The University of Calgary

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL: THE DUNBAR DISTRICT, VANCOUVER

By

Victoria Sun

A Master's Degree Project Submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Design
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Environmental Design (Planning)

Faculty of Environmental Design

Calgary, Alberta

June 1999

0-612-47660-X

ABSTRACT

Retail Development and Revitalization at the Community Level: The Dunbar District, Vancouver

Victoria Sun

Supervisor: William T. Perks

June 1999

Prepared in partial fulfillment of requirements of the MEDes (Planning) Degree in the Faculty of Environmental Design, The University of Calgary

Retailing plays an important role in enhancing community life. Where retail activities congregate often constitutes the "Neighbourhood Centre" – the "heart" of a neighbourhood – providing shops, jobs, services, amenities and places for community events and social interactions. Such a community focus is necessary and needs to be strengthened if more cohesive and healthy communities are to be achieved.

This project investigates the importance of viable retail areas in community-building. It examines retailing in the Dunbar district, Vancouver. Dunbar has received little attention from planning authorities in the past; however, with changes in demographics, property development climate, and retail trends, Dunbar is in need of new directions for an improved future.

Through a review of retail typology and functions and key elements of success in community retail districts; and by conducting a site-specific study involving a shopper survey and a situational analysis, this project constructs a development scenario for Dunbar: Housing as well as street improvements, selected property developments, implementation policy, and the BIA mechanism figure in the scenario. The scenario outlines expansion for Dunbar Central.

Key words: Business Improvement Areas (BIAs); Community Shopping District; Dunbar Street, Vancouver; Neighbourhood Retail; Retail Development; Retail Typology and Functions; Vancouver Community Visions Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have assisted me in this Master's Degree Project. First, I would like to thank Professor William T. Perks for his constant supervisory role and generosity of time in this project. I am particularly appreciative of his thorough editorial comments and constructive substantive advice, which have assisted me greatly in shaping this project to fruition. I also owe thanks to Professor D. Lynne Ricker for her valuable perspective and assistance in survey design.

I am indebted to planners at the Vancouver and Calgary Planning Departments for acting as key informants and for their assistance in the research: especially Monica Stekl, Cathy Buckham, Peter Vaisbord, Paul Maas and Jim Francisco.

Thanks are also extended to my friends -- Andrea West, Jill Yow, Kent Tong, Karen Donnelly, Jennifer Lee and Jeremy Klaasen – for supporting and consoling me throughout the work.

Finally, I am thankful to my parents and family, who have instilled ambition in me since childhood and have continuously urged me toward higher academic achievements. This project is equally a product of their unconditional love and support. I would also like to thank my boyfriend, Nedzad Ajanovic, for broadening my perspective of the world, and for his encouragement and friendship during my final year at the Faculty of Environmental Design.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure:

Table:

INTRODUCTION

Retailing plays a vital role in our everyday lives. Jones and Simmons (1990) describe the inseparable ties we have with retailing:

> The act of shopping continues to be a major preoccupation of the North American household. On average we spend 1.7 hours per day on shopping and personal services. In addition, we know that a certain proportion of discretionary (recreation) time is spent on consumption – window-shopping, eating out, buying souvenirs. ...The purpose of over 10 per cent of household trips is shopping, and as we go through our daily routine we continuously plan and evaluate our purchases and discuss them with our friends. ...Shopping is as much a recreation as it is survival, a means of personal expression for many people.

At a local level, the act of shopping involves much more than just stocking our refrigerators and embellishing our homes; it creates opportunities for face-to-face interaction with our neighbours. This allows us to keep up with community events, and with issues that concern our places of residence; and in turn reinforces a sense of belonging in our communities.

Often located in neighbourhood centres where many activities and services usually congregate, retail activities play an important role in enhancing community life. For this reason, retailing needs to be closely considered if cohesive and self-sufficient communities are to be achieved.

By cohesive is meant, in part, that communities have readily-identifiable and inviting centres which can act as a primary focus of community energy and spirit. These centres, as described in the Vancouver CityPlan, should "provide a 'heart' for each neighbourhood. ...Here, people will find shops, jobs, neighbourhood-based sevices, public places that are safe and inviting, and a place to meet with neighbours and join in community life." (Vancouver CityPlan, 1995) Self-sufficient implies that communities need to function as social-economic units that provide a diverse range of goods and services, as well as employment opportunities for a good proportion of the residents.

Study Purposes and Objectives

This Master's Degree Project examines retailing in the Dunbar community in Vancouver (Figure 3.1). By conducting a site-specific study, it identifies major improvement priorities and proposes future directions for the Dunbar district. It is expected that the study and the proposals that flow from it (Chapter 6) will be of practical assistance to planners, residents and merchants in their present task of working toward a better future for the Dunbar community and its retail merchants constituents.

In Vancouver, efforts on commercial development and revitalization have concentrated mainly in the downtown and inner-city areas. The Vancouver Planning Publications indicate that no extensive community retail study has been done for suburban communities. The closest studies on community retailing fall within "Community Development Plans". These are local-area studies that provide broad policy directions for all aspects of a community; no implementation strategies are, however, provided regarding retail districts.

The subject of this MDP – Dunbar – did not appear in Vancouver's planning agenda until 1997. It is one of two pilot communities chosen by the City for launching its "Community Visions Program". The Program identified a number of priorities for improvement, including shopping environment, transportation, housing and community services.

The essential purpose of this MDP is to investigate ways to strengthen the Dunbar retail district, and to develop improvement proposals accordingly. As the characteristics of retailing vary from community to community, there is no universal formula for devising development improvements; the project develops a case-specific program for the Dunbar retail district. The Study objectives include:

- To identify the factors that contribute to the making of successful community retail districts
- To investigate the shoppers' opinions and preferences on the Dunbar retail environment
- To examine the problems and opportunities existing in Dunbar
- To formulate a scenario for retail revitalization and supportive property development

Methodology

Literature review

The study began with a literature review on key, empirical-theory aspects, including community planning, retailing theory and structure, commercial revitalization, and Dunbar and appreciation of the Dunbar community: the chapters 1 and 2 provide a grounding for the site-specific planning investigations. Sources consisted of books, journals, government documents, business reports, newspaper and magazine articles, the Internet, and selected Masters' theses.

A literature review was also conducted on social research methodology with a view to design and analysis of key informant interviews and a survey questionnaire.

Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to gather qualitative information. These included planners, Dunbar residents and merchants -- the three major stakeholder groups in the planning of Dunbar. Interviews were carried out in various settings: in offices, over the telephone and on the Study site; they lasted from 10 minutes to an hour.

Key informants are listed in the References. They were selected by using the "snowball sampling" technique. They were asked questions according to their role in the community. For example, the planners were asked,

- What factors contribute to a successful community retail district?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Dunbar retail district?
- What can be done to strengthen the Dunbar retail district?

The interview findings are variously reported and referenced in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Survey questionnaire

An 'on-the-street' survey was developed to investigate the shopper characteristics and behaviour. It provides an understanding of shoppers' needs and preferences, expenditures, etc.; and their "appreciation" of the Dunbar retail district have a direct bearing on the viability of the district and its prospects for improvements.

The questionnaire design, sampling and survey administration, and key findings are presented in Chapter 5.

Site Visits

The Study site was visited numerous times during the course of the research (May 1998 to February 1999) -- to conduct the shopper survey and to carry out "descriptive observation", a technique used to describe the setting, the people and the activities taking place at the site (Robson, 1993:300).

Analysis of Data

Qualitative as well as quantitative data were assembled. Qualitative data collected from key informant interviews and descriptive observation were summarily analyzed using the SWOT analysis technique. This analysis identified the key conditions presently affecting the retail environment. Quantitative data came from the survey and the Vancouver City Directory. Survey data were analyzed using the Excel spreadsheet that allows for easy tabulation and graphical representation. The Directory provided historical and present listings of businesses in the Dunbar district for purposes of determining the nature of business changes over the past two decades.

These analyses are reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

The findings obtained from the various research and analysis tasks outlined above were used for developing improvement proposals in Chapter 6.

PART I

CHAPTER 1: RETAILING STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

A study of retailing at the community level should begin with a review of some of the theory and trends on the retailing structure and patterning. Such makes it easier to understand where and how community retailing fits into the broader environment of neighbourhood and community.

This chapter consists of two sections: The first discusses the urban retailing structure; the second traces the trends and forces that have been at work in shaping the North American retail environment since the beginning of this century. These trends are examined with an eye on their relevance to retailing in Vancouver generally, and Dunbar in particular.

1.1 Retailing and Urban Settlement Patterning

Retailing structure must be understood in conjunction with human settlement patterns; the two are inextricably linked. Jones and Simmons (1987) describe the reciprocal relationship between retailing and human settlements:

> Villages, towns, and cities are as much a product of the distribution system as they are its cause. Stores serve the spatial markets represented by settlements, but settlements are also built around retail and service activities. (Jones and Simmons, 1990:142)

The relationship between retailing and human settlement can best be understood through the theory of urban structure. Many land use/growth models have been developed, notably: the Concentric Zone Model, the Sector Model, and the Multiple-Nuclei Model (Whynne-Hammond, 1985:232-234). The Concentric Zone Model, developed by Ernest Burgess in the 1920s, consists of a core or Central Business District (CBD) ringed by zones with different uses. Around the same time, the Sector Model was developed: owing to differential rental values within the city, the Sector Model takes on a radial pattern with sectors of different land uses radiating out from the CBD. With the advent of the automobile and subsequent decentralization, Harris and Ullman, in 1945, proposed a new form, the Multiple-nuclei model. It varies very much from the earlier models, in that it takes on a cellular structure with land uses not arranged in a predictable manner from the CBD outwards. It demonstrates that more than one centre can exist and, based on functional or market interdependencies, related or functionally-linked land uses will cluster because of mutual economic benefits or common siting requirements.

The three models share a common feature: a CBD and a surrounding area containing various retail centres or districts, and various functions. The Core (CBD) is the predominant centre. The areas surrounding it -- the "hinterland" -- are the sphere of influence of the core -- also thought of as its market/trade area. The hinterland is dependent on the centre for the provision of goods and services; but by the same token, the core relies on the hinterland for survival of its activities.

Urban Planners have been interested in the exchange and distribution of tertiary activities between the core and its hinterland. Tertiary is defined as "the distributive trades that include the commercial services of transport, wholesaling and retailing" (Whynne-Hammond, 1985:111). Tertiary industry is important because it provides the critical link between obtaining raw materials and the manufacturing of commodities (the processes occurring in primary and secondary industries) and the consumers who desire those commodities.

The tertiary activity that depends most on direct contact with the general population is *retailing*. Lewison (1994) defines retailing as "the business activity of selling goods or services to the final consumer". Retailing occurs at different scales and capacities, depending on the economic strength of the Core and the functions of its hinterland.

The notion of the centre and its hinterland is best premised in the central place theory, developed by Christaller and Lösch in the 1930s (Knox, 1994:33-35). The theory states that settlements, or central places, exist in a hierarchical-scale order, according to their respective abilities to provide goods and services to the size of their surrounding areas (hinterlands) as measured, essentially, by population size. Two key concepts -- "threshold of demand" and "range of a good" - are particularly important.

The demand threshold refers to a minimum size of population required to support a specific good. The range of a given good defines the trade/market area around a central place*, and within which consumers are prepared to travel to the centre to obtain it. Relating to the concepts of threshold and range is the arrangement of "high-order" and "low-order" goods. High-order goods, such as designer clothes and jewelry, have greater

* Here a central place could mean any retail nucleation, from local business centres such as neighbourhood and community shopping areas to the central business district.

thresholds and ranges than low-order goods such as groceries and hardware – i.e., consumers are more willing to travel greater distances for expensive, rare items than easy-to-find 'convenience' goods. This results in a hierarchy of centres superimposed on one another and based on the size of a trade area. The Dunbar trade area, for example, extends from 16th Avenue to 41st Avenue on Dunbar Street, a radial distance of roughly 2.5 kilometres (see Figure 5.2).

Berry and Garrison (1959) compare the settlement hierarchy of hamlets, villages, towns, cities and metropolitan areas with the intra-urban pattern of isolated clusters of shops, neighbourhood centres, community centres, regional centres and the central business districts. Carol (1960) and Morrill (1987) extend the analogy by studying Zurich and Seattle, respectively. Both found their study areas to conform nicely to the hierarchical model.

Central place theory has its shortcomings. It has been criticized as far too simplistic, founded on unrealistic assumptions. As well, advances in transportation technology and personal mobility of the consumer and recent trends toward functional specialization have meant that the theory can no longer adequately explain or predict structural retail patterns. O'Brien and Harris (1991), however, confirm the validity of the hierarchical premise: "the concept of such a hierarchy has been demonstrated frequently in the past and it has been widely accepted by the planning profession as a model of retail organization".

From another perspective, the spatial arrangement of retail functions can be explained by land values -- the bid-rent curve theory (Dawson, 1980:103): rent level, or the land value that a particular business is able to bid for a site determines the locations of different retail activities. Accessibility is the primary factor to be considered in this competitive bidding process. The highest land values occur in the Core/CBD, where accessibility is the greatest (highest); consequently, only those businesses that are most able to capitalize upon accessibility by affording the rent can locate in the centre. The highest order goods -- those with highest thresholds and ranges would be found at the core. Similarly, lower order goods, because of the smaller thresholds and ranges, would be found in the surrounding areas, the lower positions of the hierarchy.

A melding of the central place concept and the bid-rent curve thoery is well demonstrated by Garner (1960) in his spatial model of "business centre structure". He develops a set of bid-rent curves to examine the internal spatial structure of business centres at three distinct levels: regional, community and neighbourhood. Garner suggests that the businesses within the retail nucleations at each of the three levels will arrange themselves according to their positions along the threshold-size continuum. The threshold-size continuum acknowledges that the highest threshold activity, located in the core and occupying the highest value land, will be ringed by other business types in order of decreasing threshold size (Dawson, 1980: 105).

Looking at the community level, what results is that the prime retail sites will, in a mature, stabilized period of development, end up located at the neighbourhood's main (highest traffic) intersecting roads, or in the very geographic centre of a neighbourhood. Dunbar, the subject of this study, represents fairly accurately the neighbourhood positioning in the structural model – and its functional-typological characteristics, the subject of Section 1.2.

