TESTIMONY OF GENE SOLON BEFORE THE D.C. ZONING COMMISSION, MAY 2, 2002

I, Gene Solon, former first vice-president of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA), and more recently vice-chairperson of its Waterside Mall/Waterfront Task Force, thank the Zoning Commission for this opportunity to testify as an individual in opposition to the request of the petitioner in case 01-35.

Despite the lack of any traffic study, the petitioner plans to have a roadway cut through Waterside Mall, a shopping center complex which was one of the attractions that prompted so many of us to take up residence in Southwest D.C. For years, we've wanted it renovated, but *at no time* did the Southwest community endorse bisecting it with a roadway, either of the kind described in the 1998 Urban Land Institute report, or of the slightly different kind now adopted by the petitioners. Their plan was never presented to key community organizations like ANC 2D or SWNA before it was unveiled to the community last October 24th, much to the surprise of former ANC 2D executive director Gottlieb Simon and others who had been to a small-group meeting months earlier where, according to Mr. Simon, a plan featuring no roadway had been presented. I'd like you to know that a only a day or so after the *current* plan was suddenly thrust upon our community, developer Art Mosely of the Kaempfer Company telephoned me to say that it was not the development team, but "*the city*" that had wanted the roadway. It *appears* that, even at that late date, the developers were against a roadway, but found themselves forced to accept it.

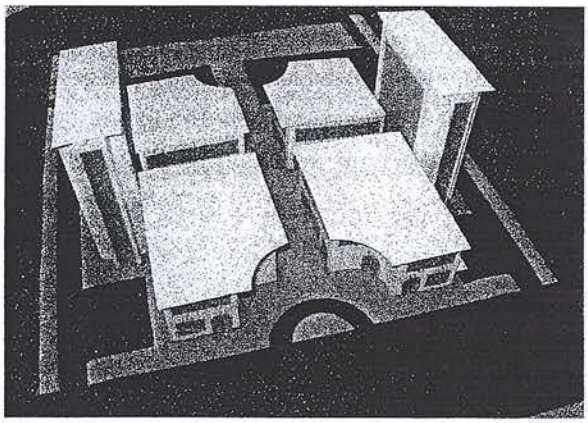
At a full-house SWNA meeting this past Earth Day, Southwesters showed clearly that they want their new shopping center to retain its pedestrians-only pathways. Widespread, enthusiastic applause greeted my suggestion that a new center contain the features of a model I exhibited – features including (1) north-south and tower-to-tower walkways, (2) architecture attractive to tourists and D.C. residents alike, (3) high-density, business-profitable, revenue-generating shopping and office space, with some housing, (4) increased automobile parking space easily accessible via existing, unnamed, underutilized side-roads now hugging the center, all part of a smooth new automobile circulation pattern linking the center to our waterfront, (5) minimum disturbance and retention of more business services during less-expensive, faster reconstruction, (6) retention of the northside park, (7) promenade cafés serving sandwiches that are *not* gasoline-flavored, and, most important, (8) respect for Southwesters, including schoolchildren, seniors and the handicapped. I have provided you with photographs of my model. I have also provided copies of a booklet that reminds us to think globally before acting locally, and that refutes the false, limited-context-based allegation that pedestrians-oriented shopping centers don't work. The booklet contains pictorial and textual references to prosperous such centers currently flourishing worldwide, and to others under construction, and to still others planned for. Examples of these are the beautiful, prosperous center at 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, and the arcade soon to be built at Gallery Place, right here in D.C.

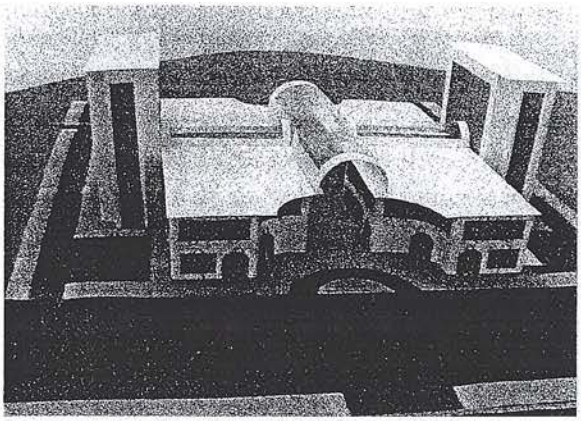
Government and consultant "experts" have been repeating the palliative that the proposed roadway will contain "traffic calming" features (speed bumps, cobblestones, etc.). I'm astounded that they seem not to realize that traffic *speed* is not the issue. The issue is *unnecessary* commuter and other traffic exacerbating the *current* rush-hour(s) gridlock on our residential streets, and impeding the shopping process – the very process the "experts" claim they want to enhance! To date we have not been shown why this traffic is at all necessary in the first place!

Commissioners, I urge you to reject the petitioners' request at his time, because it is tied to a process that violated Mayor Williams' Neighborhood Action Initiative's principle of full community involvement, because it is tied to a plan that is as flawed as the process that produced it, because Southwesters finally should be given *adequate time* for *bona fide* involvement in the development of a project that *truly* benefits *all* D.C. residents and visitors. *Please* help slow the mad rush a little, so that the Southwest community can catch its breath and work with the petitioners and our new councilmember to help shape our own destiny -- and help produce a Waterside Mall project our mayor, our council, the petitioners, you and we can *all* be proud of. Thank you.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.01-35
EXHIBIT NO.19

SAVE SOME SPACE FOR PEDESTRIANS
BECAUSE IT'S BEST FOR SOUTHWESTERS AND BEST FOR OUR CITY!





The Right Kind of Renovation We need to renovate Waterside Mall. But we need the right k*ind* of Waterside Mall renovation, renovation that preserves a sense of community, that is "neighborhood friendly," that protects Southwest and visiting schoolchildren and seniors (including those who are handicapped) from commuter and other unnecessary automobile traffic, and that allows shoppers to go from store to store without having to cross yet another street.

