notable policy response prior to 1975 was the Official Regional Plan of 1966, prepared by the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB). This advisory plan contained a general policy for the creation of "a series of compact Regional Towns, each with its own business and civic centre and each related to industrial areas, complementing a Regional business, social, and financial Core in downtown Vancouver" (LMRPB 1966, 3). These regional towns had been under discussion since at least 1962 (GVRD 1975a, 1) and were to be located both in the suburbs surrounding the City of Vancouver and in the municipalities further east in the Fraser Valley. The regional towns were meant to provide an urban growth pattern that would preserve the surrounding green spaces and that would be more economical to service than scattered development (LMRPB 1966, 3, 5). By the early 1970s, however, only the retail shopping function had decentralized to a number of regional centres, only some of which were also the designated "regional towns" (GVRD 1974d, 9).

Nevertheless, there was support among the suburban municipalities for the concept of suburban downtowns. In Burnaby, for example, politicians and planners wished to create a focal point for their community and recognized the coincidence of interests between the regional policy of compact towns and the City of Vancouver policy toward office decentralization (Burnaby Planning Department and Norman Hotson Architects 1977, 7).⁸

The final event which preceded and precipitated the development of the *Livable Region Strategy* was the election in 1972 of the New Democratic Party (NDP) to the control of the provincial government. The replacement of the long-standing Social Credit Party contributed to the optimism which was evident in the formation of the *Livable Region Strategy* concerning the possibility of the reform of municipal and regional planning powers. One of the key concerns of the NDP was the reform of the Vancouver regional transportation system. The expansion of the public transit system was seen as a means of promoting both human and environmental values in the urbanized region (Swainson 1983, 251-252).

3.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In the two years prior to 1975, the *Livable Region Strategy* was developed by the GVRD in an open planning process which involved extensive consultation with municipal governments, the general public, the development industry, and major corporations (GVRD 1974a; 1974b; 1974c; 1980a, 5; Lash 1980). Citizen participation in public sector decision-making was a major goal of the new TEAM majority on Vancouver City Council (Tennant 1980, 15). As in the 1972 GVRD "office centres" policy, it is understandable that the influence of the dominant city in the region would be reflected in the planning actions of the GVRD.

Background studies on RTCs were conducted by consultants and by GVRD staff to gauge the level of development of the existing commercial hierarchy and the potential effects of RTC development on the region (Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners 1973; GVRD 1974d). One of the major consultative seminars focussed directly on Regional Town Centres (GVRD 1974b).

The *Livable Region Strategy* was ultimately expressed in five major interrelated goals for the management of urban growth in the Greater Vancouver area (GVRD 1975a; 1975b). These were given as follows:

1. Share residential growth to reduce travel and equalize service costs.
2. Promote a balance of jobs to population in each part of the region.
3. Build regional town centres.
4. Build a transit-oriented transportation system.
5. Protect and develop regional open space (GVRD 1975b; 1980a, 6).

The five goals were to be mutually reinforcing. Residential growth sharing could reduce travel costs only if public transit systems could be improved. Service costs could be equitable, public transit could be economic, and open space could be protected only if residential growth was contained. Jobs could be spread throughout the region only if economic development, particularly office development, could be attracted to the suburbs. (Artibise, et al. 1990, 1-2).

RTCs would flourish only with good transit service; people could avoid long commutes only if job growth took place where residential development was occurring; good transit service could be viable only if there were concentrations of activity at transit accessible sites (Artibise, et al. 1990, p. 2).

The original broad objectives of the Regional Town Centres policy were expressed as follows:

Developing Regional Town Centres in suburban locations will bring jobs, shopping and cultural opportunities closer to where people live. Decentralization to these centres of some of the office growth that otherwise will locate in downtown Vancouver will greatly reduce transportation problems. The aim, therefore, is to create lively and diverse urban places which are attractive alternatives to downtown. (GVRD 1975b, 10)

Specific elements of the policy included the identification of sites for RTCs, a prospective time frame for the development of each RTC, the performance criteria whereby an RTC could be judged a success, and the method of policy implementation.

Four sites were originally identified (see Map 1, p. 161). The Metrotown area of Burnaby and the downtown area of New Westminster were originally selected as candidate sites with close to the required characteristics. Metrotown had already been selected by the municipality as a site for centralized growth (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 30; Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 28) and downtown New

Westminster, in 1975, was the primary regional focal point outside of the City of Vancouver (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 28; Nader 1976, 386-387; City of New Westminster and GVRD 1977, 1). Since significant amounts of growth already existed in both locations, it was expected that the RTCs could be completely developed by 1980 (GVRD 1975b, 32). Additionally, two areas of the outer suburbs (North Surrey and the Northeast Sector of the GVRD) were determined to have the potential to hold RTCs in the future because of the rapid population growth being experienced in both areas (GVRD 1975b, 20; GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 30-32). Eventually, the Whalley-Guildford and Coquitlam Town Centre RTCs were selected (GVRD 1980a, 12-13), and it was expected that the (undefined) preconditions for RTC development could be created in both locations by 1986 (GVRD 1975a, 7; 1975b, 20).

The development of RTCs was thus to be staged, with only one pair being created at a time. This conformed to the general understanding among the GVRD planners that "[b]y 1986 the region has the capability to develop no more than two to three regional town centres to self-sufficiency" (GVRD 1974b, 2; 1975b, 19). In a 1973 commentary on the management of growth in Greater Vancouver, Hans Blumenfeld had asserted that only *one* RTC could be developed by 1986 (GVRD 1974a, iii).

The development of RTCs in the City of North Vancouver and in Richmond was specifically rejected in the original policy (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 32-33). North Vancouver city intended to develop the entire Lonsdale Corridor, and did not intend to choose the one concentrated location that the GVRD required for the RTC. The development potential of a Richmond RTC was well recognized in 1975, but the idea was rejected on two grounds: first, there were potential conflicts between an RTC site and the airport location (in terms of noise, traffic, and building height restrictions), and second, Richmond had already nearly

achieved the jobs-to-residents balance that was a primary stated goal of the RTC policy (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33; GVRD 1983, 21).

Several characteristics were used to define a fully-functional RTC. It was considered that "Regional Town Centres will probably have to be the size of the downtown of a small city before they can grow on their own" (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 8; GVRD 1975b, 18). One background document estimated that a self-sufficient RTC would have to be approximately one tenth the size of downtown Vancouver in terms of commercial space and available services (GVRD 1974b, B1). The specific characteristics were given as follows:

- a surrounding population of 100,000 to 150,000;
- one million square feet of office space;
- \$50 million in annual retail sales;
- 700,000 square feet of retail space;
- 2,000 to 3,000 dwelling units within a short walk;
- 7,000 to 10,000 jobs within a short walk;
- 250,000 square feet of recreational space;
- a site area of only 100 to 200 acres.

Additionally, it was recognized that Regional Town Centres had to be more than just shopping and employment districts. The quality and character of the urban design of the RTCs was considered to be as important as the quantifiable elements (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 13). The unique characteristics of each site were meant to be accentuated. The human scale features would supersede the existing automobile orientation of the RTC sites. Cars and people were to be kept apart, and a good pedestrian circulation system, well-connected to public transit nodes, was a priority. Denser urban housing styles and a balanced mixture of activities, happening throughout the day and into the evening, would provide the potential for an urban lifestyle in suburban settings (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 17-19; GVRD 1975b, 18-19; Gertler and Crowley 1977, 178).

The implementation of Regional Town Centres development, as originally conceived, was not meant to rely simply on the identification of sites and the

operation of market forces. It was well understood by the GVRD planners that RTCs could not work that way. According to Harry Lash, the GVRD planning director responsible for the creation of the *Livable Region Strategy*, "under a voluntary plan it would not be possible to build regional town centres" (GVRD 1974b, 4).¹⁰ The GVRD's policy report on RTCs concurred:

Regional Town Centres will not happen in Greater Vancouver without an action program to get them started. No one government agency has the capability to develop Regional Town Centres on its own. Nor are the current means of co-operation amongst governments adequate for the task. (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 34)

Accordingly, an elaborate five-element implementation plan had been developed. First, the RTC sites would be reserved (through zoning, land use contracts, and provincial enabling legislation) to prevent preliminary scattered development and to avoid real estate speculation. Second, RTCs would be planned jointly through the cooperation of municipal, regional, and provincial agencies. This joint exercise would be coordinated by the GVRD. Third, land in the later-developing RTC sites (Surrey, Northeast Sector) would be acquired for public purposes through the use of provincial funding and a revolving fund (initially \$15 million) generated by the development of the initial RTC sites (Metrotown, Downtown New Westminster). Fourth, a formal development management process for each RTC was deemed crucial to the success of the policy. Finally, the City of Vancouver would continue its active role in the diversion of office space expansion from the downtown and Broadway Corridor (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 34-38; GVRD 1974b, 3-4; 1975a, 7; 1975b, 49-50; Gertler and Crowley 1977, 180-181; Vancouver Planning Department 1977, 2.10).

Almost immediately after the 1975 publication of the policy, however, the conditions surrounding its implementation began to change. With each change, the RTC policy was moved progressively further from the original proposals.

A political shift occurred within the ranks of TEAM, which was then the majority party on Vancouver City Council. Losing the reformist fervour which had been evident in their first years in office, some TEAM members began to side with the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), a traditionally pro-development party with very little interest in the control of growth (Gutstein 1985, 209, 213; Tennant 1980, 19). In the three years following the acceptance of the *Livable Region Strategy*, the City of Vancouver's actions toward the decentralization of office space consisted of little more than asking developers to write down their reasons for selecting a downtown location over the RTC locations (*The Vancouver Sun* 1981). The B.C. Telephone Company was the only major office user to be forced to relocate, and that decision had preceded the formal institution of the *Livable Region Strategy* (Ley 1985, 33). Further, according to Ted Droettboom,¹¹ "the anti-growth fervor was soon converted into a late-1950s-style boosterism" in response to a recorded drop in City of Vancouver population in the mid-1970s (*The Vancouver Sun* 1981; GVRD 1980a, 9). By 1977, TEAM sided completely with the NPA in their contention "that the city could not afford to lose the development to the suburbs" (Gutstein 1985, 213). Additionally, both the provincial and federal governments ignored the concept of decentralization by unilaterally placing major developments in the City of Vancouver downtown core (Gutstein 1985, 213-214).

Next, as a result of the provincial election of 1975, the Social Credit Party, under William Bennett, reclaimed power from the NDP. In addition to downtown development activities, there was an almost complete withdrawal on the part of the provincial government from a regional consideration of issues based on the *Livable Region Strategy*. The Bennett government significantly slowed and altered the development of the rapid transit system which was planned to link all of the RTCs and the downtown core (Swainson 1983, 252-253). The Province alone determined the nature, timing, placement, and funding of the SkyTrain light rail

system (Swainson 1983, 253-254; Gutstein 1985, 214-215; MacDonald 1987, 193-194; *The Province* 1989a). The new implementation powers which had been anticipated for the GVRD never materialized. Indeed, the provincial government never officially committed any recognition or resources to the implementation of the *Livable Region Strategy*, thus slowing town centre development, according to Ken Cameron¹² (*The Vancouver Sun* 1981). By 1978, the Province had completely undercut the transportation planning responsibilities of the GVRD through the creation of the provincially appointed Urban Transit Authority (Gutstein 1985, 215). In 1983, the Province completely and unilaterally removed the land use planning powers of the GVRD (GVRD 1987, 4; Baker and Lanskail 1990).

Also in 1983, the GVRD recommended the inclusion of Richmond Town Centre and the Lower Lonsdale area of the City of North Vancouver in the RTC policy (GVRD 1983, 22). The rationale for inclusion was a simple recognition of the reality of the regional importance of the two centres, ignoring the problems which had been perceived in 1975. The loss of planning powers prevented the official recognition of these areas, but they have been informally treated as RTCs since at least 1983 (GVRD 1987, 52; Township of Richmond 1986, 44, 47).

3.3 POLICY EVALUATION

As a result of the changes described above, four important *Livable Region Strategy* elements which related to Regional Town Centres were missing almost from the outset of the implementation of the policy. First, the strong leadership of the regional level of local government was lacking because the increased acquisition and implementation powers on which such leadership was to be based were not forthcoming from the provincial level. It had been widely assumed that the powers would be granted and that the GVRD would use them. "It [was] anticipated that the GVRD [would] assume a leadership role in this whole area of

legislative amendment and decentralization amendment programs" (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 81). It was also widely understood that a voluntary implementation system was insufficient to the task of building RTCs within the time frame of the *Livable Region Strategy* (GVRD 1974b, 4 -- see footnote 10).

Second, the decentralization of City of Vancouver core office space, which was meant to drive the development of the RTCs, was never accomplished, nor even pursued. Vancouver City Council, through a change of collective heart, lacked the will to deflect development. The suburban and regional governments lacked the power.

The municipalities (to which office planning has devolved) do not have sufficient powers to redirect private and public sector development, particularly in the face of local jurisdictional fragmentation and policy disagreement. The one level of government to have taken significant initiative in office locational policy [i.e., GVRD] is constitutionally disqualified from accomplishing its purposes. (Ley and Hutton 1984, 149)

Third, regional transportation development decisions were removed to provincial authority. The planned development of an interconnected rapid transit network was delayed and altered. As a result, rather than following a denser, transit-oriented development scenario, the growth of the RTCs was based on the existing automobile-centred transportation pattern. It is thus no accident that a majority of the RTCs have suburban shopping malls and parking lots at their cores (GVRD 1987, 51).

Finally, the implementation of RTCs was not staged as originally planned. The four original RTCs and the two additions were not differentiated or distinguished in the timing of their promotion and development through the policy. Since the GVRD had no power to enforce such distinctions, each municipality treated its own RTC as having primary importance. The goal of learning lessons from the earlier RTCs (to be applied to subsequent RTC development) could not be fulfilled.

Not surprisingly, given these significant obstacles in the path of policy implementation, Regional Town Centres have developed very slowly in most cases and hardly at all in others. The evaluations of the policy which can be found in the academic literature and in government analytical documents are uniformly unenthusiastic.

In 1980, five years after the inception of the policy and the year when both the Metrotown and New Westminster RTCs were to be fully formed, a GVRD report (1980a, 14) noted that, although suburban growth in office floorspace was occurring, "the regional town centres have not increased their proportion of office space. They have not yet proven an office location alternative to downtown Vancouver nor an effective focus for office development in the suburbs." This lack of success was attributed in part to the advisory nature of the *Livable Region Strategy* and also to the lack of municipal and provincial commitment (GVRD 1980a, 17).

A 1981 GVRD report on commercial floorspace in the region mentioned the same problems. The RTCs had not become concentrations of commercial floorspace, and the growth which had occurred was primarily due to the expansion of retail shopping malls, which was not a reflection of policy, but a response to population growth in retail trade areas around the RTCs (GVRD 1981a, 13-19).

The City of Vancouver's office growth was strongly focussed in its downtown, but Burnaby, Richmond and Surrey all saw their strongest office growth occurring outside their major commercial centres. As a result, municipal office centres of regional importance are not emerging. [...]uburban office growth has yet to produce the concentrations of office employment required to stimulate growth of associated service, retail or shopping centre facilities. Nor has it been concentrated enough to create significant municipal transportation foci. [...]It seems unlikely that such concentrations will develop unless significant changes are made to the transportation system, and unless more effective local and regional policies are devised to encourage suburban office development. (GVRD 1981a, 18)

A series of articles in the mid-1980s also discussed RTC policy. In wider discussions of regional office space issues, Ley and Hutton (1984, 417) and Ley (1985, 33) describe the policy goals of office decentralization and the lack of success among the RTCs, especially regarding major office employers.

Hutton and Davis (1984, 10, 24-30, 33) find that, in terms of office floorspace growth between 1971 and 1982, the dominant position of the City of Vancouver generally and the downtown in particular was unchallenged by the inner suburbs and that the rate of growth 1977-1982 was greater for the City of Vancouver than for the inner suburbs, suggesting a trend counter to that expected under the RTC policy. The reasons for policy failure are cited as a misperception of the evolving regional economy, a miscalculation of the behaviour of the office market, a failure to designate priority centres, ineffective policy approaches by municipal governments, competition from non-RTC commercial centres, and inadequate core-periphery transportation linkages. Hutton and Davis also note the problem of reaching consensual agreement among competing municipal interests.

A report on commercial centres in the GVRD by Coriolis Consulting Corp. (1986, 4) reiterates an earlier criticism when it notes that "regional town centres have been growing because the populations in their trade areas have been growing, not because they are deflecting development away from Vancouver or "stealing" development potential from neighbouring municipalities."

In 1987, the GVRD Technical Advisory Committee conducted a broad review of regional planning policies, including the RTC policy. This review stated that the RTC policy had achieved a certain amount of recognition in that it had been included in municipal Official Community Plans, but that the RTCs themselves were incomplete, that they had not achieved planned employment thresholds, and that the physical impressions of the RTCs (except New Westminster) were of shopping centres, rather than town centres (GVRD 1987, 18, 25, 47, 51).

Artibise, et al. (1990) provide the most recent comprehensive analysis of RTC policy.¹³ Their findings reinforce the criticisms of the previous reports. RTC growth was solely a result of trade area population growth. Faster growth in office floorspace was being achieved in those municipalities without RTCs. Municipal governments had given only passive support to RTCs and had allowed market forces and senior government investment to determine the growth pattern of the RTCs. When one RTC received some form of senior government investment, all other municipalities demanded the same investment. Additionally, Artibise, et al. offered new criticisms. The areas which municipalities had designated were too large to serve as foci for development and previous policy analysis was considered to have concentrated too much on the addition of commercial floorspace and not enough on the other elements which would contribute to a town centre, especially those related to the quality of RTC urban design (Artibise, et al. 1990, 8, 23-29).

The evaluation of the success or failure of the RTC policy based solely on its own performance criteria is difficult. To review, these criteria were:

- a surrounding population of 100,000 to 150,000;
- one million square feet of office space;
- \$50 million in annual retail sales;
- 700,000 square feet of retail space;
- 2,000 to 3,000 dwelling units within a short walk;
- 7,000 to 10,000 jobs within a short walk;
- 250,000 square feet of recreational space;
- a site area of only 100 to 200 acres.

First, there was no support offered for this particular selection of features, nor any proof that their appearance would necessarily entail the existence of the sorts of qualitative and design characteristics that were also desired. It is likely that these criteria represent simply the "ballpark" estimates of the original regional planners. In the early 1970s, RTCs were no more than an ambitious concept, one possible extension of the existing multcentred development pattern described by Nader (1976). No actual RTCs existed from which to empirically derive criteria.

Second, the criteria were heavily dependent on proximity. The existence of a surrounding population of 100,000 to 150,000 depends on the definition of "surrounding." A trade area could not be assumed simply by drawing a certain radius around a centre. The existence of major road linkages complicate the issue, especially where automobile-oriented retail patterns are concerned. The definition of "surrounding" population also depends on whether or not this population was within the *exclusive* trade area of one of the RTCs. New Westminster, once the second urban centre of the Lower Mainland, began the 1970s with a huge trade area. The subsequent growth of regional shopping centres and the designation of RTCs placed New Westminster in the middle of several new and overlapping trade areas. The surrounding population was large (and growing), but it is highly unlikely that a majority looked to New Westminster as their sole or even primary choice for retail or employment opportunities.

There are proximity problems with the other criteria as well. Though the GVRD planners asked for a site area of 100 to 200 acres, none of the six eventual municipally-designated RTCs kept to that limit (see Map 2, p. 163, and Appendix 1, p. 159).¹⁴ Only New Westminster even comes close. The figure for Whalley alone is an improvement over the original 2,160 acres given for Whalley-Guildford, but is still larger than the 1,320 acres of the core area of the City of Vancouver (Rao 1989, 7.4) or the 1,230 acres of the entire City of White Rock. Coquitlam Centre is not appreciably smaller than the 2,500 acres of the entire City of Langley. At any of these scales (except perhaps for New Westminster), the desired high density, pedestrian-oriented district is not achievable.

If RTCs are not defined by the intended high density cores, then many of the rest of the criteria become suspect. The definition of a "short walk" to jobs or housing or recreational space takes on a different meaning. The only criteria that are easily met by each RTC, except New Westminster, are those concerning retail

space. As has been noted previously, these RTCs all have one or more large regional shopping centres at their cores, and these centres are all dependent on the automobile rather than pedestrian traffic.

The criterion which has been most widely discussed in regard to the RTCs is office floorspace. None of the sources for RTC office space figures gives any spatial reference which indicates containment. It must be assumed that any office space within the very large site areas is included.

In Burnaby, for example, the B.C. Telephone Co. building is at the extreme western edge of Metrotown (and Burnaby). Until 1990, this 600,000-square-foot-plus office building (Colliers Macaulay Nicolls 1990a, 12)¹⁵ represented over half of the entire office floorspace "in" Metrotown (given as 1.3 million sq. ft. in Artibise et al., 10). This building is almost two kilometers distant from the designated centre of Metrotown at the corner of Kingsway and Sussex Avenue (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 37). Similar distance problems exist in Whalley and Richmond Centre, which sprawl, and North Vancouver Lonsdale, which is bi-polar. (Coquitlam Centre has very little office space at any scale.)¹⁶

Other more serious problems attend on the choice of office floorspace as the leading criterion of RTC success. No source defines the types of office floorspace which are to be included in the total RTC figures. Different sources have produced wildly varying figures for the same area and same year. For example, 1989 office space figures for Metrotown have been given as 1,748,474 sq. ft. (Colliers 1990a, 12) and as 1,382,252 sq. ft. (Artibise, et al. 1990, 12). A 1982 GVRD promotional document for RTCs gives Downtown New Westminster's office space as 912,000 sq. ft. (GVRD 1982b), while Artibise, et al. give a figure of only 586,481 sq. ft. for 1989. Current figures for Whalley vary from 287,000 sq. ft. (Colliers 1990a, 29) to 539,000 sq. ft. (District of Surrey 1991, 3.12). Very different estimates of office floorspace are even found for a single structure. The

headquarters of the B.C. Telephone Company are recorded as containing 580,000 sq. ft. in 1977 (Burnaby and Hotson 1977) and 442,000 sq. ft. of office space in 1982 (District of Burnaby 1982). Such variance between sources brings the accuracy of all sources into question.

These discrepancies have several potential causes. One analyst may include only leasable space, while another may include total building area. A 500,000-square-foot office tower may have only 420,000 sq. ft. of usable, leasable space. One analyst may make no distinction between types of office space, where another might include only Class A or B structures and exclude low quality buildings and offices attached to retail areas. One analyst may include the floor area of "approved" construction sites or other merely potential floorspace, where another might include only occupied structures.

Another problem exists with the logic of using a wide definition of office floorspace. No distinction seems to be made in the RTC literature between institutional and market office space and usage. In contrast, the criteria for American suburban downtowns or "edge cities" invariably include a very large amount of purely *leasable* office floorspace.¹⁷

Several RTCs have significant amounts institutional office floorspace. Metrotown includes the B.C. Telephone Company headquarters. Whalley includes the Surrey Taxation Centre and will soon hold the BC Transit headquarters. North Vancouver Lonsdale contains the headquarters of the Insurance Corporation of B.C. and B.C. Rail. New Westminster holds a provincial justice building and Douglas College.

These buildings inflate the office space inventory of the RTCs, but there is no established link between this type of space and the attraction of market office buildings, especially those built speculatively. (Presumably, this is why the American commentators concentrate on leasable space.) Though this connection

has been widely assumed in regard to the RTCs, there is no evidence to suggest that private office developers are influenced by large-scale institutional location decisions. If only leasable space is considered for the RTCs, then much smaller numbers have to be accepted.

Finally, though the criterion under discussion is undoubtedly one million square feet of office floorspace, this amount should probably be altered to reflect the passage of time and the changing regional market for office space. That million square feet was intended to be created in the two original RTCs by 1980, when the total regional office space market was approximately 25 million square feet (GVRD 1980a, 14). The current regional market is double that size (Artibise, et al. 1990, 12), halving the significance of the RTC criterion.

In view of the preceding discussion, the original performance criteria of the RTCs cannot rightly be used to examine the success of the individual RTCs. A more qualitative historical and logical analysis must be relied upon. Consequently, this discussion will turn to an evaluation of the six designated RTCs.

3.3.1 Metrotown

Metrotown was the most promising of the original RTCs. It lay along one of the major regional development corridors outlined by Nader (1976, 387) and it enjoyed good automobile access to the rest of the region via Kingsway, Willingdon Ave., and Boundary Road. At the outset of the *Livable Region Strategy* it was already attracting commercial development (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 30) to add to an existing commercial centre and significant strip retail along Kingsway (Rao 1989, 4). It was the largest and oldest of the existing commercial centres in Burnaby, with an already established commercial and residential base¹⁸ (District of Burnaby 1982).

Since the early 1970s, the area had also experienced a high density residential development boom, with 17 high-rise towers being added between 1971 and 1977 (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 17; Rao 1989, 4). Large parcels of land at the heart of Metrotown were available for commercial redevelopment (Rao 1989, 4; GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 30).

In 1975, GVRD planners opined that "the Burnaby Regional Town Centre may be the easiest to get started and could provide an example" (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 30). According to Burnaby planning director A. L. Parr, "it is almost certain that even without [a Metrotown plan], some form of commercial centre with related residential and recreational facilities will be developed within the environs of Central Park" (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, foreword). The question in Metrotown was not whether development would come, but how it would be accommodated.