1.2 Retail Patterns and Typology

In the classification and interpretation of retailing patterns, different approaches have been used; they fall under four main categories (Jones and Simmons, 1990:209):

1. Morphology
2. Functional Composition
3. Market Composition
4. Ownership

Morphology refers to the delineation and particular shape of retail clusters. The most commonly observed are nodal developments with distinct centres and edges, linear strips that spread along a transportation line (often "endlessly"), crisscross forms that radiate from major intersections, and random, dispersed stores situated on arterial streets (Figure 1.1).

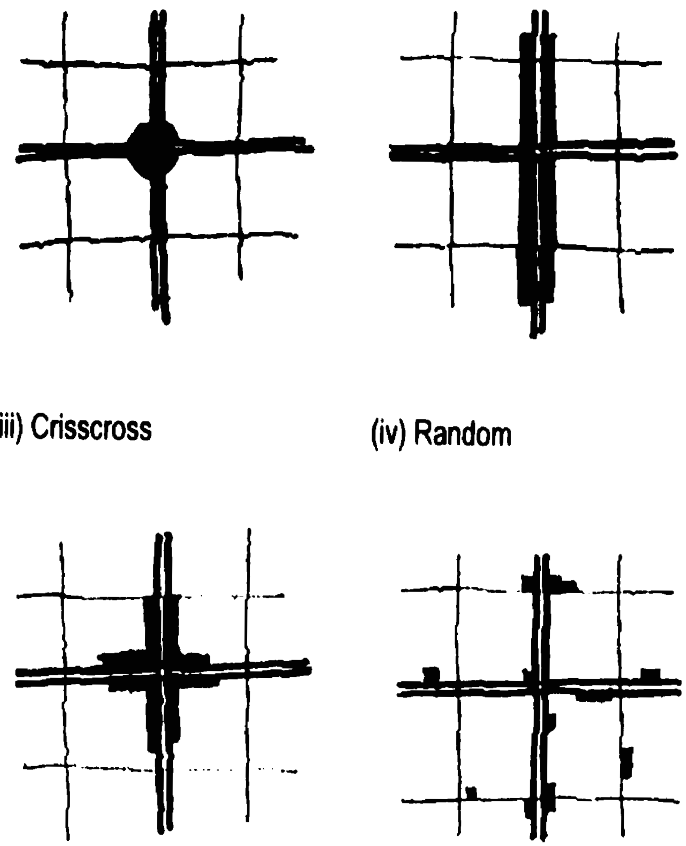
The Dunbar district belongs to the linear strip group (Figure 1.1(ii)). As will be described and analyzed in Part II of this Study, Dunbar consists of three sub-areas (Figure 3.7): a central area that typifies a retail strip along a major transportation arterial, and. two other areas having less well-defined shapes, and which are variants of the linear form.

Functional and Market Composition categories can be regarded as typological approaches useful to planning. *Functional composition* classifies retail groupings according to the nature or types of businesses. For example, a group of stores might cluster together because they specialize in a specific product line and serve the same market group. Functional composition is commonly used to determine the order and type of retail agglomerations within the retail hierarchy, as exemplified by Berry's model discussed later in this section.

Figure 1.1: Morphology of Retail Stores

(i) Nodal (ii) Linear)

(iii) Crisscross (iv) Random



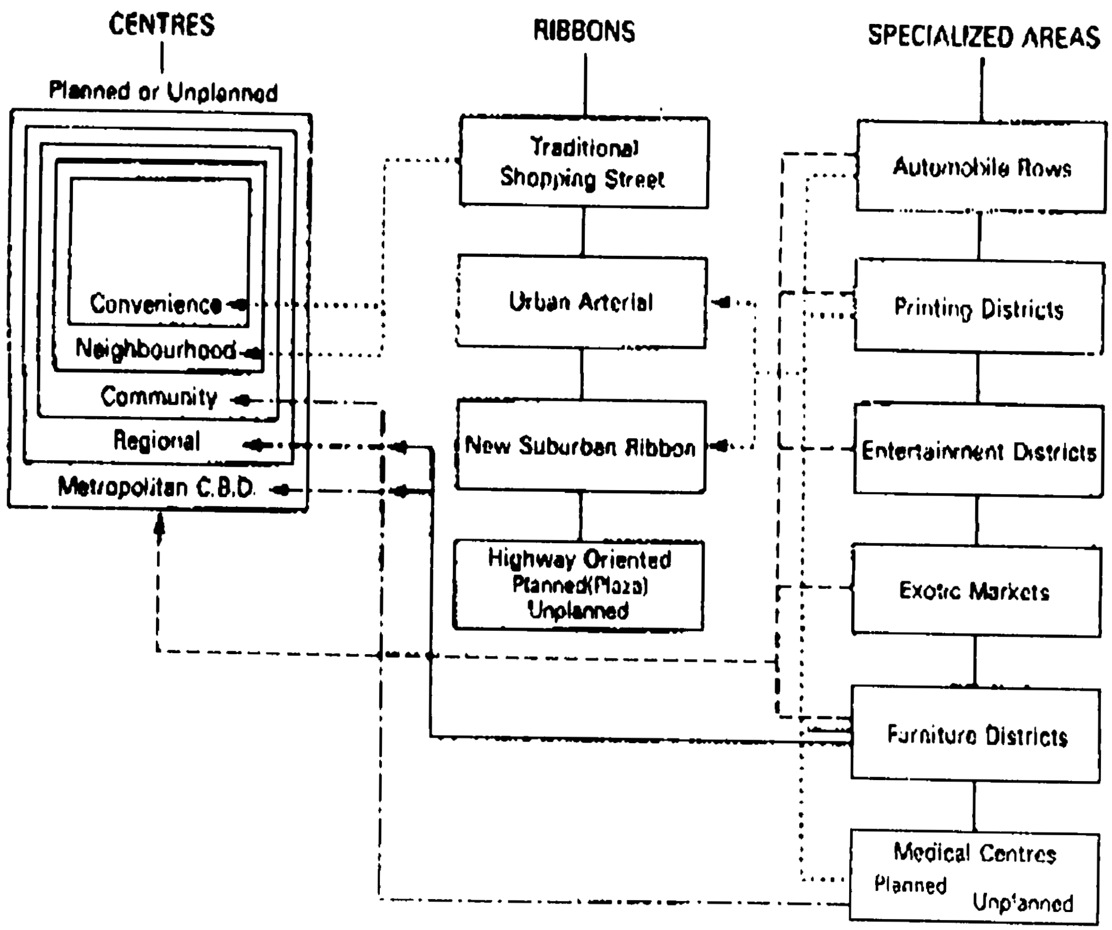
Market composition, distinguishes retail clusters by the types of customers served. Certain shopping areas may be founded on specific market sectors that take into account factors such as income levels, and/or age groups, and/or ethnicity. For example: the retail areas serving (targeted upon) an Asian market in the Vancouver region will most likely have different attributes from those designed to serve other cultural groups.

The functional and market compositions of a retail district depend on, function in relation to, consumer function preferences and expenditures. Thus, Dunbar district serves mainly a convenience function and a local (neighbourhood) market area (See further discussion in the situational analysis and the shopper survey, Chapters 4 and 5).

Last, *ownership*, defined in terms of the regulations controlling tenancy and rent levels, affect considerably the size and layout of retail clusters considerably. A retail district occupied by individual property owners and tenants, as in the case of Dunbar, takes on a different physical form than a planned shopping mall owned and managed by a single (often large) corporate body.

Among the various approaches, Berry's (1967) typology of business areas is probably the most well-known and most widely accepted formulation. It distinguishes between three main types: *centres*, *ribbons*, and *specialized areas* (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Typology of Business Areas
Source: Berry, 1967



Shopping centres are of two basic types: planned and unplanned. A planned centre, commonly referred to as a shopping mall, is "a group of architecturally unified commercial establishments built on a site that is centrally owned or managed, designed and operated as a unit, based on balanced tenancy, and surrounded by parking facilities" (Berman and Evans, 1998: 317). An unplanned centre (or district), is an area with "a concentration of individual shops on individual sites providing some sort of general node for shopping activity" (Dawson, 1983:1). Both types of centre are found in central and inner city, and in suburban locations. Centres are arranged in an order similar to that of the hierarchy described in central place theory (Section 1.1). They are classified according to four different levels situated below the central business district (CBD) – diagrammed in Figure 1.2:

- Convenience store clusters
- Neighbourhood centres
- Community centres
- Regional centres

Convenience store clusters comprises of between one and four business types; and they serve local residents living within walking distance -- customarily a two- or three-block or 350-metre radius (Garner, 1966:6).

Neighbourhood centres are also intended to serve customers residing in the immediate vicinity; but they are a step up from the convenience cluster because they will likely have personal services such as a barber, a dry cleaner, etc., in addition to groceries and sundries.

Community centres have greater thresholds and market/trade areas. They serve the needs of an entire community -- each containing two or more neighbourhoods. In addition to a wide range of everyday goods and services, they will usually offer a range of "comparison goods" such as clothing and jewelry stores.

Regional centres provide next-to-complete shopping and service facilities for a defined regional market/trade area comprising several communities. Most convenience and comparison goods can be found here, except for the most specialized commodities offered in the CBD or in idiosyncratic, specialization areas.

It is important to note that whether planned or unplanned, the centres in each level of the hierarchy all share the same functional composition. Nevertheless, they can differ greatly in morphology, market composition and ownership.

Berry's typology (Figure 1.2) further distinguishes Ribbons and Specialized Areas, each with sub categories, some of which can be subsumed within one or other of the five types of Centre. Ribbons are linear strings that develop along major transportation arterials. They can be either automobile-oriented (e.g., highway commercial strips) or pedestrian-oriented (e.g., traditional "main street" type shopping shopping ribbon). Specialized areas contain a number of functionally-related establishments; examples would include furniture districts providing a range of home furnishing products from lamps to dining table sets, and medical centres.

Further, specialty retailers and business services can be dispersed or concentrated. Generally, merchants who offer highly-specialized products (such as collectors' items) do not need to be concentrated, while other specialty businesses take advantage of compact clustering because their products complement one another and allow customers to do comparative shopping (Jones and Simmons, 1990:223).

Dunbar can be described as a combined "Centre" *and* "Ribbon". It has mostly neighbourhood level functions; but at the same time, it displays characteristics of a traditional ribbon. The functions and characteristics of the Dunbar retail district are described in detail in Chapter 3.

1.2.1 Retailing Structure of Vancouver

In Vancouver, the first real concentration of retail activity appeared just a little over a century ago, at the Granville Townsite (the eastern part of the present CBD). They congregated along Granville, Cordova, and Hastings Streets (Macdonald, 1992:22). Up until World War I, there were a few other, 'beginning' centres -- isolated clusters and ribbons in some of Vancouver's earliest residential communities, including Kitsalano, Fairview, Mount Pleasant, Hillcrest (now Riley Park), Cedar Cottage, and Grandview. These then-outlying communities were served by streetcar lines that connected them to the CBD. As the lines were extended, so the number of retail outlets expanded in the growing, outlying communities -- particularly around streetcar terminal and transfer points. The Dunbar retail clusters were among this second wave of development (circa 1910-20), along with Kerrisdale (West 41 Avenue and West Boulevard) and Point Grey (West 10 Avenue and Sasamat Street).

The immediate post-World War I period saw a burgeoning of retail ribbons outside of the CBD. Rising standards of living, coupled with an increase in automobile ownership, allowed retail outlets to spread and take on a lineal, finger-like pattern outside the CBD. These developments soon alarmed the City officials on the effects of uncontrolled retailing activity in the residential areas; in 1930, they adopted Zoning By-Law No. 2074 which detailed the allowable types and extent of commercial developments (City of Vancouver, 1971:4). In anticipation of growth, the zoning permitted more land for commercial uses than was required at the time.

As a result of By-Law No. 2074, this ribbon pattern has changed little since the 1930s, even though several important societal trends with dramatic impact on the retailing industry occurred in North American cities during the late 1930s and (especially) the post-World War II period (discussed in Section 1.3). The By-Law was revised in 1956, but this mainly focused on revising the regulations governing the uses within commercial zones rather than altering or expanding the zone boundaries (City of Vancouver, 1971:8). Vancouver's present retailing structure (patterns) can be understood in relation to Christaller's hierarchy of centres and Berry's retail typology. A clearly discernible hierarchy of centres exists across the retail landscape; however, not all of the typological categories in Berry's model are found in Vancouver.

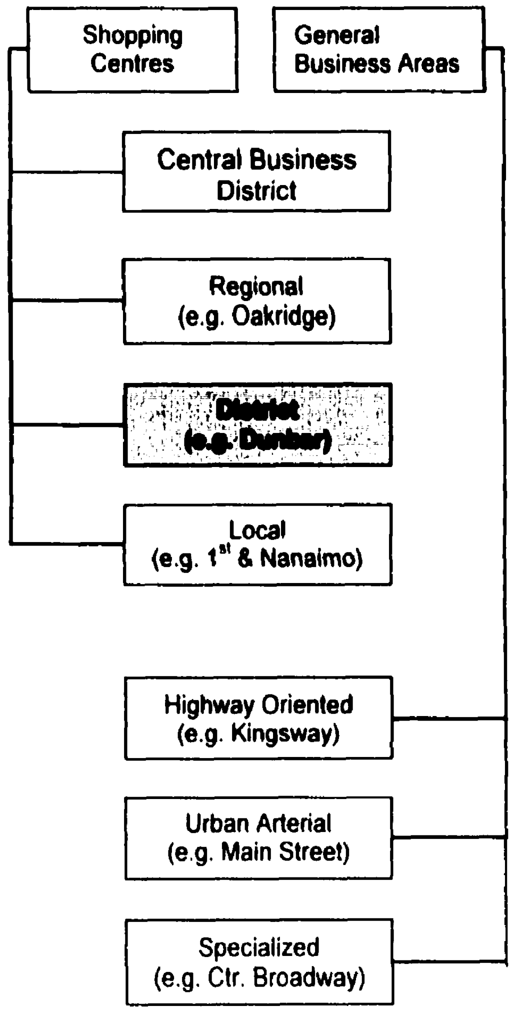
According to a City of Vancouver report (1979), Vancouver's commercial areas have been categorized and depicted as shown in Figure 1.3:

1. Centres -- various
2. General Business Areas

Like Berry's Chicago model, Vancouver also has a retailing structure characterized by a hierarchy of centres; except that Vancouver's comprises only three, not four orders outside of the CBD. In order of ascending functional complexity, these are designated by the City (op. cit.) as local, district, and regional -- corresponding to Berry's *neighbourhood*, *community*, and *regional* "centres" (See Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.3: Vancouver Commercial Structure

Source: Adapted from the City of Vancouver, 1979.



