

Host Communities: siting and effects of facilities



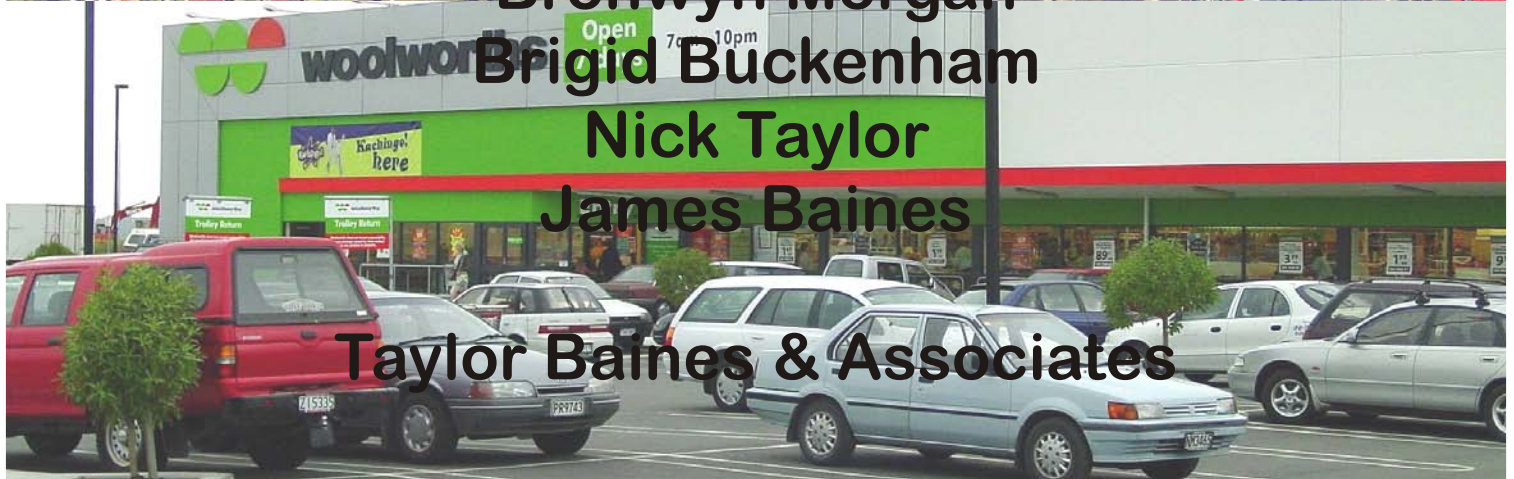
Large Retail Developments Sector Review



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1 Introduction

1.1 The wider research programme

This report contributes to social research being undertaken by Taylor Baines & Associates on the siting and social impacts of various facility types. Taylor Baines & Associates has been contracted by the Foundation for Research Science and Technology to undertake this research, and is being funded by the Public Good Science Fund¹.

The need for research into the siting and social impacts of various facility types is highlighted by the varied but often negative response from host communities to the siting of certain facilities. Examining siting issues and identifying the social impacts experienced by host communities will provide empirical information that is presently lacking in New Zealand. This information can be used to encourage thorough assessments of effects, greater community participation in the siting process, the development of effective relationships between facility providers and host communities, more equitable and better-informed planning decisions, and improved ongoing management of facilities. This in turn will further develop the effects based approach to resource management and planning embodied in the Resource Management Act 1991.

This Working Paper sets the scene for research into the siting and development of large retail facilities in New Zealand. The research will also examine the social impacts experienced by their host communities.

Large retail facilities (e.g. supermarkets, malls, etc.) have been included in Taylor Baines' facilities research since the siting of new retail facilities in greenfields locations or the re-development and expansion of existing malls and supermarkets has become increasingly contentious in recent years. In many instances, the potential for environmental and social effects associated with the design and operation of the large retail facilities have been the cause of concern to neighbours. At another level, the challenge exists to demonstrate how retailing activity, particularly the level of activity associated with large facilities, plays a significant role within the structure and function of urban communities beyond simply meeting consumer demand for retail goods and services. This is a challenge to provide empirical evidence of the nature of this dual role, that is relevant to contemporary New Zealand.

1.2 Three stages of the research

There are three stages involved in this research on large retail facilities:

1) a *Sector Review* which presents a discussion of the forms, roles and functions of retail development based on international literature and New Zealand experience; describes the institutional setting of local authority policies and plans, and recent trends up till 2001; and presents a summary framework of the potential social impacts associated with large retail developments.

¹ Contract TBAX0203.

2) a *Comparative Analysis* which examines the nature of large retail facilities and retail sector development trends by describing a sample of retail facilities² selected to contrast different scales of retail centre and different stages in the cyclical pattern of retail centre development.

3) several *Case Studies* which examine the actual experience of selected host communities in New Zealand of the social impacts associated with large retail developments.

The term *host community*, employed throughout this facilities research, refers to the residential and/or commercial area within which residents and business owners are most likely to experience the direct effects and impacts of retailing activity and the flows of people and vehicles associated with this retailing activity. In practical terms for large shopping centres, and particularly for those which include major retail facilities, this is likely to incorporate a maximum of 2-3 blocks around the shopping centre. This deliberate narrowing of focus means that the host community (as defined) will not encompass all those people who live within the primary retail catchment.

² In the cities of Auckland, North Shore and Christchurch.

2 Forms, Roles and Functions of Retail Development

2.1 Introduction

Retailing is defined by Kiel and Wadley (1980, p. 9) as “all activities involved in the sale of goods and services to the final consumer”. The final link in the chain between producers and consumers, it collects a wide variety of types and brands of goods at a central location, transfers title to the goods to consumers in exchange for payment, supplies market information to consumers, and provides a means of social expression for individuals.

Much analysis of the retail sector, however, has been confined to urban formal spaces such as the high street, the department store, the supermarket and the mall. But to view these facilities as being representative of contemporary retailing simplifies the complexity of consumption behaviour and denies the social and economic significance of other consumption spaces. Retailers create differentiated spaces of consumption through locational preferences based on questions of image and identity. Particular streets and parts of cities become associated with specific kinds of nostalgia (e.g. Carnaby Street in London) or style (Bond Street in London) which attract consumers to retail outlets in those localities (Crewe 2000, p. 277). Less obvious consumption spaces are occupied by retail activities that have hitherto been regarded as ‘marginal’. Garage sales, street markets, factory shops and second-hand dealers are also part of the retail sector. These alternative landscapes of consumption are utilised by people who are less inclined or able to visit the new civic spaces and shopping centres. Here the medium of exchange is more likely to be cash than eftpos or credit cards (Pawson 1996b, p. 340). Consumer goods are also purchased in the everyday space of the home where classified advertisements, catalogues, tupperware parties, and internet shopping enable people to make purchase decisions in private (Gendall, Robbie & Parackal 1998).

Large-scale facilities, such as department stores and malls, are comparative newcomers in terms of the development of retailing as the discussion of the development of shopping centres reveals. Their environmental, social and economic impacts on urban communities are huge when compared with those induced by alternative consumption spaces such as dairies, street markets, factory shops and so forth. Although large-scale facilities represent only part of the complexity of contemporary retailing, they manifest the values of mass consumption that pervade New Zealand society.

2.2 The development of shopping centres - the overseas experience

A distinction needs to be made between the ‘shopping centre’ and the ‘shopping district’ for the emergence of large-scale retail facilities to be better understood. The shopping district is a concentration of shops and other commercial activities in which competition is given free rein, while the shopping centre is “a coherent, planned and controlled group of establishments” (McGoldrick & Thompson 1992, p. 8).

Shopping centres also vary in size. Kiel and Wadley (1980, p. 3), for example, describe a hierarchy of planned shopping centres in Brisbane, Australia. The neighbourhood centres at the first level serve populations of up to 6,000. They provide convenience items such as food, medicine, hardware and personal services. A supermarket is usually the principal tenant. At the next level are district centres that not only provide convenience goods, but also comparison items such as furniture, clothing, banking and professional services. District centres generally serve four or five neighbourhoods and

a population of up to 25,000. Their main tenant is a discount department store such as K-Mart. Regional centres provide a range and depth of comparison items that are comparable to those available from a city centre. The floor space of a regional centre exceeds 10,000 square metres, and there is at least one major department store as a principal tenant. Custom is drawn from several districts of the city.

United States

The history of planned shopping facilities can be traced as far back as 1908 when Roland Park opened in Baltimore. The growth of planned shopping facilities in the United States was modest during the 1920's and 1930's. Only a few centres were established to serve existing communities, although the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City integrated residential development with environmental amenities. When the residential development at Country Club Plaza grew to 5,000 acres, ten neighbourhood shopping areas were incorporated into the new town. Following this example, other developers built a few other planned residential developments with central shopping facilities in the 1940's. Such shopping centres were limited to serving an area with a population of no more than several thousand people. During the boom that followed the second world war more diverse centres were established to serve a regional population (Gillette 1985, pp. 449-450).