Both GVRD and Burnaby planners agreed that the control of the automobile was crucial. The *Livable Region Strategy* proposed that Metrotown "should have a strong pedestrian orientation and reduce the space devoted to the automobile" (GVRD 1975b, 33). Burnaby's development plan for Metrotown promised that "it would not be modelled after the traditional auto-oriented central business district" (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 28), and a parking strategy would be developed to provide

convenience for the auto user while at the same time not allowing the car to dominate large areas of Metrotown. [...] At the outset, it should be emphasized that off-street surface parking is considered inappropriate for all future development within Metrotown. (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 37)

The Metrotown development plan included several conceptual maps which showed a desire for a fine-grained pattern of activity in the heart of Metrotown, including corridors of green space throughout the core area. (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 53, 69; District of Burnaby 1982). The Core Area Pedestrian Precinct was to

contain both indoor and outdoor malls, urban pedestrian parkways, and publicly-acquired areas and easements for a vehicle-free pedestrian circulation system which would create "[a] strong walkway network and urban squares system providing pedestrian continuity in the core area" (Burnaby and Hotson 1977, 68, 72).

By 1980, plans for Metrotown were well advanced, but "major change" awaited the determination of the eventual land use of two very large central redevelopment locations (GVRD 1980a, 13). These plots, held by Sears and Kelly Douglas, were the subject of major shopping centre development proposals, which were rejected by Burnaby planners and politicians because they did not conform to the desired "standards of town-centre development" (*The Vancouver Sun* 1981), again according to planning director A. L. Parr.

By the mid-1980s, however, coincident with the arrival of SkyTrain (light rail system), the shopping centre developers had succeeded in gaining municipal acceptance for three large, unconnected regional shopping complexes. Metrotown Centre, a \$100-million shopping mall redevelopment on three levels with 150 stores, opened in 1986. Adjacent to the west, Eaton Centre, a new \$130-million shopping and office complex with over 1.1 million square feet of commercial space, opened in 1989 and Station Square, a \$90-million retail, hotel, and apartment complex, opened shortly afterward (BC Transit Authority 1989, 8-9). These three developments combined to create a retail complex second in size in Western Canada only to West Edmonton Mall (*Trade and Commerce Magazine* 1992). The core of Metrotown, which had been planned as a fine-grained, street-level retail district to serve the pedestrian, had been completely covered by three vast mall complexes with blank external walls and almost non-existent pedestrian connections.

Despite the provision of a SkyTrain stop adjacent to the malls, the automobile dominates Metrotown. Automobile parking is ubiquitous, with above ground and underground structures, and acres of surface-level parking. Traffic congestion along Kingsway persists throughout each working day, and the congestion is more widespread on the weekend, when the malls attract car driving shoppers from a trade area that includes New Westminster and the eastern parts of the City of Vancouver (Artibise, et al. 1990, 9).

Municipal support for Metrotown has been mixed. Burnaby Municipal Council has added public amenities to Metrotown, in the form of the Bonsor Park Recreation Complex and a five-acre public library and park site. Recently, however, the municipality did not take advantage of an opportunity to relocate its municipal hall to Metrotown, opting instead to expand operations at its Canada Way area site (*The Vancouver Sun* 1991d). The refusal of a permit to a major shopping mall development company which wanted to build a large regional centre in southern Burnaby, away from Metrotown, has been cited as evidence of the municipal commitment to the RTC concept (GVRD 1991a, 3). This action, however, merely protected the market share of the Metrotown shopping malls, and did nothing to promote the qualitative character of the area. Indeed, a major peripheral shopping mall may have improved the Metrotown area by drawing away some of the ever-present automobile traffic.

Significant short-term benefits have been gained through the current style of development at Metrotown. Tax revenue generated from the large scale of development allowed the municipal government to hold the 1991 municipal tax increase to only 1.5 percent, as compared to a 1990 increase of 8.4 percent (*The Vancouver Sun* 1990c).

The long-term prospects for Metrotown are less clear. Despite the addition of SkyTrain to the site, the earlier pattern of automobile orientation remains and

continues to shape the area's character. Metrotown has many elements that are reminiscent of the American "edge cities" (automobile orientation, rapid pace of development, shopping malls at the core, some high quality office space), albeit on a much smaller scale.

Conversely, the nearby presence of a large population in a wide mix of housing types and the provision of major rapid transit infrastructure conform well to the RTC concept. Metrotown is in a central location as regards the region's population, and has easy access to the downtowns of the cities of Vancouver and New Westminster. Nearby areas of mixed commercial, institutional, and light industrial land use (Brentwood, Canada Way, Lougheed, Edmonds) may provide a market base for the development of even more high quality office space at Metrotown (Artibise, et al. 1990, 21).

Ultimately, however, Metrotown as an RTC is hostage to the three large shopping mall complexes at its heart. The experience of Metrotown supports Matthew's assertion that an attempt to use a major shopping mall as the catalyst for a mixed-use centre will create "uncomfortable pedestrian conditions" (Matthew 1992, 53).

If innovative means can be found to integrate these malls into some form of street-level, pedestrian core,¹⁹ then Metrotown has a good chance to become a true suburban downtown. If not, if the malls follow the common pattern of expansion and adaptation to compete with other new or expanded regional malls, then Metrotown will likely remain as it is: a mixture of urban and suburban development styles, with the potential to be a lively urban centre for the community, but with that potential compromised by too much automobile-oriented commercial development.

3.3.2 Downtown New Westminster

The relative success at Metrotown provides a sharp contrast with the development of the RTC in Downtown New Westminster. Although both had been selected as the easiest RTCs with which to begin (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 25), their development paths were diverging, even as early as 1975.

Prior to the early 1970s, the downtown area of New Westminster had been the Lower Mainland's second most important commercial and business centre, after the downtown core of the City of Vancouver (City of New Westminster 1978, 3; New Westminster and GVRD 1977, 1; Gertler and Crowley 1977, 178). It lay at one end of the most important regional growth corridor (Kingsway) and contained more office floorspace than any area outside the City of Vancouver (Nader 1976, 387-389). New Westminster was the downtown hub for the entire Fraser Valley (First Capital City Development Corp. 1982, 1). In 1975, GVRD planners considered that Downtown New Westminster was already near the size of a "self-sufficient" RTC (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33).

Like Metrotown, Downtown New Westminster also held substantial sites with redevelopment potential. It was an added bonus that most of these sites were riverfront, and therefore potentially very marketable.

Additionally, New Westminster was the only RTC to benefit from the existence of a coordinating and implementing agency (one of the key implementation measures recommended in the original RTC policy). The job of organizing the expected large scale of redevelopment was felt to be too onerous for the municipality to handle alone (First Capital City 1982, 3, 5). Accordingly, the city entered into a partnership with a crown corporation, B.C. Development Corporation, to form the First Capital City Development Company Ltd.

First Capital City Development Company Ltd. has been established as a development vehicle to syndicate major lands within Downtown New Westminster. The Development Company will perform the function of

holding land, of marketing that land, of implementing the Official Community Plan and of entering into leases with prospective developers as well as contracts and agreements with the City of New Westminster and other government agencies for the provision of services, financing, and public capital projects. (New Westminster and GVRD 1977, 14)

However, despite past success, redevelopment potential, and professional management, the growth of a large commercial centre at Downtown New Westminster has not occurred. Since at least 1970, New Westminster has been declining as a centre of regional significance. The downtown of New Westminster "became a business backwater when the Trans Canada Highway by-passed the old city in the late 1960s" (BC Transit 1986, 28). From suburban pre-eminence in the early 1970s, New Westminster's downtown had become "Greater Vancouver's smallest office market" in the 1990s (Colliers 1990b, 4).

Between 1971 and 1982, the proportion of regional office space within the municipality dropped from 5.6 percent to 4.2 percent (Ley and Hutton 1984, 142). By 1989, this proportion had dropped to 3.4 percent. Further, this smaller percentage has not been concentrated within the designated RTC zone, which holds only about one third of municipal office floorspace (Artibise, et al. 1990, 12).

The RTC designation was in part an attempt to halt this decline (First Capital City 1982, 3). In addition to the designation, public agencies supported Downtown New Westminster by locating a provincial courts building and Douglas College there, and by providing rapid transit connection to the downtown of the City of Vancouver and to Metrotown.

Private office and retail investment did not follow these public commitments. The waterfront redevelopment areas have been almost entirely taken up by high density residential development (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992b). Aside from a riverfront public market and a riverfront hotel, major commercial redevelopment has bypassed Downtown New Westminster (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992c).²⁰

The decline in regional commercial significance has not been stemmed by RTC policy for two main reasons. First, large suburban shopping malls were developed, and these malls fragmented and intercepted New Westminster's former market population. Second, the decentralization of office space throughout the region bypassed Downtown New Westminster. Both of these effects are probably related to the denser urban development and dispersed ownership pattern of the original downtown core of the municipality. Both office and retail developers could avoid the difficulty in site assembly by moving to "green field" sites in the outer municipalities (or to already assembled sites in the inner suburbs, such as the two at Metrotown).

The existence of a previously successful, pedestrian-scale core was one of the original reasons for optimism about the RTC potential of downtown New Westminster. It would be ironic if that history and human scale were actually limiting factors in the successful development of the RTC.²¹

The New Westminster RTC is now a small retail district, well-served by rapid transit, surrounded by a large resident population on the heights above and along the waterfront to the west. With the redevelopment of the waterfront lands complete, it is unlikely that the area has the potential to increase its commercial space significantly in the near term. In the longer term, however, if there is an overall commercial decline as the original downtown area ages, it is possible that the development industry will attempt the site assembly that has been so far been foregone.

3.3.3 Coquitlam Town Centre

Coquitlam Centre was chosen as one of the two outer suburban areas to be developed as potential RTCs by 1986. The site held no real advantages other than

access to a growing population base and a nearby rail line with commuter train potential.

The selection of Coquitlam Centre was the outcome of an intense political competition between the municipalities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody (GVRD 1975b, 36), all of which had separate town centre plans. Those plans, and the rivalries, continue to the present. In particular, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam continue to publicly bicker over the location of new public buildings, such as court houses and police stations (*The Vancouver Sun* 1991f), as they attempt to build up important areas for their separate communities.

While the District of Coquitlam has elaborate plans for the site (District of Coquitlam 1988; Hotson Bakker Architects and The DM Group Landscape Architects 1990), it lacks many RTC prerequisites. Despite a long-running political exercise, there is as yet no rapid transit connection to the rest of the region. As previously noted, the area designated as the RTC is vast.

A consultant study noted that the largest proportion of the growth in Coquitlam Centre in the near future would be multi-family residential, as opposed to any form of commercial development (Coriolis 1990, 3). Even this positive aspect would be slow to develop. The first of several high rise residential towers in Coquitlam Centre was not completed until 1991 (*The Vancouver Sun* 1991b).

Too many competitors for too small a market and a lack of regional centrality are obvious reasons why Coquitlam Centre has attracted very little office floorspace (less than 100,000 sq. ft. -- Artibise, et al. 1990, 12). The only current commercial potential is population-serving (Coriolis 1990, 2-3).

Coquitlam Centre is no more than an automobile-oriented regional shopping complex (Coriolis 1986, 2-3; Artibise, et al. 1990, 10). It has been such since 1979 when the Coquitlam Centre Mall opened, with its "accompanying sea of parking" (*The Vancouver Sun* 1981). Limited market potential for office space and

its current automobile-serving development pattern will ensure that, except for very long range potential,²² it will remain so.

3.3.4 Whalley Town Centre (Surrey City Centre)

The Whalley area of the District of Surrey was also originally identified as having the potential to become an RTC by 1986 (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 25; GVRD 1975b, 42). As in Coquitlam Centre, the area was thought to be well situated to accommodate the needs of a growing nearby population base. Whalley is, however, much more centrally located in the region, and can be considered an extension of the primary regional growth corridor. It has an excellent road connection to New Westminster and is not far (about three kilometers) from Highway 1, the major east-west highway for the Lower Mainland. At the outset of the RTC policy, Whalley held a regional shopping mall and a moderate amount of automobile-oriented strip development along King George Highway.

Unfortunately for the original prospects of Whalley, these advantages were shared by a competing (and larger) regional shopping complex, Guildford, which was much closer to Highway 1. (The Guildford Town Centre shopping mall was probably one of the factors most responsible for the decline of Downtown New Westminster.) The GVRD planners selected Whalley over Guildford because it was thought to be far too difficult to serve Guildford with an extension of the planned rapid transit service (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 31).

The District of Surrey did not accept that it was forced to choose between the two centres, even though they were separated by almost three kilometers. The Whalley-Guildford RTC was a dumbbell-shaped, linear zone of planned development almost as large as the Coquitlam Centre RTC.²³ Further, although the municipality quickly accepted the concept of the RTC, it moved slowly toward

adopting municipal plans which reflected this, completing the adoption process only in 1985 (District of Surrey 1991, 1.2).²⁴

By the late 1980s, no significant development (other than retail) had occurred in the RTC. A 1989 study commissioned by the municipality found that:

Whalley and Guildford Town Centres are distinct and function as separate entities although they are only two miles apart. The OCP Plan to link the centres by high density development along 104 Avenue has not happened over 10 years due to poor market acceptance. [Further,] commercial growth and major projects have in fact spread all over Surrey including other Town Centres such as Newton and South Surrey. [...] Whalley and Guildford are meeting some of the objectives for a Regional Town Centre particularly as a retail centre but do not yet function as office business centres or concentrations of civic and cultural facilities. (Rao 1989, 1-2)

The study, and a provincial government decision to extend the SkyTrain rapid transit line to three Whalley stations (*The Vancouver Sun* 1990b), coincided with a municipal re-evaluation of the RTC plans (M. O'Connor 1990). As of 1991, the District of Surrey (1991) had decided to designate Whalley as the primary development site in the municipality. The site is, however, no longer to be planned as a simple RTC. According to statements by municipal officials, Whalley is now to be planned as "the province's second city centre," one major anchor in what Surrey planners envision as a future bi-nodal region (*The Vancouver Sun* 1990a). The project was originally called "Whalley Town Centre," but more recently the District of Surrey (1992) has referred to the area as "Surrey City Centre."

The new development zone is still quite large (larger in fact than the entire City of White Rock), but urbanized development is meant to concentrate in three smaller areas surrounding the three planned SkyTrain stations (District of Surrey 1991, 3.6-3.7).²⁵ The area is planned to have at least three different grades of commercial zoning and two grades of more dense residential zoning, surrounded by large areas of single family residential. There are large redevelopment sites

which have already been assembled by developers, and which have been approved as mixed commercial and high density residential projects. Many other development or redevelopment opportunities exist in the vicinity (District of Surrey 1991, 2.6, 6.1-6.2).

The 1991 proposed plan is an attractive document, and seems to be well-considered in most aspects. Consideration is given to the road network, the infrastructure requirements, the development cost charges needed to finance public investment, community service requirements, and more (District of Surrey 1991). Very positive press coverage has reported the "commitment" of \$2-billion of investment (of which \$400-million worth is currently in the approval process), of a forest of forty office and residential towers (of which twenty could be up within five years), and of a resident population of 30,000 -- all by 2011 (*The Vancouver Sun* 1990a; 1991a; 1992d).

Much of this "projection" is simple boosterism. One reporter has observed that Surrey's mayor pitches the town centre project with the zeal of a Baptist minister (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992d).²⁶ The municipality has engaged Hill & Knowlton Communications to assist "with a broad-scale marketing program" for the Whalley area (District of Surrey 1992). Many of the most optimistic statements regarding the future of the area are made by representatives of development companies with significant current and proposed projects in the area (*The Province* 1989b; District of Surrey 1992).

Whalley is being very aggressively promoted (*The Province* 1989b; *The Vancouver Sun* 1992d; District of Surrey 1992), but several important questions remain about its long term future. The municipality should have no problem attracting a large resident population. Properly marketed and targeted, housing generally finds a ready market in Greater Vancouver. Retail space should also increase smoothly, expanding either to service the large local population or to

compete with the other regional shopping complexes. Public investment in the form of SkyTrain and the BC Transit headquarters location decision are already committed and more will undoubtedly follow from the municipal level.

The main obstacle to the development of Whalley as the region's second centre (and indeed to its development as one of six RTCs) is the problematic attraction of large amounts of leasable office floorspace, and the employment that would fill such space.

Following a consultant's projection (Colliers 1990a, 5-31), Whalley's planners assume that Whalley Town Centre could expect to attract between 3.4 and 5.8 million square feet of office floorspace by 2011 (District of Surrey 1991, 3.12). This would represent a sizable shift in the attractiveness of the Whalley site. It currently holds only about 287,000 sq. ft. in seven buildings scattered throughout the large site area (Colliers 1990a, 29)²⁷ and most of that is in one federal government building, the Surrey Taxation Centre (230,000 sq. ft.).²⁸ The projection means that, from a standing start of much less than 100,000 sq. ft. of *leasable* office floorspace, Whalley will begin to attract between 110,000 and 150,000 sq. ft. *per year* for the next nineteen years (Colliers 1990a, 31).

This assumption must be treated with some skepticism. In the past seventeen years, despite a doubling in the Surrey population (GVRD 1991b, 52), Whalley office space growth has been meagre. There is no reason to expect that a further doubling of the local population will suddenly have a drastically different effect. More reasonably, a population threshold could be reached beyond which the area's office space will *begin* to grow, but gradually.

The addition of the 18-storey, 200,000-square-foot Station Tower will soon add more space (much of it leased to a public sector agency, BC Transit), but this is the only Class A office building ever to be built south of the Fraser River (District of Surrey 1992). A glossy brochure describing the development activity in Whalley

refers to no other immediate office projects (but does refer to several high-rise and low-rise residential developments).

The only other significant local change is the addition of SkyTrain, which undoubtedly has been a catalyst for some forms of development along its route (BC Transit Authority 1989). SkyTrain has not, however, attracted vast amounts of office space to every stop along the route, nor even to the New Westminster RTC.

The most important factor working against the development of a new downtown office core in Whalley is the continuing attractiveness of the existing downtown City of Vancouver office market. Major office users locate in the existing core because of the availability of face-to-face contact, because of the natural features and prestige of the area, and because of the proximity to residential areas appropriate to the management level (West Vancouver, Shaughnessy, the West Side). Other office users are attracted by the large population base in Vancouver and the inner suburbs.

If the vacancy rate in the core is high, as it is now (CB Commercial 1992), tenants will have the added advantages of leasing incentives, lower prices, and a wide choice of sites. If the downtown market is strong, some deflection of office tenants may occur based on price, but Whalley is farther away from the core of the City of Vancouver than any other existing office submarket.

The Broadway Corridor is currently the largest concentration of office space outside the City of Vancouver downtown (CB Commercial 1992). This area benefits by being very close to the existing core. Any firms deflected from the CBD by price may easily locate across False Creek from the downtown.

Other centres in the region have advantages over Whalley in attracting office tenants. Richmond has easy access to the international airport and to the major highway between the City of Vancouver and the United States. Metrotown already has SkyTrain for connectivity, is closer to downtown, and has better relative

population centrality. New Westminster and North Vancouver Lonsdale are closer to the regional core. The only existing RTC over which Whalley has a distinct advantage is Coquitlam Centre, which has virtually no office space demand. Further, unless subject to as yet undetermined regional controls, much of the region's future office floorspace will not be in centres at all, but will continue to spread out to suburban office parks and other isolated locations -- and so will be unavailable to locate at Whalley.

Even if future population growth occurs in the area south of the Fraser River, Whalley may not be the centre best placed to capture population-serving businesses. Langley City or any of the five other town centres being developed in Surrey,²⁹ or others in North Delta, may intercept the population Whalley is being developed to serve. Whalley's future as the primary centre for Surrey may even continue to be challenged by Guildford, which retains better highway accessibility.³⁰

In terms of market office buildings, Whalley can grow either through the attraction of existing office tenants or through the attraction of new tenants, but is weak on both counts in relation to existing centres (and suburban office parks). Whalley has limited highway access and no distinguishing natural features to attract redevelopment. It is far from downtown and from the airport. As has been illustrated, Whalley does not have the features to draw existing office tenants from other centres, and Whalley will have the same disadvantages in regard to any new demand.

Massive public sector support in the form of location decisions for government employment may contribute to Whalley, but as has been seen in other RTCs (Lonsdale and New Westminster particularly), such location decisions have little influence on the private office market. Consistent municipal zoning policy may force any Surrey office users to the Whalley area, but as has been discussed

this will be a limited market. Further, Guildford has been given the same "downtown" zoning designation as Whalley, and may dilute even the limited office demand within Surrey (District of Surrey 1991, 4.7).

Whalley does have growth potential. The addition of SkyTrain and the growth in the nearby population base are important. However, the preceding discussion has given reasons why some care should be taken in predicting a future for Whalley as an office centre second only to the core of the City of Vancouver. Whalley will be fortunate if, by 2011, it has achieved the level of success that Metrotown enjoys in 1992. If Whalley's planners can learn from some of the problems in Metrotown (and their plan indicates that they may have), perhaps Whalley can exceed Metrotown in managing the qualitative aspects of RTC development.

3.3.5 Richmond Town Centre and North Vancouver Lonsdale

The designation of Richmond Centre and North Vancouver Lonsdale as RTCs has had little impact on their development. The designation came much later than for the first four centres and, perhaps to an even greater extent than the original RTCs, their development patterns were already firmly set.

Both Richmond and North Vancouver had been considered for inclusion in the original policy. In the early 1970s, both already existed as significant commercial concentrations (Nader 1976, 389).

Richmond was acknowledged as the "growth leader" among the suburban communities of Greater Vancouver (Ley and Hutton 1984, 144; Hutton and Davis 1984, 9). Its advantages included the existing scale and pace of development, commercial diversity, and good access to the international airport and the major highway to the United States (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33). The disadvantages, however, were considered to outweigh these benefits. "A Richmond Regional

Town Centre is not needed to maintain balance between jobs and population, has conflicts with airport expansion and would be expensive to serve with light rapid transit" (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33; GVRD 1983, 21; 1987, 52). Concerns were also expressed that increased commercial development of the flat, alluvial topography of Richmond would hinder the preservation of agricultural land, and might increase the risks of flooding (GVRD 1975b, 39; Ley and Hutton 1984, 144).

Good short-term development potential was similarly recognized in the Lonsdale area of the City of North Vancouver (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33), but limitations were cited here as well. There were perceived to be long term limits on population growth due to the restrictions of the mountainous topography, the existing linear development pattern of the 1970s was recognized to lack a base upon which to concentrate new facilities, and the provision of any rapid transit system on the North Shore was recognized to be very expensive (GVRD 1975b, 39). Further, the municipal council of the time did not consider that the level of development required for the RTC was desirable for its community (GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 33; GVRD 1983, 21; 1987, 52).

Throughout the first years of the RTC policy, the two excluded municipalities continued to add office floorspace at faster rates than those with the four designated centres (Hutton and Davis 1984, 11; Coriolis 1986, 4). Richmond continued to grow based on its locational advantages, and may also have begun to enjoy multiplier benefits as manufacturers, parts suppliers, service providers, and other interrelated firms influenced each other's location decisions. By 1981, Richmond had more jobs than resident labour force, and so had achieved one of the major goals of the *Livable Region Strategy* (GVRD 1983, 12; 1985, 4, 6).

North Vancouver Lonsdale was growing for a different reason. In the years prior to its 1983 selection as an RTC, the Lower Lonsdale waterfront area had been targeted for redevelopment by the provincial government. The area was the first

to receive any form of regional rapid transit, in the form of a direct passenger ferry service across the harbour (SeaBus), connecting a North Shore ferry terminal to the downtown of the City of Vancouver. The area benefited from other significant public sector location decisions, with the waterfront development of the Lonsdale Quay Public Market, the Pacific Marine Training Institute of B.C., and the headquarters of two major crown corporations, the Insurance Corporation of B.C. and B.C. Rail (Lonsdale Quay Development Company 1980; GVRD 1982a, 16; Ley and Hutton 1984, 146). All of this government-directed development occurred in direct opposition to the *Livable Region Strategy* and the RTC policy.

It was in recognition of the realities of the development of these two centres that they were eventually recommended for inclusion in the RTC policy in 1983 (GVRD 1983, 2). This inclusion was, however, not formally adopted into the regional plan due to the removal of regional planning powers that same year (GVRD 1987, 52). All RTC policy documents after 1983 refer to all six RTCs on an equivalent basis.

The simple designation of these centres has had little effect on their already established development patterns. Richmond has a very large amount of low-density commercial development spread over a very large designated town centre area (City of Richmond, 4.6; Township of Richmond 1986). Although the 1990 commercial space total is given as over 4 million sq. ft., Richmond Centre has become a "row of shopping centres and strip malls running from Lansdowne to city hall and separated from the streets by parking lots" (*The Vancouver Sun* 1991e). Very large amounts of surface parking is available in all areas of the town centre (City of Richmond, 5.9).

Richmond's office floorspace is dispersed throughout the town centre and throughout the municipality (Colliers 1990a, 10-11). Even as early as 1981, it was recognized that Richmond's dispersed office space growth was outpacing the

growth in the large designated core (GVRD 1981a, 18). The pattern of dispersed activities and automobile orientation has been unchanged by the RTC designation. Any subsequent change must await the long range redevelopment of large portions of central Richmond. Even the introduction of rapid transit could have only a limited affect on the pattern, because it is likely that each of the large shopping mall complexes along No. 3 Road would receive a station stop, thereby reinforcing their economic viability and land use proclivities.

The case of North Vancouver again illustrates the problems associated with altering established land use patterns to fulfil RTC goals. In 1980, the City of North Vancouver held two "town centres." Upper Lonsdale held more retail, office and service floorspace than Lower Lonsdale (City of North Vancouver 1980, 16), and also held the hospital and public administrative buildings (city hall, library, justice administration building), but Lower Lonsdale was an area ripe for commercial redevelopment along its formerly industrial waterfront.

Should North Vancouver have refused to allow the waterfront redevelopment, insisting instead on the (expensive) redevelopment of the major buildings around Upper Lonsdale? Should Upper Lonsdale have been abandoned as a site for all those administrative and service functions? Lower Lonsdale had better commercial redevelopment potential, and a rapid transit connection to downtown City of Vancouver, but there was no way to relocate all of the useful town centre elements of the Upper Lonsdale area.