We don't need a roadway cutting through Waterside Mall – we already have enough streets here for Southwesters and visitors. We welcome visitors to shop and recreate here, but we should not do anything to encourage them to commute *through* our residential streets. We say, "Come *to* our shopping center, don't just drive *through* it!"

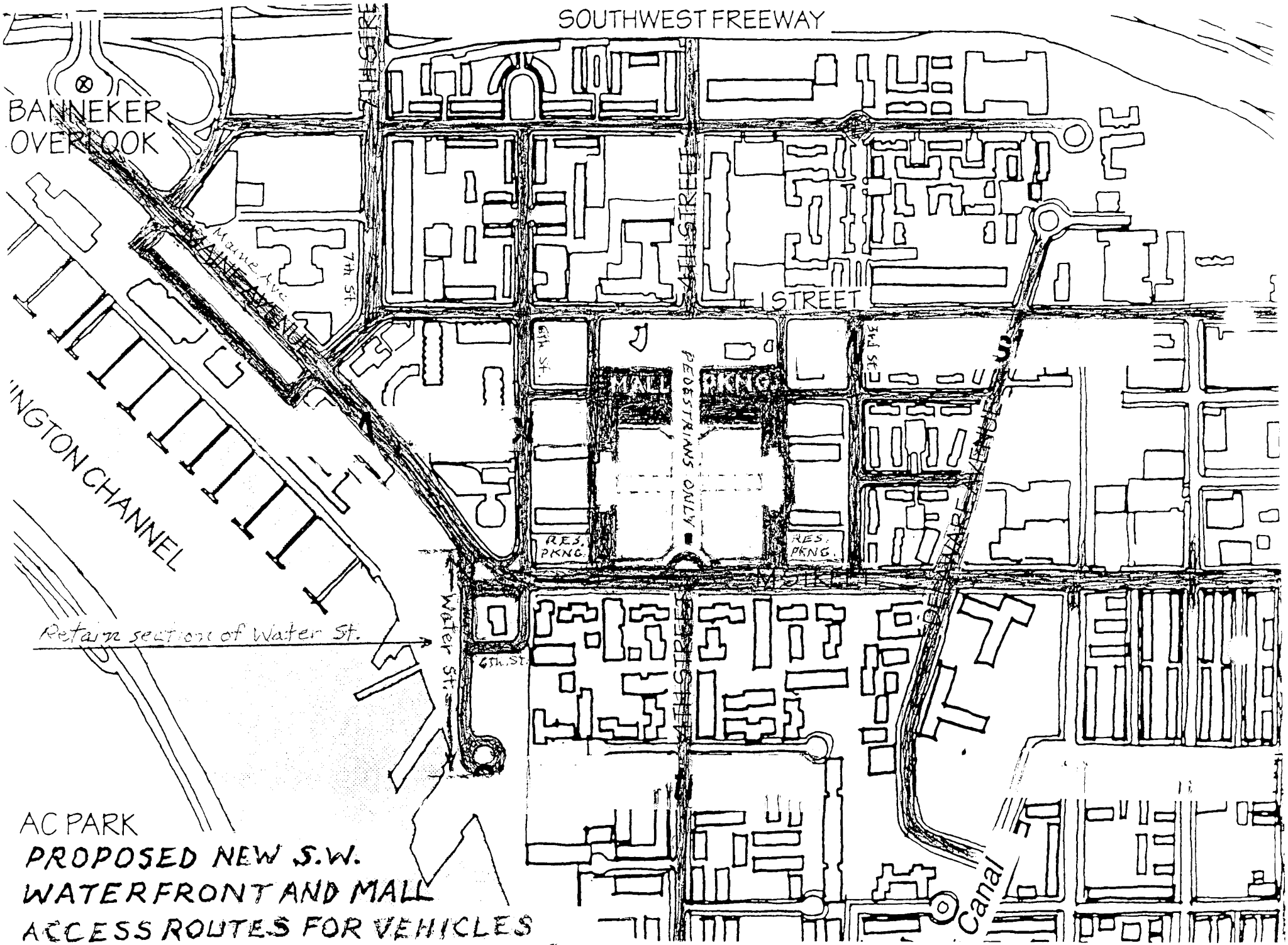
Good For Southwesters, New Neighbors, Tourists and Businesses
The photographs above show how our mall can be renovated so that it remains compact, and so that it will be attractive to visitors and to those who will be our new neighbors as Southwest waterfront and other development occurs. The above configurations are good for business – they feature high store and office densities. The shopping area can accommodate offices on the now-unused second floor. The towers can provide some housing as well as office space.

Convenient And Safe M Street Frontage, With Adequate On-Site Parking Areas Accessible Via Already-Existing Roadways
Note, in the photographs, how the two-story shopping/office structure is "pulled" right up to M Street – strollers can shop when the spirit hits them. Note how the north side of the structure is "shortened" to provide adequate parking space -- easily accessible via asphalt roadways that already exist but have been underutilized!

A Metro Station No Longer Surrounded By Traffic (And Now Protected From Bad Weather)
Note how the Metro station escalators would be so close to shops that Metro riders will find it hard to resist shopping as they approach or leave the station. And, with a transparent canopy over the shopping area, Metro users will be protected against foul weather!