In addition to the centres, a system of *General Business Areas* is designated. These are characterized by "lower land costs and rents and by a mixture of retail, service, office, general commercial and semi-industrial uses" (op. cit. :78). Notably, they are primarily automobile-oriented, serving customers from all over the Vancouver metropolitan area. Thus, their ties (in the sense of dependency) to the communities in which they are located are much weaker than the local or district centres. Typically, general business areas include activities such as gas stations, drive-in food establishments, furniture and appliance dealers, hotels, and auto repair and sales. As shown in Figure 1.3, there are three main types: highway-oriented, general business strips/ribbons; urban arterial-general business strips; and specialised-functional business areas. The latter take on certain types under the "ribbons" and the "specialised" areas in Berry's model.

Figure 1.3 shows Dunbar as an example of a "district centre". It is unplanned, that takes on a strip/ribbon form, and it comprises of community-order functions. The morphology and functions of the Dunbar retail district are depicted and discussed in Chapter 4.

1.3 Retail Trends

In all important respects, Vancouver conforms closely to North American trends in structure and typology. A brief account of these follows; and the discussion concludes with some indicative comments regarding the Dunbar district.

1.3.1 CBD versus suburban centres

Up until World War I and slightly beyond, the majority of the urban population resided in or very close to the CBD. The CBD was the primary centre for commerce. All intra-city streetcar lines converged on the CBD. This resulted in a compact and distinct shopping area with a market area equal to the entire city. As Vancouver grew, more and more people moved into outlying areas where space was more abundant, land costs cheaper, and living conditions more desirable. High transportation costs at the time meant that only the more well-off could afford to relocate. CBD merchants began to realize that an affluent market was shaping up beyond the CBD; as a result, clusters of retail businesses emerged along and around public transportation lines and terminals. This marked the beginning stage of unplanned, suburban shopping centres such as the Dunbar district. The outlying centres gradually gained a greater market share; and, consequently, an increase in their competitiveness to the CBD. The CBD market areas thus became truncated; the CBD entered a period of atrophication and decline (circa 1950-mid-1970s), while suburban centres enjoyed rapid growth.

However, not all suburban centres that initially evolved from serving neighbourhood demands have been able to capture significant market share from the CBD. At present, some remain at the infancy stage and continue to serve neighbourhood functions only. Such is the present situation in Dunbar, for example.

Examples of Vancouver suburban centres that are able to capture significant market shares from the downtown area are West 4 Avenue between Vine and Burrard Streets, and Broadway central. Their successes can be attributed mainly to the relatively high incomes of the adjacent neighbourhoods and their locations along previous major streetcar routes which have now become high automobile traffic streets. How and when the Dunbar retail centre will similarly develop and "succeed" is still an open question – a question explored first in Chapters 4 and 5, and then, from a planning intervention perspective, in Chapter 6.

1.3.2 The shopping mall

Since the late 1940s, the most dominating phenomenon across the North American retail landscape has been the shopping mall – viz., the planned shopping centre. A rapid increase in automobile ownership and fall in gasoline prices allowed for a new level of personal mobility. Coupled with expansive highway construction, people were now able to travel much farther distances within much shorter times. This led to sprawl. Suddenly, the old, unplanned suburban retail clusters were seemingly no longer adequate. Moreover, the post-war economic boom led to a rapid rise in disposable income, which in turn multiplied the purchasing power of households in suburban communities. This made it possible for suburban areas to support higher-order goods and services previously available only in the CBD. A mushrooming of planned shopping centres occurred.

The growth of suburban centres, including malls, and the relative decline of the CBD as a shopping destination is confirmed by Robertson (1983) and by Jones and Simmons (1991): retail sales in American downtowns dropped from 20 percent in 1954 to 3.5 percent in 1982. In Canada, the number of planned centres/malls rose from 64 to 369 in less than a decade, from 1956 to 1964 (City of Vancouver, 1971:16). These centres commonly locate at the intersections of highways or major thoroughfares; and they include large areas for free, on-site parking.

Commonly, the shopping structures take on a box-like form, with little design or environment attractions to them. Compared to the traditional ribbon shopping areas, which evolved gradually over time, retail unit by unit, so to speak, planned shopping centres are less attractive in form and scale because of their standardized dimensions, overwhelming scales, etc. Though convenient and diverse and functionally-rich, they have created a retail landscape that is homogeneous and alienating to pedestrians (Knox, 1994:123).

Despite the social policy critique and the perceived negative aspects of planned shopping centres, planners continue to support them – mainly because they 'remove' the traffic, noise and parking problems often associated with unplanned retail strips in residential communities such as we find in Dunbar (Jones and Simmons, 1991:218). Still, the late 1980s and decade of the 1990s has been witness in every city to a revival and retail intensification along 'ribbon' – mainstreet-type environments – such as 17th Avenue SW and 4th Street SW in Calgary.

1.3.3 Big-box retailers

The most recent trend is "big-box" retailers -- typically chain stores. They are preferred tenants of the new shopping centre because they are "less likely to default on payments due to the supporting network of their parent organizations and there is greater cash flow available due to their generally higher sales volumes" (Russell, 1988:18).

They are also popular amongst consumers because of their abilities to offer more competitive prices and larger selection by capitalizing on the economies of scale (Barry, 1998). As "destination stores" that provide immense parking space and easy access, big box retailers are able to capture significant market share from the smaller, independent retailers. There are three main types: specialty stores, discount stores, and supercentres.

Specialty stores have a single product line, and could be anything from computers to eyeglasses; examples are Toys R Us, Chapters, The Gap. Discount stores contain a wide variety of products under one roof to provide for "one-stop" shopping; Zellers and Wal-Mart are examples. Super-centers differ, in that they combine functions found in a supermarket and a discount store; a Canadian example of this is Costco which sells groceries and a variety of non-food products. Big-box stores are generally not aesthetically-pleasing in design; very often they constitute eyesores because of their visual incompatibility with adjacent uses; and they contrast sharply with the customary, diversified retail streetscape that offer sociability as well as retail service. However, a recent study suggests that, although the megastores will continue to be major players in the retail environment, they are likely to reach a saturation limit over the next five to ten years (Barry, 1998).

1.3.4 Convenience store chains

Convenience store chains are also transforming the retail landscape*. For purposes of the present Study, this is especially significant. Similar to big-box retailers, they are able to take advantage of the economies of scale and compete successfully with independently-owned competitors. This puts the position of smaller, convenience stores at stake; many neighbourhood mom-and-pop stores are finding it increasingly hard to survive. As demonstrated by a 30 percent decline in sales experienced by the Foto Grocery -- a corner-store in the west end of Toronto that has been in business for close to 20 years -- small merchants have to work longer hours (13 hour days) in order to sustain their businesses (Globe and Mail, March 2 1999:A3). In Dunbar, the trend is equally apparent; independent grocers remain open during the weekend to compete a higher share of sales from the two Mac's convenience stores in the community.

1.3.5 Neighbourhood Specialty retailing

Counteracting the large, corporate powers within retailing is the development of *neighbourhood specialty stores*. They differ from the big-boxes in that they are usually relatively small in scale, independently owned, and offer unique, sometimes exotic products. Examples include gift boutiques, antique shops, and ethnic food stores. Moreover, these stores emphasize quality and service rather than quantity and price-efficiency. Neighbourhood, mainstreet-type specialty retailing is gaining ground in recent times, partly because of changes in demographics and lifestyles – aside from an increasing rejection of the sterility and anonymity of planned shopping centres (Foot, 1996: 103).

Into the 21 century, Canada is moving from a predominantly young to a predominantly middle-aged society. The one single

* A recent merger between two Canadian convenience store giants: Alimentation Couche-Tard Inc. and Silcorp Ltd, reinforces this trend. Under the deal, the merger will create 1,600 convenience stores and 435 gas station outlets stretching from Quebec to British Columbia, expecting annual sales of $1.6 billion (Globe and Mail, March 2 1999:B11).

age group, or the so-called baby-boomers– those born between 1947 and 1966 – counts for one-third of Canada's population (Foot, 1995:105). The preeminence of this age group suggests there is a trend towards shopping environments that are more leisure-based and sociable, and that place more importance on convenience, quality, service and "neighbourly" ambience. Neighbourhood specialty shopping areas provide just that; they are close to people's homes, they offer unique experiences, and they encourage social interactions. Into the future, Dunbar will follow this trend and serve as a Neighbourhood specialty shopping district within the larger Vancouver retail landscape.

1.3.6 Some Prospects: Return to Community District Retailing

> The malls won't disappear but their glory days are over. In the next 20 years to come, the demographic shift will favour a revival of neighbourhood specialty stores supported by loyal customers for whom price is no longer the most important factor in a purchase decision. (Foot, 1995: 83)

> Very few regional shopping malls will be built within the next few years because they're so expensive...[the] trend will be to smaller centres, a bunching of specialty shops or upscale neighbourhood and strip shopping areas close to customers. (Hall, 1986:38)

Presently, there are two counteracting trends at work: one led by megastores operating on economies of scale and the other by small-scale, neighbourhood stores offering convenience, quality and service. Present societal conditions appear to move toward community district retailing; many studies seem to confirm a strong possibility that large-scale retail operations will reach their saturation level within the next decade (Barry, 1998; Foot, 1995, Ryan, 1994, Hall, 1986).

In summary, the trends discussed in Section 1.3 have all, to some degree or other, impacted on the evolution of the Dunbar retail district. Particularly, neighbourhood specialty retailing plays an imperative role in the viability of Dunbar's business environment. Chapter 4 will return to neighbourhood retailing in the Dunbar district context.

CHAPTER 2: RETAILING AND PLANNING

The intent of this chapter is to discuss the role of retailing in community planning. It begins with a brief discussion on the urban village concept: a notion that has unveiled the importance of retail activities in building cohesive and people-oriented communities. It then identifies the key ingredients of a successful community shopping area for gauging the Dunbar study district in Part II. The last section (2.3) provides an account of the Vancouver planning policies and programs currently guiding retail development at the community level.

Retailing plays a critical role in supporting local needs; and where retail activities congregate usually constitutes a focus for community energy and spirit. Such a focus point is indispensable in building a cohesive community where people can come together and join in community life: a vibrant community shopping district encourages social interactions, provides venues for cultural events, contributes to neighbourhood amenities, and creates jobs close to people's homes.

Figure 2.1: A Vibrant Community Shopping District: Comfortable Sidewalk, Tree Plantings, Varied Storefronts, etc. Source: Sucher, 1995

2.1 The Urban Village Concept

The importance of retailing is possibly best embraced in the "Urban Village" concept. Urban village refers to a city made up of "individual neighbourhoods with dynamic mixes of housing, shops and offices and by ...human scale, intimacy...vibrant street life" (Sucher, 1996:7) (See Figure 2.1). One of the earliest visions was Ebeneezer Howard's idea of a "Garden City". Proposed in the late nineteenth century, Howard's plan was based on a new kind of community/settlement that embodied the best of both worlds: the natural setting and social connections of the rural village and the services and cultural amenities of a village-scaled town centre (LeGates and Stout, 1996:345). Thus, Garden City was to consist of a clearly recognizable, spatially-defined and circumscribed town centre that provides a focus for social interaction as well as retail services. Differing land uses (residential, commercial, transportation) were to be overlapped to produce dense developments that allowed resident to walk to the town centre within a short period of time.

In the 1960s, sociologist Herbert Gans used the term "urban villagers" to describe groups of both inner city and suburban dwellers in Boston who still maintained a lifestyle that very much reflected their pre-existing village-like, physical environments, cultures and personalities. A more contemporary notion of urban village emanated from the New Urbanism movement (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Calthorpe, 1993). The main thrust is to design compact communities that are self-sufficient in amenities, shops and housing and made up of physical elements that are friendly and inviting to pedestrians.

Thus, the term "Urban Village" reflects a blend of the modern and the traditional; but it cries out all the contradictory feelings that people have about the places they live in. On the one hand, they want familiarity -- a sense of belonging in their local social network; on the other hand, people want anonymity -- privacy in pursuing their interests and domestic life. This tension between the social and the anonymous mirrors the two counteracting retailing trends presently at work, viz., neighbourhood specialty stores in community retail districts versus big-box retail chains located on the suburban peripheries. People value the personal contacts and the sense of intimacy in neighbourhood specialty stores, and yet they also desire the diversity in choice and the anonymity when shopping in big-box centres. A well-conceived urban village seeks to create a living environment that combines the physical compactness and diversity of the city with the social intimacy and familiarity of the "local", the "village".

As Jan Ghel (1987) and others point out, an urban village is safe-feeling and inviting for people; and it possesses elements that draw people, not cars, together:

> Here is one urban village indicator: While you are driving around a modern American city you come across a commercial district where you want to get out of your car and stroll around; you have found an urban village, or at least a potential one. (Sucher, 1996:8)

An urban village can thus be thought of as a small-scale, interesting commercial district where one would want to leave his/her car and experience it on foot (Figure 2.2). Where social interaction is intense, so is the feeling of familiarity and neighbourliness. Retail functions range widely in scale and nature; they have different space requirements and advertising needs; they contribute to the kaleidoscopic streetscape and to the social mix needed in the development of a "whole" community.

To conclude:

> To a large degree, the future urban villages will emerge out of our existing neighbourhoods. So it's of critical importance that we identify those things about our neighbourhoods which we value and want to preserve. (Sucher, 1996:9)

To a good degree, Dunbar is one such Vancouver neighbourhood.

Figure 2.2: An Urban Village with Human-scale Buildings and Sidewalk Retailing Source: City of Vancouver, 1997.

2.2 Ingredients of a Successful Community Shopping District

The following set of planning criteria, drawn from the literature review, personal observations and interviews with city planners and residents, are now discussed. There are two broad categories.