The City of North Vancouver opted for the same unsatisfactory solution as the District of Surrey had with Whalley-Guildford. The municipality refused to choose, and instead invented the Lonsdale Avenue Linear Town Centre as a compromise (City of North Vancouver 1980, B4). The concept of a concentrated, pedestrian-oriented core of development and employment once again could not

be reconciled to a municipal desire to bring positive change to all of its traditional commercial centres.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Suburban downtowns have not appeared in Greater Vancouver. The Regional Town Centres policy of the *Livable Region Strategy* has not succeeded in creating major office and business centres which are also lively, diverse, pedestrian districts. Several general observations can encompass the causes of this lack of success.

Although the original policy was well-conceived, it was not carried out as originally planned. Those who framed the policy seem to have had a good understanding of the high level of public intervention required for successful RTC development. They understood that municipalities would have to receive assistance and direction from an effective regional coordinating body. They believed that development of an interconnected rapid transit network had to shape, not follow the commercial development of the centres.³¹ They understood that a detailed implementation process was required, consisting of public spending and ownership, of land use regulation to control speculation, and of professional management of the development process. The planners may even have *underestimated* the amount of control that municipalities would have had to exercise throughout their jurisdictions to prevent scattered large-scale commercial construction, and to funnel every project with town centre potential into their individual RTCs (without harming regional economic development potential).

The policy was not carried out as originally planned. The political will which had been in evidence during the formative stages of the policy vanished just when implementation had been about to begin. Shifting priorities and electoral reversals removed the political commitment which had been expected from the City of

Vancouver and from the provincial government. Without wider powers and resources (an important element of the policy), the GVRD was unable to coordinate regional development. While Regional Town Centres have remained a discussion point among the various governments of the region, the municipalities have accepted the forms of development which have been offered by the market.

The responsibility for the lack of implementation rests with the provincial level. Even if the City of Vancouver had continued the enforced decentralization of commercial space, it is unlikely that individual RTC municipalities could have prevented the development from jumping to other areas of the region with less stringent requirements or with a greater desire for development at any cost. It had been assumed that only in the face of a united regional authority could such capital flight be prevented, and only the provincial government could have mandated such an authority.

The second general observation is that the policy, as actually implemented by individual municipalities, has had little effect on the scale of development which has occurred in the RTCs. Though each area has grown in the intervening period, there is no evidence to suggest that their growth has been other than that which would have occurred in the absence of policy.

In 1975, development was already occurring at Metrotown, and more growth was expected. The issue at Metrotown was not the amount of development, but the style. Metrotown is by far the most successful of the four original RTCs, but it has a vast regional shopping complex at its core, and the ubiquitous automobile traffic and parking that accompany it. The fine-grained, pedestrian-scale core street pattern has been foregone. Even the addition of rapid transit has not altered the automobile pattern which was put in place by the mall developments.

Downtown New Westminster and North Vancouver Lonsdale had the benefit of large areas of potential waterfront redevelopment and significant amounts of

provincial government support for that redevelopment. These two areas were the only centres to receive assistance and partnership from the B.C. Development Corporation. North Vancouver Lonsdale gained massive public sector support before its inclusion in the policy. Indeed, this support illustrated the lack of concern which the provincial government afforded the regional policy. There is no evidence to suggest that Downtown New Westminster received support as an RTC, rather than as another lucrative waterfront redevelopment opportunity. New Westminster has become a moderately dense residential suburb. (This is not necessarily a problem, since it is well served by public transit and the regional road network). It is, however, not an important commercial centre.

Richmond Town Centre was an economically successful commercial area before the original policy was conceived, and before and after its ultimate selection as one of six RTCs. Richmond Centre was and is growing by virtue of significant locational advantages.³² It is close to the international airport and to the major north-south highway between the City of Vancouver and the United States. Richmond contains some of the areas closest to the City of Vancouver with available sites for industry or other land-intensive commercial ventures, such as warehousing (other such areas exist in central Burnaby). The municipality and the town centre area benefit from the original success, and likely also from a multiplier effect on business location decisions. Manufacturers, service providers, parts suppliers, small repair and fabrication shops, factory outlets, and many kinds of retail stores benefit from proximity to one another, and new ventures likely take this cross-influence into account when making regional location decisions. Richmond is, however, a completely automobile-reliant suburb. The town centre is a sprawling corridor several kilometers long and at least another kilometer wide. Commercial development cannot be said to be concentrated in such a district, nor even contained.

Coquitlam Town Centre and Whalley Town Centre, despite plans on a grand scale, are not easily distinguishable from other regional shopping centres in other parts of the region. They cover a wide area, contain much more retail than office development, and they are most easily accessible by car.

The third general point is a conjecture more than an observation. It is possible that the development of Regional Town Centres was heavily dependent on a particular era in the growth of the region. In the early 1970s, most of the employment and economic activity of the region was contained within the City of Vancouver and its downtown core. Indeed, this was one of the perceived problems that the original RTC plan was meant to address. If the RTCs had been implemented as originally planned, with the provision of rapid transit interconnections, it may have been possible to catch the waves of dispersed commercial activity which followed in the subsequent two decades. Commercial developers might have been convinced to take adopt a different style of development if they had been presented with a united municipal and regional resolve, and with good redevelopment sites well-supplied with public transit.

That opportunity is long past. The dispersal of commercial development has occurred and cannot be called back from such concentrations as Guildford, Lougheed, Brentwood, Langley City, Park Royal, the Knight corridor in Richmond, the Canada Way corridor in Burnaby, and many other smaller or less dense locations.

Even if the next waves of development are partially modified by the RTC policy (and based on previous experience, there is no reason to expect such modification), the dispersal that has occurred is already in place and has defined the current form of the region. If there are many centres and isolated commercial sites throughout the region, it is far too expensive to serve all of them with public rapid transit. If too few centres are so served, however, the automobile becomes

the only viable suburban commuting option. Regional Town Centres policy, based on its original goals of concentration, may not currently be as important a consideration as determining the interconnections and dynamics between a multitude of commercial sites in an already well-defined regional context.

In conclusion, in no case can RTC policy be demonstrated to have altered the pattern of development or redevelopment which has occurred in the six designated centres. The eventual addition of SkyTrain has had the effect of spurring development in Metrotown and Downtown New Westminster, but it has not been the kind of development that was envisioned for the RTCs. Richmond Town Centre and North Vancouver Lonsdale developed to patterns set well before they became RTCs. The outer suburban centres have not been developed beyond the retail function.

Greater Vancouver Regional Town Centres policy must be re-evaluated in the modern context of suburbanized and decentralized commercial activity, employment, and travel patterns. The time is past when a small group of centres could reasonably be expected to absorb most of the region's commercial growth, employment, or travel. Fresh ideas are needed to describe and adapt to the current regional realities.

CHAPTER 4

METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE: DISTRICT CENTRES POLICY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Melbourne has a suburban centres policy called District Centres, which is similar in many respects to RTC policy in Greater Vancouver. This chapter examines the relevant aspects of Melbourne's historical development, and the details and results of the introduction of the policy.

In the policy context section, comparisons are drawn between the development and character of Melbourne and Vancouver in an attempt to justify the comparison of the two policies. If the two metropolises are sufficiently similar, then lessons learned from the study of Melbourne can reasonably be applied to the examination of Vancouver.

Melbourne is shown to have an unbalanced spatial structure. The suburbs to the south and east of the core area are growing much more rapidly than the suburbs to the north and west. The core area of the metropolis (Central Melbourne) contains the largest proportion of commercial office activity and retains a large amount of retail space. The region's extensive public transit network is shown to be radially focussed on the downtown.

In the policy development section, earlier policy responses to suburban growth are described, including an early attempt at the creation of a multicentred structure in 1954. The introduction in 1980 of the District Centres policy is detailed, and the subsequent modifications and flexibility which weakened the effect of the policy are described.

The policy evaluation section synthesizes the various policy critiques that have been made of District Centres policy in the academic and consultant literature in Australia. It is found that the policy had failed to achieve its goals for

the following reasons: the wrong policy instrument was chosen; the policy reflected the lack of an adequate understanding of the development industry; and, the State government was ambivalent toward the implementation of the policy.

In the conclusion, the general observations made in the case of Regional Town Centres policy are re-examined in the context of Melbourne's District Centres policy. Melbourne's policy is judged to have been inferior to the original policy in Vancouver, but the result of the implementation of each policy is shown to be similar -- no discernible change in the scale or pattern of development in the designated suburban centres.

4.1 POLICY CONTEXT

Melbourne's historical development and character share many features with those of Greater Vancouver. Both cities have a Pacific Rim economic focus, and each is the "principal metropolis for major exporting industries" for their respective nations (Fothergill 1987, 34; GVRD 1991b, 11). Both cities are culturally and economically Western, in that they exist in consumer-oriented, market-driven democracies. This factor is significant in the study of urban development policy, since firms and individuals are allowed to locate primarily according to real estate markets and internal preferences rather than plans and external constraints.

The statutory control of municipal affairs is held in both cases at a higher level of government: for Melbourne, in the government of the State of Victoria, and for Vancouver, in the government of the Province of British Columbia. Similar party political divisions exist in the parliaments of both places, between left-leaning parties which tend to plan strategically (NDP, Labour) and right-leaning parties which favour *ad hoc* planning and market forces (Social Credit, Liberal).

The governance of both metropolises is fragmented among many smaller, semi-autonomous local governments -- a factor that makes planning for the region

difficult. As a result of this fragmentation and the attendant difficulty in providing necessary common services, cooperative water and sewerage agencies were formed. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) was formed in 1861 and was given responsibility for metropolitan hydraulic services. Greater Vancouver has had cooperative sewerage since 1914 and cooperative water provision since the 1920s under two predecessor agencies to the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), which was formed in 1967. Because of their metropolitan focus and cooperative experience, these agencies gradually gained some planning powers over their respective regions, (although these powers were severely curtailed by senior governments in the 1980s (B. Logan 1986, 153-154; Sposito 1990, 1; GVRD 1987, 4)).

Although both regions have extensive public transportation systems, Melbourne's is larger, with more elements and flexibility. The key feature of the Melbourne system is a complete radial commuter rail network connecting the Inner Area (those municipalities around the original core, also referred to as Central Melbourne) with every developed suburban corridor, for distances of up to 60 kilometers from the core (Terrell 1990, 54-55; see Map 3, p. 164). The Melbourne system has a downtown-oriented light rail system, an underground CBD rail loop, and over 2,000 trams and public or private buses in the network. The network focus is the regional core, as opposed to intersuburban linkages (K. O'Connor, et al. 1990, 38), a feature shared with the Vancouver system.

Melbourne has also shared some common historical growth features with Vancouver. Both are primate port cities surrounded by vast, sparsely-settled, resource-producing hinterlands. In each case, the early port-centred city was compact and would later hold the Central Business District of the metropolis. Corridors of growth radiated from the original city following interurban rail lines laid down in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Until the 1940s almost 90 per cent of Melbourne's inhabitants lived within 15 kilometers of the central city, and most jobs, shops and other services and facilities were either in the city or locally based. The urban structure, the travel needs of the population, and the transport system were in close harmony. (MPE 1987, 5)

In the post-war period, however, Melbourne began to face the pressures of suburban sprawl brought on by the rise of automobile use, and by national government policies which promoted universal single-family home ownership and the development of national (and metropolitan) road networks (Beed 1981, 140-145; Carter 1982, 2; Maher 1988, 164). Residential zoning was allowed to proliferate in advance of need, resulting in suburban "leapfrogging." Automobile use became a necessity because suburban rail and public transport could not economically provide more than corridor service. In addition to increased travel costs, a homeowner faced increased housing costs due to speculation in land. The most attractive suburbs became enclaves of the middle and upper economic classes.

There are several significant differences between Melbourne and Greater Vancouver. Melbourne has a population about double the size of Greater Vancouver. The seat of government in the State of Victoria is Melbourne itself, and that city's metropolitan problems are therefore immediate to the decision makers. Vancouver is governed from the city of Victoria on Vancouver Island, across Georgia Strait from the mainland. That separation, real and psychological, may be the cause of less senior government concentration on metropolitan problems than is evident in the Australian case.

Although both metropolises are fragmented into many small local government areas, Melbourne is far more fragmented, with 56 semi-autonomous governments (MPE 1987, 2-3) to Greater Vancouver's 18.

[T]he governmental pattern in the Melbourne area [...] is the most complex pattern of any of the Australian metropolitan statistical divisions and districts. Not only are there 55 local councils [in 1979],

but an unusually wide range of regional bodies and state government departments and agencies is involved in one way or another in metropolitan governance. (Leach 1979, 49)

Geographical differences are important. Mountains, ocean, and an international boundary funnel Greater Vancouver's growth into a narrow southeasterly corridor. Melbourne is also growing to the southeast, but that is not the sole option, only the most attractive (Beed 1981, 154-156). Further, Vancouver's restricted growth avenue puts valuable farmland under pressure from urban development interests. Melbourne has an abundance of surrounding farmland and its preservation is likely more a matter of amenity than economics.

There is a lack of balance between various suburban areas in metropolitan Melbourne. "All in all, Melbourne's development is skewed to favour the south and east, with major implications for economic growth and employment distribution" (Edgington 1988, 11). Melbourne has traditionally grown more toward the amenity-rich southeast than toward the northwest, and that trend is continuing (Beed 1981, 154-156; K. O'Connor, et al. 1990, 15).

Between 1976 and 1981, southern region employment increased by 11.3 percent and eastern region employment increased by 15.2 percent. Corresponding figures for the northern and western suburbs were, respectively, 5.4 and 0.5 percent. The southern and eastern areas have consistently taken a larger share of office floorspace than the northern and western areas (Edgington 1988, 8-9, 11). The northern and western suburbs hold a declining base of manufacturing industries and jobs, and a negligible level of significant office development (Jones Lang 1987, 2).

The western suburbs are characterised economically by large-scale industrial development, and residentially by a predominantly blue-collar workforce, low educational skill levels, and a high proportion of the population born in non-English speaking countries. (Maher 1988, 171)

In comparison, the southern and eastern suburbs hold growing office development, population, and employment (MPE 1987, 13-15; Edgington 1988, 9-12; K. O'Connor, et al. 1990, 18-19). The southeastern suburbs occupy rolling hills of finer environmental quality than the flat, formerly swampy north and west, and have tended to attract more of the white-collar segment of the residential market (Thompson 1978, 133).

The share of the metropolitan population residing in the Inner Area has declined steadily since the Second World War, from 52 percent in 1947 to 21 percent in 1976 (Beed 1981, 223). Throughout the 1960s, however, total CBD employment grew by 66 percent and the central area accounted for 85 percent of the total value of metropolitan office construction (Alexander 1979, 38-39). The Inner Area has recently had a declining share of employment, office development approvals, retail turnover and floorspace versus the suburban share (MPE 1987, 13-15). Carter (1982, 4) reports a 9.1 percent decline in CBD employment between 1972 and 1977.

Despite these relative declines, however, the CBD remains unchallenged as the pre-eminent office district in the region, partly as a result of CBD office development booms in the early 1970s and late 1980s (Sandercock 1983, 60; K. O'Connor, et al. 1990, 18). Even though the Inner Area share of office floorspace fell 10 percent between 1980 and 1989, the area still holds over 83 percent of metropolitan office stock (Moodie 1991, 58).

3.2 *POLICY DEVELOPMENT*

Several issues led to the adoption of multiple suburban centres policy in Melbourne. Conditions in the 1970s were typical of those in the whole of urban Australia: a high degree of socioeconomic segregation between suburbs; variations in basic facilities and services among suburbs; lack of match between local skills

and available jobs (e.g., blue-collar skills in an office area); low density suburban sprawl with inadequate infrastructure and public transit provision; and high land costs due to low density demand and speculation (M. I. Logan, et al. 1977, 105; Neutze 1978, 172-185).

For the metropolitan area as a whole, extremely rapid population growth was expected in the 1970s but did not occur (Beed 1981, 83), lessening the pressure on outward expansion of the city. This expectation, however, resulted in the over-estimation of the amount of zoned residential land required for new population growth. Low density sprawl occurred, with its incumbent servicing problems.

Public sector investment [...] was hard pressed to keep up with the pace of development, particularly at the urban fringe where subdivision was occurring well in advance of demand. As late as 1971, only 76 per cent of all dwellings were connected to sewerage mains in Melbourne. (Maher 1988, 164)

Multicentred regional policy has been considered a potential urban development instrument as early as 1954, when five district business centres were chosen to draw retail activity from the CBD toward the fast-growing suburbs (MMBW 1954, 53; Hofmeister 1988, 97, 207). This early policy was similar in intent to the RTC policy in Greater Vancouver, in that each sought to redistribute the costs and benefits of growth throughout the metropolis. The business centres policy was meant to relieve the CBD from the pressure of containing all or most of the region's commercial activity, and to provide easier access to commercial services (and economic growth) for the low-density suburbs (T. Logan 1986a, 177).

The district business centres did not develop. Governments were unwilling to place public sector development in the centres and were also unwilling to regulate private sector location decisions in support of the centres (Sandercock 1977, 149-150). Most metropolitan policies continued the traditional levels of support for the CBD (Alexander 1979, 95). Most importantly, the State government

did not even attempt to fully implement the plan until 1968 (Maher 1988, 173), by which time regional conditions had changed. In the absence of district centres, free-standing shopping centres emerged to serve the suburban areas.

Various methods were proposed throughout the 1960s and 1970s for dealing with suburban sprawl and with an expected continuance of rapid population growth. The State Government proposed the development of satellite cities outside the developed area of Melbourne (Beed 1981, 166-167; Neutze 1978, 175). The 1969 Melbourne Transport Plan recommended expenditures of almost three billion Australian dollars on a radial freeway network and road improvements throughout the region (Beed 1981, 77-78; Thompson 1978, 137). Plans and studies throughout the 1960s concentrated attention on adapting to outward growth through the use of satellite cities and suburban growth corridors (Neutze 1978, 177; Sandercock 1977, 151; T. Logan 1984, 1048). The 1967-1971 Planning Policies for the Melbourne Metropolitan Region, prepared by the MMBW, identified eight corridors of outward urban development, each to be anchored by an external suburban centre (Beed 1981, 159-164; Thompson 1978, 137).

All of these policies were based on an expectation that rapid population growth would continue along the trend established in the 1960s (Beed 1981, 77-78; T. Logan 1986b, 177; MPE 1987, 5) and none were fully implemented. The Transport Plan was too expensive, the MMBW had limited implementation powers, and the population projection was an overestimate of the eventual growth (Beed 1981, 77-78; Maher 1988, 173-174).

The subsequent expectation of reduced population growth pressure engendered a new set of planning responses (T. Logan 1984, 1047-1049; 1986a, 177). Attention began to be paid to the actual structure of the metropolis and the changes that were occurring within it (e.g., the decline of traditional manufacturing in the central and northeastern sections of the city and the economic growth of

the southeast). Central to the debate was the concept of urban consolidation -- an increased intensity of land use in existing urban areas of Melbourne (Carter 1982, 2; Bunker 1983, 26-29). Discussion of urban consolidation led to renewed interest in the development of suburban centres, which was put forward as a way of targeting social, economic, land use, and transportation improvements to specific areas of the metropolis (Carter 1982, 2; Sandercock 1983, 55; Bunker 1976; Morison and Richardson 1977).

The 1970s saw the MMBW attempt to guide debate toward the possibility and implications of a more compact urban form consisting of higher density residential areas, and more specific activity centres made up of a multitude of functions at various points throughout the suburbs. (Maher 1988, 176)

District Centre Policy was officially revived as part of the 1980 MMBW Metropolitan Strategy. This policy statement declared that the Melbourne CBD would continue as the predominant centre in the region, but recognized the principle of urban consolidation in the suburbs and the potential benefits that would accrue if suburban development could be concentrated in a few selected centres (ODAC 1986, 2; Moodie 1991, 14-15). These benefits were taken to be:

- better access to jobs and services for suburban residents, resulting in reduced need for dispersed regional travel;
- more efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure by making multipurpose local trips possible via public transit;
- more efficient provision of services and infrastructure (as opposed to the needs of more sprawling development);
- concentration of local trade and suburban job opportunities; and,
- the provision of a potential social focus for suburban communities (Moodie 1991, 15).

Upper and lower limits were recognized on the eventual number of District Centres (DCs). The selection of too many centres might have diluted the effect of the policy and might not have presented the development industry with clear investment priorities. Too few centres might have represented a threat to the primacy of the CBD (MMBW 1982, 1; T. Logan 1986b, 4). Up to twenty centres, and not many fewer, was considered the appropriate range.

The criteria for DC selection included the present size and function of the centre, its accessibility by both private and public transport, its infrastructure capacity, and the available range of cultural and commercial facilities (MMBW 1982, 1; T. Logan 1986b, 4). There were two key considerations. First, public transportation linkages were taken to be of paramount importance (Maher 1988, 176). Second, although each centre was to be judged on the basis of its existing regional retailing function, it was recognized that the eventual DC function would be to provide a broad range of retail, commercial, community, and entertainment opportunities (MMBW 1982, 4; Moodie 1991, 15).

Melbourne's 35 largest shopping centres (and surrounding areas) were assessed based on these criteria (T. Logan 1986b, 4). In 1981, as part of the MMBW Metropolitan Strategy Implementation document, the designation of fourteen District Centres and six potential District Centres was announced (MMBW 1982, 6; see Map 4, p. 165. For a list of District Centres, see Appendix 2, p. 160).

Not all potential DCs were selected (MMBW 1982, 5-6). Some were considered to be sufficiently far out in the suburban fringe that their selection would encourage sprawl rather than concentration. Others were so close to the CBD and the inner DCs that their trade areas overlapped and might dilute the effect of the other selections. Despite these restrictions, every major subarea of the metropolis contained at least one DC (see Map 4, p. 165).

The original DCs varied widely in character. Some were already well-developed, diversified centres (Moodie 1991, 162), while others were little more than shopping centres at crossroads (Carter 1982, 2). All DCs were located around existing commuter rail stations (Moodie 1991, 156).

In 1982, the Liberal Government which had held power in the State for decades was replaced by a new Labor Government. The DC policy was reviewed and approved by the newly-formed Ministry for Planning and Environment

(MPE).³³ The only major change made to the policy was that the six potential DCs were removed because it was felt that new, outer-area DCs would promote fringe expansion (T. Logan 1986b, 5). Implementation measures for the district centres would include a modest amount of direct spending, the preparation of structure plans in association with local councils, and statutory controls on development. The most important statutory provision was the creation of a new District Centre Zone for application to the fourteen DCs and the use of office location policy to support them.

Within the DC zone, office developments of up to 4 000 sq. m. (43,000 sq. ft.) were permitted outright, subject only to site plan approvals. Outside of this zone and parts of Central Melbourne, office building development size was limited to 2 500 sq. m. (27,000 sq. ft.) (Moodie 1991, 16). In industrial areas, freestanding office developments were even more drastically limited (ODAC 1986, 3; MPE and MMBW 1984).

In recognition of the restrictive nature of the office location policy, the MPE established the Office Development Advisory Committee (ODAC) to present development industry concerns directly to the Minister (ODAC 1986, 1). ODAC was successful at promoting a more flexible approach to office location policy. Following ODAC's recommendation, two new zones were created. The "Office A" Zone allowed the development of small to medium office projects in the Central Melbourne hinterland. The "Office B" Zone allowed office developments in areas adjacent to but not within the DC Zone areas (ODAC 1986, 4).

The increased flexibility of the policy was further shown in the creation of the Comprehensive Development Zone in 1983. According to Kilmartin (1986, 8), this zone was an ill-defined concept designed to give the State government maximum discretion when examining very large development proposals. The most notable use of this zone was in the rezoning of a site for the relocation of a major

corporate headquarters from the CBD to a non-DC site in the Inner Eastern area of the region -- a rezoning which was counter to both the DC policy and the office location policy (Kilmartin 1986; King 1991).

When the Labor government issued its new comprehensive metropolitan strategy, *Shaping Melbourne's Future*, in 1987, District Centres had become part of a wider location policy called *Metropolitan Activity Centres* (MPE 1989). *Shaping Melbourne's Future* was a regional strategy intended to redistribute the benefits of growth throughout the region, to control sprawl, to accommodate ongoing economic restructuring, and to allow the government to play a more active role in facilitating change than simply regulating it.

Like the *Livable Region Strategy* in Greater Vancouver, *Shaping Melbourne's Future* had a set of mutually reinforcing goals, only one of which was directed specifically to the creation of multiple suburban centres. Goals of consolidation of future growth within established urban areas and growth corridors, improved infrastructure for modern industries, improved access to services, encouragement of employment in declining areas (the northern and western suburbs particularly) would all be strengthened by the policy for achieving a balanced pattern of activity centres (MPE 1987, 1).

Under the new strategy, the objectives of the modified DC policy were as follows: to reinforce the existing pattern of activity centres (not only the DCs); to strengthen the role of Central Melbourne as the prime metropolitan focus; to concentrate major developments within DCs; to differentiate between the locations and types of DCs and to encourage individual distinctions; and to introduce new centres for high technology industries or other innovative uses. The policy also addressed the fundamental social objectives of minimizing automobile use, promoting public transit use, and maintaining access to community benefits for those without vehicles (MPE 1989, 2).

District Centres were placed into three categories (see Map 5, p. 166). First, three Established Inner Urban DCs were recognized as being nearly at their development capacity within the DC Zone boundaries, limiting their scope for expansion and increasing pressure for redevelopment. Second, six Regional DCs varied in their potential, but attempts would be made to contain strip or sprawling development in all six. Finally, six Outer Strategic DCs³⁴ were to be actively promoted as the best locations for further higher rates of development, due to their proximity to proposed ring and radial road routes throughout the metropolis. Mixed use developments, medium density developments, and road and public transit access were important priorities in all three variations. (MPE 1987, 38; 1989, 4-6; Moodie 1991, 19).