New regional centres were established on sites near the convergence of major new highways. They became economically feasible after the Interstate Highway Program developed freeways looping around the heart of cities (Breckenfeld 1972, p. 82). Many of them were in areas where no concentrated residential development had previously existed. The regional shopping centres introduced several new features including nurseries, soft music, fashion shows and concerts. They stressed the availability of parking, and the separation of pedestrian and automotive traffic, in reaction to the traffic congestion of downtown areas. By the 1960's suburban shopping centres had further diversified their range of services and were attracting people on such a regular basis that they could be viewed as a community ritual (Gillette 1985, pp. 450-451). Gillette (1985, p. 450) notes that:

“The number of shopping centres grew from a few hundred at the war's end to 2,900 in 1958, 7,100 in 1963, and 22,000 in 1980; 230 of the latter were classified as regional malls serving wide geographic regions.By 1954 total retail sales in suburban shopping centres surpassed total retail sales of all metropolitan centres exceeding one million population.”

There was a proliferation of regional shopping malls in the United States during the 1960's and 1970's. This was followed by a rapid growth of discount superstores near the interchanges of major highways in the late 1980's and 1990's (Shills 1998, p.17).

The emergence of mega-retail discount chains, such as Wal-mart and K-Mart, heralded a new era in retailing in the United States. These chains discounted all types of products so “one-stop” shopping became the vogue. They developed strong competitive advantages over retailers in the “main streets” of cities and towns. Partnership arrangements developed between these mega-retail discount chains and manufacturers, allowing the chains to purchase goods direct from suppliers. Thus many regional wholesalers who served the downtown retailers were eliminated. The mega-retail discount chains secured federal, state and local funds to assist with the cost of building their complexes. Growing traffic and parking congestion in downtown areas pulled consumers away from

those areas to the mega-retail discount stores with their extensive parking lots. These giant chains reduced employment in main street areas; resulting in social instability and crime (Shills 1998, pp. 6-7). In many metropolitan areas of the United States there are now several nuclei instead of one. The old downtown areas have evolved into office and financial districts with a band of satellite centres around the periphery (Breckenfeld 1972, p. 82).

The mega-retail discount chains superseded the department store that had emerged from the traditional small-size retail chain. The department stores suffered along with other retailers in main street areas even though they had developed branch stores in the suburbs. Economies of scale favoured the mega-retail discount chains. They developed “hub and spoke” distribution systems which allowed them to purchase from suppliers for all their locations and thus reduce their costs. The buying power of the mega-retail discount chains gave them a competitive advantage over the department stores and the regional retailers who lost the price war and were often forced to withdraw from the market. The suppliers have become part of a network in which much of their capacity is contracted by major retail chains. Manufacturers work hard to secure the right to supply the major retail chains so that their low profit margins in this type of business may be countered by larger volumes of sales. As mega-retail discount chains gain more leverage, they place greater demands on manufacturers in terms of the colours and sizes of specific goods, the quantity of goods to ship and the time when those goods should be shipped (Shills 1998, pp. 12, 15).

Canada

The growth of planned shopping centres in Canada followed a similar pattern to events in the United States. Shopping centres were established first in the economic regions of Canada that were relatively advanced, and later spread to regions that were less economically advanced (Moyer 1973, p. 28). Moyer (1973, pp. 26-27) notes that the growing importance of the department store was associated with the emergence of these regional shopping centres. While Canada’s department stores relied on shopping centres for less than a tenth of their revenues in 1959, they depended on them for nearly half of their business by 1970. Over the decade until 1969 the position of the department store and supermarket in these shopping centres shifted. Supermarkets contributed half of total sales in shopping centres in 1959, while department stores only contributed a fifth. Each of these type of outlets contributed about a third of the business in shopping centres by 1969. Food chains took the lead in developing suburban shopping in Canada, so some of the later shift to department stores was a correction to the earlier imbalance in the mix of stores.

Simmon’s (1991, p. 236) studied a set of 84 regional malls in Canada; each of which had a least 500,000 square feet of gross rental area:

“The most striking discovery from mapping all these malls is the systematic avoidance of spatial competition. In city after city, the malls display a regular pattern of spacing around the downtown area and in relation to other malls as the city develops. This pattern is perhaps encouraged by the land-use planning process, but it is certainly fostered by the development industry and leading department store chains.”

Most malls in Canada have a spatial monopoly over an extended market, with their main competition coming from speciality shopping areas or smaller strip malls (ibid, p. 238).

The most famous of these regional shopping centres in Canada is the West Edmonton Mall. Completed in 1986 at a cost of \$C950 million, the West Edmonton Mall is a two storey, 5.2 million square feet structure, which contains over 600 stores and services, employs over 18,000 people, and earns 42 per cent of rental turnover in the Edmonton area and one per cent for Canada. Its attractions include a seven acre water park, a skating rink, a miniature golf course, Fantasyland with a roller coaster, a four acre aquarium, 19 movie theatres and the Fantasyland hotel with 360 rooms (Hopkins 1990, p. 5). Butler (1991) highlights the role of the West Edmonton Mall as a tourist attraction. As the largest shopping mall in the world (circa, 1990) some visitors were attracted by its image and scale. But it also had another selling point to tourists - "a multiplicity of destinations neatly and conveniently packaged at one location" (ibid, 291). Although the West Edmonton Mall is virtually identical to other malls in its shopping function, it has broken this pattern through its non-shopping services and entertainment activities to create an image of 'elsewhereness' through the construction of the artifacts and the theme rooms at the Fantasyland Hotel. As such, it is an excellent example of how malls have integrated the leisure aspects of shopping activities with a variety of other recreational activities.

United Kingdom

Retailers and developers in the United Kingdom, and many other countries in Europe, have been more constrained by planners than their North American counterparts (McGoldrick & Thompson 1992, p.18). Yet developers in the United Kingdom built 660 new shopping centres (with an average floor area of 153,000 square feet), or about one centre for every 80,000 people in the country, between 1965 and 1986 (Gardener & Shepherd 1989, p. 96). Out-of-town sites became the most favoured option for larger shopping centres during the 1980's, with sites alongside motorways becoming the targets for developers. There were also a significant number of large regional town centre schemes in the pipeline, plus a series of refurbishment programmes for town centre malls which had opened during the 1960's and 1970's (ibid, pp. 107, 120).

The genesis of planned shopping centres in town centre locations in the United Kingdom was in the late 1950's. They were established in cities such as Plymouth and Coventry which had experienced heavy damage from bombing in the second world war. The next stage in the process was the formation of shopping centres in new towns during the early 1960's. The third stage began in 1964 when the Bull Ring Centre was opened in Birmingham, and the Elephant and Castle scheme in London a year later. They were the first two covered shopping centres in the country. This particular stage lasted until 1972. The fourth stage of development was from 1972 through to the latter part of that decade. There was an increased average size of shopping centres and greater adoption of the fully enclosed design. By the late 1970's there was a reduction in the rate of development, although by 1990 there was some indication that new shopping centre floor space in town centres was increasing again (McGoldrick & Thompson 1992, pp. 8-9).

Planned shopping centres in out-of-town locations in the United Kingdom are of more recent origin than those in North America. Hallsworth (1994, pp. 297-300) describes three waves of retail decentralization in Britain. The first wave began in the late 1960's and early 1970's with the establishment of large free-standing food stores. The second wave, initiated in the 1970's, consisted of out-of-town "retail warehouses" ranging from 10,000 to 40,000 square feet in size. They were like North American outlet malls in style and image. Carpets, toys, automotive accessories, furniture, home improvement and gardening were the main store types in the second wave. During the third

wave of regional shopping centres in the 1980's (e.g. the Gateshead Metro Centre in 1984 of two million square feet) many proposals did not survive the planning process.

Although many regional shopping centres experienced planning delays, many in-town malls went ahead. There was a structural over supply of retail space in recessionary conditions. The rush to develop regional shopping centres was led by locally based developers residing near enterprise zones (created early in the Thatcher period) who perceived a development opportunity in their area. The large institutional investors, however, had their capital invested in town/city centre schemes and stood "to lose if a massive supply of out-of-town floor space came on stream" (Hallsworth 1994, p. 305). Before these out-of-town schemes were approved the consumer boom collapsed and developers were able to avoid their construction.

There are four main types of out-of-town shopping centres in the United Kingdom:

- (1) speciality centres - clusters of small independent units selling items to tourists and visitors;
- (2) district centres between 100,000 and 300,000 square feet of floor space with a superstore as the anchor retailer;
- (3) retail parks of warehouses with more park-like designs; and
- (4) regional centres with a minimum of 500,000 square feet of floor space (e.g. Milton Keynes, Brents Cross and the Metro Centre) that offer a mixture of comparison shopping, leisure and catering facilities (McGoldrick & Thompson 1992, pp. 15-16).

2.3 The development of shopping centres - the New Zealand experience

Changes in the built environment

With regard to the development of urban infrastructure, there are four basic resources: land, the built environment, social facilities and capital. The built environment consists of a complex structure of buildings, roads, bridges etc. The nature of this built environment may constrain urban development. Low density housing, for instance, has spatial consequences for the delivery of services, for investment and for transportation systems (Kilmartin, Thorns & Burke 1985, pp. 48-50). Owners of capital seek efficiencies of scale and these are reflected in the built environment.

There have been major changes in the built environment, with moves in many areas from production to consumption. Pawson (1996a, p. 320) suggests that until recently, the urban centres of New Zealand were shaped by large-scale production. Factories were built within industrial zones, housing was relatively uniform, and transport networks were established. Since the late 1980's, however, a new layer of purpose-built consumption infrastructure of planned shopping malls and more heterogeneous housing stock has been added.