Uncovered Or (Preferably) Covered, A Pedestrians-Oriented Shopping Center Is The Sensitive, Intelligent Way To Go
"It won't work" theories have been thoroughly refuted by experts (see page 14 of my booklet, "Saving Some Space For Pedestrians," wherein planning expert Patrick Siegman attests "Most pedestrian malls have succeeded.") We have all the ingredients – including an "alternative" (Metro) transportation mode -- here in Southwest D.C. to make a pedestrians-oriented shopping center a resounding success! **Let's do it the right way!**

-- *Gene Solon*



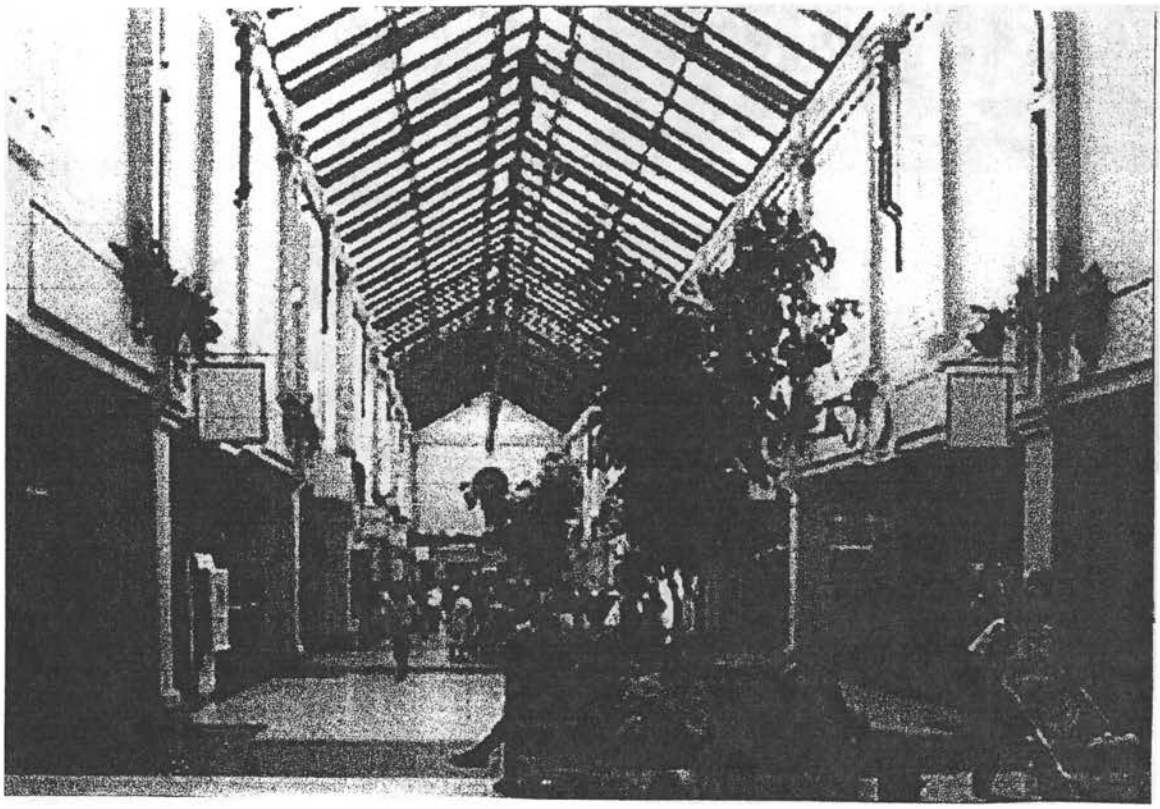
AC PARK

PROPOSED NEW S.W. WATERFRONT AND MALL ACCESS ROUTES FOR VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS – Gene Solon, 4/7/02

SAVING SOME SPACE FOR PEDESTRIANS

Old, New and Planned

SHOPPING PLAZAS AND ARCADES



***Everywhere* – Why Not Here?**

Section 1: Open Plazas Section 2: Arcades Section 3: Discussion

By Gene Solon, Member of the District of Columbia's Southwest Community

February 2002

SECTION 1: OPEN PLAZAS





Pedestrians only: here are three shopping plazas in Barcelona, Spain, where shoppers and sightseers congregate – and where cars are not allowed.



Why It Works

A tremendous variety of eateries, shops, markets, and cultural institutions can be found here, along with a huge number of pedestrians and people-watchers. About 1.5 kilometers long, Las Ramblas is really a sequence of three pedestrian-oriented street/boulevards. Its central pedestrian promenade is unique in many respects, not the least being its agreeable aesthetics (which come from its pleasant proportions, relative to adjacent development). Landscaping and provision of ample seating are two other big plusses.

The street is lined with five-to-seven-story buildings, street-level display windows, and many entrances. The central walkway is, on average, 60 feet wide; sidewalks are usually less than 10 feet wide, encouraging walking in the center. A row of trees separates the central walkway from automobile traffic - two lanes on either side (plus one parking lane). Pedestrians have precedence: Cars are relegated to narrow shoulder-lanes and must at every turn accommodate pedestrians, who are free of intersections in the central promenade.

Therefore, pedestrian traffic is always high, partly because of the area's 24-hour attractiveness and partly because of the mixture of activities; regardless of the time of day, there is something to do. A huge number of different enterprises are in operation here - traditional retail, specialized vending, kiosk sales, markets and exchanges, fairs and exhibitions, seat rental, shoe-shining, eateries and pubs, entertainment, etc. There are also a number of museums and cultural institutions.

Shopping in Athens

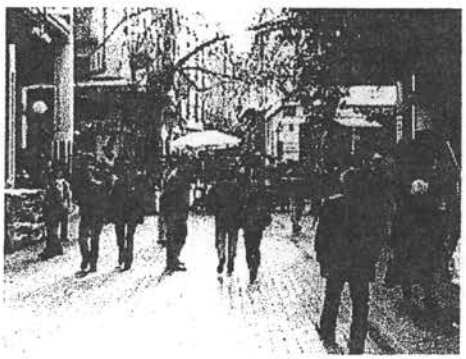
People ask me all the time, besides the ruins, cafes, restaurants, nightlife, and day-trips, what is there to do in Athens? When in Athens do the thing that everybody in our western society does best. Go shopping.

Downtown Athens is a shoppers paradise. Streets that were once choked with traffic have now been closed to all motor vehicles and the central shopping area has become a walking shoppers paradise with every kind of shop you can imagine, and some you never imagined existed. There are street merchents selling everything from scarves to devices that make stuffed grape leaves or hollow out a zuchinni. The clothing shops have quality men and womens apparel from all over the world and the shoe stores make you wonder why your choices at home are so limited.