Physical:

1. Street permeability and variability
2. Quality of public spaces
3. Parking and accessibility
4. Neighbouring uses and amenities
5. A Community theme

Socio-Economic:

6. Retail merchandise mix
7. Market composition
8. Competition/trade area
9. Retail district improvement organizations

The physical environment of a shopping district is indicative of its viability. A decrepit, poorly maintained streetfront, regardless of the mix of retail functions and the amenities available, is less attractive for shoppers and profitable for merchants than one that is visually pleasing and vibrant. Although the success of a community retail district cannot be measured solely on the basis of its physical condition, there is a general acceptance among planners and community residents that well-designed and well-maintained physical components help foster a vibrant local business environment (Buckham, 1999, pers. comm.; Stekl, 1998, pers.comm.; Schofield, 1998, pers. comm.; Maas, 1984:36).

1. Street permeability and variability

For a streetfront to be attractive to shoppers, there needs to be a certain degree of permeability and variability. Sucher (1995) describes street permeability as the "transparency" or openness of retail storefronts from the sidewalk. Open storefronts help to create business by providing an indirect form of marketing. They increase the chances of spontaneous buying when people can see the products for sale. Open storefronts also encourage social interaction between merchants and shoppers. An open storefront does not just mean one has a large entryway.

Street variability refers to the breaking up of scale on building facades and the intermingling of physical elements along the streetfront. Street variability is affected by the nature of businesses on the street -- different types of businesses have varying space requirements and advertising needs. Whatever the mix, the design of building facades and the arrangement of physical elements such as street furniture and merchandize stands determine to a large degree how a street looks. Generally, there is an accepted notion that buildings should be human-scale in community shopping districts (Katz, 1994; Calthorpe, 1993; Duany & Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Gehl, 1987; Jacobs 1961).

In street variability, too much variability can lead to visual disorder, causing nuisance and disorientation to shoppers. One way to solve this is to organize the varied elements around a specific theme and according to the functions of the district. For example, Gastown and Granville Island Marketplace in Vancouver are organized around the Historic Town and the Festival Marketplace themes, respectively.

2. Quality of Public Spaces

Public spaces refer to the spaces between the storefront and the sidewalk curb, and any other open spaces between and around buildings. The quality of public spaces is determined by a range of physical characteristics, such as the design of building facades, the availability of street furniture, and the cleanliness of the area. Generally, there is a positive correlation between the quality of public space and the level of social activities. As Gehl (1987) observes:

> In streets and city spaces of poor quality, only the bare minimum of activity takes place. People hurry home.
>
> In a good environment, a completely different, broad spectrum of human activities is possible.

In this sense, the quality of street and other public spaces is an important factor for planning lively shopping districts. Attractive, pleasant and secure public spaces not only draw people to a shopping district, they also encourage people to linger, socialize and participate in other activities. When people socialize and enjoy being there, they tend to extend their stay, which then increases the frequency of patronizing stores.

Many elements go into making good public spaces; for example, width of sidewalk, basic street provisions for comfortable walking and sitting, weather protection, building façade design, and vegetation. Appropriate sidewalk width for a shopping street is a highly subjective matter because the "tolerances and demands for space vary a great deal from person to person, within groups of people, and from situation to situation" (Gehl, 1987:135). In general, a desirable width allows two groups of people of 2 to 4 persons to pass each other comfortably from opposite directions without too much adjustment to continuing on their way (Sucher, 1995:30). See Figure 2.1. Width of sidewalk must not be so wide as to destroy the feeling of intimacy on the street. For sitting, if there are no such provisions, people generally do not stay long in an area. Common forms of seating on a retail street are public benches and café chairs. People like watching other people and observing the activities happening on the street. Gehl's (1987: 29) research has shown that the most-used seats are those with a view of intense pedestrian activity (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Outdoor Public Seating Oriented to Pedestrian Activity Source: Sucher, 1995; Gehl, 1987.

(i)

(ii)

Adequate weather protection measures also increase the comfort for shoppers in an outdoor retail district. Covered walking and seating areas provided by awnings and patio umbrellas are needed.

Last, interesting building design with visually-stimulating storefronts, as well as different forms of vegetation, are also components of good public spaces. Murals/public art on straight building walls -- as seen on 17th Avenue S.W., Calgary – add colour, ideas, and decorative features to what would otherwise be dull, plain edges to the public space. Vegetation, trees, flowering shrubs, hanging flower pots, etc. can embellish streetscapes and increase visual appeal as well as emotive and physical comfort.

3. Parking and Accessibility

Success of a community shopping district depends very much on convenient parking. The most successful districts are those that allow the co-existence of moving and curb-side parked cars and people -- not their wide separation, as in shopping malls. Therefore, the solution is not to fully eliminate car traffic in a shopping area (as in the case of a mall) but instead to find ways to calm car traffic so that cars can come and go without threatening the safety of pedestrians. There are many ways to "calm" traffic in shopping districts. One is to narrow the streets for car use and devote the gained spaces to pedestrians, plants, and street furniture.

Some streets are, however, made wider than they need to be to accommodate traffic at present and in likely the future. Dunbar, the main thoroughfare that runs through the three shopping sub-areas, is one such example; it could be narrowed. The dimensioning of Dunbar will be discussed in Chapter 4.

A good European example of a street that allows for the peaceful co-existence of people and cars is the "Ramblas" in Barcelona, Spain. As Jacobs (1993) describes it:

> It is a street clearly designed for people to be on, to walk, to meet, to talk. And it succeeds. The wide, central, tree-lined and canopied promenade, a focus for walking, with cartways for automobiles pushed to the sides in grand reversal of the norm, is a stroke of genius that establishes the social orientations of the street.

Figure 2.4: The Ramblas: Pedestrian Seating on the Central Promenade with Narrow Car Lanes Behind Source: Jacobs, 1993.

The beauty of this commercial boulevard lies in its ability to give the right-of-way to pedestrians by placing the main pedestrian walk in the centre while at the same time accommodating car traffic by allowing cars to arrive and park in the two, narrow-driving and one parking-lane on each side of the walkway. A different, Canadian example exists in Granville Island, Vancouver. There, the combination of cars, bikes, pedestrians and transit use and the various types of parking, including free surface parking and paid lots, all contribute to making the area easily accessible and convenient for its shoppers. Traffic moves at speeds of only 5 to 10 kilometres per hour. In Kerrisdale, Vancouver, the use of different paving material at key intersections and the provision of a free, underground parking lot half a block from the main shopping street make it a desirable community shopping district.

4. Neighbouring Uses and Amenities

Normally, a community shopping district is abutted by residences comprising mostly of single-detached homes. The surrounding residential population -- along with those living in apartments situated above retail stores -- very much determines the character and 'magnetism' of the retail district. A local retail district surrounded by low-income groups will be very different from one supported by higher income households. In addition, community retail districts are commonly surrounded by, or sometimes contain within them, neighbourhood amenities. Neighbourhood amenities refers to all the environmental features and civic services that contribute to a more convenient and enjoyable life: for example, parks, library, movie theatre, community centre, sporting facilities, etc. Amenities can sometimes serve to draw shoppers from outside the market area of the neighbourhood. In Chapter 4, the Dunbar amenities are discussed.

5. Community Theme

Another idea that is supposed to add to the success of a community shopping district is the presence of a unifying community theme. Schofield (1998) argues that a theme can help to strengthen community identity by involving elements that tell the history and character of the local culture and residents. A unifying community theme is said to reinforce the connection between residents and their community by adding to their sense of home and place.

Today, many new communities are designed with a central theme for marketing. Mackenzie Towne in Calgary, for example, captivates homebuyers by the "Olde Towne" theme, a combination of 'Georgian' townhouses and ranch-like single-family homes. Further, the use of a consistent "historical" architectural style throughout residential and commercial areas provides a sense of unity and identity. In long-established communities such as Dunbar, where redevelopment or renewal is desired and a theme had not been present, the incorporation of a theme in the shopping district can serve to strengthen community image and help focus community energy. Many and different physical elements can be utilized to create or strengthen a community theme.

These include (but are not limited to) lamppost banners, gateways/archways and bulletin boards. The establishment of a gateway, like the medieval gate around a walled city, provides a particular sense of identity and security. They serve a purpose of announcing to visitors the beginning and the end of a community district; and, like the banners, they can reinstate the sense of place in people's minds. Last, community bulletin boards, also located at critical points, advertise community events.

Dunbar would benefit from the establishment of a community theme that reflects its distinct identity and character. Ideas for the theme can be drawn from local residents and merchants, with the guidance of design professionals who are knowledgeable about the community.

6. Retail merchandise mix

The success of a shopping district, whether a mall or a downtown pedestrian precinct, depends greatly on the functional mix and the merchandise focus. Retailing in community districts can be broadly classified as:

- Convenience retailing
- Specialty retailing
- Eclectic retailing

Traditionally, shopping districts evolved to serve the day-to-day needs of nearby, "local" residents. A community shopping district of a convenience orientation consists of "convenience" businesses providing the essentials of daily life: commonly, grocery store, bakery, drug store and one or other personal services such as hairdresser, beauty salon and laundromat. Convenience goods are goods that do not require comparison shopping because they are generally consistent in prices and services regardless of the location. A district usually does not extend for more than a few blocks. Because the main factor that attracts customers to them is convenience, their market/trade area is made up mainly of residents of immediate neighbourhoods.

Specialty retailing creates a unique shopping environment by offering functions with a specific product focus; for example, antiques and art, ethnic foods and restaurants and bars. People patronize these areas for the convenience of one-stop comparison and, sometimes, for goods not available elsewhere. The intersection of Main Street and West 49th Avenue in Vancouver is one example of a local, specialty retail district. Referred to as the "Indian Market", the area sells a range of ethnic products from exotic spices to traditional Indian sarees. Similarly, the retail strip between West Broadway and West 5th Avenue on Granville Street in Vancouver specializes in antiques and art. In Calgary, the Westhills factory outlet area represents specialty retailing in an outlying suburban setting, providing selections of brand name fashions at discount prices.

Finally, many community shopping districts fall under the "eclectic" retailing group. Since the 1970s, demographic and lifestyles shifts have led to changing demands in community retail districts (Foot, 1996: 83). Many have diversified in function in order to serve a wider clientele and to stay competitive. Fourth Avenue in Vancouver and the Kensington area in Calgary are good examples: both are characterized by compact streetfronts lined with small, individualized stores with a rich mix of products and services. Like specialty retail areas, these community shopping areas with an eclectic mix of functions draw people from 'city-wide'.

The three district categories just outlined are not necessarily mutually exclusive; many community retail districts are hybrids and take on a considerable number of functions that fall outside of any one particular retail concentration. Dunbar follows a convenience retailing focus, although it also exhibits characteristics of specialty and eclectic retailing.

7. Market composition

The success of a district depends largely on the characteristics of its market. A market refers to a set of consumers. According to Jones and Simmons (1990), a retail market can be defined by:

- Location
- Income
- Demographics
- Lifestyle

Location: A market is defined by location: it refers to a set of consumers contained within a spatial unit such as a neighbourhood, a community district, or a metropolitan region.

Income: Incomes is a key aspect. Different groups have varying levels of purchasing power and thus capture uneven shares of the market. Market size, when defined by income, is measured in monetary terms – i.e., number of households x household income. Income determines purchasing power and also shopping patterns in space. Certain retail businesses will depend on specific income levels. Thus, for example, high-income groups are more likely to patronize up-scale restaurants than will low-income groups.

Demographics: Population is broken down into different groups, by age and sex; demographic structure of the market population greatly affects the mix of products in a district. Variations in household compositions generate different demands for retail products. For example, a retail district in a suburban residential community consists primarily of family-oriented businesses such as children's clothing and family restaurants; whereas an inner-city-yuppies district, with predominantly singles and young couples, will be occupied mainly by bars and fashion boutiques.

Lifestyle: Within a spatial unit (e.g. a neighbourhood), there is diversity of lifestyles and preferences. Ethnicity is the main determinant of lifestyle sub-markets. For example, asians have distinct food preferences, as do Europeans or Africans.

The four market composition characteristics – location, income, demographics and lifestyle – discussed above will be examined in the Dunbar context in Chapter 3.

8. Competition/Trade Area

Location plays a strategic role. A retailer is likely to succeed when it locates in an area where the demand for its specialization is high and/or is not being met by existing businesses. Where demand is relatively low and when there are many competitors offering similar products in close proximity, success is less probable. When planning takes place, one needs to be concerned only with the retail centres on the same level of the retail hierarchy as the intended location. For example: a community grocer serving the immediate neighbourhood does not need to be too concerned with a chain supermarket in a regional shopping mall located 20 city blocks away. Although it is likely that major patrons of the grocery store also make occasional trips to the regional supermarket, the supermarket is likely to have little effect on the competitiveness of local grocer in a neighbourhood.

When a store offering highly-demanded products is introduced to a particular retail district, it can pull market shares from its competitors – either within the district or from other districts. Such effects appear to be stronger in community shopping districts than downtown or regional shopping centres. In Kerrisdale, the establishment of a GAP and several up-scale clothing boutiques has increased its competitiveness by offering comparison products unavailable in nearby shopping districts. The location of similar stores in a regional centre or the CBD would not have the same effect because these centres already offer functions of equal ranking.

Thus, for a community retail district to increase its competitiveness, it needs to distinguish itself from competitors. To capture a greater market share, it will have to identify the retail products and features that serve as the main draws for its customers, and then focus in and expand on them accordingly. Chapter 4 and 5 will identify and analyze the assets and opportunities possessed by Dunbar; and Chapter 6 will discuss how Dunbar can capitalize on them to increase competitiveness and economic viability.