These changes have affected the pattern of retail infrastructure in New Zealand. Kearns (1992, p. 282) observes that economic restructuring has resulted in "visible changes to the landscape of place". The nature of shopping has "markedly altered" with large malls opening that have competed with each other and older, less attractive, retail facilities. Each mall usually has a supermarket belonging to a major chain, a general merchandising store and a collection of specialty stores. Kearns (1992, p. 282) maintains that "the architecture of the malls is standardised and their content so similar that any one could be any where: the ultimate evocation of placelessness. Whilst consumers gain with lower prices, the cost is the loss of neighbourhood facilities that formerly defined different suburbs".

Banks (1992, pp. 282-283) reveals how restructuring in the retail sector in Christchurch has affected the viability of neighbourhood shopping centres with between ten and fifteen shops. He discusses the changes that occurred in a sample of 15 local shopping centres in the city between 1978 and 1991. The numbers of dairies, butcheries and draperies declined sharply, while there was a significant increase in the numbers of hairdressers and takeaways. These trends are partly explained by changes in the national pattern of retail spending. Both supermarkets and dairies recorded some \$600 million of annual sales in 1982. By 1991, however, the annual sales of supermarkets and dairies were \$1,100 million and \$350 million respectively. Banks (1992, p. 283) concludes that "Aggressive marketing by supermarkets and the opening of new complexes underlies the relative demise of local dairies: the price paid by the consumer is the loss in many neighbourhoods of a service accessible on foot and 'open all hours'".

Although shopping malls are usually easily accessible by car, and considerable emphasis is placed on providing plenty of free parking for them, access by foot remains important. In a study of the expansion of Riccarton Mall in Christchurch, it was found that people living in the immediate precinct of the Mall, including elderly people and students, made frequent use of it as a local facility. Indeed, adequate, safe access by foot was a major issue for them (Taylor 1998).

Changes in patterns of consumption

Changes in legislation and the licencing of retailing and liquor consumption have changed patterns of consumption in New Zealand. Pawson (1996a, p. 324) notes that the repeal of the Shop Trading Hours Act in 1990 allowed shops to open on all except three and a half days a year. This repeal transformed the cultural practices associated with the 'weekend' and blurred the distinction between shopping and leisure. Moreover, it undermined the position of dairy owners who lost their traditional advantage (over supermarkets) of flexibility of opening hours. Thus retail sales have become more concentrated in the hands of larger enterprises, and the closure of smaller retailers has disadvantaged consumers with less mobility.

In addition to the development of supermarkets and shopping malls there are alternative landscapes of consumption (e.g. markets and second hand stores) which were discussed earlier in this paper.

Planned shopping centres

Bowler (1996, p. 328-329) discusses how planned shopping centres have become an important element of New Zealand's retail sector. The first malls were opened in New Lynn, Riccarton and Pakuranga in the 1960's. The majority are owned and operated by property developers, insurance companies and enterprises specialising in managing retail properties. Many of the earlier shopping centres were built on suburban or greenfield sites as stand-alone complexes. Subsequently, some malls have been established in inner city areas (e.g. South City in Christchurch). Most malls are enclosed and their tenants are expected to furnish their shops within set guidelines, and contribute to the operating expenses of the centre. Anchor stores, such as supermarkets, discount chains, and department stores, attract customers to the mall with the hope that they will also visit speciality shops. Retail chains dominate the tenant mix partly because of their capacity to pay high rentals.

Shopping centres are privately owned public spaces. Shoppers are protected from the vagaries of the weather, and the attention of political or religious speakers, by the enclosed and controlled environment of many of these centres. Patrons whose behaviour may discourage others from

making purchases, moreover, may be asked to leave these centres as they are privately owned. Bowler (1996, p. 329) notes that this blurring of the private/public dimension of shopping malls is compounded by the inclusion of public libraries and leisure-related facilities in some centres. Shopping has also become an important leisure activity in its own right. It may even be both a chore and a leisure activity to the same person at different times. “One manifestation of the competition between shopping centres for customers is regular refurbishment, in which the skills of retail designers are being used to integrate further the associations of leisure and shopping (ibid).” Thus, shopping centres can take on distinct physical and operational characteristics, in contrast to the view of standardisation and “placelessness” as suggested by Kearns (above).

Le Heron and Le Heron (1996, pp. 338-9) note that there is an emerging link between multiplexes and shopping malls. The multiplex expands the scale of cinema operation by providing a wider range of movies over a longer daily screening period. There are a number of theatres of differing size under a single management. Sometimes they are located near or in the midst of a shopping centre where they have retail chains, fast food chains, family restaurants and leisure and recreation activities as neighbours.

2.4 Roles and functions of shopping centres

Consumption behaviour and shopping

The values of a mass consumption society have influenced the roles and functions of shopping centres. Pawson (1996a, p. 322) observes that consumption has become another means of constructing social identity as the collective solidarities of work and class have weakened. Thus the purpose of consumption is not only material, but has acquired a symbolic function. The consumer actively searches for meaning through consumption behaviour that is influenced by qualities ascribed to products by retailers and other people whose lifestyle the consumer wants to imitate. More importantly, Pawson recognises that consumption is also influenced by places, where individuals purchase products and later display the symbols of their social identity.

Jackson and Holbrook (1995, p. 1914) contend that “*consumption is a social process* whereby people relate to goods and artifacts in complex ways, transforming their meaning as they incorporate them in their lives through successive cycles of use and reuse”. These meanings are linked to the social relations of production and consumption. Jackson and Holbrook add that modern identities are dynamic and multiple with individuals carrying a range of different, and sometimes conflicting identities in their heads at one time. As part of their study of shopping behaviour at two north London shopping centres they conducted a series of focus groups with people from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds. Five themes emerged from these focus groups:

- the differences between individual women (as well as between women and men) in what they define as shopping ‘skills’ and how those ‘skills’ are learnt;
- shopping is a source of pleasure and anxiety both of which may be experienced simultaneously;
- the same experience of shopping may have radically different meanings for different people (or for the same person at different times) as the social context varies;
- consumers are knowledgeable and are clearly able to identify items of quality; and
- shopping is a highly complex gendered activity with men taking an instrumental approach to shopping, whereas women tend to browse (Jackson and Holbrook 1995, pp.1918-1926).

Jackson and Holbrook (1995, p. 1928) conclude that “ ‘Shopping’ is not an undifferentiated and impersonal activity; it encompasses a wide range of social activities whose meanings vary with the dynamics of class and gender, ethnicity and generation (among many other mutually constitutive aspects of human identities)”.

Consumption spaces

The places where consumption activity occurs have been described as consumption spaces by social scientists. ‘Consumption spaces’ have been described by social scientists as locations which people visit to buy goods and services, either for necessities or for fun and enjoyment. Examples of consumption spaces include theme parks, festival places, sports stadia, cinema complexes, art galleries and shopping malls. People who reside near consumption spaces are usually in a better position to access the goods and services, whereas those who live at some distance are likely to experience difficulties in obtaining them. The limited amount of research available indicates that consumption spaces are disproportionately located in gentrified areas of inner-city residential districts and at new centres located on the periphery of large urban regions (Mullins et al 1999, pp. 45, 51).

Shopping centres provide the opportunity for individuals to visit a consumption space and construct their social identity. The West Edmonton Mall, for instance, “provides a place which celebrates and reinforces this consumption community of middle-class and middle mass shoppers, excluding those who cannot participate in the consumer act” (Shields 1989, p.159).

Shopping and leisure

The development of shopping centres has resulted in a blurring of the distinction between consumption and leisure. From places where people could purchase a wide variety of goods, they have evolved to centres of leisure activity where people shop, enjoy a coffee or snack with friends, and visit a cinema. A survey conducted by the Hillary Commission (Wilson, Russell & Paulin 1990, p. 75) found that shopping centres were the most popular leisure facilities used by respondents during the previous four weeks (56 per cent), followed by visits to the beach/river (52 per cent) and restaurants (46 per cent). They were more popular destinations for younger respondents (i.e. 24 years and under) than older people.

Jackson (1991, pp. 282-284) has identified four main relationships between shopping and leisure: (1) independence (or shopping as purchasing), (2) shopping for leisure, (3) shopping and leisure, and (4) shopping as leisure. These categories are not mutually exclusive however. For many people shopping is a chore to be completed as quickly as possible. Shopping for leisure involves the purchase or hire of goods for use during subsequent leisure (e.g. video stores), while shopping and leisure activities have become linked with the development of retail centres, cinemas, and theme parks as part of one large complex. Shopping as leisure includes such activities as window shopping, browsing and watching other people participating in recreational activities.

Shopping centres - societal and functional roles

With consumption becoming a means for people to construct their social identities, and shopping assuming the character of a leisure activity, shopping centres have become a focus for community activity. As Goss (1993, pp. 22-26) points out, it is the developers themselves who have promoted the concept of the shopping centre as an alternative focus for community life both in the suburbs and

the inner city. Shopping centres appear to be public spaces, they may house public amenities such as post offices and libraries, and they sometimes provide space for public meetings.