In addition to DCs, the Activity Centres policy intended to promote many other spatial concentrations within the metropolis. Six research and development areas, called Technology Precincts and all associated with academic institutions in the region, were to be supplied with infrastructure appropriate to high technology industrial development (MPE 1989, 20).

Further, the policy recognized and was intended to reinforce an existing commercial hierarchy of almost 50 other activity centres throughout the region. These other areas were freestanding shopping malls, strip developments, and regional shopping centres (MPE 1987, 37; 1989, 4-8). Later, additional centres would be added, bringing the number of DCs to seventeen (see footnote 34).

While the role of District Centres was reaffirmed in the policy, the centres had become merely the "preferred" location for office development. Subsequently, office developments would also be considered if they were within the undefined "functional area" of any of 63 recognized activity centres. The physical limits of the DC Zones were no longer necessarily restrictive. Nearby subsidiary centres were to be designated as "spillover areas" to accommodate

developments than might be deflected by the "full up" DC zones (MPE 1987, 20). Even completely isolated office developments would be considered, based on a number of conditions. For example, projects could be permitted if they contained a mixture of uses, or demonstrated a high quality of design, or conformed to existing local development patterns (MPE 1989, 16; Sposito 1990, 4; Moodie 1991, 20).

3.3 POLICY EVALUATION

District Centres policy has been criticized on a number of grounds. Studies of office location patterns and an examination of the general policy indicate that DCs have not fulfilled the goals set out for them. This lack of success has been attributed to three main sources. First, it has been argued that DCs were the wrong policy instrument to accomplish the stated goals. Second, it is argued that the framers of the policy demonstrated a lack of understanding of the office and retail development markets. Finally, government ambivalence toward the policy has been seen to be the key to policy failure. The following discussion examines DC policy in these critical contexts.

4.3.1 The Success of District Centres

District Centres have failed to attract sufficient development to become significant mixed-use areas in the suburbs. Indeed, by some measures the DCs as a group have declined in regional significance since the outset of the policy. The share of suburban retail stock within DC Zones fell from 47.9 percent to 39.3 percent between 1980 and 1990 (Moodie 1991, 37). In the same period, the DC share of suburban office stock fell from 55.5 percent to 45.2 percent (Moodie 1991, 69). The scale of these numbers indicates that the selected DCs had a significant

presence in the suburban commercial hierarchies, but that this presence had not been augmented through DC policy.

Further, whatever success the DCs have enjoyed has been focussed almost entirely in the eastern and southeastern regions. Studies of the regional office market in the 1980s indicated that the northern and western suburbs had been bypassed by the development industry, while at the same time an office development boom was being experienced in Central Melbourne and along a narrow eastern suburban corridor (Jones Lang 1987, 2; Fothergill 1987, 28, 37; Moodie 1991, 163). Even so, Fothergill notes in 1987 that only one of the eastern area DCs, Box Hill, had grown significantly as an office centre (Fothergill 1987, 31).

In 1991, Moodie recognizes that only one centre, Prahran, could be called a complete, functional DC. The success of this centre, however, cannot be ascribed to the DC policy because Prahran was a large and diversified centre prior to designation (Moodie 1991, 162; see Map 6, p. 167).

Another DC, Dandenong, was seen to be growing into a potential mini-CBD for the entire southeastern region of Melbourne. Three other DCs were recognized as containing either the office (Box Hill) or retail (Footscray,³⁵ Frankston) functions of a true District Centre (Moodie 1991, 162-163). Moodie is again reluctant to apply credit to the DC policy.

It is readily evident that the successful centres to date are in the south and east sectors -- and they may well have been successful centres without District Centre status given that these sectors are the focus of most development activity in Melbourne. (Moodie 1991, 5)

Despite the fact that the DCs were originally selected for their strength as retail centres, only two, Dandenong and Prahran, held over 92 900 sq. m. (one million sq. ft.) of retail space in 1990 (Moodie 1991, 44). The status of the DCs as office centres was even less plausible. In 1990, no DC contained over 92 900 sq.

m. (one million sq. ft.) of office floorspace, and only Box Hill's 90 000 sq. m. came close (Moodie 1991, 72).

Unfortunately, even the relative success of Box Hill may be questionable under the exact terms of the DC policy. Box Hill is the only DC to have benefited from a special Office Development Zone, adjacent to but not within the Box Hill DC Zone (Moodie 1991, 54). Nowhere is it stated that the office floorspace within this unique zone is explicitly excluded from the tabulation of office figures. It must therefore be assumed that it is included, thus skewing the figures relative to the other DCs.

Regarding the wider functions envisioned for DCs, only one (Prahran again) functioned as an entertainment centre. None of the DCs contained a full range of community service facilities (Moodie 1991, 148-150).

Finally, one of the key goals of DC policy was to promote more efficient travel in suburban regions, particularly via the readily available public transit linkages within the DCs. Despite the stated importance of this goal, up to 1991 there had been no monitoring of public transit usage to and from the DCs. Further, according to Moodie, there were "few instances of major improvements to transport infrastructure undertaken in District Centres over the past decade" (Moodie 1991, 157).

4.3.2 Office Location Restrictions as a Policy Instrument

Several analysts assert that the choice of office location restrictions as the key statutory device was imprudent. Statutory controls of this type have been viewed in Australia as weak implementation devices because their function is negative: they can refuse, but not promote development (Moodie 1991, 169). Only in periods of strong economic growth can they be used to attempt to direct development (T. Logan 1986b, 13). Even then, as is shown by the relative lack of

success in drawing office development to the northern and western during the 1980s booms,³⁶ negative policy can have little effect on private location decisions when many other choices exist within a very large urbanized region (Jones Lang 1987, 2).

T. Logan charges that the policy formulation process was flawed by an insufficient examination of the ability of DC policy to fulfil the stated goals and a lack of examination of alternative proposals which might provide another means of fulfilling them (T. Logan 1986b, 12). In support of this allegation, T. Logan contends that the potential benefits which would accrue from the concentration of infrastructure requirements have been overestimated (T. Logan 1986b, 8-9).

Additionally, one of the key aims of DC policy was to allow an alteration of the suburban travel patterns to favour public transit instead of the automobile. T. Logan asserts that the potential for such change in travel patterns was exaggerated (T. Logan 1986b, 7; Carter 1982, 4). Since a radial public transit network can conveniently serve only corridors, most of the dispersed households in the surrounding hinterlands will have limited access to efficient service, especially for multi-purpose trips. Further, the existence of a large number of two-earner households and the continuing increases in suburb-to-suburb travel limit the potential for public transit usage. If centres were indeed successful at drawing significant retail and office development, automobile use could actually increase, causing serious congestion problems within suburban centres. Such congestion problems in the more successful DCs are noted elsewhere (ODAC 1986, 4; Fothergill 1987, 36).³⁷

4.3.3 The Market Potential of District Centres

A frequent observation in the District Centre literature is that the policy reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of the requirements and behaviour of

both the office and retail development markets. A fundamental conflict is recognized between the needs of modern retail concerns and the policy requirements of DCs. The development of stand-alone shopping malls and one-stop, high volume stores that maximize access by automobile "is generally not conducive to district centre location." The key requirements for such retail establishments are cheap land and effective automobile access, not expensive street-level sites and easy access to public transit (Carter 1982, 4). Further, large retail development players were already represented in DCs (which were selected based on their retail function), and were unlikely to substantially increase their DC profiles. The existing retail hierarchy therefore favoured the development isolated sites which had not yet been served by one of the major players (T. Logan 1986b, 6).

Because the assumption underlying the design and location of these facilities is that the potential users can reach them only by private motor vehicle, the typical size of new facilities and the distance between them can be great. Given the low density nature of suburban settlement, facilities often have to be large to attract a sufficient market to ensure their viability. In retailing, for example, new shopping centres have to depend on an extensive market area to generate a threshold level of sales. Since access to suburban facilities depends on private transport, there is little compulsion for facilities to cluster together, at least from the point of view of the providers of the facilities. (Beed 1981, 26)

Similar problems existed with regard to the office function of the DCs. The requirements of modern office users are complex, and not all of these requirements can be supplied by sites within DCs. Office location factors can include access to face-to-face business contacts, access to specialized financial and legal services, prestige and tradition, corporate inertia, staffing considerations, residential preferences of managers, and the price and availability of speculative office space (T. Logan 1986b, 6). Suburban office developers are most concerned with serving the needs of tenants and with reduced costs. Suburban office users are most concerned with regional accessibility, especially to markets, and the

availability of plentiful automobile parking. Both of the factors mitigate against DC locations (Fothergill 1987, 32). "As suburban offices have few *forward* and *backward* linkages to their immediate environment, the physical proximity to other service firms located in District Centres offers only limited advantages to suburban tenants" (Edgington 1988, 11). Many of the preferences of the suburban office users can be satisfied within free-standing office parks (Fothergill 1987, 32).

Further, there are considerable costs associated with DC area development due to site constraints and competition with other land uses, particularly retail (Fothergill 1987, 1, 32). There is a lack of large redevelopment sites, and site assembly in the relatively dense DCs is difficult (ODAC 1986, 6; Moodie 1991, 54; King 1991, 25). This can present problems even when firms are good candidates for DC locations.

Larger offices, having high ratios of junior to senior employees, benefit from access to public transport and so are better suited to District Centre locations. For these larger developments, the main constraints have been difficulties in finding suitable vacant sites within District Centre zones. This problem is compounded by the inability of offices to compete (in terms of their realised capital value) with existing District Centre uses, especially in the retailing core. (Fothergill 1987, 32)

Daniels (1986, 35) considered that the DC policy represented excessive optimism about the potential volume of office enterprises that would be attracted to or could grow within the boundaries of DCs. The Office Development Advisory Committee considered "that the boundaries of the District Centre Zones do not always coincide with functional activity in and around the centres and consequently, office development is unduly restricted" (ODAC 1986, 5). In addition to the lack of sites, the automobile-related congestion, and the lack of adequate suburban-scale parking, some members of the Committee asserted that "the proposition that all suburban office requirements of substance can be satisfied within District Centres is patently erroneous" (ODAC 1986, Appendix A).

As mentioned previously, the Committee argued successfully for greater locational flexibility regarding the DC policy.

In a report on the Box Hill DC, USE Consultants (cited in Moodie 1991, 18) contended that DC policy was too general to address the development requirements of the different types of land uses within each DC (i.e., retail, office, institutional, recreational). It was argued that separate regional policies for each sector should have been developed first, then applied to the DCs only after a much more careful examination of the consequences of such an spatial amalgamation. Carter offers support to this contention.

[T]here is no relation of the physical plan to an understanding of the locational influences affecting the sorts of land uses the plan intends to promote in the district centres - all 14 district centres are to have 'a little bit of everything'. Nor is there any comment on the social or economic affects (apart from accessibility) of a successful programme of attracting growth to district centres. (Carter 1982, 4)

4.3.4 State Government Commitment to District Centres Policy

Several investigators examine the support of the State government for DC policy and find it to have been inconsistent. The first and most obvious source of inconsistency has been the State's continued support for CBD pre-eminence. Carter argues that support for the CBD and fourteen other centres diluted the potential of public sector action on both fronts (Carter 1982, 6; Fincher 1988). Logan notes the extensive CBD office use by the public sector, and a resistance to alter this use in favour of decentralization (T. Logan 1986b, 10).

Moodie cites several factors which indicate a lack of public sector interest in DC policy. There was no planned program of government office decentralization, such as had occurred in metropolitan Sydney under a similar suburban centres program (Moodie 1991, 5). Indeed, in the ten years since the introduction of DC policy, no single policy document of any kind had dealt solely with the centres.

DC policy had always been an add-on to wider policy concerns (Moodie 1991, 22). A consultant's report is cited (Moodie 1991, 18) which stated that no major policy initiatives had been undertaken as a result of DC policy.

Moodie also notes the inadequacy of staff resources allocated to the District Centre program. Only one full time officer was assigned, supplemented by other staff subject to their availability to be called from other assignments (Moodie 1991, 9).

Finally, and most importantly, the inconsistency of government support is shown clearly in the manner in which the interpretation of DC policy became increasingly flexible throughout its first ten years. Although the State government endorsed the concept of DCs in every major economic and regional development strategy announced throughout the 1980s (Moodie 1991, 16-20), there was no indication of the level of importance placed on the concept in comparison with other elements of these strategies, nor which strategy element would take precedence in the event of a conflict.

As described above, the policy of support for the CBD apparently took precedence over DC development. Similarly, whenever DC policy came into conflict with an economic development issue, economic development appeared to be more highly valued by the government than the issues of efficiency, accessibility, and social focus which were at the core of DC policy. The attentiveness of the government to the development industry position is illustrated in the process by which ODAC was able to address their concerns directly to the Minister and to succeed in promoting a flexible office location. "The impact of District Centre policy has been lessened by the ability of developer interests to bypass the planning system and wield direct influence at Ministerial level to facilitate developments in other locations" (Moodie 1991, 194).

Kilmartin (1986) describes in detail the case of the relocation of the headquarters of G. J. Coles Ltd., Australia's largest retail chain, from the CBD to an isolated development site at Tooronga in the municipality of Hawthorn. The company recognized the applicability to its own operations of the American style of suburban campus headquarters, with easy automobile access to its dispersed regional outlets and large amounts of free parking for its clients and employees (Kilmartin 1986, 7-8). Though Coles would cite CBD parking constraints as the major reason for the move (Kilmartin 1986, 9), it is likely that the prestige and high profile of such a site (in the Australian context) were also corporate considerations.

Despite the fact that the relocation was directly contrary to DC policy (regarding the support of both the centres and the CBD), very little opposition was raised. The municipality of Hawthorn supported the project because of the potential for local job creation and increases in local tax revenues (Kilmartin 1986, 8). The State government planners had initially attempted to persuade Coles to relocate within the CBD (not to one of the DCs), but relented when Coles reminded the government of the economic contribution which the company made to the State in employment and tax revenue (Kilmartin 1986, 9). The State government had to reckon seriously with the possibility that Coles could quite easily relocate to the competing city of Sydney, in the State of New South Wales (Kilmartin 1986, 12). The proposed site was rezoned as a Comprehensive Development Zone, which allowed the State government (in the person of the Minister for Planning and Environment) to place the project on the "fast-track" through the development permit process (Kilmartin 1986, 8, 11).

Kilmartin finds this rezoning to be typical of general government responses to corporate pressure. "The State has shown on numerous occasions that it is willing to accommodate private sector interests when development and/or locational proposals do not comply with government policy" (Kilmartin 1986, 7).

King (1991) reaches a similar conclusion in his study of a later rezoning proposed for an additional major office and retail development on the Tooronga site. Large corporations are shown to be able to circumvent government location policy, again partly as a result of the threat of capital flight (King 1991, 5, 39). Following de Neufville and Barton (1987), King argues that the flexible policy has been a "comfortable myth" which has presented the appearance of government control and guidance, while allowing political and economic accommodations to be made in the interests of private capital (King 1991, 11).

While projects are assessed on a "one-off" basis with little concern for the overall effect of development on the whole economy, and whole policy continues to be rationalized and its force downgraded in the application by both public and private planners, the interests of private capital will continue to dominate over rational approaches by elected Governments. (King 1991, 17)

Development has proceeded at the Tooronga site despite the lack of good public transit access and any previous major commercial development. The later designation of Tooronga as an activity centre simply recognizes the actuality of the scale of development that has been allowed, and legitimizes the accommodations which were made to allow such development (King 1991, 12). The initial accommodation made for Coles Ltd. showed other development interests that the government was not going to enforce its stated policy, leading to the later development pressure at Tooronga and to many more nearby development applications at variance with DC policy (King 1991, 26-29).

T. Logan's 1986 critique of District Centre policy provides an excellent summary of the preceding discussion. She asserts that DC policy was too simplistic to address the complexity of modern urban conditions (T. Logan 1986b, 2-13). The policy did not reflect a good understanding of the "strong economic and social forces that would militate against its success." The locational preferences of large firms were not sufficiently considered, and the bargaining

power of those firms was seriously underestimated. The potential for major changes in the mode of travel from automobile to public transit was exaggerated. The potential increases in infrastructure efficiency were overestimated. Finally, the resources constraints and conflicting priorities of the public sector were not sufficiently acknowledged. Where Kilmartin and King imply that DC policy ineffectiveness was deliberate and designed to allow accommodation, T. Logan is perhaps less kind in implying that the policy was simply poorly crafted and inadequately researched.

4.4 CONCLUSION

As in Greater Vancouver, suburban downtowns have not been created in Melbourne. The experience of DC policy therefore provides an opportunity to examine and test the observations made in the previous chapter with respect to Regional Town Centres policy in Greater Vancouver. To review, these observations concerning RTCs were (a) that a well-conceived policy was poorly implemented, and that the fault lay with the senior level of government; (b) that the policy as actually implemented had very little effect on the pattern or scale of regional development; and (c) that it is likely that such a policy could only be successfully applied under a limited set of historical conditions, now past.

First, as described in the immediately preceding section of this chapter, District Centre policy was not particularly well-conceived. Where RTC policy reflected a solid understanding of the high level of intervention required to create a suburban downtown, DC policy relied almost entirely on a negative statutory instrument which restricted office space location. The policy in Vancouver was not implemented because of a lack of senior government interest. In Melbourne, the State government proclaimed several times that DC policy was an important element in wider economic and regional strategies, but in the actual

implementation of the policy, the State demonstrated that many other elements in those strategies were more highly valued than the creation of DCs.

The example of District Centres challenges one of the key assumptions in the strategies of both Vancouver and Melbourne -- that is, the importance of public mass transit to the creation of suburban downtowns. The existence of an elaborate, multicentred public transit network, and the selection of DC sites along this network, has made no discernible difference in the development of the DCs.³⁸ In Greater Vancouver, SkyTrain can be shown to have spurred development in the suburban centres which lay along its route, but the experience in Melbourne shows that it may not be the *existence* of the rapid transit line that is responsible. A potential alternative explanation might be that SkyTrain represents a *unique* comparative locational advantage for a limited number of suburban firms. If so, this could argue against the marginal value of more rapid transit lines, which could reduce the value of a formerly unique locational advantage.

The second observation, that policy as implemented has had little effect on the pattern and scale of development in the suburban centres, is borne out again in Melbourne. As in Vancouver, any centres which have developed can be shown to have been developing well prior to their designation under the policy.

There is a significant difference in the effect of implementation on the wider suburban context. In Vancouver, RTC policy had no effect whatsoever on the overall scale of suburban development. Office and retail space dispersed throughout the urbanized region, and in some cases created new concentrations of activity which had not been significant prior to the policy (Canada Way corridor, Knight Street corridor, and others).

In Melbourne, however, the urban field had a different character. Central Melbourne has a much higher proportion of commercial office activity than the City of Vancouver (which can be used as an equivalent) has in Greater Vancouver.

Central Melbourne holds 83.3 percent of regional office stock, where the City of Vancouver holds only 64.3 percent. While each metropolitan area has a strong subsidiary office centre on the core fringe, the St. Kilda Road area is much more significant to Melbourne than Central Broadway is to Greater Vancouver.³⁹ Unlike retail space, office space has not yet suburbanized to any great extent in Melbourne, and the restrictive nature of the office location policy may have dampened the possibility for such suburbanization (K. O'Connor and Blakely 1988, 12).⁴⁰

This rigidity of policy may have had the effect of constraining the supply of suburban office space with some developers being dissuaded from entering the suburban market because of the prescriptive nature of the policy. (Moodie 1991, 193)

While it has been shown that some larger firms were able to negotiate locational flexibility with the State government, it is unlikely that smaller concerns had such power. Unfortunately, this smaller scale of office building is exactly the level in the hierarchy which provides services to the suburban population. By severely restricting this function, the DC policy may have degraded the access to services (and jobs) which the policy was meant to augment, thus increasing the need for suburban residents to travel long distances to obtain such services.

Interestingly, DC growth was greatest in the southeastern areas which had experienced most of the regional dispersed growth of all kinds. It may be that the development of suburban centres with downtown functions is contingent upon the prior existence of a complex hinterland of office and industrial activity.⁴¹ If this is true, then even the long range prospects of suburban downtown development were harmed by the restrictive components of DC policy.

The preceding discussion applies also to the third observation, that the introduction of suburban centres policy may be dependent on unique historical circumstances. Commercial office activity is still so centralized in Melbourne that it

could be argued that the moment for the successful introduction of some form of DC policy has not yet arrived. Even if *all suburban office space* in Melbourne was concentrated in the seventeen DCs, they would still contain only about one fifth of the amount in Central Melbourne, and only half of the amount in the CBD fringe alone (Moodie 1991, 58-59).⁴²

Currently, the development of the south and east is being led by the industrial sector (Hofmeister, 207). If the office location restrictions were to relax, more development would be drawn to the suburbs, particularly those in the south and east, providing the context for the development of cross-linkages between firms and therefore also providing a broader regional base on which to support a suburban downtown.

Even were this scenario to be accurate, the framing of a good DC policy would still be difficult. As has been shown in the case of Melbourne, many complex and sometimes contradictory factors must be taken into account. Suburban downtowns must contain a large enough and varied enough amount of development to mimic the functions of a traditional downtown. This mixture of functions could not be achieved simply. It cannot, for example, be assumed that a successful retail space hierarchy will be identical to a successful office space hierarchy. A new DC policy would therefore have to be sufficiently powerful to be able to shape simultaneously all of the various private sector development markets which intersect in a typical downtown. Further, this power to shape markets would have to be sufficiently subtle to avoid damaging the prospects for private sector development in each of those sectors throughout the entire regional economy.

Put in those daunting terms, it is not surprising that the efforts toward the creation of suburban downtowns failed in Vancouver and Melbourne, where this was pursued at the regional scale. To see how it is possible to build a successful

suburban downtown in the face of such difficulties, the next chapter examines the experience of Bellevue, Washington, and its CBD policies.

CHAPTER 5

BELLEVUE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT POLICIES

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the two previous chapters, which considered regional policies toward the creation of suburban centres in Vancouver and Melbourne, this chapter examines the municipal policies of the City of Bellevue, Washington. Bellevue's CBD is an excellent example of the progress that may be made, through the application of policy, toward the modification of a suburban area into a recognizable centre. The following quotations indicate the nature of the changes which have occurred in downtown Bellevue, and the speed with which they occurred.

The layout of the Bellevue CBD is similar to many suburban activity centers designed around the automobile. Arterial streets are wide with large setback distances from sidewalks. Office buildings are widely dispersed. This land use and street configuration make pedestrian travel very difficult. (Noguchi 1982, 1)

The central business district of Bellevue does not sprawl; it has a tight pattern of development within well-defined edges. (Whyte 1988, 307)

The Bellevue case suggests what can be achieved when suburban centers are transformed to places where people take priority over automobiles. (Cervero 1989, 193)

The City of Bellevue, Washington, offers one of the best example(s) of a suburban downtown which has reached a mature stage of growth. (Rao 1989, 12.5)

Less than a decade separates the first statement from the next three. In that short time, the core area of Bellevue has been transformed from an automobile-oriented retail district into a vibrant regional office employment centre, with a high-rise core and significant pedestrian amenities.

The policy context section of this chapter describes the statutory and regulatory environment in which the City of Bellevue developed its policies,

particularly with regard to the lack of regional governance. The historical development of Bellevue is also presented, and the pivotal effect of a particular development proposal is described.

The policy development section outlines the various instruments which have been employed toward the development of Bellevue's CBD. These include the 1979 CBD Subarea Plan, the 1981 amendments to the Land Use Code, (including the introduction of the FAR Amenity Incentive System), and the improvement of public transit service to the CBD through agreements between the City of Bellevue and the METRO transit carrier. The importance of community involvement is also described.

The policy evaluation section details the successful development of a suburban downtown in Bellevue, in terms of both commercial development and qualitative character. In the concluding section of this chapter, the reasons for this success are briefly compared to the less successful policy endeavours in Vancouver and Melbourne. It is asserted that the Bellevue policy has been more consistently implemented than the others. Broader regional and national suburban development trends are examined with regard to their effect on the scale of development in downtown Bellevue. Despite questions surrounding the success of policy with respect to scale, it is found that the unique features of the Bellevue CBD are related more to design and other qualitative factors. Finally, the Bellevue CBD policies are found to have been applied at exactly the right time to achieve the most beneficial effect.

5.1 POLICY CONTEXT

The City of Bellevue is an incorporated area of King County in the State of Washington, and is located across Lake Washington to the east of Seattle (see Map 7, p. 168). Local government in Washington is entirely under the authority of the

State legislature and any powers or obligations given to the local level derive directly from statutes of the legislature (Stroh interview 1991). Under the principle of "local option and control," municipalities have traditionally been granted the freedom to decide which powers and responsibilities they will adopt, and the extent to which they will submit to any regional authority (Washington State Local Governance Study Commission, 1988, 35).⁴³ Although Bellevue is within the boundaries of King County, the County Council has no jurisdiction over the city, but is simply a parallel local government. King County controls the land use planning and service provision of the unincorporated areas of the county, while Bellevue has authority within the boundaries of its incorporated area.

The City of Bellevue has a "council/city manager" form of government. An elected city council makes policy, enacts laws, and adopts a budget. The council hires a city manager, who is responsible for implementing policy, administering the city's laws, and directing its departments. Council members elect one of their number to serve as mayor (City of Bellevue 1990a, 4). The city regulates land use through planning and zoning powers, and regulates the construction of buildings through the issuance of permits. The city has authority over many of the natural features within its boundaries, including shorelines, wetlands, steep slopes, and streams.