If someone is looking for quality shoes or clothes they will go down to Ermou street the number one shopping street in Athens where besides local shops you can find well known stores like Benneton, Zara's and other international shops. There is even a Bodyshop. Ermou at one time was a main street for traffic. It is to date the largest of Athens streets to be closed to cars and it is now like a New York City street fair, any day of the week, with thousands of shoppers, street musicians and people selling hot chestnuts in the winter and corn-on-the-cob in the summer. It's like a high-class bazaar.





The two other main shopping streets of Eolou and Agiou Marou are the streets where you can find incredible bargains in clothes, fabrics, yarn, shoes, and cafes where you can catch your breath after a period of furious shopping. There are old women from Russia and young men from Persia, selling silk shirts, socks, and underwear on the street.

Space for pedestrians in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia



Brisbane City Shopping

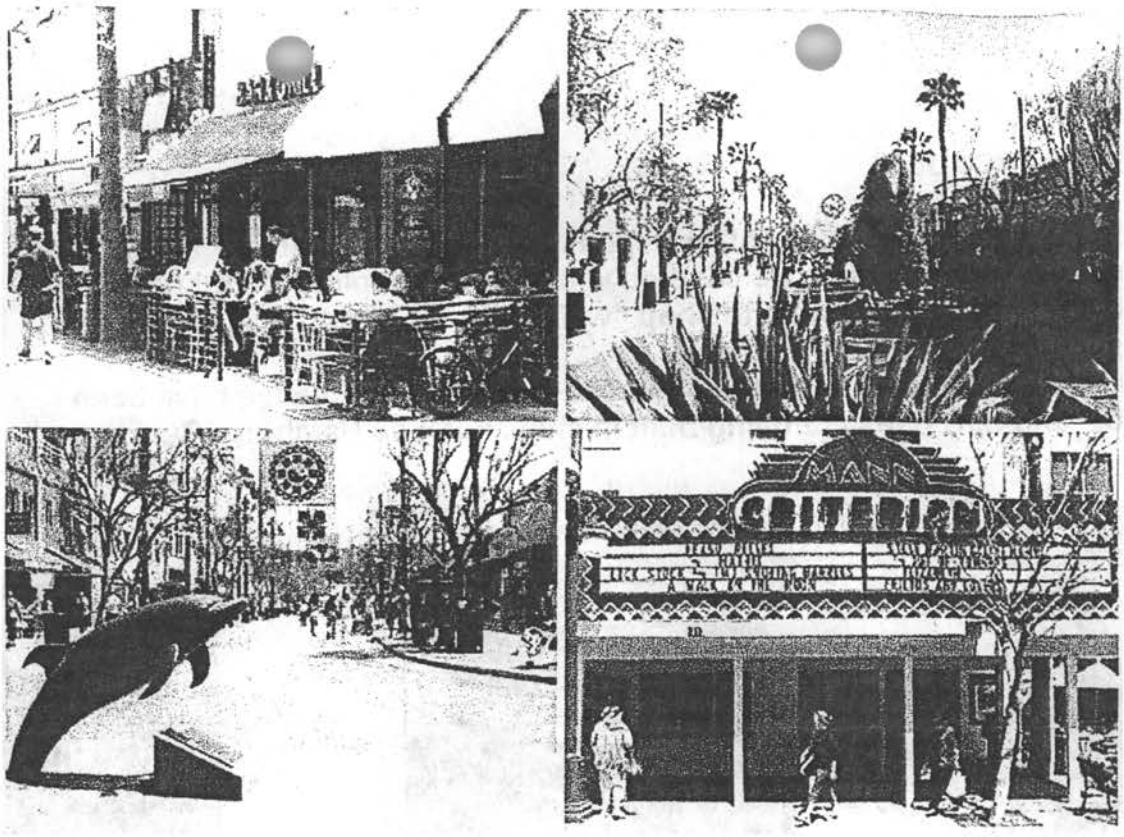
The heart of shopping in Brisbane has put on a fresh face. Queen Street Mall, lined with a colourful mix of heritage facades, historic arcades and modern shopping galleries, has added some extra pizzazz with bold new architecture for its canopies and pavement cafes. It's a statement in fashion that reflects the Mall's status as a thriving hub for Australia's young designers. Offerings include premiere entertainment venues, innovative al fresco dining, contemporary public art, green spaces, shady seating areas and shopping to suit all tastes.

Message from Birmingham, UK:

"With many special 'pedestrians only' streets, you can stroll at your leisure in a relaxed atmosphere, and although there are over 700 shops, this compact city layout is easy to get around in, so you can enjoy all the benefits of shopping in the city with less of the hassle and more of the 'shop 'til you drop' experience."

Message from Calgary, Alberta, Canada:

In creating what they envision as "Canada's best downtown," -- set to be completed in 2025 – Calgary's city fathers have planned for plazas, walkways, and "links" for pedestrians.





At the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California, you can enjoy shopping, strolling, lunching and socializing – safe from traffic.

SECTION 2: ARCADES

In the 1800s, pedestrian-only walkways in Paris, France and other cities throughout Europe began to be covered with glass canopies – in response to citizens who wanted to be able to shop "without getting wet."

These areas were known as shopping arcades. Many old arcades have been "revived," and new ones are being built in cities such as Hamburg, Germany.







Passagen/Shopping Arcades

Location: in the City, south-west of the Binnenalster (Inner Alster)
Public Transport:
Jungfernstieg (S1, S2, S3), (U1, U2)
Gänsemarkt (U2)
Bus: 34, 36, 102, 109

The first shopping arcades were established in Hamburg as early as the 19th century. The Alsterarkaden and Colonnaden, then and now, protect pedestrians and shoppers from the inclemency of the changeable Hamburg weather. Today in close vicinity to these two early shopping arcades are a network of through-passages and shopping arcades the like of which one finds in other great European cities such as London, Brussels, Leipzig, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Milan.