Young people, in particular, have adopted modern shopping centres as places where they can 'hang out' with their friends. Vanderbeck and Johnson (2000) investigated the role of the mall in the lives of a group of African American young people aged 12 and 13 residing in an economically disadvantaged area of a medium-sized city in the southeastern United States. The young people participating in the study felt the mall provided them with a secure environment where they had relative freedom of movement. Many of them desired social and recreational spaces where they would not feel threatened. They also wanted freedom from parental restrictions and the ability to make their own choices as to their destination and companions. Their most common activities at the mall were shopping, browsing, eating, meeting friends and acquaintances, people-watching and using the game room (particularly boys). Although some of these activities are consumption oriented, others reflect the use of the mall for social purposes in 'public' space. Many of the young people considered the mall to be one of the few entertainment/social outlets available that did not involve a risk to their safety by being 'on the streets'. Adults often consider the presence of young people in 'public' space as a threat to their 'natural' authority, but for some young people their presence in these spaces can be better explained as a pursuit of mainstream goals which they are unable to realise in other parts of their lives (Vanderbeck & Johnson 2000, pp.18-20).

Yet it is not only young people who enjoy the sense of community that modern shopping centres provide. The amenity value of a large retail centre is illustrated by the societal role of Pakuranga Plaza in Auckland. Developed as the central component of a new suburb, the Plaza is now managed by Westfield New Zealand Limited. The Plaza has over sixty shops, a department store, a large supermarket, offices, and personal and financial services. Community services, including a library, an art gallery, a community creche, and a youth and recreation centre, are located nearby. Pakuranga does not have a main street with a strip mall, so the Plaza has an important role as the town centre. The commercial centre around the Plaza has become the social hub of the Pakuranga community. There are five schools within walking distance of the Plaza and three rest homes nearby. The schools make educational visits to the Plaza, and the rest homes regularly bus residents there. Retired locals often meet at the Plaza to chat, while young people make regular visits. Furthermore, the businesses based in the Plaza support schools and community organisations through donations and sponsorships (Taylor 2000b, pp. 11-12).

Shopping centres also deliver amenity to the community through a functional role. Centres fulfill this role by supplying goods and services in an efficient and convenient manner. There are several advantages arising from concentrating the sale of goods and services at a number of centres in a city. Consumers are given the opportunity to compare similar goods and services, the travel time to access those goods and services is reduced, and the efficiency with which those goods and services are delivered is maximised (Taylor 2000b, p. 13). Thus the functional and societal roles of shopping centres complement each other in providing amenity to urban communities.

3 Retail and Shopping Trends in New Zealand

Several important trends have influenced the development of the retail sector in New Zealand since the mid-1980's. After a period of declining retail consumption between 1985 and 1992, households have become more affluent, and their consumption of goods and services has again begun to increase in real terms (see Table 1 and Figure 1). They also have greater mobility as vehicle ownership has become more widespread. While this greater degree of mobility and longer trading hours have widened the range of shopping opportunities through retail stores, there is a growing trend for products to bypass these physical facilities through direct media marketing using the internet, networking (e.g. Amway) and call centres. The operating expenses of retail stores have grown at a higher rate than their sales, due partly to the longer trading hours expected by the public (Tansley 2000a, pp. 5-6).

Table 1: Retail Turnover Per Household and Per Capita (Constant \$NZ) 1984-2000

Year ended June	Retail Turnover per Household		Retail Turnover per Capita	
	Constant Prices (\$)	% Change	Constant Prices (\$)	% Change
1984	20,466		6,686	
1985	21,199	3.6	6,897	3.2
1986	20,990	-1.0	6,877	-0.3
1987	20,465	-2.5	6,723	-2.2
1988	19,117	-6.6	6,286	-6.5
1989	18,457	-3.5	6,039	-3.9
1990	17,994	-2.5	5,866	-2.9
1991	16,699	-7.2	5,737	-2.2
1992	16,257	-2.7	5,604	-2.3
1993	16,472	1.3	5,723	2.1
1994	17,144	4.1	5,980	4.5
1995	18,213	6.2	6,366	6.5
1996	18,280	0.4	6,366	0
1997	18,382	0.6	6,381	0.2
1998	18,604	1.2	6,441	0.9
1999	18,668	0.3	6,487	0.7
2000	19,599	5.0	6,869	5.9

Source: Statistics New Zealand and Jebb Holand Dimasi cited by Jebb (2001).

Note: Constant price data are at average 1999/2000 prices adjusted using official constant retail sales series in March 1995 dollars.

These trends have encouraged the development of large-scale retail stores since the late 1980's to minimise the rental and staff costs per square metre of floor space. The number of shops in most centres has declined, and there has been a shift away from locations which have high pedestrian numbers already established to sites on the edge of centres (or outside them) where large-scale stores can operate in a stand-alone capacity. Growth in retail activity is occurring at relatively few existing or new locations, while the range of types of retail activity and amount of floor space have diminished at the majority of established centres (Tansley 2000a, pp. 6-7). Retailing in city centres,

or small suburban centres, is now being squeezed by the two growth areas of the sector - high quality shopping malls and large-scale discount destination stores (Marketplace New Zealand Ltd 1999, p. 11).

Supermarkets now dominate the sale of convenience goods as they generate about three-quarters of food and grocery turnover³ (see Table 2). Shopping habits have become more specialised over the last decade, however, with the arrival of several offshore retail chains, the growth of franchise operations, and the increasing numbers of New Zealanders who have experienced comparison shopping overseas. Shopping malls now host a wide range of speciality shops,

Figure 1: Retail Turnover Per Household

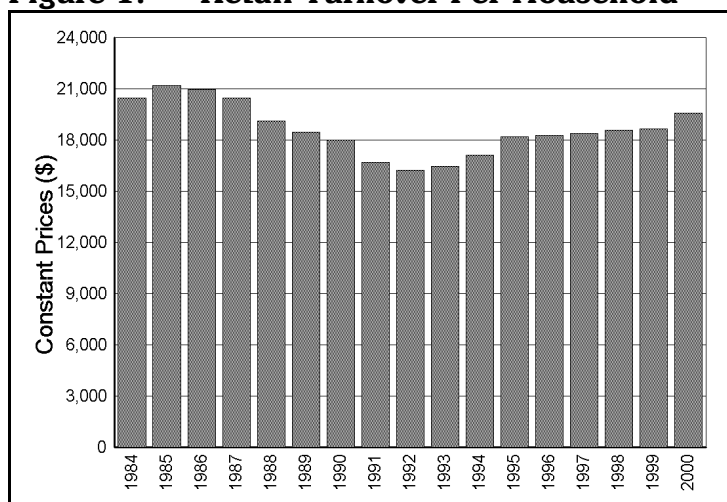


Table 2: Supermarket turnover as percentage of food and grocery turnover in New Zealand

Year ended March	Supermarket turnover \$ million	Total food & grocery turnover \$ million	Supermarket turnover as percentage of food & grocery turnover
1996	5,700.6	7,877.8	72.4
1997	5,982.5	8,253.3	72.5
1998	6,306.5	8,672.3	72.7
1999	6,676.1	9,086.1	73.5
2000	7,073.1	9,535.0	74.2

Source: Quarterly Retail Sales Returns of Statistics New Zealand cited by Tansley (2001).

supermarkets are being relocated further away from the parking areas of comparison shoppers, and the sale of household goods (e.g. appliances, hardware, garden supplies) has become the main type of retail activity at the edge of centres or stand-alone sites (Tansley 2000b, pp. 4-5).

The last two decades have also witnessed the emergence of discount retailing in New Zealand, most notably through the activities of the Warehouse Group. From a small family-operated store in Takupuna established with \$80,000 of capital in 1982, this company has become a nationwide chain

³ Excluding restaurants, cafes, and takeaway bars.

of 93 stores with sales of \$1.075 billion, net profit after tax of \$67.5 million, and 7,264 employees at the end of July 2000. The remarkable growth of the Warehouse Group, with its characteristic red stores where every consumer is promised a bargain, is illustrated by the statistical profile presented in Table 3. Founded by Stephen Tindall, who was formerly employed by the retailer, George Court and Sons Ltd, for 12 years, the Warehouse remained in private hands until it became a public company and listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange in 1994. Since then, the Warehouse has established a chain of stationery stores, and also moved offshore in 2000 when it purchased a large discount merchandise chain operating in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland (The Warehouse 2000, pp. 5, 8, 12).

Table 3: The Warehouse - Statistical Profile

Indicators	Year ended 31 July 1990	Year ended 31 July 2000
Sales	\$65.4 million	\$1.075 billion
Net Profit after tax	\$3.0 million	\$67.5 million
Number of stores	27	93
Square metres of retail space	76,609 (1993)	282,779
Number of NZ towns & cities served	11	47
Number of staff	1,200 (approx.)	7,264

Source: The Warehouse (2000, pp. 5, 20).

4 Institutional Setting: Policies, Plans, and Trends

4.1 Institutional Setting Relevant to the Retail Sector

Currently, there are no national policy statements or any central government discussion and debate relating to the nature and direction of retail development in New Zealand. This is despite the potential for retail development to have a significant impact on urban growth strategies and related social, economic, and cultural issues.