The regional planning function within the Seattle metropolitan area is fragmented. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)⁴⁴ is a voluntary and cooperative association of most of the local governments within the four counties of the Seattle region. The PSRC prepares the regional transportation plan, which is a prerequisite for the receipt of federal transportation funding (Stroh interview; PSCOG 1989, 9). The plan is developed through an on-going negotiation process among the member local governments. The PSRC has no implementation or enforcement powers. Cooperation between local governments on joint land use

and planning issues is usually accomplished through negotiated contracts called "interlocal agreements" (Stroh interview).

The Metropolitan Municipal Corporation of Seattle (METRO) is the only example of a regional authority in Washington State (Washington State 1988, 5). It was formed in 1958 to take responsibility for water pollution control and sewerage in King County, particularly around Lake Washington. County voters consistently refused to mandate any other role for METRO until 1972,⁴⁵ when the agency was granted authority to plan and operate public transit within King County, including the City of Bellevue (Brambilla and Longo 1980, 47; Bish 1982, 60-61; Stroh interview).

The most recent long range regional planning exercise is a public and intergovernmental discussion process called *Vision 2020*, coordinated, but not controlled by the PSRC (PSCOG 1990b).⁴⁶ Preliminary planning for a high-capacity rapid transit network has been under examination by a committee of local government representatives⁴⁷ (KCTS 1991; Stroh interview). The recent passage of the Washington State Growth Management Act requires the development of county-wide land use plans and policies (toward the containment of urban sprawl), but the discussions on cooperation between local governments are as yet preliminary (Stroh interview).⁴⁸

Although Bellevue participates in many cooperative planning arrangements and "interlocal agreements," and is a member of the PSRC, it is important to note for the following discussion of the Bellevue central business district (CBD) initiatives that the city was not required by any external authority to plan as it did.⁴⁹ The creation of an suburban downtown for Bellevue (and for the surrounding Eastside communities⁵⁰) was a purely local response to local conditions and community vision.

Although the population of Bellevue is only about 82,000, it is the core area of a new and rapidly developing group of communities known as the "Eastside" (in reference to the position of these communities on the eastern shore of Lake Washington). The population of this area is 350,000, and its economic base is high technology manufacturing and software companies. The initial growth of this sector has been attributed to "spin-off" contracts from Boeing and the local military establishments (Welch 1989, 61). While containing only 7 percent of the State of Washington's population, the area holds 35 percent of the high technology firms, and employs over 50,000 persons in that sector (surpassing the City of Seattle in this regard in 1983 -- Welch 1989, 58-61). In recognition of the importance of Bellevue (and particularly its CBD) as the putative "downtown" for the entire Eastside economy, the subregion is often referred to as "Greater Bellevue" (Welch 1989, 142).

Urban growth in Bellevue began in 1940 with the opening of the Mercer Island Floating Bridge. The bridge allowed suburban communities to develop on the east side of Lake Washington in the late 1940s and early 1950s, providing homes for workers employed in downtown Seattle, or at Boeing Company sites throughout the region. Until that time, Bellevue had been a small unincorporated community of berry farms and summer homes. Under the pressure of rapid growth, members of the small community objected to several features of King County zoning, especially regarding lot sizes and the allowance of incompatible land uses near residential areas (Washington State 1988, 38).

In response to these objections, Bellevue was incorporated by popular vote in 1953, and a planning commission was immediately established to address the issues of zoning and land use. Single family residences were separated from high density housing and from light industrial land uses. Another notable action of the first planning commission was the designation of Bellevue's central business district

(Welch 1989, 35). This CBD is located in the western portion of Bellevue, between the shore of Lake Washington and Interstate Highway I-405 (see Map 8, p. 169).

The proposed downtown was to be developed around Bellevue Square, a community shopping mall built in 1946. Generous amounts of off-street parking were required by the city's original land use code -- provision of five parking spaces for every 1000 square feet of development was mandatory (Tranpln 1976, 8; Schneider 1981, 250) -- and the downtown zone was laid out in 600-foot superblocks. This combination of factors created a downtown suited to low-rise developments separated by parking lots, and comfortable to the automobile driver, but not to the pedestrian (National Cooperative Highway Research Program 1987, 81).⁵¹

In 1963, another bridge to Seattle was opened, and a new growth period began. The city manager undertook an active annexation campaign which enlarged both the land area and the population of Bellevue. In under a decade, the city had annexed 17 square miles and added a population of 38,500 (Washington State 1988, 38). This accounted for over half of the eventual land area of the city (27 square miles), and the population more than doubled between 1968 and 1970 (City of Bellevue 1991a).

The key to the growth of Bellevue (as well as to the rest of the region) has been the Boeing Company, a major aircraft manufacturer and military contractor based in Seattle, but with ancillary operations throughout the region (PSCOG 1990a, 3, 8; City of Seattle 1991, 2, 9, 43). So many engineers and managers from Boeing moved to Bellevue in the 1960s that the small city came to be called a "company town" (Welch 1989, 70).

Bellevue in the 1970s shared many features with the typical American suburb of the time. It held a predominantly white, wealthy population and it afforded

convenient automobile access to the metropolitan core.⁵² The Bellevue CBD was also typically suburban. In the 1970s,

Bellevue's downtown area [...] consisted of a collection of low-rise commercial structures, with a sprinkling of six- to thirteen-story office buildings, a sprawling regional shopping center, and strip commercial development. The 400-acre downtown had been totally oriented to the automobile, with about half its area devoted to parking. (Miles and Hinshaw 1987, 221)

A 1976 parking study noted that the "[t]rip characteristics of Bellevue reflect[ed] those of a large shopping center rather than a CBD in a city of 66,000 people" (Tranpln 1976, 8). Over 60 percent of trips to the Bellevue CBD were for shopping and only 10.7 percent were work trips. In contrast, 34.7 percent of trips to the Seattle CBD were for shopping and 38.6 percent were for work.

Large scale CBD office space construction was inhibited by the parking requirements. Schneider (1981) cites a study

which showed the inhibiting effects of this very high parking requirement on the economics of building high-rise office buildings in downtown Bellevue and [...] concludes that such buildings will not be economically attractive until the parking requirement is lowered (Schneider 1981, 250).

The downtown Bellevue office space vacancy rate in 1976 was 13.4 percent (Tranpln 1976, 49). Less than half of the available zoned commercial land throughout the City of Bellevue had been taken up (931 acres out of a total of 2,000), and this oversupply provided even less incentive for office sector businesses to locate in the CBD area (Schneider 1981, 251). Office and retail developments began to scatter throughout the city. Annual retail sales for the CBD area were only \$150 million. Almost no one lived in the downtown area. Traffic was congested, the air quality was poor, and the automobile dominated the streetscape (Schneider 1981, 248). "In general, central Bellevue was not distinguishable from other suburban communities of the 1960s and 1970s" (Cervero 1989, 171).

These common suburban problems might not have provided sufficient impetus for Bellevue to change its policies. Indeed, the same problems remain unaddressed in many suburban communities today. Bellevue, however, faced an additional growth challenge.

In the mid-1970s, a major retail and mixed-use development proposal was put forward by Edward DeBartolo, developer of more than 125 shopping mall complexes in the United States (Welch 1989, 36). The Evergreen East project was to be built three miles from the CBD on a 120-acre cleared tract of land on Bellevue's eastern border with the municipality of Redmond, and would eventually contain "a major regional retail/office/apartment complex" (Schneider 1981, 248). City officials and the downtown Bellevue business community recognized that this proposal, if realized, would threaten the future viability of the downtown as a major centre (Schneider 1981, 248; Whyte 1988, 307; Welch 1989, 46).

As early as 1974, city officials had been expressing the intention to develop the CBD more intensely and to discourage competing retail and service centres from locating in Bellevue (Tranpln 1976, 147). The Evergreen East proposal provided the necessary link between expressed intention and action. According to Caroline Robertson, president (in 1989) of the Bellevue Downtown Association: "The city council and the community took a look at itself in the seventies and saw the danger of becoming Anyplace, U.S.A., with suburban sprawl, and said, 'We can't allow this to happen in Bellevue'" (Welch 1989, 46).

The downtown businessman with the most to lose if the Evergreen East development were to proceed was Kemper Freeman, Sr., developer and owner of the Bellevue Square shopping centre, which lay on the western edge of downtown Bellevue.⁵³ With the support of Bellevue City Council and of other downtown retail concerns, Freeman's response was to double the size of Bellevue Square, turning it "from a suburban community shopping center to a regional super-mall"

(Cervero 1989, 171). When the expansion was completed in 1984, Bellevue Square held over 900,000 square feet of floorspace on two levels, contained four major retail anchor tenants, 3,000 employees, and the Bellevue Art Museum (Welch 1989, 46-47).

In the mid-1970s, the City of Bellevue undertook a series of studies to more accurately determine the development potential of the downtown area⁵⁴ (Schneider 1981, 248). Not surprisingly, these studies confirmed the (preconceived) importance of the CBD area to the future health of the city economy, and the destructive competition which the Evergreen East proposal represented.⁵⁵ More important than the findings, in combination with the Bellevue Square expansion, the conduct of the studies demonstrated a united civic resolve against the Evergreen East proposal.⁵⁶ The proposal was abandoned by its developer.⁵⁷

5.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The municipal energy which had been generated during the Evergreen East confrontation was subsequently applied in a series of public and private actions which altered the character of the Bellevue CBD area.

The CBD Subarea Plan was adopted in November, 1979, as the culmination of the wide-ranging study process described in the previous section of the report.⁵⁸ The plan established the goals, policies, and guidelines by which the city council intended to promote the development of the CBD. The major goal was expressed as follows:

The Bellevue Central Business District shall be the financial and business hub of the community. The regional retail district, major office, major multi-family, major hotel and major institutional uses and

*complexes shall be located in this area in order to protect and preserve residential communities from proliferation and encroachment of such uses. Defined areas of the Central Business District may be more intensely developed in order to facilitate public transit and pedestrian circulation as a primary mode of travel. (City of Bellevue 1991b, 1)*⁵⁹

The sub-area plan contained seven major goals and over a hundred policy statements which provided the foundation on which later implementation was based. The plan outlined a number of conceptual land use districts within the downtown (see Map 9, p. 170). The central core of the downtown would be primarily for office uses. Surrounding this central hub would be two multiple use districts, a residential area in the northeast corner, a "character" area (Old Bellevue) in the southwest corner, and a hotel/motel district to the east, near the highway. The western edge of the downtown would be an area of retail focus, containing Bellevue Square. All of the major elements which were to follow found conceptual expression in the plan, including: bonus incentives, land use types and intensity, urban design, pedestrian circulation, and the limitation of parking supply (City of Bellevue 1991b, 1-8).

The CBD Land Use Code was amended in 1981 to give force to the goals and policies outlined in the CBD Subarea Plan (Noguchi 1982, 2). The CBD land use districts which had been presented conceptually in 1979 were brought into the Code. Previously large setback requirements were reduced for core area developments, allowing developers to build out to the sidewalk in the traditional urban manner. Maximum lot coverage of 100 percent was allowed in the central hub, and was placed at 75 percent in the surrounding CBD districts. Outward from the centre, the allowable floor area ratios (FAR) ranged from a maximum level of 8 in the most central district to very low maximums of 0.5 or less in the outlying CBD residential and character areas. The gradual drop in allowable FAR from the centre, through moderate intervening multiple use districts, to the low-rise CBD

fringe produced a "wedding cake" pattern of development, characteristic of high density cores in other cities (City of Bellevue 1990b, 96).

A major feature of the CBD Land Use Code was the introduction of the FAR Amenity Incentive System, whereby developments were allowed bonus floorspace (depending on the CBD district) in exchange for the provision of public amenities. Eligible amenities included pedestrian-oriented frontage, retail frontage, plazas and landscape features, arcades, marquees and awnings, underground parking, and many other factors (Noguchi 1982, 2; City of Bellevue 1990b, 99-108).

The size of the bonuses provides an indication of the relative importance which city officials placed on each amenity. Underground parking yielded a bonus of only 0.5:1,⁶⁰ whereas public spaces yielded 8:1, and there were even higher bonuses for providing portions of a pedestrian corridor or major public open space. The childcare space bonus was set at 8:1, while performing arts space yielded 10:1. Average amenity bonus size varied between 5:1 and 8:1 (City of Bellevue 1990b, 99-108).

Additionally, the parking requirements which had previously provided a disincentive to high-rise construction were altered in favour of downtown development. Much lower minimum and maximum amounts of parking were required of new developments. A typical office structure which had required five parking spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of development in 1981 was thereafter required to produce only between 2 and 3.3 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. (later the maximum was reduced further to 2.7 spaces). The reductions were intended to remove the disincentive to high-rise development and to introduce a new disincentive toward automobile use, which might would allow the later promotion of public transit use by commuters and shoppers (Cervero 1989, 173-174; Noguchi 1982, 4-5; City of Bellevue 1990b, 112-117).

Another important component of the CBD Land Use Code was the provision of design guidelines for developments throughout the CBD. The central office areas of the CBD were designated as the Core Design District, in which all development is subject to design review by city officials (City of Bellevue 1990b, 122-143). Later design guidelines followed for building/sidewalk relationships, pedestrian connections through superblocks, a pedestrian corridor, and the Old Bellevue commercial district (City of Bellevue 1983, 1). These policies ensured a large measure of civic control over the style of buildings and the aesthetic environment of the core of the CBD. The urban design staff of the city subscribes to William H. Whyte's philosophy of human-scale and pedestrian amenity (Kay 1991, 6; Miles and Hinshaw 1987, 222-223).

The centrepiece of the human-scale planning of the CBD core is the planned Pedestrian Corridor, which is to run through the centre of the CBD, anchored at the eastern end by Bellevue Square⁶¹ and at the western end by a public transit complex (Miles and Hinshaw 1987; National Cooperative 1987; Kay 1991). The corridor will bisect one of the 600-foot superblocks. It is to be developed piece-by-piece along with the privately-held parcels of land which border the designated area. Generous bonusing provisions are in place to encourage private interests to supply amenities (City of Bellevue 1990b, 105).⁶²

The development of the CBD was further advanced in the early 1980s through negotiated agreements between the City of Bellevue and METRO, the regional public transit carrier. METRO had shifted its position on service provision from an entirely Seattle-centred approach to one which focussed additionally on four regional centres, one of which was Bellevue. The City of Bellevue and METRO were therefore able to agree on the location of a six-bay, timed-transfer bus transit station in the office core of the CBD (Noguchi 1982, 3).

Most importantly, Bellevue and METRO negotiated the 1981 Transit Incentive Agreement, whereby METRO would provide additional hours of transit service based on two CBD performance factors (Noguchi 1982, 4-6). Service hours would be increased if downtown employment increased, or if the number of downtown parking spaces provided by new developments was limited. These performance criteria were required because METRO was initially reluctant to commit scarce public transit resources to an area which had a decidedly automobile-oriented land use pattern. Only if the Bellevue CBD policies were effectively pursued would the extra service be provided.

Two alternative employment forecasts were used as benchmarks for the provision of 10,000 additional service hours. If the lower of the two forecasts was reached, an initial component of a potential 10,000 additional hours would be provided. If the higher forecast was reached, two-thirds of the additional hours would be released. The balance of the extra service would be given only if CBD employment exceeded the level of the higher forecast by 25 percent.⁶³

A final planning instrument which should be discussed in relation to Bellevue's CBD policies is the Conflict Resolution Process. This process is not solely a feature of the CBD policies, but is a general monitoring instrument used to update subarea plans throughout the city on a phased six-year cycle. The CBD Subarea process occurred in 1991.

In each process, a team of professional facilitators is hired by the city to discuss any problems or concerns raised by the general public or the business community. The most recent process resulted in the down-zoning of a residential sector of the CBD and the placement of a height limit of 450 feet on future CBD development.⁶⁴ At the end of the process, despite these minor modifications, City Council reaffirmed its policies toward the CBD (Stroh interview).

The community and the private sector were also involved in building the downtown. Bellevue Square shopping centre provided space for the Bellevue Art Museum for an annual fee of one dollar (Welch 1989, 48). Studies for the pedestrian corridor guidelines were funded solely by the property owners who were to be affected by the corridor (National Cooperative 1987, 79).

The most impressive community contribution to the downtown area was in regard to the 17.5-acre park which opened in 1987 on the southwest edge of the CBD. When the original public bond issue for the purchase of the parkland was rejected by Bellevue voters, a citizens group was formed which raised \$1.8 million in corporate and private donations. The money funded the first phase of the park, and encouraged voters to pass the bond issue for the remainder in 1988 (Welch 1989, 53).

5.3 POLICY EVALUATION

Public and private sector actions have been effective in the creation of a suburban downtown for the City of Bellevue. In 1981, there were only two medium-rise buildings in the downtown area (Schneider 1981, 248). The alteration of the CBD policies were followed by an immediate rise in private sector interest in downtown development, and a corresponding inflation of property values from \$6.00-\$10.00 per sq. ft. to \$40.00-\$60.00 per sq. ft. (Welch 1989, 48). A CBD office development boom followed.

Three high-rise towers were completed in 1983 and two more were completed in 1986. A 17-storey seniors residential condominium was completed in 1987. Bellevue Place, a multi-tower hotel/office/retail complex, was completed in 1988. By 1989, there were eleven buildings in the CBD taller than ten storeys (Welch 1989, 48-51).

The amount of office floorspace grew from approximately 1 million sq. ft. in 1980 (Welch 1989, 44) to 4.7 million sq. ft. in 1991 (Stroh interview).⁶⁵ Total non-residential floorspace is currently over 9 million sq. ft. (Stroh interview). Employment in the CBD grew from approximately 12,000 in 1981 (Noguchi 1982, 1) to over 25,000 in 1989 (Welch 1989, 50). Interestingly, this concentration of commercial space has not been achieved by unduly restricting commercial growth in other areas of the municipality. Only *major* and intensive commercial developments, such as high-rise office and large mixed-use developments, have been so restricted. Over 7 million sq. ft. of non-residential floorspace exists along the Bel-Red corridor, a 4 mile strip of development between I-405 and the municipal border with Redmond (Cervero 1989, 171). According to Kay (1991, 4), the City of Bellevue contains 16 million sq. ft. of office space. The CBD, therefore, accounts for only approximately 30 percent of the total.

The CBD policies also reflect a certain flexibility with regard to the pace of development. This flexibility may be a simple recognition, given the lack of a regional authority, that capital flight could not be prevented. Conversely, the policy may reflect an understanding that market commercial development was attracted to Bellevue for market reasons, and would not be deflected by consistent qualitative control.

There is no legal mandate that puts the planning on a fixed time schedule. When a parcel of land is developed or redeveloped, then the improvements for that site are made. Therefore, market forces for office and retail space are what drives the schedule. (National Cooperative 1987, 71)

The retail prominence of the CBD area was assured through the expansion of Bellevue Square shopping centre. In 1989, stores in the mall had a retail failure rate less than one third of the U.S. average. In 1987, total retail sales at Bellevue Square were \$957 million, accounting for over one third of all retail sales in the City of Bellevue (Welch 1989, 46-47).

The only downtown sector which has not performed to expectations is the residential. Only about 500 units of housing currently exist in the CBD, mostly in older multi-family buildings. The 120-unit Pacific Regent seniors building accounts for the only recent addition. However, despite a difficult financial market in the U.S., the development of residential units in the CBD is proceeding, with over 2,000 units currently in the last stages of the approval process (Stroh interview).

The agreements between the City of Bellevue and METRO have also contributed to change in the CBD. The public transit station was eventually to be served by 17 METRO bus routes. By 1984, public transit service to the Bellevue CBD had been increased by almost 4,000 hours under the terms of the Transit Incentive agreement (Cervero 1989, 173). The agreement was amicably discontinued in the late 1980s, because both parties came to agree that additional service hours were in their mutual best interests (Stroh interview).

In 1981, the CBD had a transit mode split⁶⁶ of about one percent (Noguchi 1982, 1). By 1989, this had improved to seven percent, with a further 18 percent of commuters using either car or van pools (Cervero 1989, 175). Downtown Bellevue had the lowest percentage of single occupant vehicle commuters among all suburban employment centres studied by Cervero.

The quality of growth has been as important as the scale. Beyond the figures, the CBD has the "feel" of an urban centre, with (occasionally) bustling pedestrian traffic, a cluster of central office towers, street art, good restaurants, expensive hotels, and exclusive clubs for the business class (Welch 1989, 42-54). Downtown Bellevue has grown from a low-density, automobile-oriented retail district serving a local market to a high-rise regional office employment centre.

An initial wave of offices locating in the CBD in the early 1980s was composed mostly of branch operations of Seattle service sector firms which wanted a presence on the Eastside. In the mid-1980s, however, a second wave of

development occurred which brought higher profile offices, such as the corporate banking headquarters of Seafirst Bank, regional headquarters of major accounting firms KPMG Peat Marwick and Touche Ross, and the national headquarters of CityFed Mortgage, one of the largest mortgage banks in the United States (Welch 1989, 49). Downtown Bellevue has arrived.

The downtown has the capacity to grow. Mark Hinshaw, Bellevue's former principal urban designer, asserts that the Bellevue CBD has enough development potential to continue growing until 2050 (Welch 1989, 110). Due to its high profile (and high land costs), the Bellevue CBD will not receive all of the future commercial growth of the Eastside, but it is likely to remain the prestige location for first class development. A new city may be forming out of the many communities of the Eastside. The population of the Eastside is forecast to surpass Seattle's early in the next century (City of Bellevue 1991a), and its high technology industrial base already surpasses that of the central city (Welch 1989, 61). If such a city does develop, downtown Bellevue will be its urban core.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Bellevue has succeeded in creating a suburban downtown through the application of a municipal policy, where regional policies in Melbourne and Vancouver were unsuccessful. The comparative analysis of the policies of Melbourne and Vancouver, begun in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, may now be extended. As before, the discussion will be based on the observations made originally with regard to the Regional Town Centres. To review, these observations were (a) that a well-conceived policy was poorly implemented, and that the fault lay with the senior level of government; (b) that the policy as actually implemented had very little effect on the pattern or scale of regional development;

and (c) that it is likely that such a policy could only be successfully applied under a limited set of historical conditions, now past.

There are only limited similarities to be found regarding the quality and implementation of the three policies. Greater Vancouver's RTC policy was found to be well-conceived, but poorly implemented. Melbourne's DC policy was found to be poorly conceived and inconsistently implemented. In contrast, the City of Bellevue created the right policies and consistently reaffirmed them throughout the decade. These policies were developed under a simple model: the problem was identified, studies were undertaken, goals were set, implementation measures were enacted, and monitoring was done. Despite the simplicity, the results of the process were only realized through vision, perseverance, and open consultation on the part of city officials, the business community, and the general public. Any of these three parties could have delayed or destroyed the process had it chosen to do so. This civic resolve in the City of Bellevue is in direct contrast to the lack of senior government support for regional policy in the other two cases, and the unwillingness or inability of municipalities to consistently support independent policy.

As with the Melbourne example, the case of Bellevue challenges the assumption that good public transit provision is a prerequisite for the success of a suburban downtown. In Melbourne, the existence of a complete radial public transit network was not a factor in the success or failure of the District Centres. In Bellevue, good public transit linkages did not exist at the outset and it was not considered that such linkages were required. The provision of public transit was pursued strictly as an amenity which would reduce the complete dominance of the downtown by the automobile. One of the key factors in the success of the Bellevue CBD has been its location directly adjacent to a major north-south highway (I-405), and within a few miles of interchanges with the two major east-

west highways out of the City of Seattle (I-90 to the south and Route 520 to the north).

It is less clear whether or not the adoption of CBD policies had a major effect on the pattern and scale of development in downtown Bellevue. In Vancouver, RTC policy was shown to have little effect on the continuing dispersal of residential and commercial activity throughout the region. Regarding Melbourne, it was asserted that DC policy may actually have impeded the underlying structural suburbanization which may be required to support a suburban downtown (see Section 4.4 above).

Downtown Bellevue was the most prominent suburban centre in the Puget Sound region in 1979 (Daniels 1982, 59), and remains so in 1992. Further, Bellevue's CBD development benefitted from a rapidly growing sub-regional economy on the Eastside, based on software and high-technology firms (PSCOG 1990a, 9), which were an addition to (and perhaps a result of) the continuing economic presence of Boeing. This parallels the cases of Vancouver and Melbourne, where the most successful of the suburban centres were found to have developed either from important existing centres (Metrotown, Prahran) or from centres which contained a high degree of economic activity in their surrounding regions (Richmond Centre, Dandenong).

However, while Bellevue's relative position is unchanged, its relative importance has grown very much. Daniels (1982, 62) notes that office space in the Seattle region in 1979 was highly centralized, and that competing suburban centres were therefore much more limited than in typical American metropolitan regions. Subsequently, between 1980 and 1988, downtown Seattle's share of regional office space fell from 75 percent to 50 percent (Pivo 1990, 459). In the same period, the Bellevue CBD has become not only the second most important commercial centre in the region, but in the entire State (Welch 1989, 44, 50).⁶⁷

Conversely, it is highly unlikely that the CBD policies can be given even a moderate amount of the credit for this larger scale of development. The relocation of activity from Seattle and its reconcentration in suburban centres is certainly only the local expression of a nation-wide trend. The autonomous and rapid development of suburban centres in the 1970s and 1980s, generally around freeway interchanges, has been noted by many American researchers.⁶⁸

The development of the Bellevue CBD is noteworthy not because of the scale of its development, but for its unique attention to the details of design and pedestrian comfort, and for its relatively excellent public transit characteristics. Further, the City of Bellevue has persisted in the designation and planning of its CBD since municipal amalgamation in the 1950s. Most other American "edge cities" did not even exist as places in the 1950s and 1960s (Garreau 1991, 6-7).