As increasingly areas of the city centre were banned to cars and pedestrian zones established not only were existing shopping arcades revived but also a series of new shopping arcades were created. Today within the city centre there exists a labyrinth of interconnecting shopping arcades with a total length of several hundred metres. The conversion of further buildings is also planned in the eastern part of the city centre.





The Market is conveniently located halfway between Milwaukee and Madison.

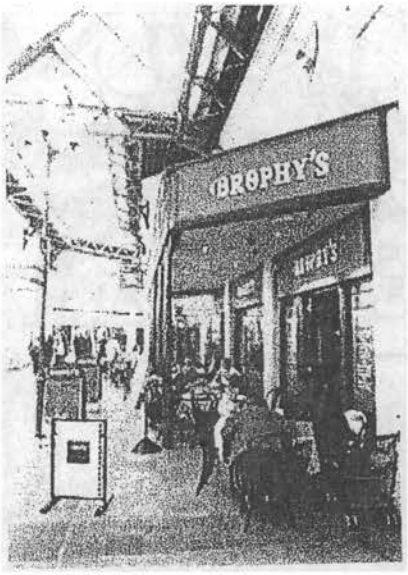


Arcades are attractions in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (left), and Watertown, Wisconsin, USA.

Shopping arcades have proliferated all over the world. Today, they include renovated originals – and brand new ones of a variety of types, from rustic (in Wisconsin), to relaxed (in Lancaster and East Lancashire, UK), and elegant (see the pages following this one).

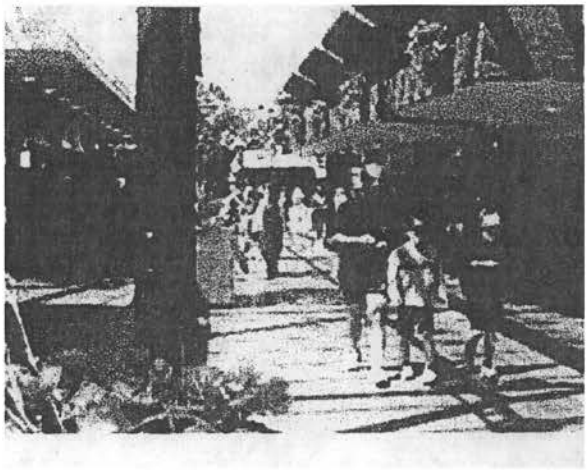
FRESH LOOK





STITCH EXPRESS





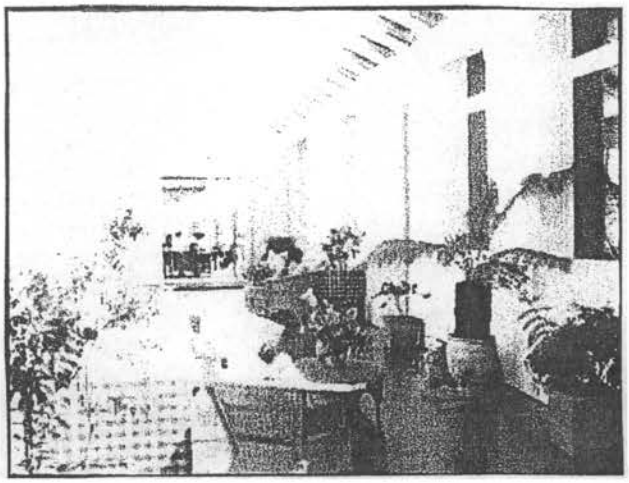
St Nicholas Arcades
12 Lancaster Gate
Lancaster

Burnley is situated in East Lancashire

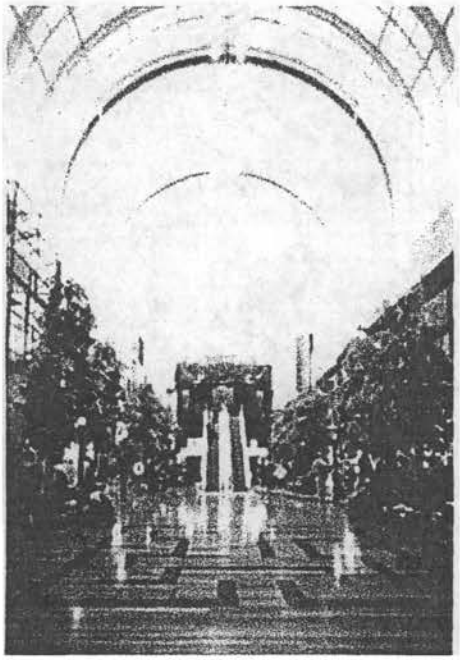
If in merry old England, why not here in Southwest D.C.?



If in Ellesmere Port, UK – why not here, in Southwest D.C.?