9. Retail District Improvement Organizations

Commonly, neighbourhood retail districts face factors – competition, physical environment, etc. – that are favourable to the retail environment or threatening and problematic. Successful community retail districts tend to have a recognized management body that is able to deal effectively with these variable and various forces by uniting resources and professional talents to a common business front. There are two major forms of management:

A. Merchant Associations
B. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)

Merchant Associations

A merchant association is formed by voluntary members consisting of merchants and property owners within a defined retail area. Merchant associations vary in effectiveness in dealing with problems confronting their business areas. Generally speaking, the most successful and stable associations are those with clearly defined missions; and they consist of members who have been in the area for a long time (Vaisbord, 1998, pers. comm.). Active leadership by a few skilled and knowledgeable members, combined with prolonged commitment by the members-at-large are key to organizational success. The West 10th Avenue Merchant's Association in Vancouver is one organization that has done well in improving the local business environment. Established for over 50 years, the association consists of 75 active members, equivalent to 70% of merchants along West 10th Avenue between Blanca and Discovery Streets (McBride, 1999, pers. comm.). Part of the explanation for its high level of membership enrollment is that many members are also long-time residents of the area; therefore they are genuinely concerned about the well-being of their neighbourhood as a whole. The organization has used creative means to promote their district to potential customers, including the distribution of colour walking maps that describe the locations and merchandize mix of stores found there.

Often, merchant associations establish to fight against problems and threats affecting their business areas, such as rising crime rates and deteriorating physical environment. When the sole purpose of forming the organization is to avert a single, perceived problem, the organization usually does not last very long; and when, in cases they remain after a single-purpose issue is resolved, they no longer possess the same fervour as when they first started. This reflects the cyclical nature of merchant associations. It takes a considerable amount of time and commitment on the part of members to carry the organization through times of 'disinterest'.

Merchant associations can help increase the viability and cohesiveness of a community retail district. They provide a starting point for the improvement of local business environments by focusing and mobilizing energy, financial resources and planning skills; and they facilitate communication between merchants and other key agencies such as the City, developers, architects and service groups (Russell, 1988: 81). Such an organization is particularly needed when merchants are faced with problems that they cannot solve on their own.

The BIA (Business Improvement Area)

A BIA in Vancouver (also known elsewhere as Business Revitalization Zone/BRZ), is a non-profit association of property owners and business tenants who join together to improve and promote their business environment. It is a business improvement program that involves partnership between the City and the business community. BIAs are established under municipal by-law – in Vancouver, under Section 456 of the Vancouver Charter.

BIAs obtain funding for their street and local environment improvements projects via a levy. In Vancouver, a BIA can be established only if less than one-third of the property owners and/or tenants object. Once a BIA is approved by City Council, the levy is applied to all businesses in the designated area. A BIA is managed by a volunteer board comprising of property owners and tenants who are accountable to both City Council and the local business community. The board is responsible for budgeting and ensuring that funds are allocated to activities that meet the agreed plans of the BIA association.

BIAs are gaining increasing popularity as a tool in revitalizing local business districts. Retail districts where BIAs have been instrumental, such as Kerrisdale in Vancouver and Kensington in Calgary, are more visually attractive and vibrant. Vaisbord argues that a BIA would be effective in helping Dunbar improve its physical image and increase its economic viability (Vaisbord, 1999, pers. comm.).

BIAs are not without shortcomings. Once approved by Council, the mandatory levy creates an added financial burden on retailers who are already having difficulties making ends meet. This, combined with increased rents that usually accompany local improvement programs, can drive out many small businesses critical to the identity of a district (Francisco, 1998:16). Businesses such as corner grocers and second-hand clothing stores contribute to the local character of the area and attract high numbers of repeat customers. Increased rents also make it harder for small start-up ventures to enter the BIA district. The result of this is a gradual takeover by chain stores and franchise operations, which often lack the community-mindedness possessed by independent merchants who live and work in the neighbourhood. Last, many wonder whether the benefits derived by individual businesses really pay off for the long-term cost of improvement. The extent of market share retained and enhanced after capital investments are still very much undetermined and require further study (Francisco, 1998:16).

Still, BIAs have proven successful in many retail districts in Vancouver and Calgary; some include Kerrisdale and Mount Pleasant in Vancouver, and 17th Avenue S.W. and Marda Loop in Calgary. BIAs assist business districts by providing an organizational structure for improvement so that funds, people and skills are directed toward clear objectives. It also benefits the City by enhancing and/or creating public amenity spaces. As mentioned earlier, Dunbar could well benefit from the establishment of a BIA. The mechanisms for making it happen will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2.3 Vancouver Planning Policies and Retail Development

The roots of the broad directions guiding community development in Vancouver can be traced back to the 1970s when active political movements brought policy decision-making to the local level. The Elector's Action Movement (TEAM) was perhaps the most influential. Formed by members of the liberal middle class, TEAM held the majority on City Council from 1972-1978 (Wynn & Oke, 261); and under their agenda, decision-making on planning issues was consigned to a collaborative effort between City planners and community groups. Vancouver was divided into twenty-three community districts and the implementation of a local area planning program whereby residents were able to voice their opinions on decisions concerning their neighbourhoods. TEAM's efforts were two-fold: to improve the quality of public spaces, and to create attractive, self-sufficient and more liveable neighbourhoods.

This political framework of the 1970s formed the ideological basis for two important plans which continue to guide the City's policy and land development decisions. The first is the 'Livable Region Plan', first released in 1976 by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). The plan sought to manage growth by concentrating it in multiple town centres, much like the multi-nuclei model proposed by Harris and Ullman. This was thought to be the solution in bringing jobs closer to people's homes, and in enhancing amenity and service levels in the suburbs. Although the document shared much of the planning ideologies at the time, it did not go far in affecting development in the 1980s; development continued in response to exceptionally strong social and economic forces such as the influx of Asian immigrants who brought with them large sums of capital for property investment; and by the late 1980s it was apparent that a new plan was needed. As a result, the "Livable Region Strategic Plan" was re-visited in 1990 and later adopted in 1996. Among the strategies outlined in the plan – protect the green zone, achieve a compact metropolitan region, improve public transportation choice - was the building of complete communities.

> ...to support the public's strong desire for communities with a wider range of opportunities for day-to-day life. These communities would be focused on town centres throughout the region. (Greater Vancouver Regional District, 1996:2)

Briefly stated, the policies were directed at minimizing home-work separation, diversifying housing types, expanding community services and amenities, fostering a favourable business environment, and facilitating access/transportation service between urban centres.

These same objectives were articulated in the municipal context, in 1995, when the City of Vancouver adopted the "CityPlan". According to CityPlan, Vancouver residents desire 'a city of neighbourhoods'; neighbourhoods to be thought of as villages, each with its own identity (City of Vancouver, 1995:5); of central importance to this is "Neighbourhood Centres".

> Neighbourhood Centres, usually developed from existing shopping streets, will provide a "heart" for each neighbourhood. Here, people will find shops, jobs, neighbourhood-based services, public places that are safe and inviting, and a place to meet with neighbours and join in community life. (City of Vancouver, 1995:5)

Thus: a well-defined centre providing community focus, attractive public places for social interaction, and shopping areas serving the day-to-day needs of the residents.

CityPlan emphasizes the role of retail districts in creating cohesive and "complete" communities. Recognizing the importance of retail activities in creating complete neighbourhood centres, efforts must be made by planners, merchants and residents to ensure that community retail districts develop in an appropriate manner -- in such a way that is in accordance with the City's policy directions and citizens' wishes.

It is now necessary to turn to the planning measures that currently guide retail developments at the community/neighbourhood level.

2.3.1 Community Visions Program

The City has been working on a number of ways to bring the goals of CityPlan to the local level. "Bringing CityPlan to Neighbourhoods – A Proposal for Discussion", was released in January 1996 to engage residents in planning their own neighbourhoods. From this arose the "Community Visions Program" (July 1996), the purpose being:

> ...to have communities, assisted by staff, develop visions that incorporate a wide range of community interest and describe common ground for moving in CityPlan directions. (City of Vancouver, 1996)

The Community Visions Program is the first of its kind in Vancouver to combine two streams – a community visions process and a city-wide process. The visioning process takes the directions of the CityPlan right down to the neighbourhood level by involving local residents in community planning through a series of workshops, meetings and public events. A city-wide process occurs simultaneously to link dialogues bewteen communities and to bring city-wide ideas to the visioning of individual communities. By involving people on both local and metropolitan levels, community visioning delivers a true partnership building program between the City and its residents.

The Visions Program is facilitated by a community liaison group, which consists of about 30 volunteers from the community and represents a variety of interests, cultures, demographic characteristics and professions. Its role in the Program is critical because it serves as the major linkage between the community and the city staff (Stekl, 1998, pers. comm.) Besides advising city staff on community involvement, they also serve a "watch-dog" function in the process by making sure that community input is carried into subsequent stages of the program (Stekl, 1998, pers. comm).

In January 1997, Dunbar was one of two pilot communities selected to test this new approach. According to Harv Weidner (1998), Dunbar was chosen because it had received very little previous attention from the City. Also, it has been a stable community with many long-time residents who genuinely care about the future of their community. In the summer of 1997, a series of workshops and seminars were held. As well, an extensive survey, consisting of directions developed through workshop sessions, was conducted on community residents. Among the various topics addressed in the program (environment, transportation, housing, etc.) is the shopping environment. The workshop participants recognized the importance of the retail district in fostering community life in Dunbar and identified it as a major priority for improvement (City of Vancouver, 1998:5). The major issues concerning the Dunbar shopping district and the planning implementation strategies in resolving these will be discussed in chapters 4,5 and 6.

2.3.2 Zoning Policy

Zoning is probably the most important (though not exclusive) instrument at hand by which planning for the Dunbar retail district will be achieved. The following presents a summary view of the current and potential zoning situation.

The Vancouver By-Law contains schedules for the various zoning districts (Zoning District Plan). The schedules outline the activities/uses, land use-building densities, design compatibility and height restrictions.

Retail uses in Vancouver are mostly contained within three zoning districts: i) Comprehensive Development, ii) Historic Area and iii) Commercial. Comprehensive Development zoning (CD) oversees areas that require special attention such as the

Downtown, waterfront districts and neighbourhoods in transition. Each of the CD zones is accompanied by a separate by-law or an official development plan tailor-made to the intended form of development. Unlike other zonings that are, for the most part, exclusive to one type of land use, CD districts typically comprise several different and varying land uses.

The Historic Area District (HA) provides special measures for the development and preservation of areas with historic significance; they permit a mixture of uses, including retailing business services and some types of manufacturing. Examples of HA districts include Gastown, Yaletown and Chinatown, all of which are major, inner-city shopping districts characterized by distinctive historic buildings and vibrant retailing activities.

The Commercial Districts (C) governs most of the unplanned retail strips in suburban residential communities. It is intended to provide for commercial uses, predominantly retailing and personal services, in residential neighbourhoods (City of Vancouver, 1997). Among the categories under the Commercial Districts, C-1 and C-2 are the most common zonings for community shopping districts; (see Table 2.1). Typically, C-1 zones contain small-scale convenience establishments (i.e. corner grocers and "mom & pop" stores) and limited service functions to serve the needs of the immediate neighbourhood. C-2 zones allow a broader range of goods and services, and they are intended to serve several neighbourhoods. Both zonings permit residential uses, as long as the architectural design is "compatible" with commercial uses (City of Vancouver, 1997). In C-2 areas, buildings with only residential uses are also permitted in cases where commercial uses are considered unsuitable; although the guidelines do not make explicit what constitutes un-suitability (Neale Staniszkis Doll Architects, 1991:7). Whereas C-2 zones generally stretch along major streets in a ribbon/strip fashion, C-1 zones are more localized and tend to take on a nodal form at minor intersections where traffic is less intense. The intended form of development is low-rise, at heights not exceeding 30 and 40 feet, in C-1 and C-2 zones, respectively. In special cases where the design meets the relaxation conditions in the By-law, height relaxations may be permitted in C-2 at the discretion of the planning authority.

For example, when a proposed development adjacent to a low-density residential zone will exceed the maximum allowable height, significant terracing of the upper storeys from the rear property is required to mitigate overshadowing and privacy invasion of the residences behind. Further, C-1 and C-2 have different floor space ratio (FSR) requirements. C-2 permits more total and residential floor space on a given lot than C-1, with an overall FSR of 3.0 and a residential FSR of 2.5, (as opposed to 1.2 and 0.75 for C-1, respectively). This means that C-2 zones allow not just higher buildings but a higher.density as well. FSR, in conjunction with height restrictions and other design regulations control the bulk of development while allowing developers certain freedom to decide on the placement and the height of the building on the lot.

In summary: In community shopping districts, zoning regulations have worked only somewhat effectively toward minimizing adverse effects of retailing activities on adjacent residential neighbourhoods. At the same time, private market forces are constantly in tension with public regulatory controls. As communities grow, the push for development heightens because of increased needs in housing, retail and other services and amenities. Generally speaking, the situation is especially acute in Vancouver because of the city's natural geographic boundaries and limited amount of developable land. At a more local level – in Dunbar to be specific – development is picking up pace in response to the city-wide shortage of developable land. Development activities are mostly concentrated in the three C-2 pockets that constitute the Dunbar retail district, due to untapped development potential existing in those zones after modifications in the Zoning By-Law.

Table 2.1: C-1 & C-2 Zoning Districts Source: Neale Staniszkis Doll Architects

Category	C-1	C-2
Permitted uses	- commercial - commercial & residential if compatible in design	- commercial - commercial & residential if compatible in design - "all-residential" if commercial deemed inappropriate
Location	- in suburban residential neighbourhoods - secondary streets and intersections	- in suburban residential neighbourhoods - major streets and intersections
Market area	- immediate neighbourhood	- several neighbourhoods
Form	- free-standing nodes	- strips/ribbons
Building height	- 30 feet	- 40 feet (relaxation permitted)
Floor Space Ratio	- 1.2 overall - 0.75 residential	- 3.0 overall - 2.5 residential

Over the past few decades, Vancouver has had to adapt and accommodate zoning regulations to growth forces. There has been a move toward less rigid zoning application -- to allow more freedom in development. In particular, C-1 and C-2 zones were lifted of housing disincentives in 1989*; this has led to an intensification of housing developments in community shopping districts, often in the form of mixed use buildings. In Dunbar, over the past five years or so, all new property developments in the C-2 zones have been mixed use, and almost all reach the maximum allowable height in the By-Law to maximize on the number of dwellings above the ground floor. This trend is expected to continue into the near future, as just within the last year, close to five new development proposals have been put forward in the Dunbar retail district.

2.3.3 Return to Mixed Use Property Development

Mixed use development commonly implies a building with a mix of residential and commercial uses. A more specific definition is provided by the Urban Land Institute (1987), which states that a mixed used development "must have three or more significant revenue-producing uses, with significant physical and functional integration (including uninterrupted pedestrian connections).