The nature and direction of retail development is instead determined at the regional and territorial level through the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). Regions and territories approach retail development within a framework for the management of natural and physical resources provided for in the Act. These approaches are embodied in regional policy statements, district plans, resource consent decisions, and case law.

4.2 Policy and Planning prior to the Resource Management Act 1991

Prior to the implementation of the Resource Management Act 1991, territorial authorities strictly controlled the direction and nature of retail development under the Town & Country Planning Act 1977 which placed emphasis on the economic welfare of people (Cowan 1976). The policy and planning environment adopted within each territorial authority had a powerful influence over retail development. This influence extended to where and what type of development should occur, and how to revitalise existing retail centres. For example, a planning discussion document on Dunedin's retail sector asked the question whether territorial authorities should let corner stores continue to decline, or whether attempts should be made to ensure that they remained viable (Cowan 1976). Conscious efforts were often made to ensure particular retail centres remained viable. Such efforts included improving road and parking access, and generally creating a 'pleasant' shopping environment.

Although a variety of retail forms existed, territorial authorities tended to focus on developing and maintaining the viability of Central Business Districts (CBD) (Cowan 1976; Williams 1978). In Dunedin, for example, the territorial authority encouraged the development of the CBD as a business and social centre, and actively discouraged activities which detracted from the CBD (Cowan 1976). In another South Island example, for much of the 1990s, the Christchurch City Council has actively funded a 'City Centre' promotions campaign to counter the drift of retailing activity towards the various suburban shopping mall developments. More recently it has invested in additional covered parking in the city centre and re-developed the public transport network (with the regional council) around a new city centre bus interchange.

4.3 Retail Development under the Resource Management Act 1991

The current legislative regime under which retail development is dealt with is the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The RMA provides a resource management framework and principles to guide regional and territorial authorities when dealing with resource management issues specific to their regions:

5. Purpose-(1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

(2) In this Act, “sustainable management” means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well being and for their health and safety while-

- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
- (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

3. Meaning of “effect”-In this Act , unless the context otherwise requires, the term “effect” ... includes-

- (a) Any positive or adverse effect; and
- (b) Any temporary or permanent effect; and
- (c) Any past, present, or future effect; and
- (d) Any cumulative effect which arises over time or in combination with other effects- regardless of the scale, intensity, duration, or frequency of the effect, and also includes-
- (e) Any effect of high probability; and
- (f) Any potential effect of low probability which has a high potential impact.

2. Interpretation-(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

....

“Environment” includes-

- (a) Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and
- (b) All natural and physical resources; and
- (c) Amenity values; and
- (d) The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) of this definition or which are affected by those matters:

The purpose of the RMA and its definitions of “effect” and “environment” suggest that retail development “should be managed in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well being and for their health and safety”. Retail development must also ensure that:

- the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations is sustained,
- the life-supporting capacities of air, water, soil, and ecosystems is safeguarded, and
- any adverse effects on people, communities, amenity values, and social, economic, and cultural conditions are avoided, remedied, or mitigated. These adverse effects may be temporary or permanent, past, present or future effects, cumulative effects, effects of high probability, or effects of low probability but high potential impact.

This framework for the management of retail development is used by territorial authorities whose functions include:

31. Functions of territorial authorities under this Act-Every territorial authority shall have the following functions for the purpose of giving effect to this Act in its district:

- (a) The establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies, and methods to achieve integrated management of the effects of the use, development, or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources of the district:
- (b) The control of any actual or potential effects of the use, development, or protection of land, including for the purpose of the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards and the prevention or mitigation of any adverse effects of the storage, use, disposal, or transportation of hazardous substances:

In order to carry out the purpose of the Act and their functions under it, territorial authorities must prepare a *district plan*⁴. In preparing a district plan, territorial authorities must have regard to *regional instruments* including the *regional policy statement*⁵. This statement is prepared by the regional council and provides an overview of the resource management issues of the region and the policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the natural and physical resources of the whole region. Guidance may be found in this statement as to how to manage retail development in the region. District plans must also state the significant resource issues of the district, and the objectives, policies, and methods/rules to address these issues⁶. These rules may prohibit, regulate, or allow activities⁷. Retail development may be classified in district plans as permitted, controlled, discretionary, non-complying or prohibited activities. These classifications play a role in determining the level and nature of territorial authority involvement in the development of regional retail sectors:

- permitted activities
 - ▶ no resource consent needed
- controlled activities
 - ▶ need a resource consent
 - ▶ resource consents *shall* be granted, although conditions may be added⁸
- discretionary activities
 - ▶ need a resource consent
 - ▶ resource consents *may* be granted or refused, and conditions may be added⁹
- non-complying activities
 - ▶ need a resource consent
 - ▶ a resource consent *shall not* be granted *unless* any effects are minor and granting it would not be contrary to the objectives and policies of the district plan¹⁰
- prohibited activities
 - ▶ activity is not allowed.

The management of retail development by different regions will therefore depend on whether or not it is considered to be a significant regional issue (regional policy statement) and territorial issue (district plan), and on the nature of the district plan rules relating to retail development.

4.4 Territorial Authority Approaches to Retail Development

The flexibility afforded to regional and territorial authorities under the RMA has resulted in some diversity of approach to retail development throughout New Zealand. The approaches taken are

⁴ s. 72-73.

⁵ s. 75.

⁶ s. 72, 76.

⁷ s. 68, 76.

⁸ s. 105.

⁹ s. 105.

¹⁰ s. 105.

highlighted in regional and territorial policies, plans, rules, and resource consent decisions. In broad terms, there are two debates relating to the direction and nature of retail development:

- 1) Central Business District/existing retail centres-based protection and revitalisation versus new out-of-centre development, and
- 2) regulated versus non-regulated retail development.

These debates are evident in the different approaches taken by city councils such as Christchurch, North Shore and Upper Hutt.

Christchurch City

Objectives and policies relating to retail development in the Christchurch City Council's transitional plan focus on:

- ▶ development in a manner that ensures adverse effects are kept to a minimum
- ▶ the viability of the central business district (CBD) and other existing shopping centres
- ▶ developing employment opportunities
- ▶ servicing geographical areas
- ▶ recognising shopping centres as focal points of communities
- ▶ improving designs and layouts
- ▶ recognising the importance of small corner shops and small shopping centres for special groups such as the less mobile.

Objectives and policies relating to retail development in the Christchurch City Council's proposed district plan focus on:

- ▶ ensuring a standard of amenity appropriate to the location and function of an area, while avoiding, remedying, or mitigating adverse effects
- ▶ an equitable distribution of suburban centres of varying size and function
- ▶ ensuring development is appropriate to the zone, and that services and infrastructures in existing suburbs and the central city are reinforced.

Judge Jackson noted in the Baker Boys Case¹¹ that the implementation of this proposed district plan is evidence of a less rigid approach (as compared with its transitional district plan) to retail development in Christchurch. This is also evident in the fact that retail development is more likely to be a discretionary activity under the proposed district plan (resource consent is needed and *may* be granted), compared with a non-complying activity under the transitional district plan (resource consent is also needed, but *shall not be granted* unless the effects would be no more than minor and granting the consent would not be contrary to the objectives and policies of the district plans).

Resource consent hearings and decisions highlight an approach to retail development in Christchurch which has moved away from efforts to ensure the viability of the CBD and other existing shopping centres, and places great importance on the ability to mitigate effects so that they are no more than

¹¹ [1998] NZRMA 433; (1998) 4 ELRN 1 297 (EC).

minor¹². It also recognises that the effects on trade competitors/competition cannot be considered, that it is not the territorial authority's role to regulate industry, or err on the side of caution as with technological issues, and that developers do not need to justify the need for their development.

North Shore City

The North Shore City Council has taken a distinctive and focused approach to retail development, known as a "centres-based strategy". This strategy focuses on encouraging retail development in existing centres, while reserving the right to allow retail development in areas outside existing centres as long as a full assessment of the social and economic impacts is carried out, and it is determined that any adverse impacts can be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.

In adopting this approach, the Council has recognised that business and commercial centres make a significant and important contribution to social wellbeing and to social conditions in urban environments¹³. These centres perform a variety of different functions (convenience shopping, comparison shopping, entertainment, leisure, community) and help mould unique community lifestyles. In order to retain these centres and their functions, careful consideration has to be given to out of centre development which may pose a significant risk to the viability of existing centres, and some degree of regulation is needed to ensure an efficient pattern of retail development¹⁴.

This approach has not been welcomed by all, as demonstrated in *The North Shore Case* below. However, in that case the court held that a centres-based strategy was in line with the purpose and principles in the RMA, and accepted the North Shore City Council approach.

Upper Hutt City

The changing approach to retail development in Upper Hutt is evident in its transitional and proposed district plans. There was a clear focus in Upper Hutt's transitional plan on the protection and revitalisation of Upper Hutt's CBD. The transitional district plan promoted the enhancement of the "Central Business District in order that it remain an attractive and well used shopping area, the *main retail* area of Upper Hutt and the Commercial, Social and Cultural Centre of the City". Although the proposed district plan still refers to the important functions of the CBD, it no longer states that it is the main retail area in Upper Hutt. Rather, the plan promotes the "continued environmental, social and economic health and vitality of the Central Business District and work in concert with retailers and other Central Business District stakeholders to enhance the amenity, attractiveness and appearance of the centre".