The Bellevue example lends support to the concept that particular events and times are important for the successful development of suburban centres. The Evergreen East proposal may have been the key event in the history of Bellevue's CBD development. First, as discussed previously, the confrontation over the development focussed the attention of the community. Fortunately, this civic focus was created at exactly the right time to allow the city to at least partially direct the powerful process of commercial suburbanization in the 1980s. Had the new CBD policies not been in effect, the development of one or more "edge cities" in Bellevue might have occurred in the Bel-Red corridor, or at one of the freeway interchanges, rather than in the current downtown.⁶⁹ The CBD could have been bypassed, as New Westminster was in the Greater Vancouver case study.

Second, the Evergreen East proposal may have been a signal to the commercial development industry that Bellevue was an attractive location for large scale development. Edward DeBartolo was a major national developer, and it

would not be unlikely that other developers would become interested in an area where DeBartolo had shown such interest. Subsequently, the confrontation and its outcome would have provided a clear signal from the community to potential developers about the proper place for large scale projects within the desirable Bellevue market.

The development of a downtown environment, once begun, provided an obvious and convenient location for office users relocating from the Seattle CBD, for new branch offices of downtown Seattle firms, and for prestige developments, such as the regional headquarters of national firms. The prestige factor would attract more firms. Other firms would find Bellevue a good, central location from which to provide the surrounding high technology industries (and many other firms) with sophisticated legal, accounting, and banking services. None of these firms would have located in Bellevue solely because of the CBD policies. They would have followed their internal priorities and markets to the new Eastside, where Bellevue had built a comfortable, familiar, and prestigious place for them.

CHAPTER 6

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.0 *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter provides a brief review of the conclusions of the three preceding chapters, and provides a synopsis of the lessons which have been derived from the study of the suburban centres policies of Vancouver, Melbourne, and Bellevue. These lessons state that (a) a regional policy is necessarily fragile; (b) it is difficult to influence commercial location decisions; (c) it is dangerous to make policy in ignorance of the forces of regional development; (d) suburban centres policy may apply only in a particular period or set of circumstances; and (e) the provision of public rapid transit linkages to suburban centres is not as important as has been previously claimed.

General recommendations are provided for the subsequent improvement of suburban centres policy in general. The region and its development industry must be carefully studied, and the fruits of these studies should be applied directly to the formation of policy. Governmental resolve must then be shown to prevent undue pressure for the accommodation of the desires of the development industry. The paper concludes with the presentation of some prospective topics for further research.

6.1 *REVIEW OF CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS*

The original policy toward the creation of Regional Town Centres in Greater Vancouver reflected an awareness of the high level of public intervention that would likely have been required to shape the development of a system of suburban downtowns. Due to shifts at the political level in the provincial government and on Vancouver City Council, the policy which was eventually

implemented was much less assertive, and relied more on individual municipal resolve than on regional planning and coordination. Perhaps as a result of this reduced effectiveness, Regional Town Centres policy cannot be shown to have caused more development, or different forms of development, than would have occurred in the absence of policy. Regional Town Centres policy was first developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and may have been an appropriate response to the suburbanization problems which existed then. The region of the 1990s is, however, substantially changed and a new form policy response may be required.

District Centres policy in Melbourne was not as clearly conceived as the original policy in Greater Vancouver. As in Vancouver, the policy cannot be shown to have had any positive effect on the development of suburban downtowns. Those centres which had development potential prior to the policy continued to grow. Those centres without such potential did not. Indeed, the use of the negative statutory instrument of restricting office location may have had the perverse effect of curtailing the level of suburban economic development required to support a suburban downtown. There may not as yet be sufficient suburban activity in all of Melbourne to create a significant CBD-style employment and cultural centre.

The downtown of the City of Bellevue has grown very rapidly since the institution of CBD land use and design policies. The Bellevue CBD is an important office, retail, and cultural centre for the Eastside region. Due to its original importance in the region, and to the existence of powerful suburbanization trends throughout the United States in the 1980s, the CBD policies cannot be shown to have altered the *scale* of development in the Bellevue CBD. Conversely, the design guidelines and floor area ratio (FAR) incentives have had a significant effect on the *style* of development. The development of both the policies and the CBD

may have been the result of a fortunate coincidence between the timing of a major development controversy and the wave of commercial suburbanization in the 1980s.

6.2 *FIVE GENERAL LESSONS*

Lesson 1

A regional policy toward the development of a system of suburban downtowns is fragile, and is subject to many considerations beyond the purview of such policy.

The development of a regional system of suburban centres is necessarily a long term proposition, measured in decades. If there is a change in government at the level which is required to implement policy (or pass statute in support of policy), then there is likely to be an accompanying shift in political philosophy. The Social Credit government which replaced the New Democrats in B.C. in 1975 had much less interest in intervening in the operation of market forces than had their predecessors. Indeed, due to the geographical manifestations of political support in the 1970s, the Social Credit party had a more rural power base, and perhaps a correspondingly lower level of interest in urban issues. In the City of Vancouver, concern over a drop in municipal population led to a new "boosterism" which contradicted earlier municipal support for Regional Town Centres policy. As in the case of the Metrotown mall developers, large development interests can sometimes afford to be patient enough to outlast government resolve. In the State of Victoria, the government became progressively more flexible as a response to the concerns of developers and some major corporations. These changes are not unusual in democracies, and a regional policy which requires a consistent and long term level of political commitment and courage will fare poorly.

Further, even if the level of government commitment is consistent, it may be a lower level of commitment than the government has to other planks in its policy platform. The State of Victoria has consistently maintained that District Centres are a part of their overall metropolitan and economic strategies, and such commitment has been explicit in major policy papers throughout the 1980s (Moodie 1991). Unfortunately, the priority placed on this policy is much lower than the government has placed on wider economic development considerations. The case of the G. J. Coles Ltd. perfectly illustrates the problem of capital flight at the regional scale. When the choice is between a consistent policy implementation and the loss of a major corporate employer, the government cannot afford to be courageous.

Lesson 2

It is very difficult to redirect the location decisions of the commercial development industry at the regional scale.

None of the three policies described in this paper can be shown to have caused more overall development than would otherwise have occurred in the respective regions. The successive waves of suburbanization which have flowed through metropolitan regions in the postwar period have needed no such policy support. It is very unlikely that suburban centres policy would have had an effect on the amount and type of development which has been both relocating from the core and growing indigenously, and if such an effect were present it would be impossible to distinguish from the effects of the many other forces at work.

As at the regional level, none of the three policy examples can be shown to have caused more development than would otherwise have occurred in particular suburban centres. The most successful suburban centres in each case were found to have been important centres prior to policy institution, or to have been located

in areas with dynamic sub-regional economic activity (or both). By this argument, the potential to develop a suburban downtown may be limited to specific areas within a metropolitan region, and the attempted use of such policies to spread development into areas of the region which have not previously attracted development interest may be a waste of effort. The northern and western suburbs of Melbourne, like the northeast sector and south of Fraser area of Greater Vancouver, have only very long term development potential (if any), and such development would require just the sort of structural shift in the urban form of those regions that suburban centres policy has been unable to deliver.

As is shown in the Bellevue case study, the key opportunity which is presented to suburban centres policy is not the creation of development nor the redirection of development into centres, but the influence on the design of development that has already been attracted. Bellevue succeeded in using the "natural" outward movement of development in the 1980s to create an urban-style downtown. Metrotown may have been presented with a similar opportunity, but it was not pursued as effectively in that case.

Lesson 3

Without a solid understanding of the metropolitan region, and of the needs of the local commercial development industry, a policy which tinkers with the regional economy can be dangerous.

The regional policies in Melbourne and Vancouver both contained requirements for the manipulation of commercial location decisions. If such a policy is not implemented, then it can do no harm. In the case of Regional Town Centres, the only location decision which was forced was the B.C. Telephone Company headquarters, and this was done as a result of a City of Vancouver

decision which predated the RTC policy. All other RTC location decisions have followed the preferences of the development industry. In Melbourne, however, there was a high level of intervention in the commercial development location process. Rigid guidelines were set and followed. While accommodations were made for powerful interests, less powerful applicants were forced to choose a sanctioned location or alter their plans. O'Connor and Blakely (1988) assert that this policy may have stemmed the suburbanization of some activities, and so harmed the economic prospects of the depressed areas of Melbourne.

On the other hand, the municipal policy of Bellevue focussed development in its centre without causing any harm to the surrounding sub-regional economy, or even to nearby areas within Bellevue's borders. Firms which wished to locate in office parks were free to locate in the Bel-Red corridor, or in neighbouring Redmond, or beyond. The restrictions on suburban downtown development only applied once the location decisions had been made, and the policy intervention was moderate enough to avoid changing those decisions. Business and development interests have argued for less-restrictive policy, but this is not surprising. Developers will *always* complain about state intervention. In Bellevue, they complained, but stayed because they perceived that it was in their interests to stay (Welch 1989, 51).

Lesson 4

Suburban centres policy is relevant only to particular eras (and perhaps to unique circumstances) in the development of a metropolitan region.

The City of Bellevue developed a good policy and steadfastly implemented it, but the successful development of its CBD also derived from a lucky historical circumstance. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Evergreen East proposal focussed civic attention on the creation of a true CBD at the critical time just prior

to the most recent wave of commercial suburbanization (based on high order office employment). The situation would have been markedly different if the CBD policies had been delayed a few years, or had not been developed at all for lack of a catalyst, or if the civic coalition which stopped Evergreen East had not been formed. In those circumstances, a different sort of downtown might have developed, based on a more typical freeway oriented pattern. Such a downtown might not have the potential to attract high order office functions and users, who might have determined that an office park in the Bel-Red corridor, or a prestige location at one of the nearby highway interchanges was a better way to fulfil their Eastside location requirements than the nondescript Bellevue CBD.

Due to the unchallenged centralization of high order urban functions in Central Melbourne, District Centres policy may have been applied at too early a stage in that region's development. After a few more years of suburbanizing of employment and producer services, there may be enough activity to require the services of a high order suburban CBD.

Regional Town Centres policy may have been formed at just the right moment in the regional development of Greater Vancouver. Only the central city had more jobs than labour force, and the commuting pattern was distinctly inward from the suburbs every morning. New Westminster's small downtown was the most important regional centre outside of the City of Vancouver. Regional planners recognized that rapid suburbanization was occurring.

It cannot be known what would have happened if the subsequent suburbanization had been focussed. Perhaps, like Melbourne, the policy would have been too rigidly enforced and would have delayed the process of broad suburban economic development. Perhaps, like Bellevue, the policy would have allowed the municipalities, particularly Burnaby and Richmond, to guide the development that was certainly coming to their centres into a more urban pattern.

That moment is past. A great deal of suburbanization and dispersal of economic activity has occurred, and nothing will call it back. The RTCs have grown (some more than others), but other concentrations of varying size and functional composition have also been forming over the past fifteen years. Regional decision makers must now plan for a region with dozens of major and minor centres, strips, and corridors. Planners in Greater Vancouver's modern era must determine if a policy for the development of a few important nodes is still relevant to such a region.

Lesson 5

Public rapid transit linkage to the regional core may not be as important as previously assumed in the development of a suburban downtown (or a network of suburban downtowns).

The existence of a complete radial public transit network in Melbourne, upon which the selection of District Centres was partially based, was not a factor in the success or failure of policy. As argued in previous sections of this paper, the only important factors in the development of the centres were success prior to policy and the existence of a dynamic sub-region economy (the south and east in Melbourne). If anything, a radial network reinforces the importance of the CBD, which is the most accessible location from the greatest number of suburban areas. While some centres in the southeast may benefit from linkages between the few centres on the same public transit lines, Central Melbourne benefits from the convergence of all lines.

The construction of the SkyTrain light rail line from the City of Vancouver to downtown New Westminster, later extended to Surrey, has had a positive effect on the development of several areas along the line. However, most of this development has not been restricted to the RTCs, nor has most of it been related

to commercial construction. The majority of suburban developments which have been constructed after the introduction of SkyTrain have been multi-family residential projects (BC Transit Authority 1989), and these have not been concentrated in the RTCs but have occurred at almost every station along the line. (This pattern is being repeated as SkyTrain is being extended to Whalley -- District of Surrey 1992) Although major commercial redevelopment has occurred at Metrotown, this cannot be attributed solely to the introduction of SkyTrain. The owners of the major Metrotown sites had been attempting to obtain development approval for the malls for several years prior to SkyTrain. The construction of the line changed only the resolve of Burnaby Municipal Council to hold out for a different style of development. The redevelopment of New Westminster was also not directly related to SkyTrain. Attractive waterfront sites were sufficient to attract development activity well before the decision to build SkyTrain was taken.

In Bellevue, the development of the CBD was accomplished without the existence of a rapid transit connection to the regional core. Improved public transit service (by bus) did not contribute to the development of the CBD, but was increased *afterwards* in direct response to the prior increases in employment and design changes which favoured less parking. In Bellevue, as in most other American metropolitan areas, highways were the key locational consideration.

There may be a serious problem with using public rapid transit to attempt to shape development in a dispersed region. The provision of public rapid transit will not have the same effect in the modern region as it had for earlier urban forms. In the monocentric regions of the early part of this century, the location of rail transit lines led to residential and retail development around the rail stations because the rail line represented a substantial increase in the accessibility between the core (where jobs and commercial activity were concentrated) and the previously

undeveloped hinterland. The correlation between public transit location and later development was readily apparent.

In the modern region, where arterial road and freeway networks provide a high level of broad regional accessibility for automobile users, the provision of public rapid transit is only a marginal increase in the total accessibility of a particular sub-region. The nascent suburban centres of Greater Vancouver are all accessible by road (otherwise, they could not have become relatively important centres). A rapid transit line can only augment this accessibility, and then only on one of several corridors which serve the centre.

This applies also to the entire modern region of suburbanized and dispersed residential and commercial activity. The road and transit network that exists *now* has built a dispersed region, and this region could not have developed if these dispersed locations had not been accessible in the first place. The addition of some form of rapid transit will therefore make much less difference to the marginal accessibility than it might have in 1910, or 1950, or 1970. (This point is strongly related to the previous lesson regarding the time-related aspect of suburban centres policy effectiveness.)

Today's metropolitan areas are characterized by a well developed transportation system and a highly decentralized pattern of land use. These characteristics have reduced accessibility-related differences between locations, which have in turn weakened the transportation-land use linkage. (Guiliano 1989, 16)⁷⁰

In a literature review on the transportation and land use linkage, Deakin (1991) found that, although there remain many proponents for the use of rail transit to "redirect urban growth patterns toward more compact, centered development," it is difficult to show such a causal relationship (Deakin, 26). Economic and mathematical models generally assumed monocentricity, and became less tractable with "each additional dose of reality" (Deakin, 31). Simulation models generally concluded that many other factors (such as housing

type, cost, and size; schools; crime rates; lifestyle and life cycle variations) were as or more important than transport variables in forming location decisions (Deakin, 32). Finally, empirical studies of the effect of public transit location were found to show that

[m]any localized benefits can be found, but from a regional perspective the benefits are quite modest. Shifts toward compact growth and increased density, when they occur, seem overwhelmed by stronger regional trends toward decentralization. (Deakin, 34)

Worse, the automobile has allowed the mobility requirements of suburban residents to expand. Any switch to the use of public transit will represent a net loss in mobility for some residents, because the ability to accommodate multi-destination trips, especially those related to shopping and children, will be hampered. Accordingly, T. Logan has argued (1986b, 12) that policy makers have exaggerated the possibility for a large scale modal shift from automobile use to public transit use in association with suburban centres. Those persons and businesses located in the widely spread-out suburbs have no true incentive to leave their automobiles, and do have some significant disincentives.

There are yet more potential problems associated with the public transit-suburban centre link. In centres which do experience increases in commercial and residential concentration, any attraction created in the centres will not be restricted to public transit users. Severe traffic congestion results when individuals do not choose to employ public transit in their approach to the centres.

The decentralization of employment, however, rarely achieves the goal of higher transit use. In fact, experience in most cities indicates that suburban town centres more often than not give rise to serious traffic congestion. (Leicester 1991, 1)

This problem can be observed on any business day at the Metrotown shopping centre complex in Burnaby. Despite the provision of a SkyTrain station, the extensive parking lots are used to nearly capacity and the surrounding road system is jammed almost to gridlock. Large suburban shopping malls generate

significant amounts of traffic by design -- their size is an indication of the developer's estimate of the extent of the mall's trade area, and large malls must draw customers from a wider area than small malls.

The problem can also apply to work trips. In a GVRD report on a seminar given by Kenneth Orski, a Washington, D.C.-based transportation consultant, it is stated that

[S]ome U.S. cities are discovering that often rail transit systems can create new traffic congestion problems to replace the ones they solve. In Washington, D.C., for instance, high density office developments have grown up around the Metrorail's suburban stations. But 95% of the people who work in the new office developments arrive by car - creating more congestion than ever around the stations. (GVRD 1990a, 6)

These difficulties will be intensified if office employment is relocated from the core of the region (as was the original intent of the RTC policy). The traditional CBDs invariably have the highest transit modal splits in their respective regions, versus very much lower modal splits in the suburban centres. For example, the downtown of the City of Vancouver has a peak hour modal split of over 40 percent, where Metrotown's split is only 17 percent (Leicester, 3). Government relocation of offices, one of the few public initiatives that can encourage higher suburban centre densities, can therefore have a perverse effect on travel patterns. T. Logan (1986, 8) notes that the relocation of a taxation office from the central area to a district centre in the 1970s increased automobile use among the displaced workers from 14 percent to 78 percent. The shorter journey to work had the effect of forcing public transit users into their automobiles.

The final irony is that the resulting traffic congestion and parking problems of an initially successful centre may deter the office employment location decisions that the centre was meant to attract. Neutze (1978, 185) asserts that "[a]s a suburban employment centre grows it becomes less easy to handle the increasing volume of road traffic and to provide parking for all the cars of customers and

employees." As Fothergill (1987, 1) points out, the most desired locational advantages for suburban businesses are accessibility and parking. If these elements are unavailable in the suburban downtown, the office park becomes a much more attractive option.

These considerations of the potential problems with the use of public transit provision as a land use tool do not constitute proof that there is no connection between public transit and suburban centre land use and character. The policies which have been studied in this paper may have been so ineffective at shaping the character of suburban growth that the benefits of transit provision could not be realized, and there may exist more effective means of forging the connection. If public transit had been provided to Metrotown at the right time (i.e., prior to the growth of the commercial developments), the pattern of growth might have been different and the municipal council which approved the three malls might have made a different choice.

The benefits of public transit provision to a region are unquestioned. SkyTrain is jammed to capacity every morning and every afternoon as it transports commuters from suburban homes to their jobs in the regional core (and elsewhere). Many, if not most, of these travellers have been induced to leave their automobiles at home. This can only be positive for everyone. What remains to be shown, however, is whether the provision of public transit can have a positive effect on the absolute amount of growth or the pattern of growth in a suburban centre. More research is needed in this area.

6.3 *RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GREATER VANCOUVER*

This paper has outlined many difficulties associated with the development of suburban downtowns through explicit policy. If the conclusions and lessons herein are well-founded, several courses of action may be suggested toward the

improvement of such policy. The following is a hypothetical list of recommendations and requirements for the development of suburban downtowns, with special reference to how the Greater Vancouver region might comply.

6.3.1 Study the region.

First, any metropolitan region wishing to develop a policy for the creation of suburban downtowns must have accurate and broadly based knowledge of the region, both its economy and its urban structure. Antique images of the region, whether derived from the 1950s or the 1980s, must be abandoned in favour of very intensive investigation. How does the region really work in the modern context? What does it really look like today? What trends are in operation which will affect the economy or the urban structure? Without answering these questions, as the experience of Melbourne shows, policy experimentation can be dangerous.

Greater Vancouver must thoroughly investigate the economic success of Richmond. Are Richmond's locational advantages the sole source of this success, or are there other factors that might be shared with other areas of the metropolis? What is the linkage between the dynamic sub-regional economies of Richmond and Burnaby with their two respective RTCs? How important to the regional economy are the low-density corridors and clusters of employment, such as the Knight Street, Canada Way, or Brentwood-Lougheed-Highway corridors? Will equivalents of these corridors develop south of the Fraser River, or in the northeast sector? Where will they be located, and how will they affect the planned town centres?

6.3.2 Study the commercial development industry.

Second, if policy is meant to affect private sector location decisions, then accurate and broadly based knowledge of the development industry is a necessity. How does the development industry make location and investment decisions? What trends are operating presently which affect that decision process? Where is the region in the current development cycle? Given answers to all of the above, how attractive are the areas being promoted by policy? Without answering these questions, the attraction of private sector investment will be slow, non-existent, or based on luck. The schedule of development in a suburban centre will be unknown and uncoordinated (and perhaps uncontrollable).

Further, it is widely assumed that the investment decisions of the public sector can be a catalyst for private sector location decisions. This assumption should be tested. How did the construction of SkyTrain affect the timing of development in the RTCs and beyond? Did the attractiveness of the RTCs increase? Has public sector office location (BC Transit, B.C. Rail, I.C.B.C., for examples) drawn a corresponding amount of private sector office construction?

6.3.3 Develop policy based directly on these studies.

After sound knowledge of the region and the commercial development industry is acquired, policy should be formulated which reflects that knowledge. Given such understanding, it must be assumed that the locations chosen for suburban downtown development are able to attract interest. That interest should not be squandered through immoderate policy requirements. The policy must be powerful enough to shape the expected development, but judicious enough to avoid alienating the developers and driving them to other sites. Both Bellevue's FAR incentive system and the 1973 City of Vancouver interim zoning bylaw were predicated on the fact that development was assured and that there was a certain

flexibility or negotiating room wherein developers and planners could trade off design quality for additional commercial floorspace.

Clinging to the logical policies of a previous and bygone development era is a mistake. Planners should respond to the actual region, as opposed to the idealized region of memory. How likely is it that a policy designed to solve the development problems of the 1960s will adequately address the problems of a region that has spent thirty years growing into a new urban form?

6.3.4 Do not waver.

The final requirement for a successful suburban centres policy is political resolve. If the analysis of the region and the development industry has been thorough, trust it. Be prepared to wait for the development through at least one business cycle. Do not allow concessions, because they set a precedent for subsequent developers to insist upon. Do not change the rules. If the development industry smells the panic of politicians needing a quick, high-profile development, then they will apply pressure. Developers often state that the one thing they most want from government is consistency. It does not really matter what the rules are (within reason), as long as they apply equally to all players in the competitive market.

The experience of the Bellevue CBD may convince a farsighted municipal council of the long term advantages of being patient and firm. The City of Bellevue was (and is) confident enough in the development potential of their CBD that they are willing to wait for the eventual development of their pedestrian corridor. Bellevue's politicians and planners were not stampeded into wanting it immediately, and allowing the development industry to sense that desire and use it to apply pressure.

6.3.5 A Final Note

If the recommendations listed above were to be followed exactly, the policy would not fulfil all of the requirements that planners originally placed on suburban downtowns. None of the three policies studied had any demonstrable effect on the scale of development or on the location of development in the three regions. The success of Bellevue did not lay in the attraction of more development than would otherwise have come to Bellevue or the region. The dispersal of economic activity was not altered by the development of an urban-style CBD. The travel pattern of the region has not been significantly altered either.

This suggests that the goals attached to the development of suburban downtowns may have been too broad to be achieved. An urban downtown, comfortable to the pedestrian and attractive to high order businesses, has been shown to be approachable. However, the positive benefits that were assumed to accrue to such development have not been in evidence, providing yet more justification for a re-examination of suburban centres policy. If the eventual benefits are so limited, is it really worth continuing such a long and difficult task? Are there more effective ways of providing jobs, shopping opportunities, and housing to suburban areas, while maintaining a commitment to a more "livable" and environmentally responsible region?

6.4 TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The foregoing discussion has presented several areas where further research would be of use.

Most importantly, the nature of the public transit and land use linkage should be examined. Can public transit shape land use into a multicentred form? Can a multicentred form support a financially viable transit network? If not, is a suburban centres policy still worth pursuing? What is the benefit of a centres

policy if it does not control the use of the automobile and lessen the need to commute? If a region is dispersed into a multitude of various sizes of centre and corridor, what is the best way to ameliorate the negative externalities of urban transportation (noise, pollution, land consumption, high cost of transit, etc.)? If suburban centres do not control the use of the automobile, what effect does the creation of a high order suburban centre have on the development of the urban fringe (i.e., will fringe development increase due to the increased proximity of an urban-style downtown)? What would be the effect of combining the provision of public transit to suburban centres with the use of transportation demand management techniques (TDM), such as employer-provided vanpools or high-occupancy vehicle lanes between centres? Would such measures improve the strength of the assumed linkage between transit and land use in the suburbs?

Further, if public transit and pedestrian mobility improvements do not accrue, if the design values expressed in the RTCs are those of the regional shopping mall, what is the effect on the relatively large resident populations for whom the RTCs are their neighbourhoods? Does RTC growth penalize residents with constant non-resident parking and traffic congestion problems, and the attendant problems of noise, pollution, and stress? What is the correlation between SkyTrain and various forms of illegal activity (such as drug transactions at stations, the migration of prostitution from the City of Vancouver, increases in burglaries near stations, and assaults in deserted train cars or stations)? If there are crime problems, will RTCs simply reinforce the negative opinion of higher density living already held by many citizens?

A second area of useful study is the connection between dynamic sub-regional economies and the development of suburban centres. Do such sub-regional economies exist, and does such a connection exist, or are the cases studied in this paper coincidental? Do centres develop to provide services to their

hinterland, or are they formed in parallel by the same processes that drive the sub-regional economies? What is the connection between airport location, highway interchange location, and suburban centre location in the operation of the sub-regional economy?

Third, there are many common assumptions that relate to the discussion of suburban centres which might be tested. Is there such a thing as a "critical mass" of development, beneath which a centre needs policy guidance and beyond which it will grow autonomously? What is the long term development potential in areas with growing populations, but little high order commercial development (e.g., Coquitlam Centre, Whalley)? It seems to be assumed that these areas will eventually take on the characteristics of the inner suburban centres, which have grown as a result of the dispersal of regional employment. Is this process sequential and inevitable, or will the development of the inner urban centres preclude the development of other, more remote suburban centres?