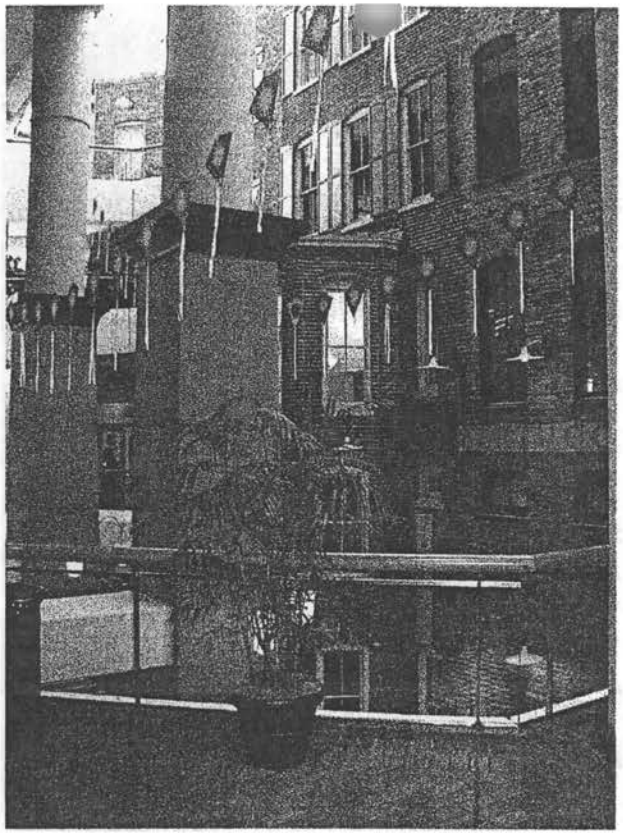


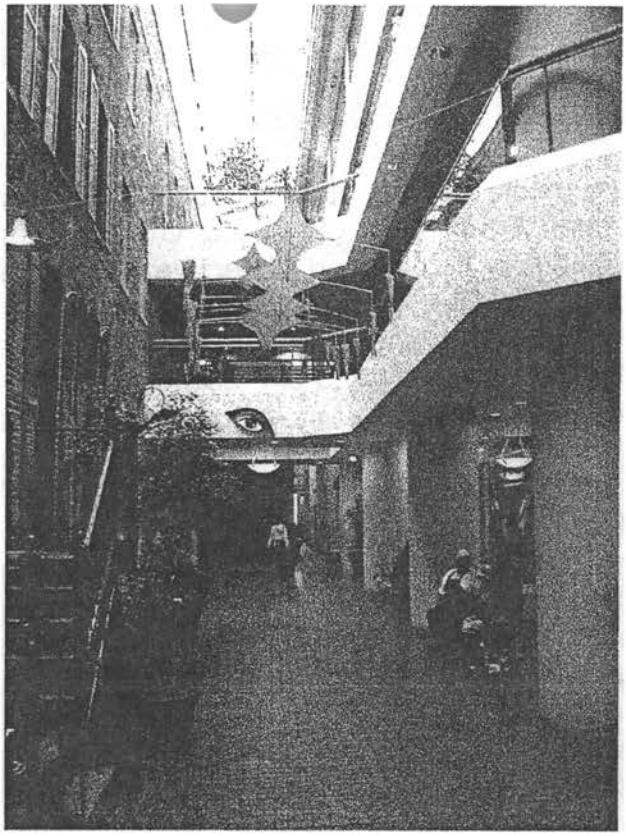
If in Los Angeles, California – why not here, in Southwest D.C.?

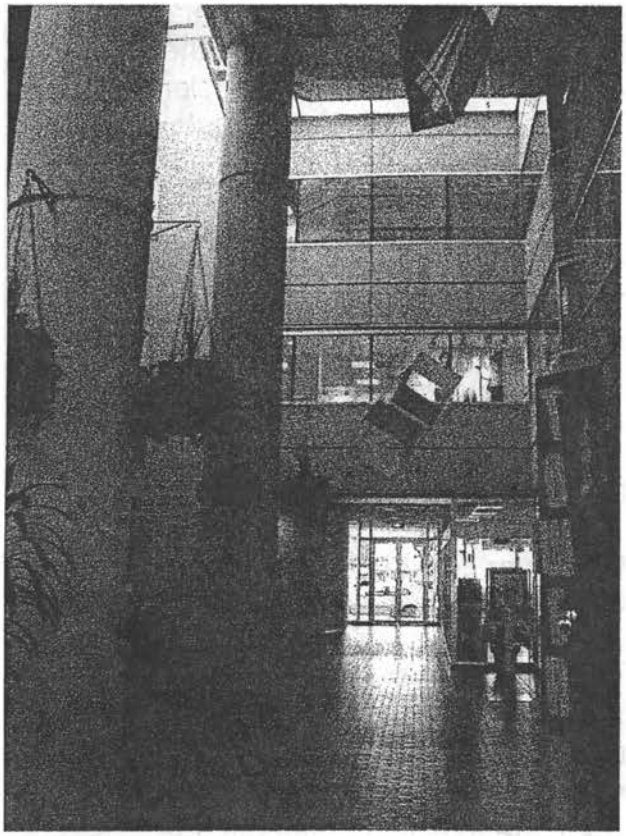


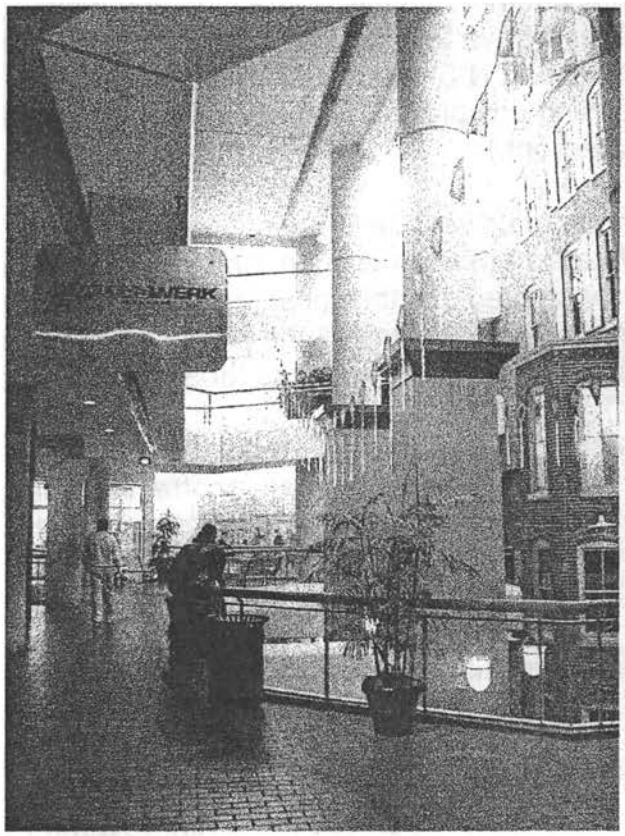
Itäkeskus - East Centre Shopping Arcade Helsinki 1992

If in the capital of Finland – why not in the capital of the United States of America?