A variation to the proposed district plan in 1998 took this approach one step further by categorising large scale development at the St Patrick's Estate in Silverstream as a discretionary rather than non-complying activity. This variation assisted with the application by Promall Limited to build a large scale retail centre at the St Patrick's Estate. However, appeals regarding the variation and the granting of consents to Promall Ltd were lodged. This case is discussed below.

¹² Baker Boys v Christchurch City Council [1998] NZRMA 433; (1998) 4 ELRN1 297 (EC); 1999, *Progressive Enterprises Limited and General Distributors Limited and the Christchurch City Council. The Resource Management Act 1991. Hearing Before a Commissioner.*

¹³ Taylor 2000b.

¹⁴ Taylor 2000b; Butcher 2000.

4.5 Environment Court Approach

The nature of retail development in New Zealand has also been influenced by the approach of the Environment Court. A right of appeal to the Environment Court exists for those who want to challenge the decisions of territorial authorities. A number of retail cases have gone to the Environment Court¹⁵. The Environment Court has reinforced the right of territorial authorities to allow the establishment of new out of centre developments, or to encourage the protection, revitalisation and development of existing centres. The Court has endorsed and embraced the effects based approach embodied in the RMA by emphasising the importance of establishing what adverse effects may arise as the result of a development. The possibility of adverse effects will not however preclude the development of a retail centre if it is shown that these effects can be mitigated. The Court has also confirmed that effects on trade competitors/competition can not be considered. A number of key cases highlighting the Environment Court approach include:

The Baker Boys Case¹⁶

This case, heard in 1998, was an appeal against a decision to grant a resource consent to build a stand alone supermarket in Ferrymead, Christchurch. The appeal was brought by several supermarket owners in the Christchurch region, and the owner of a bakery sited adjacent to the site on which the proposed supermarket was to be built. The activity proposed in the resource consent was classified as a non-complying activity under the Christchurch City Council's transitional district plan, and a discretionary activity under the Christchurch City Council's proposed district plan. These plans were seen to carry equal weight and therefore to need equal consideration. Although it was considered that the proposed plan was less rigid than the transitional plan, it was nevertheless viewed as continuing the "retail hierarchy" in the transitional plan, and therefore posed no conflict. In order to decide the appeal, the court had to determine the nature and gravity of any potential effects, and whether or not granting the resource consent would be contrary to the objectives and policies of the district plans, and the purpose of the RMA.

The court discussed a number of potential adverse and positive effects of the proposed development. The potential adverse effects included: reduced turnover for other supermarkets in the locality, the closure of other supermarkets in the locality, reduced value of the other supermarket's buildings and land, reduced trading and profitability of the satellite shops surrounding the other supermarkets, loss in employment in the other supermarkets and satellite shops, reduced socio-economic viability and cultural welfare of social focal points in local suburbs, and an increase in traffic causing parking and safety issues. The appellants did not claim that the potential of reduced turnover or supermarket closures were adverse effects, but accepted that they were precluded from consideration as effects of trade competition on trade competitors, and relied on them as evidence of how the other adverse effects would occur.

The potential positive effects discussed included: increased choice for consumers in the locality, increased convenience due to the proximity of the proposed supermarket, potential redevelopment opportunities with the other supermarkets, a more efficient use of the proposed supermarket site, and improved trading opportunities for convenience shops in localities near the other supermarkets. The

¹⁵ Formerly the Planning Tribunal.

¹⁶ [1998] NZRMA 433; (1998) 4 ELRN 1 297 (EC).

court held that these effects were either poorly evidenced, minor, or could be mitigated, and also that they could not be considered because of section 104(8) of the RMA which precluded the consideration of effects on trade competitors/competition.

Whether or not granting the consent would be contrary to the objectives and policies in the district plans was also considered. The relevant objectives and policies in the transitional district plan include:

- ▶ to provide for the development of a wide range of employment opportunities and choice of location consistent with environmental criteria,
- ▶ to provide a wide range of employment opportunities conveniently located in relation to suburban residential areas,
- ▶ to increase employment opportunities and to provide for servicing activities associated with the hill parts of the City,
- ▶ to recognise shopping centres, primary schools and other community facilities as community focal points,
- ▶ to provide facilities for local employment where possible,
- ▶ to recognise the importance of shopping centres as community focal points. ... In addition the scheme attempts to prevent further decline of the small local centres by preventing further major expansion of the larger district centres,
- ▶ to improve the design and layout of centres and reduce conflict between pedestrians and motor vehicles,
- ▶ to strengthen shopping centres as community focal points, and
- ▶ to recognise the social or community importance of the corner shop and the small shopping centre particularly to the less mobile person and to encourage retention of these facilities where possible.

The relevant objectives and policies in the proposed district plan include:

- ▶ to ensure the equitable distribution of suburban centres of varying size and function throughout the urban area of the city, and
- ▶ to ensure that retail activities in industrial areas are appropriate to such an environment and are consistent in scale and type with the need to reinforce services and infrastructure provided in existing suburban centres and the central city.

The court held that granting the consent would not be contrary to the specific objectives and policies of the transitional district plan, but would be contrary to the plan's general policies. In relation to the proposed district plan the court held that granting the consent would be "neutral" in respect of the objectives and policies. The court held that granting consent would not be contrary, however it ultimately gave little weight to these plans as they had not been replaced with a tested plan.

The court also considered whether or not granting the consent would be contrary to the purpose of the RMA and concluded that it would not be. The court therefore dismissed the appeal, and affirmed the granting of the resource consent to build a stand alone supermarket in Ferrymead, Christchurch. One of the key issues that came out of this case is that effects on trade competitors/competition will not be considered in a resource consent application.

The North Shore Case

This case, decided in 2001, involved an appeal by a number of parties against a decision by the North Shore City Council to take a “centres-based approach” to retail development in its proposed district plan. The references subject to appeal concerned the North Shore City Council’s issues and goals relating to retail activity, its intended management of growth and development in the city, and a number of business issues. The North Shore City Council wanted to adopt a “centres-based approach” in which the Council would encourage retail development in existing centres (focal points of social benefit and amenity) in order to maintain the viability of such centres in the interests of the social and economic wellbeing of people and communities within associated catchments. It was argued that this approach was in line with the Council’s duty to carry out the purpose of the RMA (s.5), and also in line with other regional instruments such as the Auckland Regional Council’s Regional Policy Statement which aimed to encourage urban intensification in selected locations while avoiding, remedying, and mitigating the effects of transport on the environment.

As well as this centres-based approach, the Council would retain the opportunity for large scale retail development to occur outside existing centres as ‘limited discretionary’ or ‘discretionary’ activities. If this development was classified as a limited discretionary activity, then the Council would be limited as to what effects it could consider during resource consent applications, for example, traffic effects. The Council however preferred this development to be classified as a discretionary activity as this would allow the Council to assess all potential effects of the proposal. Such effects would include social and economic effects. The Council argued that any economic effects would not include effects on individual trade competitors as this was precluded under the RMA, rather it would focus on the continued viability of an existing centre as a collective physical resource of public benefit and interest.

The National Trading Company of New Zealand Limited (NTC), an appellant in this case, argued against the approach intended by the North Shore City Council, claiming that it was an outdated approach reminiscent of the Town & Country Planning Act 1977 focus on the economic welfare of the people. The NTC argued that the Council’s approach placed too much emphasis on the economic protection of existing centres and insufficient emphasis on the provision of retail development in the region as a whole. It also favoured the classification of retail development outside existing centres as a limited discretionary activity in order to avoid the potential for such a wide ranging assessment of effects.

After consideration, the court accepted the North Shore City Council’s argument, and endorsed its centres-based approach.

The Upper Hutt Case¹⁷

This case involved an appeal by a number of parties against the decision of the Upper Hutt City Council to make a variation to its proposed district plan (making large scale retail development at St Patrick’s Estate a discretionary rather than non-complying activity), and to grant resource consents to Promall Ltd to develop a large scale retail and entertainment complex at St Patrick’s Estate in Silverstream, Upper Hutt. This complex would include a wide range of retail and entertainment activities, and constitute the largest retail centre in the Wellington region.

¹⁷ Decided 2001.

The Council argued that granting consent to Promall was consistent with both the Upper Hutt City Council's proposed district plan and the Wellington Regional Council's Regional Policy Statement. It was acknowledged that granting the consent was not consistent with policies in the transitional district plan, but argued that less weight should be given to this plan because it was not developed under the RMA, it was not constrained by the inability to consider the concerns of trade competitors, and because it contains out of date issues and policies (Thomas 2000). In support of the variation and granting of resource consents, it was pointed out that the Upper Hutt CBD had actually been experiencing a decline in retail activity for a while, and that the development of a complex such as that envisaged by Promall may in fact stimulate and reverse this decline in activity.