Mixed use development is not a new phenomenon or idea: it can be traced back centuries to the earliest developments in cities and towns, including the early 20th century in Canada. Until the turn of this century, all land uses were intermixed; cities were compact, and people did not have to travel far to obtain daily commodities or services. Then came the introduction of "zoning" measures which developed such as to proscribe mixed uses. For many decades, planners used zoning to confine individual activities in single use zones believing that such a practice would "remove 'non-conforming' uses, and create 'tidier' and more ordered patterns of land use" (Coupland, 1997: 30). Intense uses such as commercial and industrial were thought to be disruptive to the harmony of quiet residential neighbourhoods, creating nuisance and eyesore. In most cities of North America, efforts on preventing mixed uses have concentrated in residential areas. In commercial areas, the separation of uses has not been enforced as stringently.

In Vancouver, the first controls on commercial activities were introduced in 1928. Under Zoning By-law No. 2074, enacted in 1930, commercial and industrial activities were not allowed to encroach into the adjacent residential zones (City of Vancouver, 1971: 8). The more recent versions of the By-law (No. 3575 and No. 7841) have preserved the same zoning districts but moved

*Prior to 1989, developers were penalized for incorporating residential space in mixed-use projects. The penalty was imposed by the 'residentail floorspace multiplier', which reduces the total FSR allowable as more residential space is added, i.e. 1 square feet of residential space is equivalent to 2 ½ square feet in FSR calculation.

toward a more favourable regulatory environment for mixed use developments. This is partly due to the increasingly apparent downsides of single-use areas, perceived by some as being "lifeless, inconvenient, and unappealing" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1981:41), and partly due to the rising demand in alternative forms of housing.

In Commercial zones, residential frontage is restricted at grade to permit only entryways to dwelling units. This is to ensure the continuity of retail frontage, as well as to enhance the privacy of residential units (Neale Staniszkis Doll, 1991:7). In Vancouver, mixed use buildings typically consist of retailing on the ground level and residential and/or office uses on the upper floors. They range in size from the two storey buildings consisting of one or two dwelling units above one shop, to the much larger four storey structures comprising of multiple retail outlets and more than 50 residential units. Over the past few decades, developments in Vancouver have followed the larger version to maximize the potential of scarce commercial property.

Recent city policy orientations in Vancouver demonstrate a renewed interest in mixed use developments. In 1975, the City implemented a density bonus system as an incentive for developers to incorporate residential units within office developments in certain parts of Downtown. This was initiated as an effort to spread population more evenly across Downtown, as prior regulations concentrated residential population in the West End, one of the densest residential areas in North America. Outside the CBD, mixed use developments have also been encouraged. Mixed use developments help to achieve CityPlan objectives such as the creation of more diversified forms of housing and the minimization of distances between home, services and amenities. CityPlan policies, combined with zoning amendments, have led to the spread of mixed use developments in Vancouver suburban communities. Between 1974 and 1985, over 150 mixed use buildings were built outside of the CBD, adding close to 1000 units to the Vancouver housing stock (McIntyre, 1985:2).

The renewed interest in mixed use development is due to two main reasons. First, it offers developers the most profitable uses of a site and allows the full development potential to be realized. Recent market conditions generate insufficient commercial floor space demand for developers to devote a building entirely to commercial uses. Demand for residential units in community retail districts, however, has been high. This explains why mixed use buildings rarely take advantage of the overall 3.0 FSR permitted in C-2 zones but instead maximize on the allowable 2.5

residential FSR. Mixed use developments allow developers to spread the risk between a retail and a residential component according to market conditions.

Second, mixed use developments provide alternative forms of housing and increase housing choices for residents. More and more people are choosing to live in mixed use buildings because of the convenience of being able to work, shop and use amenities and services within proximity of their homes. In a residents survey conducted on mixed use living environment, close to 85% of the respondents reported either very satisfied or satisfied with their housing choice (McIntyre, 1985).

Apart from the practical reasons for mixed uses such as more housing choices and better investment value, mixed use developments also enhance community life. Research has shown that a stronger sense of community exists in mixed use neighbourhoods than single-use areas (Nasar & Julian, 1995: 178). Social interaction is more intense in mixed use areas because people are more likely to walk than use their cars for shopping and recreational trips. In this light, mixed use developments help to build more cohesive and healthier communities.

With respect to Dunbar, mixed use development is likely to continue with the current demand in alternate forms of housing and the scarcity of developable land in Vancouver. City improvement programs and zoning, as discussed in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, serve as effective instruments in ensuring that mixed use developments occur in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the CityPlan, i.e. to create "complete" communities with well-defined "Neighbourhood Centres". Chapter 6 will discuss how City programs and zoning could be used as part of an implementation proposal to revitalize the Dunbar retail district.

PART II

CHAPTER 3: DUNBAR COMMUNITY

3.1 Origins

Dunbar is among the earliest residential suburbs in Vancouver. It first appeared as "Dunbar Heights", in the old Municipality of Point Grey which amalgamated with Vancouver in 1929. Dunbar Heights was developed by Charles Trott Dunbar, a speculator who acquired large tracts of land. He distributed free calendars advertising "Dunbar Heights" and paid the B.C. Electric Railway Company (BCER) $35,000 to extend streetcar service to the area (Wynn & Oke, 96). This, along with other infrastructure improvements, including the paving of roads and sewer work, quickened the development of Dunbar in the 1920s. By 1929 more than 80% of the 583 lots in Dunbar Heights were occupied.

Like Kerrisdale, Kitsalano, and Fairview, Dunbar was another "suburban dream". The majority of residents were young couples employed in white-collar and skilled blue-collar professions. Gripped by the concept of "home", they settled in Dunbar to start their families away from the increasingly congested downtown. Many remained at the same address for years; although records also reveal that several blocks in Dunbar Heights had moderately high property turnover rates between 1921 and 1961 (Wynn & Oke, 1992:98). Even still, the fond memories of early residents documented in books and newspaper articles indicate that many grew up in the area and that at least some, if not most, felt a strong sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.

Prior to the arrival of the streetcars, Dunbar depended on horse wagons to deliver daily goods such as milk, vegetables and wood (Diggins, December 7 1983). On can imagine the arduousness of hauling goods up Dunbar hill, rising as high as 122 metres at Dunbar Street and 26th Avenue -- recorded as the third highest point in Vancouver.

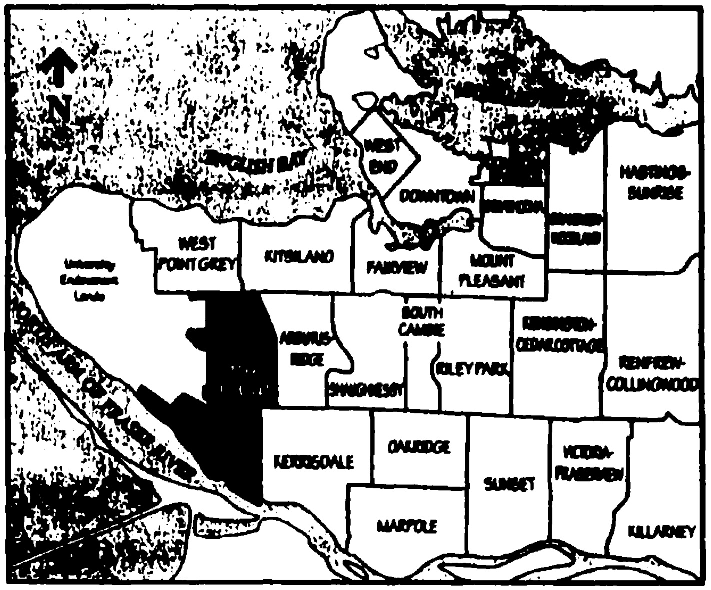
3.2 The Community Today*

Dunbar today is a mature, suburban community in Dunbar-Southlands, one of the 23 designated districts (Figure 3.1). The community is a relatively stable one: between 1986-1991, only 47% of the residents moved, compared to 58% citywide. Stability is also reflected in the high rate of home ownership: in 1991, 81% of dwellings were owner-occupied.

The population is characterized by a high proportion of baby-boomers (born between 1947 and 1965). In 1991, they constituted one-third (32%) of the population. As the primary income-earning and child-rearing group, the boomers have significantly affected -- and will continue to influence -- the demand for housing, shopping facilities and recreational amenities. Children had also become a major population group: between 1986 and 1991, the under 14 ages had increased by 16%.

Dunbar is characterized by a population whose mother tongue is predominantly English. However, between 1971 and 1991, there was a significant increase in residents who identified Chinese as their mother tongue. Chinese has replaced German as the second most common mother tongue; and the proportion of residents of Chinese origin was 10% in 1991, 9% higher than in 1971.

Figure 3.1: The Dunbar-Southlands District
Source: City of Vancouver, 1994.



Dunbar is a fairly well-to-do community; household incomes are relatively high: median income is $69,162 (1991), approximately *double* that of the City-wide median. Only 10% of Dunbar residents are classified as low-income, as compared to 25% city-wide.

3.2.1 Community Organizations

A number of community organizations exist in Dunbar. Two are of particular interest because of their role in the retail district: the

* Information from this section is mostly drawn from Dunbar-Southlands: A Community Profile, City of Vancouver, 1994.

Dunbar Business Association and the Dunbar Residents Association.

The Business Association was formed by a small group of local merchants who saw the need for a united effort directed to improving the business environment. Although the organization is listed by the City as one of the "active" community groups, it is somewhat loosely formed and not yet very effective. Compared to its counterparts in other areas of the city, it has not been as successful in achieving a distinctive community business image. This is mostly due to a lack of consensus among merchants on "the issues", and thus failing to arrive at common goals. At present, the organization is not as active as it used to be; nor has it accomplished any improvements in the built environment or successfully shaped the district's destiny.

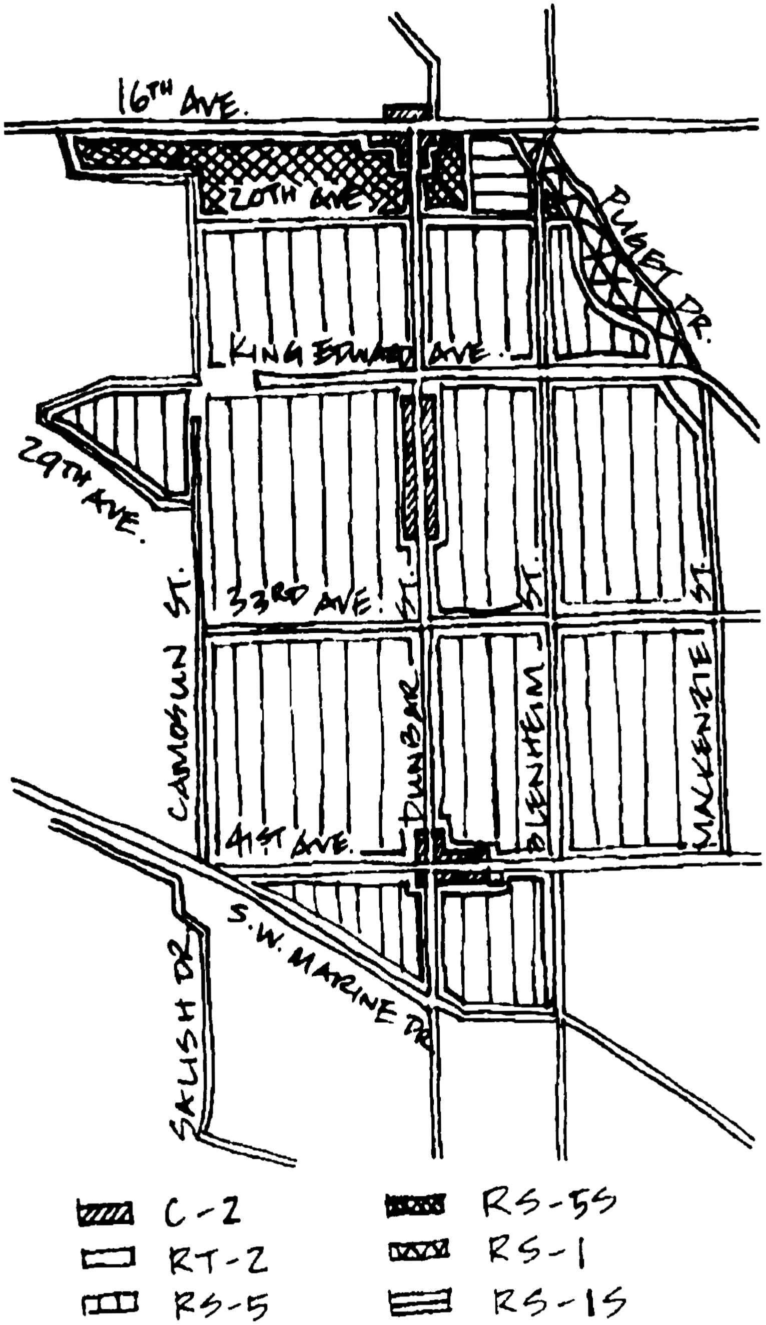
The Dunbar Residents Association, on the other hand, is an active organization. There are 400 members, and the organization meets regularly to discuss and respond to all that affect the community, ranging from design to safety issues (Spielgement, 1997, pers. comm.). Many members were active participants in the "Dunbar Community Visions" workshops; some also belong to the Dunbar Liaison Group which serves as a "watchdog" to ensure that residents' input is fully and fairly represented.

3.2.2 Zoning

Dunbar is zoned for the most part as single-family residential, under RS-1 and RS-5 (Figure 3.2). RS-5 regulates most of Dunbar; it differs from RS-1 in that it enables the City to have more control over the appearance and design of the house. RS-5 allows more floor space than RS-1 by requiring a design review that covers overall design, materials, landscape and detailing. It also encourages new houses to take on a traditional architectural style (circa late 1920s). In the northern part of the community -- north of 20th Avenue -- additional units or secondary suites within single-detached homes are permitted. Two-family dwellings are also found in Dunbar, but these are restricted to two small pockets adjacent to the three retail strips zoned C-2.