Well, there *is* a beautiful, prosperous shopping plaza in our District of Columbia, and it's been here since 1983 – at 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.!

IF AT 2000 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., WHY NOT AT 401 M STREET, S.W.?

Southwesters, let's unite to bring beauty and prosperity to our great community!

SECTION 3: DISCUSSION

At a public meeting at the National Building Museum and at other public forums, Andrew Altman, the Director of the D.C. Office of Planning stated that the Southwest D.C. community had wanted Waterside Mall cut through at 4th Street by an asphalt roadway for automobiles. ANC 2D commissioners who were at the Building Museum meeting showed visible shock at Mr. Altman's statement. After all, as ANC 2D Executive Director Gottlieb Simon pointed out recently to over 100 people at a January 28th Southwest community meeting, Mr. Altman had not polled ANC 2D or any other community organization on the roadway cut-through issue. Yet, last October, he and a former Southwest councilmember suddenly unveiled their roadway plan, a plan, according to Mr. Simon, completely different from the one discussed months before at a meeting at the councilmember's office. Even after widespread criticism of the plan was expressed at community meetings since last October, and even after Office of Planning staff implied that they would present alternative plans for discussion, the roadway plan has not yet been altered by its announcers. A secretly devised roadway project has been thrust upon us, without a traffic study having been done, without a benefit/cost analysis having been done, and without adequate community input – in violation of the essence of Mayor Williams' Neighborhood Action Initiative. I've been told by one of the project developers that the developers wanted to renovate Waterside Mall for pedestrian traffic only, but that "the city" forced the automobile roadway plan upon them. (Incidentally, city officials have told me that consultant Bing Tom had advocated cutting through the O Street and N Street cul-de-sacs at the Edgewater, Harbour Square and Tiber Island housing complexes, so that cars could drive through and park closer to our Southwest waterfront.)

Those of us who have been working long and hard for Southwest community-beneficial Waterside Mall renovation, and for other improvement for our city, have been profoundly disappointed. On this most important Southwest D.C. project effort since the 1960's Urban Renewal project, the process has been egregiously flawed. And so has the substance of the arguments for a roadway cut-through!

I respectfully and politely rebut the pro-roadway arguments as follows:

- Mr. Altman has been incorrectly putting his arguments in a "roadway vs. mega-mall" framework. Well, Waterside Mall is a little mini-mall and nowhere near a mega-mall to begin with – and those of us who favor constructing an attractive pedestrian walkway/plaza through it are, ourselves, *against* a mega-mall for Southwest D.C.
- Mr. Altman equated the pedestrian walkway/plaza concept with an "internal mall" concept. He then claimed that businesspersons don't like "internal" malls. Well, as we know, those businesspersons at "internal" Waterside Mall now, want to stay there. And, as my booklet shows, pedestrian shopping malls, old and new, whether open or attractively covered ("internal"), are thriving throughout the world. As transportation planner Patrick Siegman verifies, the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California is thriving, and many other pedestrian-only shopping malls, open and covered, are planned for U.S. cities as well as

cities elsewhere (see the pages following this discussion). *In fact, according to the Washington Post, a "big pedestrian arcade" is planned for Gallery Place in D.C.!*

- Mr. Altman has been claiming that, without a roadway through it, Waterside Mall is a "barrier," preventing travel by city residents and visitors. Not so. It's at most a minor two-block detour. A *real* barrier exists just twelve blocks north, where the Canadian embassy, and the Prettyman and other courthouses *really* block 4th Street off. Further, another *real* 5-block square "barrier" is planned to be built soon at Mt. Vernon Square – the new Washington Convention Center. The "barrier" claim just doesn't wash.
- Mr. Altman's most recent claim is that a roadway cut-through is needed to attract visitors from the Smithsonian mall area to Southwest. Again, not so. To attract such people, it is not just another strip of asphalt we should offer, but a beautiful pedestrian-only shopping plaza, a haven safe from auto traffic, with trees and cafes and resting places – and, perhaps, a gleaming transparent arching roof to protect people, *including Metro users*, from bad weather! We want people to come *to* our shopping center, not drive *through* it! And we want *both* visitors and Southwest residents -- including children and seniors -- to be able to shop at store after store *without* having to cross auto traffic!
- All of the above pro-roadway claims seem to me to comprise a surprisingly awkward attempt to fit a sweeping, suspect, faddish planning theory into Southwest D.C. local reality. At the recent community meeting at St. Matthew's church, Mr. Altman encouraged us to rely upon his status as a professional, and told us to rest assured that a 4th Street roadway cut-through is just a part of a grand scheme for Southwest D.C. that includes the narrowing of Maine Avenue. Well, while we can readily agree to demolish Water Street to make room for houses and businesses, we certainly should *not* stand for the narrowing of Maine Avenue! Maine Avenue, as wide as it is, is *already* gridlocked during rush-hour periods by commuter traffic! 4th Street, too, is already a gridlocked commuter artery! We need a new traffic plan that reroutes commuter traffic *away* from 4th Street and from Maine Avenue. We certainly do *not* want to make 4th Street an artery that is even more convenient for commuters than it is now. (On "professionals": I remind you all that it was "professionals" who brought us the gridlock, noise and pollution we suffer from now.)
- Mr. Altman's and Councilmember Ambrose's periodic references to Shirlington in Arlington, Virginia are badly misleading: I'm sure they know that the Shirlington street to which they refer is a dead-end street, and has a meridian, an "island," protecting shoppers from 2-way traffic. The 4th Street roadway cut-through plan thrust at us here does *not* include a dead-end, and does *not* include a meridian! So, Ms. Ambrose's recent promise notwithstanding, an asphalt 4th Street connector simply cannot be made "neighborhood friendly." Further, the photographs of Arlington Mr. Westbrook showed us recently are suspect – although Mr. Westbrook knows very well that there usually is traffic on the streets he showed us, his photos show no cars (except for the tail end of one)! If there will be no cars, either moving or parked, on a 4th Street cut-through here, then we will have no need for an ugly asphalt scar. It would be much more logical for

us to have attractive tiles or pavers -- for pedestrians only! Finally, Mr. Litsky recently expressed his enchantment with a consultant's suggestion that the asphalt cut-through could be only three lanes wide, with curbside parking – a terrible suggestion, one that would create a bottleneck condemning this community, already suffering from gridlock, to mega-gridlock that would totally destroy it!