A number of arguments were put forward opposing the variation and the Promall development. As in the North Shore Case, it was argued that out of centre developments pose a significant risk of adverse social and economic impacts on existing retail centres and their communities (Taylor 2000a). In this case there is a significant risk to the Upper Hutt CBD and other retail centres. As the viability of the proposed development will rely heavily on expenditure from outside Upper Hutt, concern was also raised about the lack of a detailed assessment of the social and economic impacts on the wider Wellington region. Hansen points out that there is the potential for significant adverse impacts on retail, economic activity and efficiency, amenity, ancillary services, transport, and the ability of less mobile people to access retail outlets (2000). Another argument put forward focused on how the development could be justified economically, given the population distribution and growth in the Wellington region (decline in Upper Hutt), the topography of the region, the locations and composition of existing retail, and predicted future population growth (Dimasi 2000).

The Environment Court allowed the appeals relating to the variation and the granting of resource consents to Promall Ltd to establish the Valley Plaza. In allowing these appeals, the court held that apart from possible improvement to stream margins, the overall environmental effects (aesthetics, structure design, threat to other business, flood risk, traffic, and wildlife) would be detrimental. Although the court acknowledged its inability to consider trade competition, it commented on the importance of the CBD to the Upper Hutt community and the potential for it to be badly affected by the proposed retail and entertainment development.

5 Social Impacts of Large Retail Developments

5.1 Introduction

This section looks at the impacts that shopping centres might have on their host communities. A host community involves elements of public, community and commercial infrastructure as well as residents living in close proximity to the shopping centre. The impacts summarised here have been identified through individual New Zealand case studies, AEE documents for shopping centre proposals and evidence for the Environment Court presented by expert witnesses, as well as a number of overseas journal articles.

The scope for this literature review is to summarise the potential impacts which could occur in both the construction phase of a shopping centre, and when it is operational, whether a new project, or the refurbishment or extension to an existing centre.

As a basis for organising the material, the impacts discussed in this review can be categorised as biophysical, social or commercial. In some instances an impact may have aspects which relate to more than one, or even all three categories. In essence, the relevance of any of these impacts derives from their social consequences. An example of this is the issue of parking. At one level, parking requires physical infrastructure and occupies space which competes with other uses of land. During the construction phase, parking may be at a premium for both the construction workers and retailers' staff, as well as shoppers. Construction activities might also be hazardous and impinge on the safety of other people as well as obstruct residents and their visitors from accessing private driveways. Once the centre is complete, its car parks may be used for shopping or visiting other businesses outside of the centre and thus assist the commercial environment. In a social context, staff parking may be some distance from the centre itself which raises the question of safety for late night centre staff (Taylor & Buckenham 1998, p. 4).

Whilst the nature of any impact may be unique to each case, there are a number of themes, both negative and positive, that relate to the whole. This can sometimes make the task of weighing up the merits and demerits of any proposal a difficult one - "In sum the evidence on the social, economic and environmental impacts of RSCs [Retail Shopping Centres] is inconclusive on whether they have a positive or negative effect" (Williams 1995, p. 242).

5.2 Biophysical Impacts

Impacts on the natural environment

In some instances, the development of a large shopping centre on a site may present concerns about biophysical risks to the area which may or may not be mitigated. For example, the potential effect on the frequency and severity of flooding impacts from the siting of the proposed Valley Plaza Mall in Silverstream, Wellington on a natural floodplain was raised by a number of witnesses giving evidence both for and against the variation being applied for by the proponents of the centre. This is linked to the loss of greenfields land (unpaved) from productive use or ecological function. Furthermore, informal and formal areas for recreation such as "greenfields" can be encroached upon by retail developments. Members of a community can find themselves without the recreational spaces they have been used to. Whilst the new retail centre might offer indoor leisure activities, they

do not provide for the same activity as the open land. This impact can contribute to the sense of lost vitality and health of a community (Taylor 2000c).

There are examples in the literature from overseas of large mega malls closing several years after establishment and communities being left with “large white elephants” on a site that was previously an attractive green space (Williams 1995). This alteration of land use poses both ecological and commercial issues for a community. In ecological terms, the outcome of the change is likely to be irreversible. In commercial terms, the outcome of the change may represent new opportunities as well as unrealised expectations.

Physical nuisances

There are a number of impacts which are associated with building a large shopping centre, and for the purposes of this review they have been clustered together under the category of nuisance. They include the effects of dust, air pollution, litter, noise, vibration and power surges. A host community can experience some or all of these nuisances during the construction phase if they are not planned for by the developer.

Neighbours of shopping centres experience operational noise effects such as increases in vehicular noise, car alarms sounding off and the sound of carpark cleaning machines which tend to operate in the early hours of the morning. Nearby residents also experience increased noise from shopping trolley collections and delivery vehicles.

Litter from fast food outlets sited within or near a shopping centre and supermarket trolleys left outside can be a nuisance to neighbouring businesses and residents for some considerable distance around.

Visual impacts

The size and design of a shopping centre and associated facilities can have potentially either negative or positive effects on its host community. Alteration to an existing centre may be more visually pleasing than the original design. However, in some instances, the overall design may be considered “out of character” with the neighbourhood and require modifications before it is acceptable to the community. A large new development may shade neighbouring properties at different times of the day, more so than neighbours have hitherto experienced. It may dominate and conflict with the existing landscape, and impede views (Taylor, Buckenham & McClintock 2000). The size and type of construction, often including large expanses of blank walls, may attract tagging which is considered a form of visual pollution in many communities.

Construction of a new or existing centre impacts on a community if existing vegetation is removed. This can be either positive or negative, depending on proposed landscaping measures. To minimize such impacts, a new planting scheme should be in keeping with the neighbourhood. Service and storage areas may also require screening to avoid unsightly visual effects for neighbours. Similarly, car park lights and signage for the new development need to be designed with its immediate community in mind or else neighbours may experience off-site glare (Boffa 1999, p. 7).

Impacts of changes in traffic flow

Impacts from traffic on the local infrastructure of a host community need to be considered at both the construction and post construction phase of a development. During construction, the community experiences a number of traffic related issues that change once the development is operational. Large construction vehicles are designed to carry heavy loads and make frequent trips. At times they may operate outside normal business hours disturbing a community's peace. The movements of construction vehicles and workers' vehicles on streets that are already coping with normal traffic flow can create added noise, congestion, dust, air pollution and alter vehicle and pedestrian flows (Taylor & Buckenham 1998).

Once a shopping centre is operational, a community may experience reconfigured street patterns and changes to the times vehicles are using the local streets. For example, if a movie and leisure complex is part of the centre development, traffic can be expected to be moving around the streets at later times of the evening. There is also likely to be an overall increase in the numbers of vehicles. Established routes may change and new "rat runs" created. Thus residents in streets which prior to the development were used to a particular traffic flow pattern, may experience either less or more traffic as a result of the change (ibid, pp. 10-12). Accompanying these changes may be associated changes in noise patterns and levels due to more or less traffic on neighbouring streets and in mall carparks.

Pedestrian footpaths and access ways to existing shops will be affected during the construction phase as the infrastructure is dug up, entry/exit points altered, and construction and delivery vehicles frequent the area. After completion of the centre, new routes through local streets may be favoured as pedestrians cross streets to access new entrances. This can become an issue of safety as pedestrians "jaywalk" busy main streets where traffic lights do not relate to shopping centre entrances. Safety may also be an issue (see later section), with both pedestrians and courier deliveries competing for footpaths (Taylor, Buckenham & McClintock 2000, p. 26).

5.3 Social and Commercial Impacts as a result of change or the creation of a centre

Employment

Whilst a new shopping centre might generate additional jobs during its construction phase, it may also reduce job opportunities in the area as it competes with existing smaller businesses. Job loss in a neighbourhood ultimately leads to social and economic disintegration whereby the impacts of a centre become both commercial and social.

Centre employees may not live in the neighbourhood and contribute little benefit to the host community. If an employee lives outside of the area they work in, they are less likely to shop and spend time in their place of employment. However a new centre with a new variety of shops attracts new people to it, and thus can add to the vibrancy of a neighbourhood.

The potential impacts of a shopping centre on local employment are various. Whilst some research from overseas indicates "the ultimate possible impact of more powerful mega-retail chains will be to displace tens of thousands of small business entities and make millions of retail employees

redundant” (Shils 1999, p. 8) others believe a new centre will boost the local economy substantially. Existing retailers often cite “more foot traffic in the area” as a potential effect from the development of a new centre or a refurbished centre.

It is possible that new jobs are created during the construction phase, both directly in construction-related activities and indirectly (eg food outlets in the vicinity, frequented by the construction workers). However the issue of ongoing employment patterns is widely debated, as not all mega centres survive and in some cases nearby “strip shops” or “Main Streets” are “decimated by repeated closings of small stores, unable to compete with new retail giants” (ibid, p. 9). Furthermore, construction-phase jobs may turn out to be only temporary.

The changing functions and strategies of “Main Streets” or “strip shops” is a major consequence of a large shopping centre setting up in the vicinity. One overseas study discusses the disappearance of wholesalers as “major suppliers sell out to chain stores.... these retail giants have the buying power to negotiate the lowest prices with their suppliers” (Shils 1999, p. 9). Whilst in some cases this may result in small boutiques opening in side street shops where rentals have decreased, vacant shops can have a marked negative impact on a community. Cheaper rentals can also alter the type of retailer attracted to the area. “These effects include losses of small businesses and jobs, which are followed by social instability, increases in crime, tagging and losses in property values ...” (Taylor, 2001).