The current zoning does not allow much for residential density and/or diversification in housing types, thereby limiting the size and composition of the local customer base. As will be proposed in Chapter 6, rezoning of certain residential areas is required to increase the economic viability of the Dunbar retail district.

Figure 3.2: Dunbar Zoning Districts



3.3 Dunbar Street: Past and Present

Dunbar Street first came into existence in the 1910s in the old municipality of Point Grey. Streetcars came in 1913, with service every half hour from 10th Avenue to 41st Avenue, routing via Crown, 16th Avenue and Dunbar (Diggins, 1983:36). In 1925, service expanded along Dunbar Street to connect West Point Grey with the Vancouver Downtown. By 1927, three streetcar routes operated on Dunbar. Gradually, Dunbar became a major neighbourhood street -- houses interspersed with corner stores.

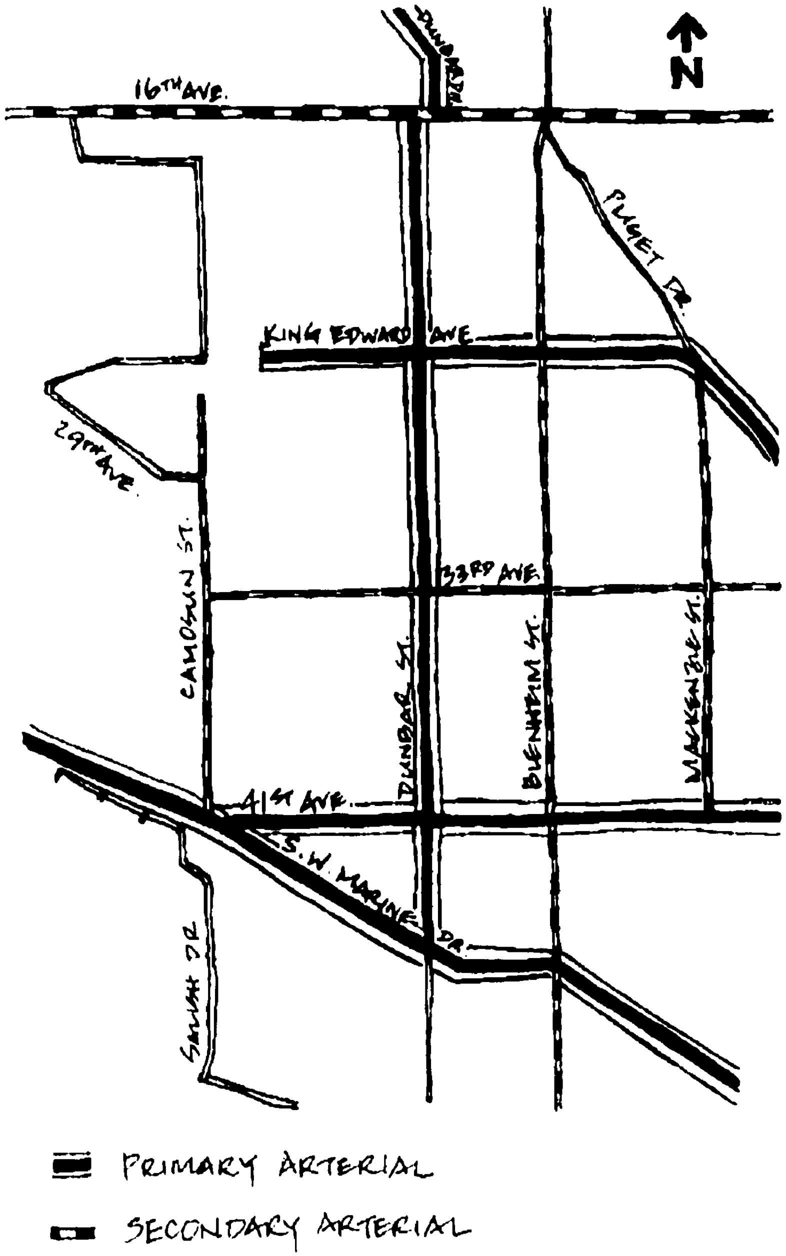
The earliest retailing occurred at the intersection of 41st Avenue and Dunbar, a streetcar interchange at the time. Soon afterward, businesses emerged in random, linear fashion along other sections of the street; specifically between 16th and 19th Avenues, and between 26th and 29th Avenues (See Figure 3.7). By the 1930s, the physical boundary of the business areas on Dunbar Street had more or less taken shape; and these have changed little to present day.

Dunbar Street is one of the four primary arterials in the community, along with Southwest Marine Drive, 41st Avenue, and King Edward Avenue; see Figure 3.3 (City of Vancouver, 1997). It stretches 34 city-blocks north-south from 12th Avenue to Southwest Marine Drive, close to *3.5 kilometres* in length. The Street has an above-standard width, with a right-of-way of 26 metres, even though it consists of one lane of moving traffic and one parking lane on each side. Today, cars are often travelling at a speed at or over the limit of 50 km/hour. Thus, traffic speed and pedestrian safety on Dunbar Street, especially along the retail stretches, are worries for local residents. The City Transportation Plan (1997) recognizes the potential of expanded pedestrian, bike, and transit uses along Dunbar Street.

Dunbar Street is now experiencing unprecedented changes, particularly along the stretches within the three C-2 zones (Figure 3.7). Recognizing its increasing importance as a city-wide transportation arterial and a community shopping street, the City, developers and residents are paying close attention to the street and its role in the community shopping district: Dunbar has been identified as a major place for improvement in the Community Visions Program; it has also become the target of many development ventures.

Prior to the 1989 removal of residential penalties in C-2 districts (discussed in Section 2.3), developers have shown little interest in the Dunbar retail district (Vancouver Courier, 1997, April 23). Currently, redevelopment is occurring at a startling pace: over the

Figure 3.3: Major Arterials Through the Dunbar Community



past few years, two large-scale, mixed-use buildings have been constructed, and four more will begin construction shortly. All the projects involve tearing down one or two storey buildings and turning them into modern -- four-storey complexes with commercial on the ground level and residential units above. Some of them incorporate underground parking for housing units. This trend is expected to persist under the current provisions of C-2 zoning.

With the recent mixed-use developments, Dunbar Street is entering another phase (Figure 3.4). Over the years, it has matured, slowly and gradually, and without active public interventions that might direct or precipitate changes of a particular kind or character. Thus, the three Dunbar shopping sub-areas have taken on an old, unplanned retail form, retaining much of the original building structures (some of which were houses). See Figures 3.5 and 3.6. However, with recent changes in zoning regulations and market conditions, Dunbar Street is now destined to undergo dramatic transformations.

Figure 3.4: A Recent Mixed-use Development on Dunbar Street: Residences over Shops, Higher Architectural Profile, Higher Density

Figure 3.5: Original Buildings on Dunbar Street

3.4 The Dunbar Study District

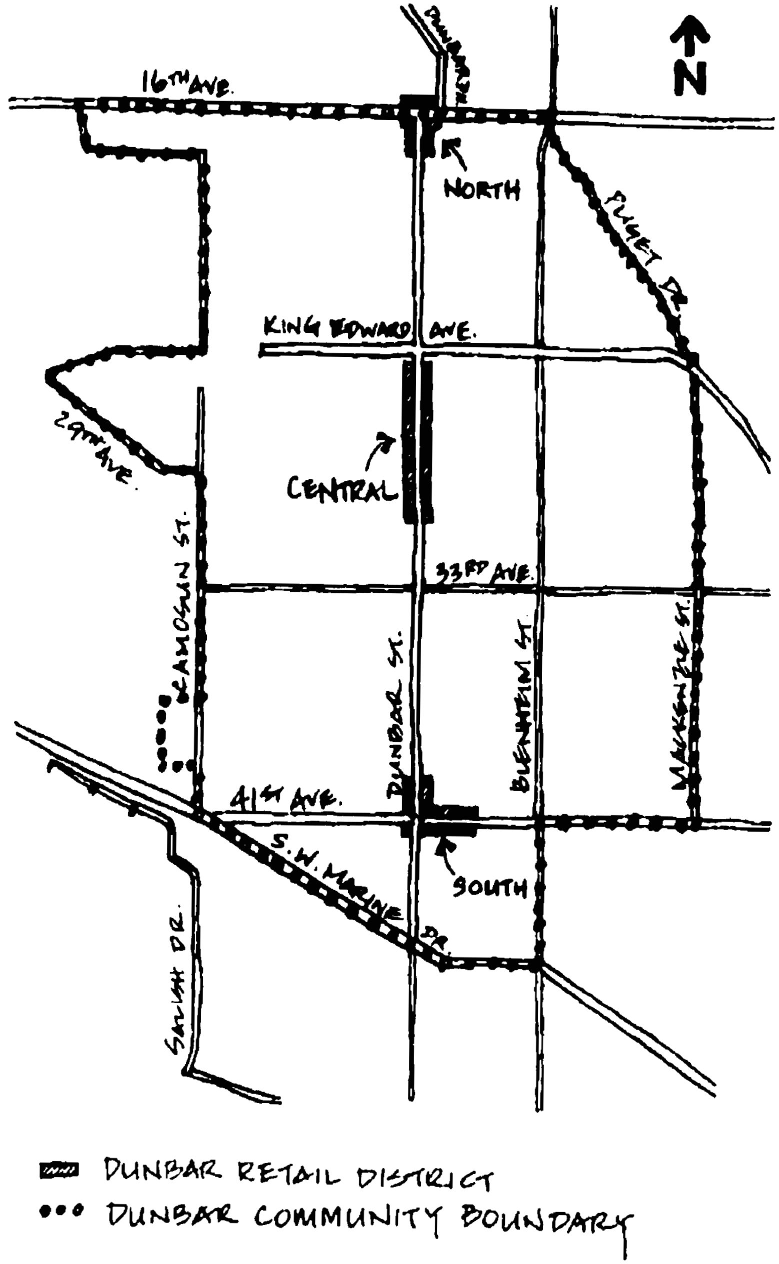
The study district consists of three retail areas (Table 3.1 and Figure 3.7). This section will account for the major characteristics and retail functional change for each of the three sub-areas within the Dunbar retail district.

Table 3.1: Location and Retail Frontages, Dunbar Sub-areas

	Location	Lineal Feet Frontage
North	16th to 19th Avenues on Dunbar	1,000
Central	26th to 30th Avenues on Dunbar	2,700
South	38th to 41st Avenues on Dunbar, and 41st from Dunbar to Collingwood	1,300

Figure 3.6: An Old House Converted to Retail

Figure 3.7: Three Sub-areas within the Dunbar Retail District

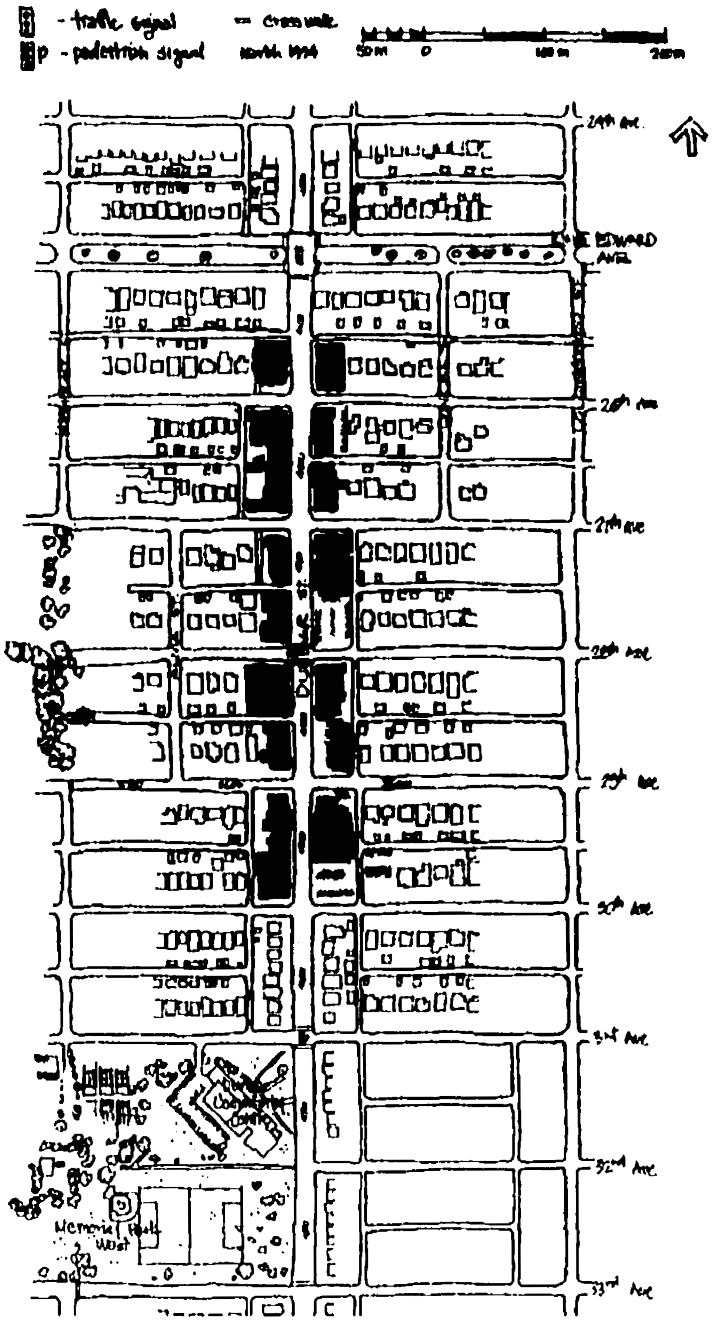


Dunbar Central (Figure 3.8)

Dunbar Central is the main area within the district. It is defined by 4 ½ blocks along 440 metres from King Edward Avenue to 30th Avenue. It is the heart of the community – the "Neighbourhood Centre". With a lineal retail frontage of approximately two times of the North and South areas, Central is the largest, and consists of the widest variety of stores, services and activities.

Three major recreational and cultural amenities belong to this area: the Dunbar Community Centre and Memorial Park West, located just a short block from its southern edge, and a community library on the corner of Dunbar and 29th Avenue. Dunbar Central is also the home to Vancouver's last, independent supermarket – Stong's; and a movie theatre until only recently, when development pressures forced its closure for a four-storey mixed use building. The west side of the street has a much better sense of retail continuity, as the storefronts are smaller and narrower. A strip mall and several larger structures dominate the east side, some of them occupying close to an entire city block for store space and customer parking. Most of the buildings in this area are no more than two storeys high, with a few exceptions on the northern edge of the shopping area, which is occupied by the two new four-storey mixed used buildings and an apartment building.