Fourth, as discussed in the Greater Vancouver case study, there appears to be a great deal of inconsistency associated with the use of office floorspace figures in policy evaluation. The development of guidelines for the collection of such figures, and for their use in support of arguments, would be beneficial in the study of the modern regional economy. The accurate estimation of office space is doubly important because it is often used as a proxy for employment, and particularly for managerial, research, and producer service jobs. How should office space figures be differentiated? Should leasable and non-leasable space be separated? Should owner-occupied buildings be distinguished from speculative office buildings and public sector space? Is all office space equivalent (i.e., should there be a distinction made between population-serving office users, such as doctors and accountants, and other users with a wider market, such as engineering

firms or research firms)? Are there industry standards for the reporting of office space figures, and if not, should such standards be set?

Fifth, the Agricultural Land Reserve has probably had more effect on the current shape of the urbanized area of the Greater Vancouver region than any other single factor, and certainly more than RTC policy.⁷¹ What are the implications for continuing or discontinuing the protection of agricultural lands from urban development pressure? Does the lack of a contiguous development pattern help or harm the formation of suburban centres?

Sixth, there are several trends which might be examined in relation to regional growth patterns. What happens to the need for suburban centres if the population continues to disperse beyond the urban fringe? Will the existing hierarchy of small rural towns be a next wave of RTCs, or will the residents be determined to retain the small town character which attracted the population growth at the outset? What effect will the advent of practical telecommuting have on the region? Suburban centres were meant to reduce interregional travel and provide a cultural focus, and telecommuting may provide a partial solution to the former but may provide a greater need for the latter.

Finally, some questions could be addressed concerning the success of the Bellevue CBD policies in attracting urban-style developments. Exactly why did the development industry conform? The development pattern in Bellevue is certainly distinct from almost any other suburban centre in the U.S., in that it is relatively distant from highway interchanges and it is being designed for pedestrians. Was there a "bandwagon" effect (i.e., did the initial pattern condition later developments)? Does the adaptation of the development industry to the particular case of Bellevue suggest that the industry in general is capable of more flexibility than most current policy requires of it?

NOTES

¹ For a discussion, see "Will The Center Hold?", a letter to the editor from Ian Fisher, and editor's reply in *Vancouver Magazine* (November, 1991, 22).

² One square foot is equal to 0.0929 square meters. Accordingly, one million square feet is equal to 92 900 square meters.

³ A beltway is defined as a limited access highway, partially or completely encircling a (traditional American) city area. Most beltways were originally intended to be high-speed bypass routes around central city traffic congestion. Beltway interchanges with radial routes provided a focus for suburbanizing commercial development. See U. S. Department of Transportation (1980) for an early discussion of the effects of beltways on American metropolitan areas.

⁴ Garreau also recognizes the importance of highway interchanges and linkages to the location of the suburban centres (1991, 32-35).

⁵ Hereafter referred to as "(GVRD and Spaeth)."

⁶ Hereafter referred to as "Coriolis."

⁷ Hereafter referred to as "(Jones Lang)."

⁸ Hereafter referred to as "(Burnaby and Hotson)."

⁹ There are many sources for these criteria (GVRD 1974, B1; 1974c, 21; 1980b, 34-40; GVRD and Spaeth 1975, 8-10; Gertler and Crowley 1977, 178). None of the sources present justifications or supporting evidence for the selection of these particular characteristics or quantities. It must be assumed that they were simply "ballpark" figures about which a consensus had developed among the planners and other interested parties.

¹⁰ The reference is drawn from page 4 of the "Overview" section of the document.

¹¹ Mr. Droettboom was then a City of Vancouver planner, and is now City Manager.

¹² Mr. Cameron was then a GVRD planner, and is now Manager of the GVRD Development Services Department, which succeeded the GVRD Planning Department in 1983.

¹³ A more recent summary of the development of Regional Town Centres policy can be found in Davis and Perkins (1992). Davis and Perkins use a comparative study of RTC policy and a similar policy in Melbourne to draw general lessons for the formation of future multicentred regional policy.

¹⁴ A digital map of municipal RTC designations was used to estimate the area of each zone. Several other sources were also used to confirm the approximate size of the estimate based on the digital map (Rao 1989; Township of Richmond 1986; District of Burnaby 1982; District of Burnaby 1991; GVRD 1986, Appendix D). Acres are used to maintain consistency with 1970s documents.

¹⁵ Colliers Macaulay Nicolls is hereafter referred to as "Colliers."

¹⁶ 115,000 sq. ft., according to Artibise, et al. (1990, 12).

¹⁷ Hartshorn and Muller (1986) and Garreau (1991) agree that *five million* square feet of *leasable* office space is needed to qualify for recognition as a suburban business centre (or "edge city").

¹⁸ District of Burnaby (1982) estimates that 150,000 to 200,000 persons lived within a 3-mile radius from the core of Metrotown in 1982.

¹⁹ An innovative experiment in shopping mall alteration is occurring at Park Royal in West Vancouver (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992g). Park Royal's owner is spending twenty million dollars on an expansion project which will include the introduction of street-front retail outlets and a new public market. If this venture is successful, other companies involved in the highly imitative shopping mall sector may decide to follow Park Royal's example. The Metrotown RTC could benefit from such a trend. (Bellevue Square, the major regional mall in the Bellevue CBD has already introduced such street level retail.)

²⁰ Two small office buildings have been added to the RTC since 1980, one of 80,000 sq. ft. on the edge of the old downtown and one of 43,000 sq. ft. in the New Westminster Quay development area (Real Market Review Inc. 1992, 25, 28). Most of the office space in New Westminster is concentrated outside of the RTC, in the 6th Street and 6th Avenue area.

²¹ The preference of commercial development markets for large sites and the difficulty in providing these sites in nascent suburban centres are also seen to be barriers to the development of suburban downtowns in Melbourne (see Chapter 4).

²² Coriolis (1990, 2) implies that the Coquitlam Centre forecast period of 20 years is probably too short to see any major commercial concentration.

²³ The size of Whalley-Guildford is given as 2,160 acres (Rao 1989, 7.4).

²⁴ An earlier document (District of Surrey 1980) had outlined the options available for a Regional Town Centre in north Surrey, and had recommended the concept of developing a connection between Whalley and Guildford.

²⁵ There is currently considerable doubt about the construction of the most southerly of the stations. Negotiations are ongoing between the District of Surrey, the provincial government, and the developer (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992a; 1992e; 1992f). The most recent announcement from BC Transit is that construction will not proceed (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992f).

²⁶ The reporter, Harold Munro, includes the mayors of both Surrey and Coquitlam in this observation (*The Vancouver Sun* 1992d).

²⁷ Here again there is confusion between sources, and even within the same source, over the exact extent of office floorspace in an area. The District of Surrey (1991, 3.12) document gives a current figure for Whalley office floorspace of 539,000 sq. ft., while the Colliers (1990a) study gives two different figures: on page

2, over 400,000 sq. ft., and on page 29, only 287,000 sq. ft. in seven buildings. I assume that the difference in the two Colliers numbers is due to the addition of Station Tower, but that still leaves the discrepancy between the two documents. The figure given in the District of Surrey document is almost identical to that given in Artibise, et al. (1990, 12, Table 1) for the old town centre, Whalley-Guildford (532,926 sq. ft.). The District of Surrey figure may reflect an unaltered number from a pre-1991 document. As discussed above, such confusion brings all sources into doubt.

²⁸ District of Surrey (1991, 6.2) cites a floorspace estimate of 530,000 sq. ft. in Whalley. Aside from the Surrey Taxation Centre, the only other buildings noted were Whalley Post Office, Western Cable Systems, some B.C. Telephone Co. offices, and one medical/dental building. Again, there is doubt about the exact nature of this 530,000 sq. ft. of office floorspace.

²⁹ Guildford, Newton, Fleetwood, Cloverdale, and South Surrey are the town centres for each of Surrey's other sub-areas (District of Surrey 1992).

³⁰ Another important shopping centre with 150 stores, 3 anchor tenants, and over 700,000 sq. ft. of retail space will open in west Newton in 1994 (*The Vancouver Sun* 1991c). The addition of this shopping mall to two existing centres on the Delta side of Scott Road (Scottsdale Mall, Scott 72 Center) will create the largest retail agglomeration south of the Fraser River, and could provide another major competitive threat to the attractiveness of Whalley.

³¹ The prudence of this belief is challenged in the conclusion of this paper.

³² See Walmsley (1992) for a discussion of the current general commercial success in Richmond.

³³ The Ministry for Planning and Environment (MPE) received the planning functions of the MMBW in 1985. At the end of the 1980s, MPE was reconstituted as the Department of Planning and Urban Growth and, more recently, has been renamed the Department of Planning and Housing.

³⁴ The total of 15 DCs is a result of the addition of Broadmeadows in 1985. Subsequently, two more DCs were designated: Fountain Gate/Narre Warren in 1989 and Werribee in 1990 (Moodie 1991, 17, 21).

³⁵ Footscray is not in the south or east. It is directly to the west of the CBD and is primarily a population-serving retail centre (Moodie 1991, 162).

³⁶ This is in contrast to the development pattern in Greater Vancouver during a commercial development boom in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when commercial floorspace was being added in all areas of the metropolis at faster rates than population was growing (Coriolis 1986, 4-5).

³⁷ Increased automobile use has been noted in the case of a public sector office relocations from CBD to suburb in Sydney (Neutze 1978, 185) and Dandenong (T. Logan 1986b, 8). Such increased traffic congestion is found throughout American suburban centres (Cervero 1984; 1986). Although no empirical support is available, such congestion is readily apparent in Metrotown in Greater Vancouver.

38 Hofmeister (1988, 209) asserts that the lack of suburban nucleations in Melbourne is the result of an absence of freeway intersections.

39 Central Broadway contains approximately 4.6 million sq. ft. of office space (Colliers Macaulay Nicolls 1990b), less than ten percent of the regional total (Artibise, et al. 1990, 12), and was roughly equivalent to the total in the six RTCs in 1989. St. Kilda Road, on the other hand, contains about eight million sq. ft. of office space (sixteen percent of the regional total). This is more than double the amount in all fifteen DCs (and St. Kilda Road only accounts for about half of the non-CBD office space of the core area) (Moodie 1991, 58-59).

40 The 2 500 sq. m. (27,000 sq. ft.) limit on non-District-Centre office buildings meant that even very small buildings were restricted. The limit in industrial areas was even smaller (500 sq. m., or about 5,400 sq. ft.).

41 The cases of Richmond in Greater Vancouver and Bellevue, Washington appear to bear this out. This point will be elaborated upon in Chapter 6.

42 The CBD contained 51.9 percent of regional office floorspace in 1991, the rest of the Inner Area contained an additional 31.4 percent, and the suburban areas contained only 16.7 percent (Moodie 1991, 58-59).

43 Hereafter referred to as "(Washington State)."

44 The PSRC replaced the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG), which was disbanded earlier this year (Stroh interview 1991) on the recommendation of the PSCOG Review Task Force (PSCOG 1989, 1). The PSCOG performed two functions: cooperative transportation planning (necessary for the receipt of federal transportation grants) and general forecasting for population and employment. The City of Bellevue almost withdrew from the PSCOG in 1986 because of disagreements over PSCOG's forecasted levels of employment (lower than Bellevue's own estimates) and over the PSCOG's opposition to Bellevue's attempt to obtain its own water supply (PSCOG 1989, Appendix B).

45 Rejection of further powers occurred in 1956, 1958, 1968, and 1970 (Brambilla and Longo 1980, 37-38, 45).

46 A renewed regional strategy is also currently occurring in Greater Vancouver. A statement of goals for the strategy, called *Creating Our Future* (GVRD 1990), is being used to create a new Regional Strategic Plan. Concurrently, strategic planning for regional transportation is being undertaken in a joint GVRD-Ministry of Highways and Transportation planning process, called Transport 2021.

47 It is called the Regional Transit Project Planning Committee (KCTS).

48 The Washington Growth Management Act requires the following several actions from local governments:

- comprehensive land use and transportation plans to be submitted from local governments by 1993;
- the setting of urban growth boundaries (as in Oregon);
- the identification and protection of environmentally sensitive areas; and,
- concurrence between increasing population and infrastructure provision (KCTS).

49 The Growth Management Act will require action in the future, but the direction of growth to existing compact urbanized areas will likely only augment the initiatives already current in Bellevue (Stroh interview; KCTS).

50 The "Eastside" is the name used to refer to the urbanized and urbanizing areas to the east of Lake Washington from Seattle, including Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Bothell, Issaquah and other areas. The total population in this area in 1989 was estimated at 350,000 (Welch 1989, 20; City of Bellevue 1991a).

51 Hereafter referred to as "(National Cooperative)."

52 From notes taken at "The Bellevue Experience," panel discussion at The Emerging City Conference, held at Bellevue on September 27, 1991. The reference to race and wealth is drawn from the recollections of panel member Mr. Lee Springate, head of the City of Bellevue Parks Department.

53 The Freemans have been one of the leading families in the area for over 50 years. Miller Freeman, an Eastside publisher, was a leader in the discussion favouring the construction of the Mercer Island Bridge in 1940. Kemper Freeman, Sr., developed Bellevue Square in 1946. Kemper Freeman, Jr., recently developed Bellevue Place (a large hotel and commercial complex in the CBD).

54 Three of these studies were *Bellevue CBD Parking Study* (Tranpln 1976), *Downtown Bellevue: Problems, Potentials and Future Directions* (City of Bellevue and Bellevue Downtown Development Board 1976), and *Bellevue Central Business District Framework Plan* (City of Bellevue 1977).

55 DeBartolo had his own study which showed, again not surprisingly, the benign nature of Evergreen East (Schneider 1981, 248).

56 King County had also opposed the development (Welch 1989, 46). The source gives no reason for this opposition. See Kay (1991, 6) for a discussion of civic agreement on CBD development.

57 According to Welch (1989, 46) this was the first time DeBartolo had been unable to gain approval for a major project in the United States.

58 The Central Business District (CBD) Subarea Plan was adopted by Resolution No. 3453 of the Bellevue City Council on November 13, 1979. It was later amended by Resolution No. 4632 on October 7, 1985. The plan forms Chapter 21.V.3 of the City of Bellevue Comprehensive Plan.

59 This goal was amended in 1990 to read: *Maintain the Bellevue Central Business District (CBD) as the financial, retail and business hub of the Eastside and the primary commercial area to provide local goods and services to the neighborhoods surrounding the CBD and to the residents and employees within the district.* (City of Bellevue 1991b, 1)

60 The ratio system is read as follows: for every square foot of amenity provided (the right side of the ratio), a developer is allowed to build an additional amount of commercial space (the left side of the ratio). For example, the parking ratio of 0.5:1 indicates that each square foot of parking provided would yield the developer only one half a square foot of development area, whereas a bonus of eight square

feet would be provided for each square foot of child care space provided (at an 8:1 bonus level).

⁶¹ The mall itself has been adapting to the pedestrian orientation through the addition of street level retail and restaurant outlets on its eastern (downtown-facing) frontage. Public art and greenery has been added to the sidewalks along other areas of that frontage.

⁶² The corridor has not yet been developed, other than as a sidewalk passing between parking lots. As such, however, the corridor enhances pedestrian mobility within the core.

⁶³ The lower forecast had been produced by the PSCOG (see footnote 44) and had been a source of contention between Bellevue and METRO, which had used the lower forecast to prepare its plan, rather than Bellevue's own more optimistic forecast (PSCOG 1990b, Appendix B; Noguchi 1982, 5).

⁶⁴ The tallest building currently in the CBD is 373 feet high, but at least two projects in the development pipeline will exceed 450 feet. They will be allowed to proceed through "grandfathering" provisions (Stroh interview).

⁶⁵ Though less so than in the case of RTCs in Greater Vancouver, there is some inconsistency surrounding the figures given in various sources for office and commercial space in Bellevue. Welch (1989) is the only source to provide a figure for 1980 office space, and agrees generally with descriptions of downtown Bellevue as an important, but primarily retail centre for the Eastside. The figure provided by Stroh (interview) was drawn directly from the City of Bellevue database, and is based on CBD building records. Pivo (1990, 461), however, provides a 1988 office space figure of 9 million sq. ft. for downtown Bellevue. It may be that Pivo had meant to refer to total commercial or total non-residential space. Several sources (Stroh; Welch 1989; Cervero 1989) place current total CBD commercial space at over 7 million square feet. Stroh (interview) gives a figure of 9.24 million sq. ft. for current non-residential floorspace in the CBD.

⁶⁶ The transit mode split is the percentage of commuters in the morning peak travel period who use public transit, as opposed to all other methods.

⁶⁷ In 1989, downtown Bellevue contained almost twice as much commercial space as either Spokane or Tacoma, the second and third largest cities in Washington State.

⁶⁸ The literature review section of this paper (see Section 2.1) contains a description of only part of the copious research on the phenomenon of modern suburban centres in the United States. See particularly Muller (1976), Baerwald (1978), Greene (1980), Hartshorn and Muller (1986), Cervero (1989), and Garreau (1991).

⁶⁹ Pivo, in his study of office suburbanization in six North American cities, notes that Bellevue was unusual among them in its distance from freeway interchanges (1990, 462).

⁷⁰ As quoted in Parker (1991, 44).

⁷¹ The Agricultural Land Commission Act of 1973 provided statutory protection from urban development to the highest classes of farmland in the entire province through the creation of the Agricultural Land Reserve. The development of lands (and the prevention of development) within the Reserve is administered by a provincially-appointed, but putatively independent Agricultural Land Commission.

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 - (1991a) "Whalley poised for huge facelift," by Ann Barling, April 5, p. E1.
 - (1991b) "Frontenac and centre," by Ann Barling, July 12, p. E1
 - (1991c) "Surrey shops oppose mega-mall," by Harold Munro, November 26, p. D3
 - (1991d) "Burnaby buys land, offices to expand civic hall," by Bruce Constantineau, November 29, p. E2.
 - (1991e) "Growth puts new bent to Richmond planning," by Jes Odam, December 5, p. F12.
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 - (1992c) "Tough times on the edge of the edge," by Harold Munro, March 28, p. B10.
 - (1992d) "A critical mass to stop the strip malls," by Harold Munro, March 28, pp. B10.
 - (1992e) "Builder set to start Whalley station," by Harold Munro, April 2, p. B3.
 - (1992f) "Plans for Surrey SkyTrain site derailed by land developers' financial withdrawal," by Jeff Lee, April 4, p. A5.
 - (1992g) "Park Royal counts on street-front look to lure shoppers out of passing traffic," by Jenny Lee, August 1, p. B1.
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APPENDIX 1

Regional Town Centre boundaries, 1985 (GVRD 1986: Appendix D; author's digitized map).

A digital map of municipal RTC designations was used to estimate the area of each zone. Several other documents were used to confirm the approximate size of the estimate (Rao 1989; Township of Richmond 1986; District of Burnaby 1982, 1991).

1. Metrotown, 735 acres
 - North by Thurston, Bond, and Grange to Dover
 - East by Royal Oak
 - South by Imperial St.
 - West by Boundary
2. New Westminster Downtown, 250 acres
 - North by Royal Ave.
 - East by McBride Blvd.
 - South by the waterfront
 - West by Queensborough Bridge
- 3a. Whalley-Guildford Town Centre, 2,160 acres
 - North by 112th Ave.
 - East by 156th St.
 - South by 96th Ave.
 - West by 132nd St.
- 3b. Whalley Town Centre, 1,320 acres
 - East by 140th St. (see District of Surrey 1990: 3-9)
 - all other boundaries remain the same
4. Coquitlam Town Centre, 2,400 acres
 - North by Pathan Ave.
 - East by Coquitlam/Port Coquitlam municipal boundary
 - South by the railway
 - West by Coquitlam/Port Moody boundary
5. Richmond Centre, 1,150 acres
 - North by Cambie Road
 - East by Garden City
 - South by Granville Ave.
 - West by Gilbert Road
- 6a. Lonsdale Quay (Lower Lonsdale area only)
 - West by Forbes St.
 - North by 5th St.
 - East by St. Patricks
 - South by the waterfront
- 6b. Lonsdale Town Centre, 690 acres
 - West by Forbes St. and Mahon Ave.
 - North by Trans Canada Highway
 - East by St. Andrews Ave.
 - South by the waterfront (see City of North Vancouver 1989)

APPENDIX 2

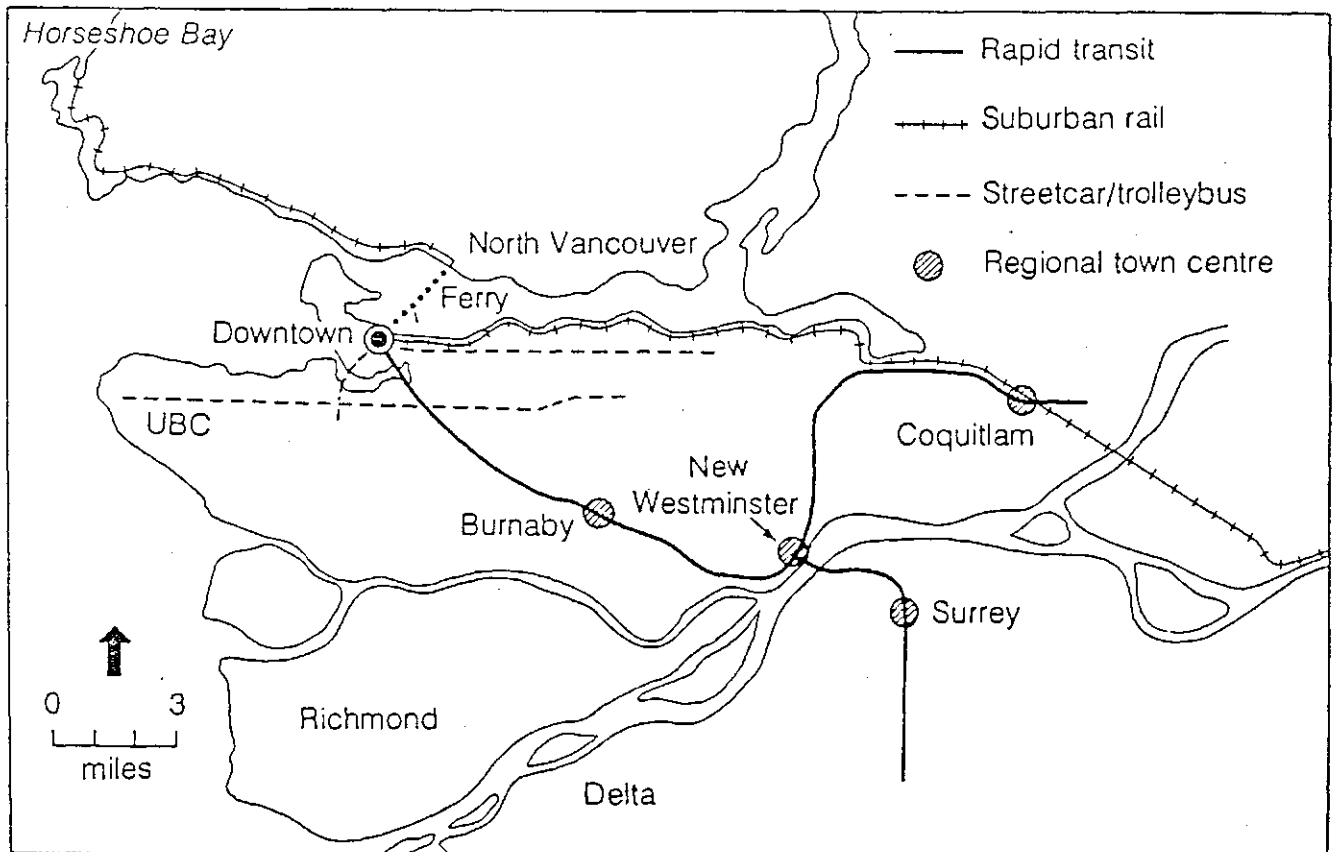
District Centres by region and date of designation (Moodie 1991).