Parking

Potential social impacts associated with the provision and use of carparking facilities are many and varied.

The construction of extensions to existing shopping centres is likely to cause disruption to existing carpark arrangements and a temporary shortage of carparking. The added number of construction related vehicles exacerbates this shortage. During construction, local streets are likely to experience overcrowding as workers’ vehicles compete for carparks with those of residents and existing employees. This can have a detrimental effect on existing strip shops, particularly if they depend on courier deliveries and one-stop shopping outside on the main street for their customers. Construction over months and years may prolong disturbances long enough to result in the closure of some businesses.

After completion, a host community may experience less demand for parking on neighbouring streets as new parking spaces have been created by the development. If adequate on-site staff parking has been provided, this should improve the residential amenity and thus a redevelopment of parking facilities can impact favourably on a community. However, past experience would suggest that adequate parking for all staff working in a new shopping centre is not always provided on site. Thus, due to the increase in size of the commercial development, streets further away from the centre may for the first time experience increased and conflicting parking demands. Residential streets are often subject to intense parking if there is a shortage in the area. Local residents are impacted upon by the use of space outside their homes preventing their visitors from parking nearby.

The practice of opening seven days a week will change the ambience of a neighbourhood. The experience in residential streets of intensive parking during the weekdays may become a 7-day a week phenomenon, with an associated sense of invasion and alienation experienced by local residents. Such potential impacts may affect not just local residents. Another example of the same

kind of competition for limited parking with a change to 7-day retail activity might be competition between parishioners and shoppers when a new shopping centre opens in close proximity to an established church (Taylor, Buckenham & McClintock 2000, p. 25). Yet another example arises when a shortage of parking can result in pressure on parks provided by smaller businesses in the vicinity of a large centre. Shop keepers may be forced to pay for the patrol of private parks for customers. However the new carparking facilities at a mall also provide parking for shoppers who wish to access shops outside the shopping centre itself.

Malls with cinemplexes will introduce night-time parking to a community. However, if managed properly, “the introduction of a cinemplex to a centre will provide complementary parking use and is an efficient use of existing parking resources.” (Edwards 1998, p. 31).

If the centre is a “stand alone” development, some distance from an existing retail centre, the latter’s existing carpark buildings may experience a decline in their patronage. This is an example of an impact that is biophysical, social and commercial, whereby existing carpark buildings are no longer frequented and therefore the cost of maintaining them becomes expensive, resulting in increased levels of litter and tagging.

Altering street infrastructure, such as available parking, both during construction and afterwards can be disorientating for residents, especially the elderly who feel safe with what is familiar.

In summary, changing levels of demand for parking and new ways of providing for parking can result in a variety of impacts on existing patterns of use, which in turn have the potential for a variety of social consequences for numerous groups of people - local residents, retail customers, owners and employees of existing businesses, and users of other community facilities.

Pedestrian safety

There is potential for pedestrian safety and amenity to be compromised both during construction and subsequent operations of a new shopping centre, unless careful attention is paid by planners to the needs of pedestrians. Construction activities may lead to the alteration or even closure of footpaths with consequent problems for pedestrians as they negotiate their way over temporary duckboards, often with trolleys and child buggies or walking frames for the elderly. The planned layout of pedestrian access ways outside a shopping centre has in some instances been altered without acknowledging pedestrian safety issues, as in the case of pedestrians being required to use entry/exit points crossed by vehicles, as was the case at Riccarton Mall, Christchurch. On the other hand, one of the perceived benefits of the vehicle-free shopping environment within shopping centres is the sense of improved pedestrian safety while moving from shop to shop.

Public Transport access

It is often necessary to move existing bus stops and taxi stands to accommodate construction work. Indeed, such facilities may be relocated permanently. However if their relocation is done in consultation with the community, the new sites may lead to an improvement, enhancing the use of public transport.

Public space: security/safety and amenity values

Perceptions of safety and security within a community can change with the siting of a new shopping centre or the refurbishment of an existing one. Various aspects of the change can result in either improvements or increased risks.

A new centre may involve an improved security system which includes security lights, video cameras and alarms, with security personnel patrolling at night, if there are movie theatres. Large shopping centres with their mix of stores, fast food outlets and movie theatres are attractive to youth. These places are undercover. As they are protected from the elements, with on-site security personnel, they are considered safe by the parents of teenagers who allow their children to socialise at these centres rather than in the central business district of a town.

Some centres actively provide holiday attractions for youth and permit fundraising activities to go on within them. Local schools commonly visit the centres as part of an educational programme and rely on the stores in the centre to make donations for raffles (Taylor 2001). However, in one overseas report, the author suggests that smaller businesses give more to charity than do large businesses (Beaumont 1994). Nevertheless, there can be strong links between shopping centres and the provision of a range of social and other services in a locality.

By way of contrast, it is not unusual for residents to be fearful for the safety of their properties if movie theatres are suggested for new centres, as they believe outsiders attracted to the area at night may be tempted to vandalise vehicles and property. Medical centres and a hospital in the neighbourhood of the proposed Newmarket Mall expressed concern for possible theft of medical supplies (Taylor, Buckenham & McClintock, 2000). To alleviate such concerns, some centres allocate space for community constables within the mall, which makes for a more security-conscious neighbourhood.

On-site staff parking provided by a centre makes departures at night safer for staff. However, if there is inadequate staff parking, they may have to park some distance from the centre and feel unsafe returning to their vehicles at night.

Residents near Riccarton Mall, Christchurch experienced an element of hooliganism in the neighbouring streets and mall carpark with vehicles doing “wheelies” until speed humps were introduced and barriers to prevent entry to vacant carparks (Taylor & Buckenham 1998, p.13).

More facilities and services for consumers

As mentioned above, shopping centres can extend the facilities within a community by providing space for them within or alongside their development. Libraries, doctors and dentists, Citizens Advice Bureaux, public noticeboards and police offices are all part of the Pakuranga Plaza Mall in Auckland. They are all easily accessed by local residents. If a new centre is developed some distance from these facilities, there may be a detrimental effect on some of these services if others are induced to relocate in order to be situated within the new mall as complementary spending and transport become issues.

A focus on a centres-based approach to the development of shopping centres (and retailing in general) over time, is likely to support progressively improved access to a variety of non-shopping,

social and community services by lending stability to their longer-term operating environment, thereby enhancing the public amenities associated with shopping centres.

Change in retail mix and type - access and choice

Large shopping centres offer convenient “one stop shopping” with undercover access ways and carparks. Convenience may be gauged in terms of time, distance travelled or walked, greater certainty for parking and level of choice offered. Such large shopping centres are in direct competition with the strip shops or Main Streets. They can substantially change the character of a neighbourhood. It is not uncommon for local residents to react against the encroaching commercialism on their community. Whilst the new centre may be convenient for some people, for those who are less mobile, or without a vehicle, they can be difficult to access. The latter rely heavily on good public transport or the ongoing service of their local shops.

Traditionally strip shops tend to include small one-off stores such as draperies, boutiques, dairies, as well as commercial premises such as banks, post offices and insurance companies, whereas shopping centres attract chain retail stores such as clothing, jewellery and shoe stores as well as large “anchor” stores like K-Mart, Deka and supermarkets. They tend to provide ATMs rather than accommodate banks and post offices.

More stores can give the consumer more choice. As chain stores tend to be attracted to large malls, the nature of the strip shops or Main Street is forced to take on new directions. Unique boutique shops and cafes that stand alone on their own merits can be attracted to open in vacated shops in the Main Street.

Property rentals/values

With the advent of a new centre or indeed the proposition of a new development, the property and rental markets undergo changes. In his evidence to the Environment Court on the Valley Plaza proposal in Silverstream, Guthrie (2000) cites significant changes to the property rentals in the Upper Hutt CBD once the proposal was mooted.

The centre developer’s need for additional land may generate bargaining situations for existing owners. Residential property in close proximity to the new centre (or extension) may experience changing patterns of occupancy (between owner occupancy and tenancy) in response to the changing amenity values of the location.

6 Conclusions

This Sector Review has highlighted a number of issues about the diversity of roles and functions which may be associated with patterns of retail development, and in particular with the development of large retail facilities.

It appears that the development of retail infrastructure in New Zealand has followed similar trends to those observed internationally. While the mix of functional and social roles is well established in the commentary to be found in international literature on retail development, this mix of roles is only gradually being acknowledged within the formal (legal) planning processes in New Zealand.

The recognition accorded to the relative importance of social roles - or in some cases the lack of recognition, combined with the flexibility afforded to regional and territorial authorities under the RMA, has resulted in some diversity of approach to retail development throughout New Zealand. While it is accepted that effects associated with business competition are not legitimate grounds for argument in RMA planning fora, it has not always been accepted that the location of retail development has social as well as competitive implications. This can be explained partly by the lack of empirical data in this country which would enable such potential linking of roles to be examined and described.

These issues have implications also for those who are engaged in effects assessment activities, particularly for social impact assessment under the RMA. This Sector Review has provided a summary of social impacts to be considered, based on recent cases in New Zealand and several overseas journal articles. However, the focus earlier in this paper given to the multiple roles and functions associated with large retail facilities also invites a reappraisal of the wider framework within which effects assessments are carried out. This matter will be the subject of further investigation in later phases of this research.

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