This booklet contains powerful refutation of the weak, inapplicable theories used to rationalize the cutting of an asphalt roadway through Waterside Mall. It shows that an attractive shopping plaza for pedestrians only, either open or covered, is what is needed for a vibrant, neighborhood friendly Southwest D.C. It asks: *If European and other capitals can do it, why can't our nation's capital do it?*

-- Gene Solon

Re: Pedestrian Malls

From: Patrick Siegman
Date: 12/21/98
Time: 11:05:19 AM
Remote Name: 209.6.68.116

Comments

Posted by Patrick Siegman <siegman@sirius.com> >Most Ped. Malls have failed, and with the exceptions where the promo, design >quality, market positioning and coordination of offerings are exceptional, >malls are not a great urban planning strategy.

Not so! Most pedestrian malls have succeeded -- unless you narrow your focus to consider only American ones. Most European, Asian and Latin American pedestrian streets are doing just fine, and the ones created in the past several decades on most American college campuses are being expanded, not shrunken. The pedestrian zone which I managed at Stanford, for example, we expanded from about three miles of street closed to private cars, to nearly five miles.

To me, that suggests a few rules for successful pedestrian streets. Make sure that the street has:

1) Major pedestrian trip generators: Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade revived, and is now said to be the most valuable retail and restaurant space in Los Angeles, in large part because they rezoned the city to allow movie theaters only along the mall. There are now over 35 movie screens on the mall, creating instant trade for the adjoining restaurants, bars and shops. In Europe and Asia, the pedestrians often come from the major train and subway stops, and need to filter through the pedestrian streets twice a day on their commute. For American college campuses, of course, students and professors going to and from class provide the pedestrian flows.

2) Comfortable urban proportions: Many American streets were uncomfortably empty once the cars were removed. The pedestrians tended to huddle along the former sidewalks. Often, the American streets had 75' to 125' right of ways, and just one to two story buildings. By contrast, the historic European, Asian and Latin American streets that were converted often have three to five story buildings, and rights of way are often in the realm of 20' to 50'. That creates a comfortable bustle of walkers, and the feeling of enclosure that makes a good outdoor room. Santa Monica's Promenade, one notices, worked to achieve the same effect by building newsstands, police kobans (substations), eateries and information centers into large kiosk buildings in the former street right of way.

3) Improved transit and bicycle access: When car access is gone, you need better alternatives. The other continents provide it. For example, Munich's pedestrianization of a major portion of the downtown was accompanied by construction of the U-bahn and S-

bahn systems, bringing tens of thousands of people directly into the new pedestrian streets. Santa Monica is working on it, with their free electric 'Tide' shuttle to the mall, among other transit lines. By contrast, the American main street to pedestrian mall conversions that failed often didn't improve alternative transportation.

4) Adjacent Housing: Local residents will make use of pedestrian streets, day and night, not only as a place for their shopping and dining, but as their park, village green and plaza. America's rigidly zoned 'retail only' downtowns usually failed to provide housing, thus depriving their attempted pedestrian main streets of a steady, 24-hour a day population. They also lost the local citizens who tend to keep an eye out for the quality of the place, put flowers in their window boxes, demand maintenance of the neighborhood, and provide local character.

5) Shopping-center quality management, security, promotions and advertising clearly help -- although that could be said for many successful Main Street revivals.

6) Urban Growth Boundaries: Not just pedestrian malls, but also many American Main Streets were killed by massive sprawl that drained investment - both public and private - from existing downtowns. Cities with greenbelt boundaries -- like most European ones -- tend to have thriving centers.

In short, pedestrian malls can be a fine urban planning strategy, and there are hundreds of examples of these wonderfully pleasant places at work. But there are rules for building successful ones -- and you have to look at more than one country to figure them out.

Some references:

1) Paul Zykofsky Center for Livable Communities Local Government Commission 1414 K St., Suite 250 Sacramento, CA 95814 USA Wk: (916) 448-1198, 800-290-8202 Fx: (916) 448-8246

Ask for any articles, or proceedings (especially the tapes) on Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade from the 1997 LGC 'Putting our communities back on their feet' conference in Los Angeles

2) National Bicycle Pedestrian Clearinghouse Peter Moe Bicycle Federation Of America Wk: 1-800-760-6272

Ask for the relevant National Bicycling & Walking Study Case Studies:

No. 16 "A Study of Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs in European Countries", which has some brief descriptions and references to more detailed studies of European wohnerfs and pedestrian streets.

No. 17 "Bicycle and Pedestrian Policies and Programs in Asia, Australia and New Zealand". Michael Replogle's fine study, with some good descriptions of Japanese pedestrian shopping streets at train stations.

No. 19 "Traffic Calming, Auto-Restricted Zones and Other Traffic Management Techniques - Their Effects on Bicycling and Pedestrians" The most detailed of the three in describing pedestrianization successes and failures in Europe.

No. 20 "The Effects of Environmental Design on the Amount and Type of Bicycling and Walking" Good case studies of the mishaps of American pedestrian malls. Authored by the Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit which understands and teaches urban design well.

Unfortunately, neither this last study nor the preceeding ones compare and contrast European and American examples. The result is that the American studies say that most pedestrian malls fail, but a few succeed. The studies of European and Asian ones describe sweeping success. But it is by contrasting the successes and failures on ALL continents that we discover the principles for a successful pedestrian street. Those are, I believe: abundant transit access, lots of nearby housing, comfortable urban proportions, central management and promotion, and a solid urban growth boundary for the city.

- Patrick

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