DISTRICT CENTRE	SUB-REGION	DESIGNATED
Footscray	West	1981
Sunshine	West	1981
Moonee Ponds	Northwest	1981
Preston	Northeast	1981
Greensborough	Northeast	1981
Prahran	East	1981
Camberwell	East	1981
Box Hill	East	1981
Ringwood	East	1981
Cheltenham	Southeast	1981
Oakleigh	Southeast	1981
Glen Waverley	Southeast	1981
Dandenong	Southeast	1981
Frankston	South	1981
Broadmeadows	North	1985
Fountain Gate/Narre Warren	Southeast	1989
Werribee	West	1990

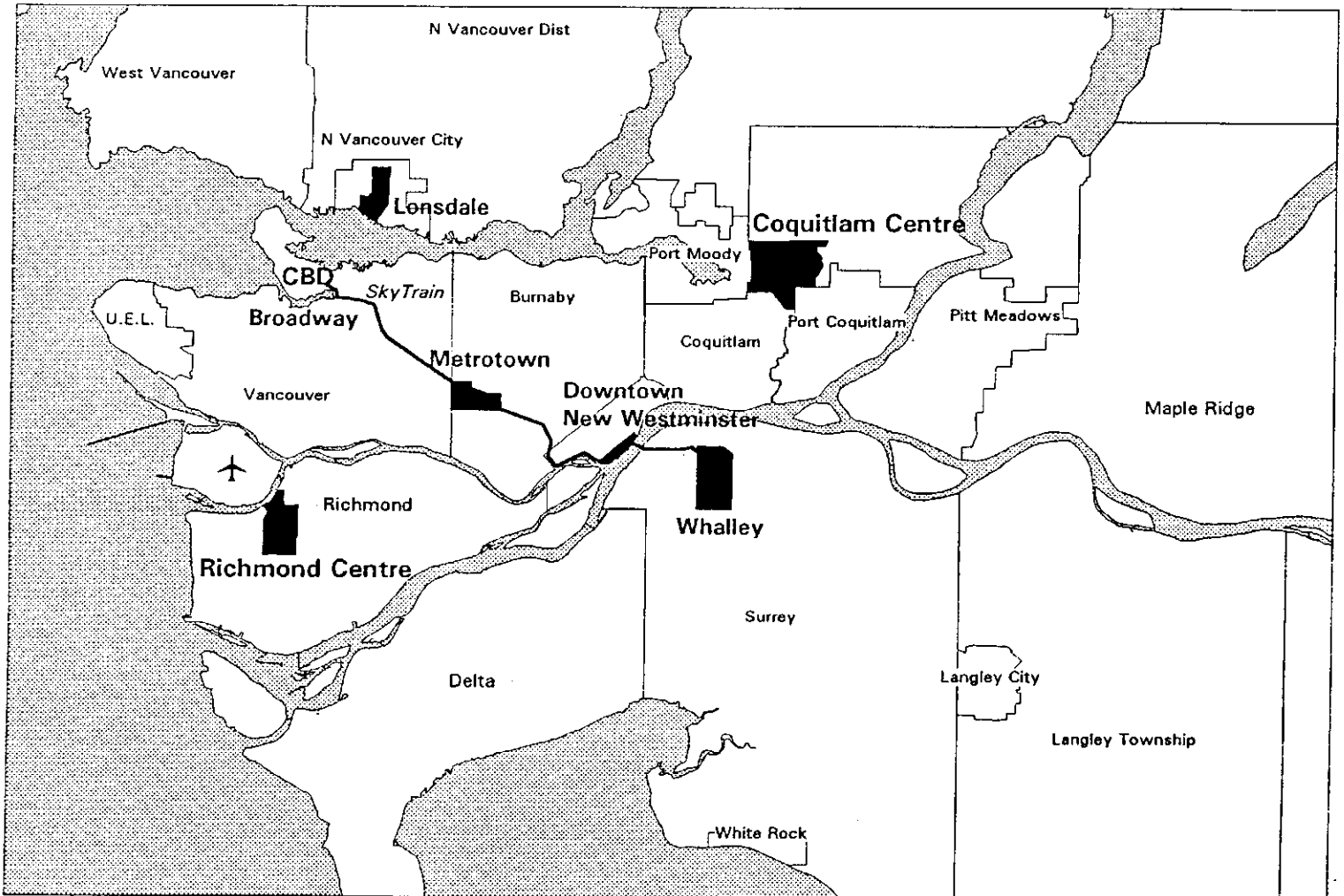
APPENDIX 3

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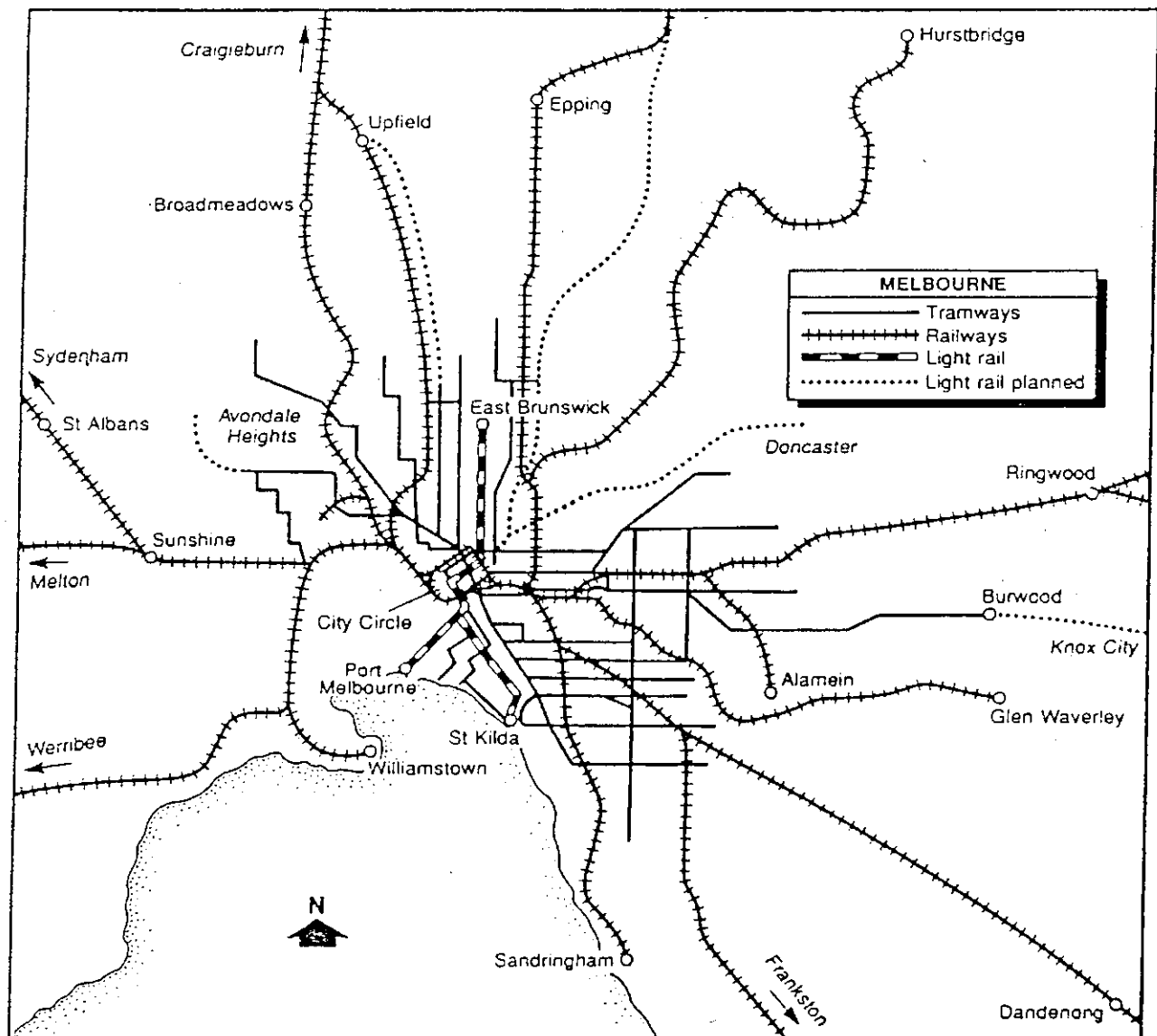
Map 1. Proposed regional town centres and public transit system, 1975
(Adapted from GVRD 1975b).



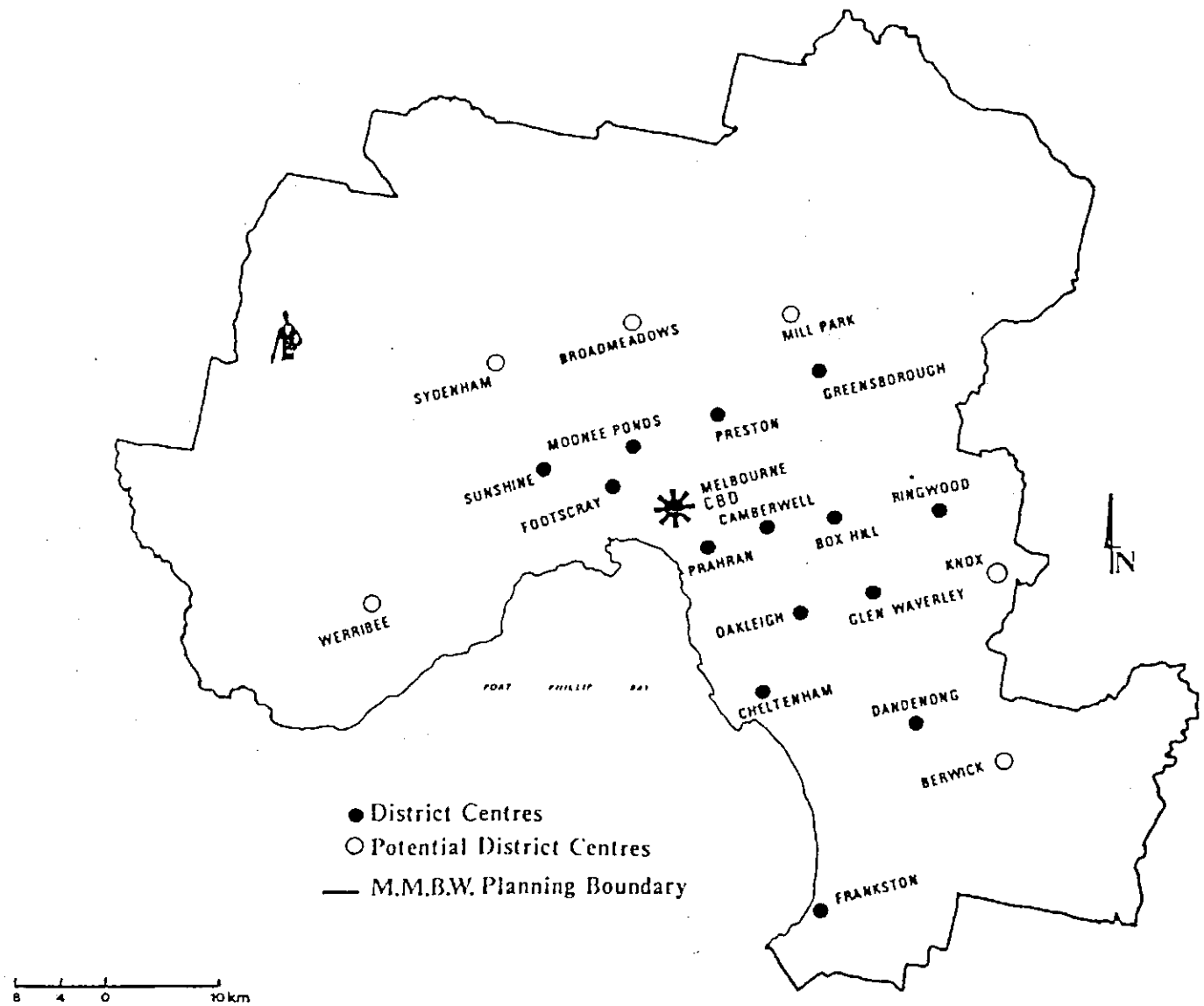
Map 2. Boundaries of six regional town centre zones and SkyTrain, 1992 (Author's map).



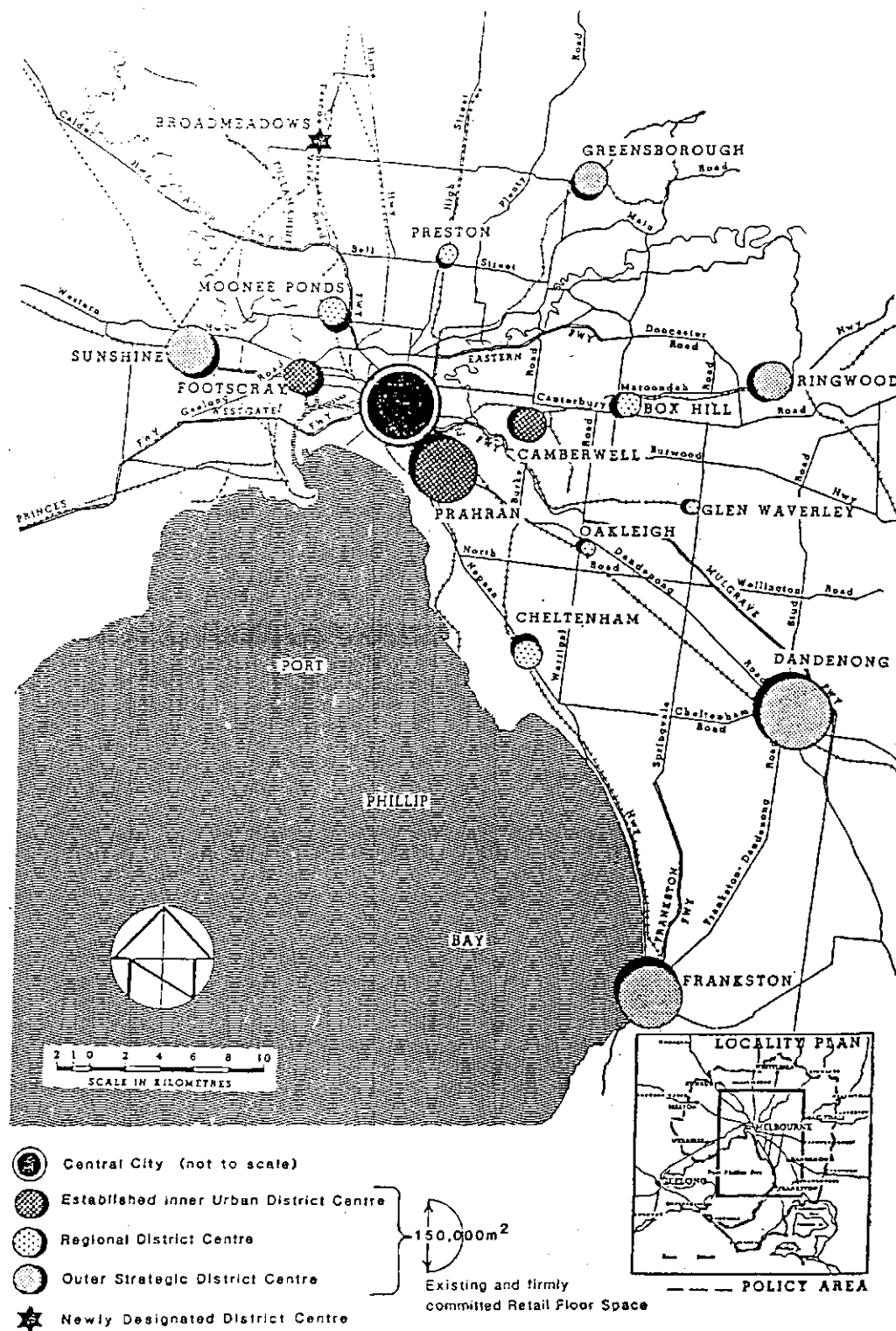
Map 3. Melbourne public transit network, 1990 (Terrell 1990).



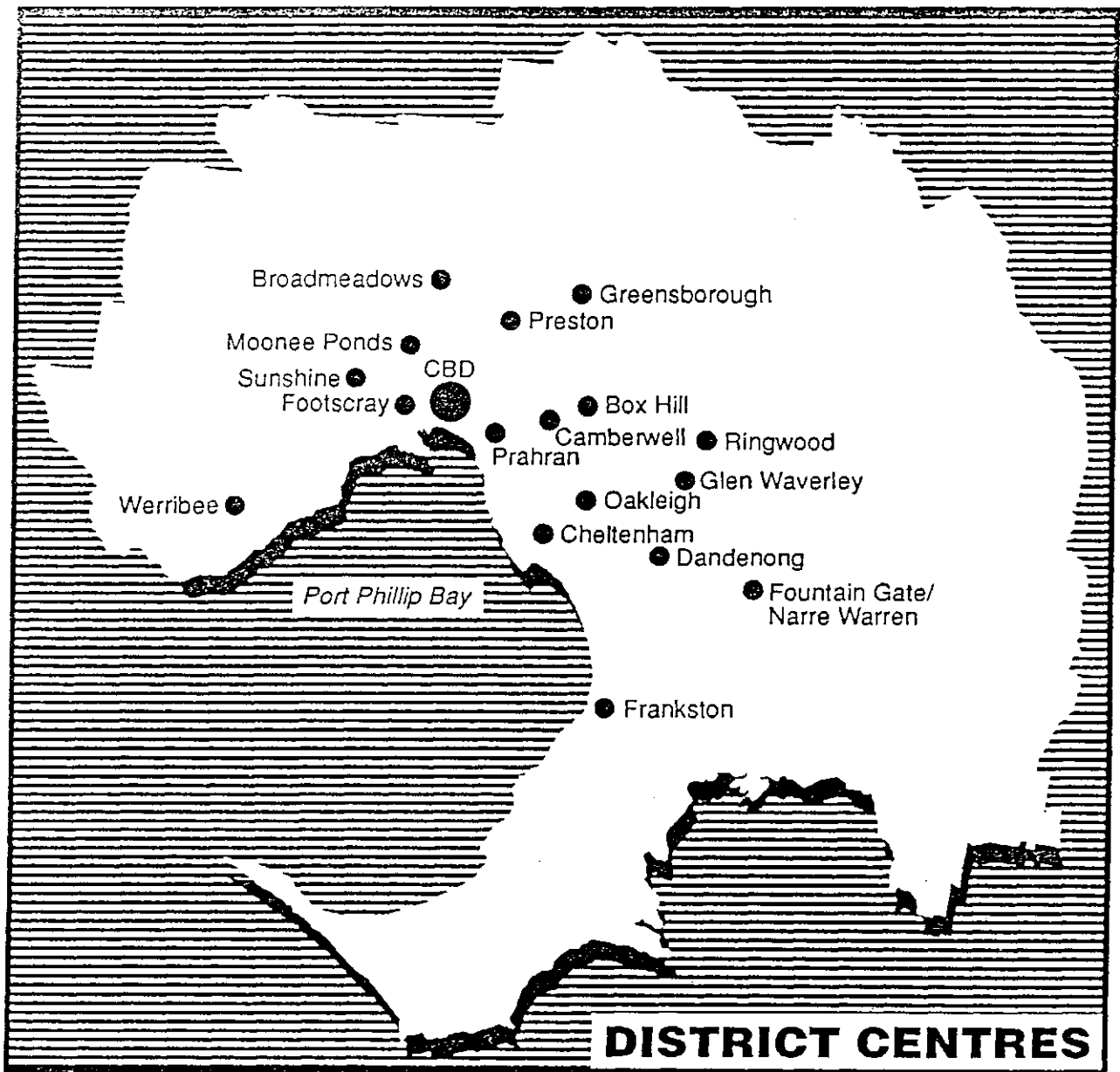
Map 4. District centres, 1982 (Carter 1982).



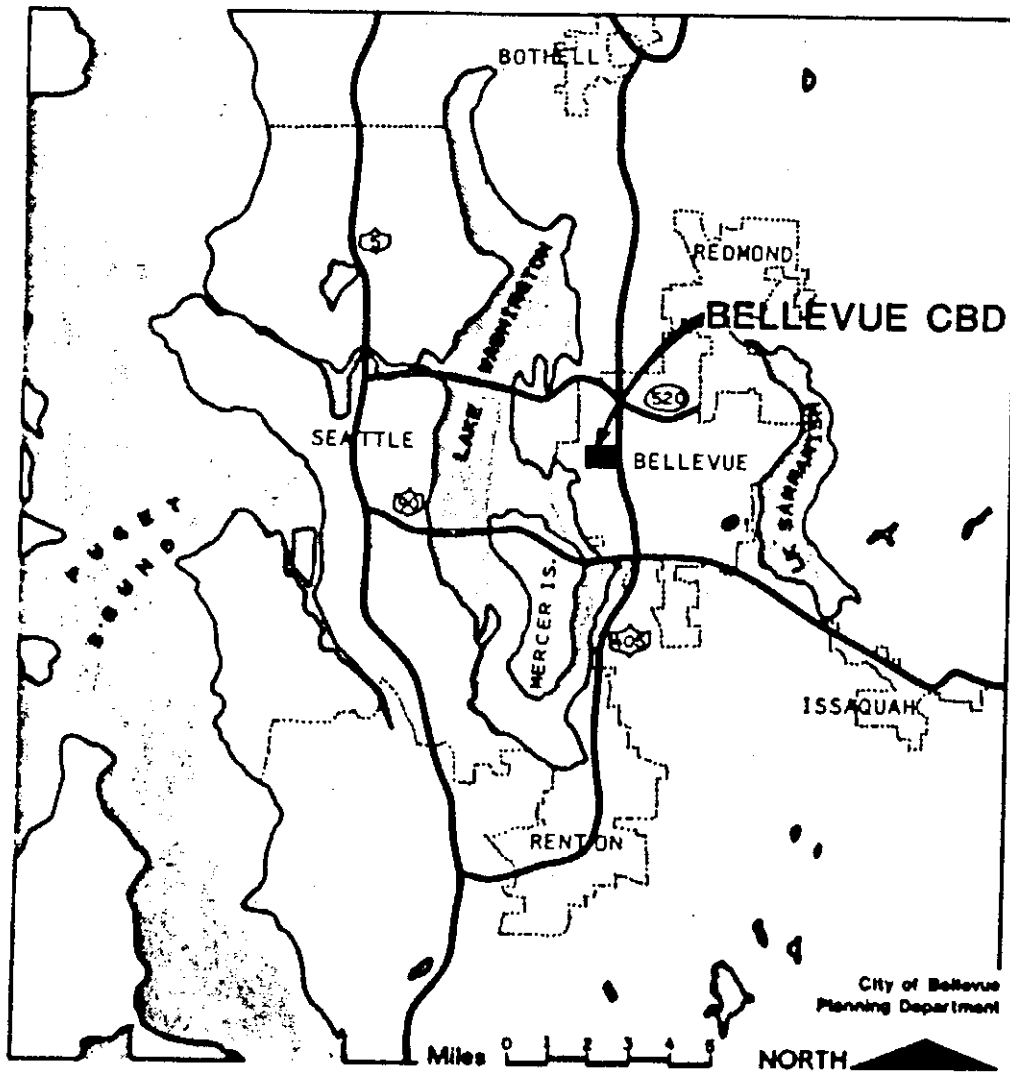
Map 5. Differentiated district centres, 1989 (MPE 1989).



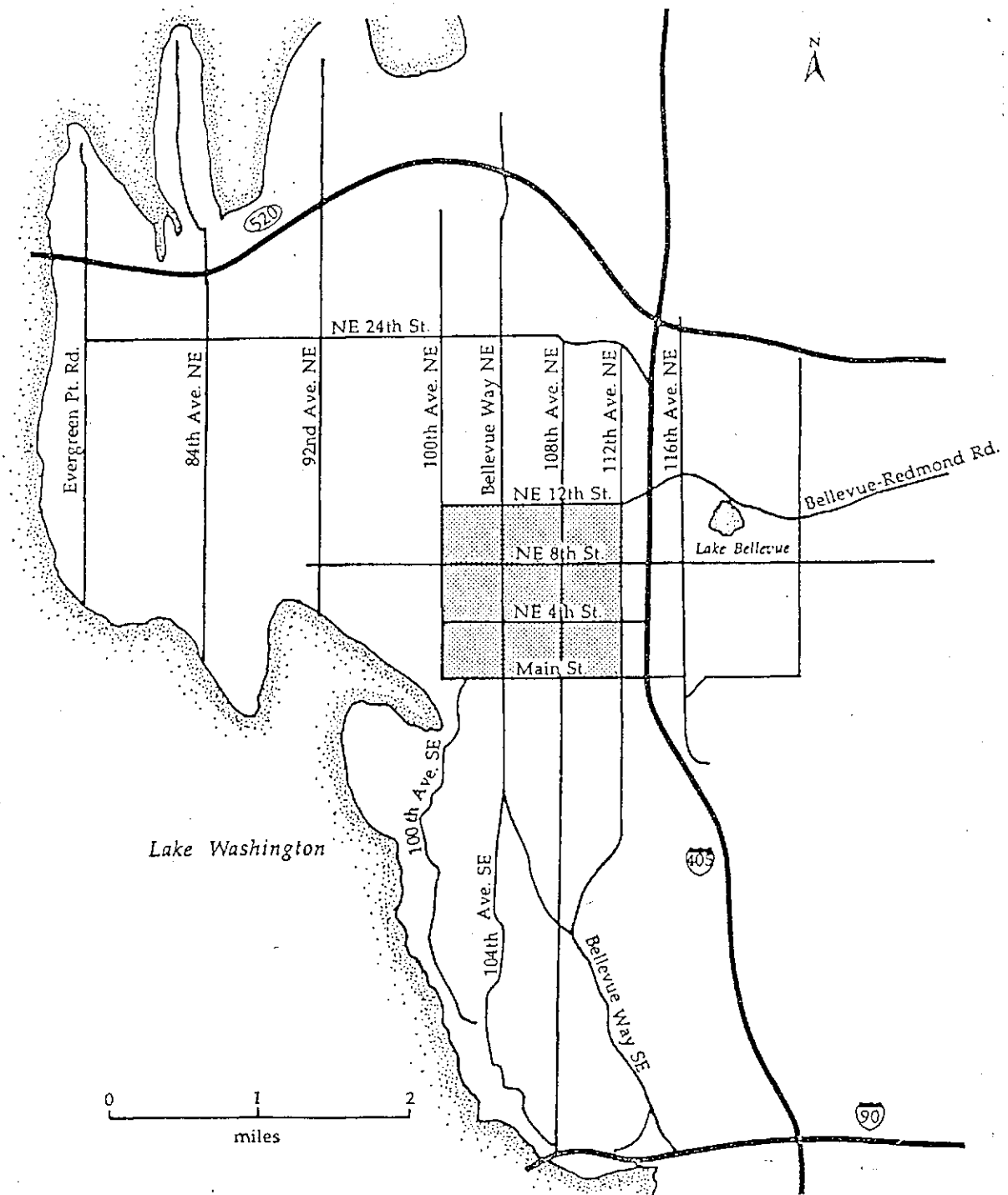
Map 6. District centres, 1991 (Moodie 1991).



Map 7. Seattle metropolitan area, showing the City of Bellevue (Noguchi 1982).



Map 8. Bellevue central business district (Cervero 1989).



Map 9. Conceptual map of Bellevue central business district sub-areas (City of Bellevue 1991b).