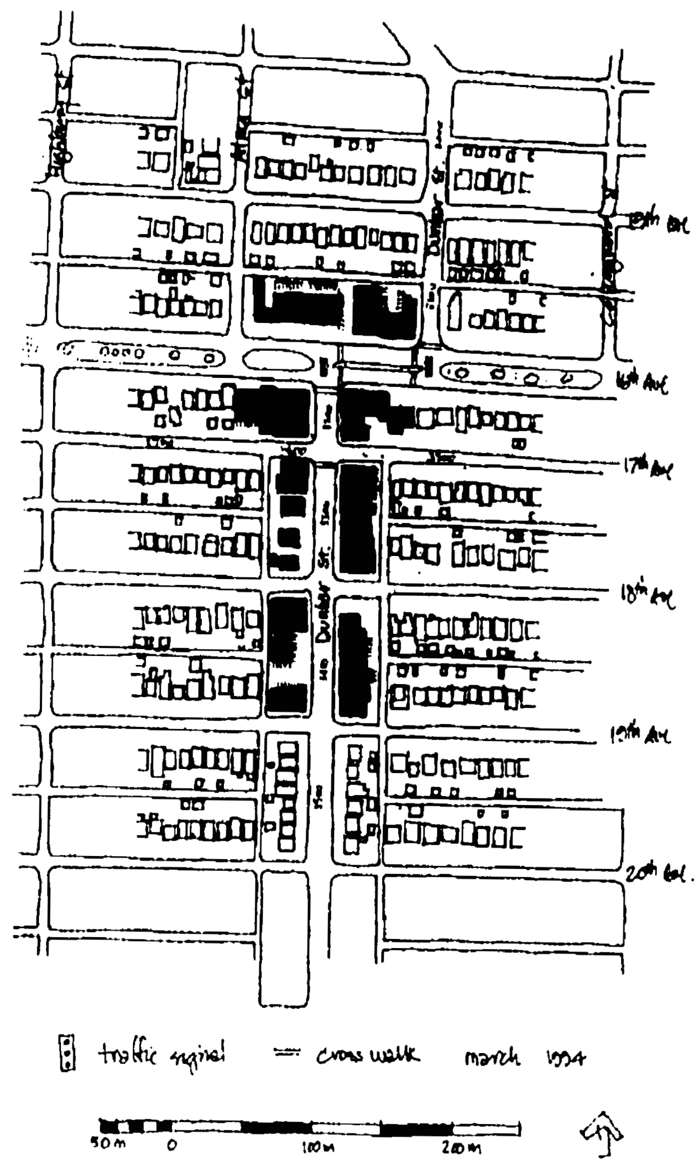
Figure 3.8: Dunbar Central Building Footprint



Dunbar North (Figure 3.9)

Dunbar North is the smallest "centre" and offers the narrowest range of goods and services. It is also the least cohesive. Like in Dunbar Central but to a more considerable degree, one side of the street differs from the other in building scale and form. Apart from one strip mall and a food market, the west side of the street is almost entirely occupied by mixed-use buildings built to the maximum height limit allowed in the C-2 Zoning. The intersection of 16th Avenue (a wide thoroughfare with many traffic lights and heavy commuter traffic) breaks up the continuity of retail activities and destroys the sense of intimacy a block south Dunbar Street. An interesting example of innovative business diversification is observed here. A long-standing plumbing store subdivides its business to include a coffee bar. This dual enterprise reflects an effort to maintain competitive strength and an apparent need for individual businesses to adapt and/or diversity their product along with changing consumer demands; which, in turn, reflect the changing demographics and cultural character of the community.

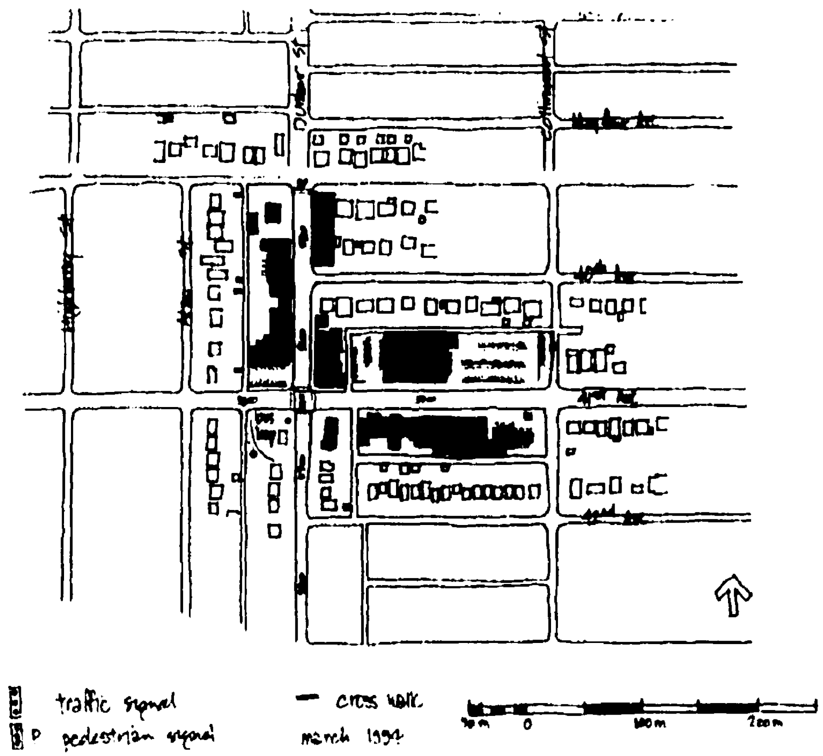
Figure 3.9: Dunbar North Building Footprint



Dunbar South (Figure 3.10)

Like Dunbar North, Dunbar South is also limited in the present range of retail functions and amenities. However, the junction with 41st Avenue does not act as much of an impediment to a successful retail area as in the case of Dunbar North because the terrain is more leveled and the intersecting street is not as wide. At present, Dunbar South is experiencing the most changes among the three areas. Three lots have been cleared and slated for development, including one on the corner of 41st Avenue and Collingwood street that used to house a popular local grocery store. Just recently, an additional development proposal has been put forward for a stretch along 41st Avenue, which will result in the demolition of four small structures that have been in existence for a long time. Similar to recent developments in Central and North, these lots will be occupied by new mixed use buildings. Two of the four have a proposed height of four-storeys (maximum allowable height in C-2 zoning) and are immediately adjacent to quiet residential properties; consequently, they have not been well received by residents in the community.

Figure 3.10: Dunbar South Building Footprint



A 1998 study assessed the "completeness" of each of the sub-areas by using major amenities as an indicator (Table 3.2). The Vancouver CityPlan emphasizes the importance of "complete" community shopping areas to provide residents with the most essential daily needs, as discussed previously in Section 2.2, Chapter 2.

Needs may differ with individuals, but in general they refer to a basic range of goods and services and recreational provisions. Table 3.2 shows results that are consistent with the site evaluations given previously. Dunbar Central is by far the most complete out of the three sub-areas. Most of the major amenities can be found here, except for a gas station and a liquor store. Dunbar North, being the smallest and the least cohesive area, has the fewest number of amenities. Dunbar South is intermediate between the other two areas in terms of the level of amenities. Together, the three areas complement one another and provide the sum of daily needs to the Dunbar community.

Table 3.2: Major Amenities in Dunbar Sub-areas
Source: Bennett, 1998.

Amenity	North	Centrall	South
Bank/Credit Union		✓	✓
Bus Service	✓	✓	✓
Community Centre		✓	
Gas Station			✓
Library		✓	
Liquor Store	✓		
Movie Theatre		✓	
Park (blocks to) nearest)	2	1	4
Pharmacy		✓	✓
Professional Offices	✓	✓	✓
Supermarket		✓	✓

3.4.1 Nature of Retail Businesses in the Study District

To understand the nature of businesses in the Dunbar retail district, it is necessary to examine the numbers and types of stores within the study district. Tracing the changes in retail businesses over time will reveal the major trends that have occurred in Dunbar as well as indicate the stability of the study district. The conclusions from this section will provide a basis for thinking out future directions (Chapter 6).

To examine this question I used the Vancouver City Directory and determined the nature of business change in the Dunbar shopping district over the last twenty years; the 1979 and 1998 directories were consulted. The method of using directories to study the nature of business change has been used in many retail studies. Ratcliff (1949) successfully used this method to reveal and explain the changes occurring in the Madison CBD. Elsamny (1976) took it a step further by studying the evolving patterns of categories to predict the future of Robson Street, Vancouver. Although the directory method has sometimes been criticized for not being fully descriptive as to retail types -- and for lacking year-to-year consistency, it has proven useful when other sources of information are unattainable.

Information from the 1998 issue (the most recent), had to be supplemented with field work in order to bring it up to date with the current year. Therefore, the data used for the present year is correct up to early February 1999. A list of businesses and their addresses was compiled for the district for the two time periods, see Appendix A for the complete listings). Businesses were grouped into major categories to facilitate the comparison of business types between the two ten year intervals. The business categories used in the present study follow the Statistics Canada retail trade categories. It was necessary to adjust certain categories because they were too finely broken down to produce sufficiently differentiated results to be useful for this study; an effort was made to distinguish retail goods from retail services. Where a store comprised more than one retail activity, it was categorized under the dominant one.

Table 3.3 shows changes in the numbers and types of Dunbar businesses from 1979 to 1999. The major changes are discussed here:

Goods

From 1979 to 1999, Dunbar experienced an overall decrease in retail goods (-18%). The largest decreases were in the Food and Other Goods categories, dropping in number by 7 and 6 stores, respectively. The decline in food stores can be explained by the fact that small grocers/food markets are finding it increasingly difficult to compete with their larger counterparts (i.e. IGA and Stong's supermarkets), which are able to capitalize on economies of scale and offer a wider selection of products at more competitive prices. The small food stores that were able to remain tend to offer specialty products such as dry goods, ethnic foods and baked products.

The decrease in the Other Goods category indicates that the types of retail goods offered in the Dunbar district has dwindled over the past twenty years. This may be that demand for diversified products has not been high enough to support the businesses in this category. An increase is observed in the Books/Stationary/Gifts category, which experienced a net gain of 4 stores. This, along with the specialization in food products, indicates that there has been an orientation toward specialty retailing.

It must be noted that besides a limited number of specialty and clothing stores, most of the retail goods offered in Dunbar are of a convenience nature (i.e. grocery, hardware, etc.).

Services

Services have increased at the expense of retail goods from 1979 to 1999. The total number of services rose from 93 to 120, changing by +29%. The highest increases were in the Food and Beverage and Other Services Categories, with net gains of 11 and 17 stores, respectively. This implies a shift in lifestyle over the last 20 years: Dining out has become an increasingly popular activity for Dunbar residents. Businesses in the Other Services Category have more than doubled, indicating that services have diversified in the Dunbar district. Another category that has experienced a relatively high increase is financial, as reflected by the high number of banks and real estate firms presently in the district (refer to Appendix A for complete business listings). Decreases in services have mainly concentrated in the Automotive and Building/Installation/Tool Repair categories. One reason for the decline in these businesses may be that their large space requirements no longer allow them to operate profitably with the rising rent levels in Dunbar.

Total Goods and Services

Overall, Dunbar experienced a net increase of 11 businesses in total goods and services from 1979 to 1999. This increase is not significant, considering that it was over a twenty-year period. The low gain in total businesses can be explained by two reasons. First, the population size of Dunbar has changed only slightly since the 1970s, increasing from around 18,000 to 20,000 in the 1990s. Such a small increase in the local threshold population means that the demand for goods and services has also remained relatively constant since the 1970s. Second, Dunbar businesses are confined within the three sub-areas (Central, North and South) by zoning regulations. Retail space is restricted to the ground level; therefore only a limited amount of space can be occupied by business operations. This further helps to explain why business increases have mainly been in the service rather than in the goods categories. Whereas services (many of which are of a commercial nature, i.e. professional offices) can locate in upper floors, retail goods stores require ground floor space to maximize sales from exposure to pedestrians. Recent mixed-use developments in Dunbar have increased the commercial floor space in Dunbar by extending vertically within the C-2 zoning boundaries.

Stability of Businesses

While the aggregate number of businesses had changed only slightly over the twenty-year period, the business turnover rate had been significant. Out of the total of 170 businesses that operated in the study district in 1979, only 44 (25.88%) had remained by 1999. This means that close to three-quarters of the businesses had either been displaced to locations outside the study district, or had been unable to continue their operations altogether. Many of these were small, independently owned businesses, which were pushed out by rising rent levels within the study district. The quickening pace of new property developments over the past decade or so is partly responsible for the rapid business changeover within the study district.

Summary of Trends

A number of conclusions can be drawn for the district as a whole:

- Retail goods have declined in numbers and types. The proportion of comparison goods (i.e. clothing, shoes, jewelry, etc.) has been low relative to convenience goods.
- Services have diversified in numbers and types, mostly in the financial, food and beverage and "other" services categories
- There has been an orientation toward more specialized products and services (i.e. food, gifts and novelties, professional and food and beverage services)
- Business turnover has been rapid over the past twenty years, despite little change in total number of businesses.

The above conclusions will be explored further in the situational analysis (Chapter 4), and the shopper survey (Chapter 5). The findings from these sections will be of particular importance for the proposals in Chapter 6.

Table 3.3: Business Change in the Dunbar Retail District, 1979-1999

	Number of Establishments, 1979				Number of Establishments, 1999				Net District Change	Percentage Change
Business Category	Central	North	South	**District Total**	Central	North	South	**District Total**	**(1979-1999)**	**(1979 Base)**
A. Goods										
A1. Apparel and Accessory	7	2	2	**11**	8	3	0	**11**	**0**	**0%**
A2. Books, Stationary and Gifts	1	2	1	**4**	3	0	5	**8**	**4**	**100%**
A3. Drugs and Prescriptions	1	1	2	**4**	1	0	1	**2**	**-2**	**-50%**
A4. Flowers	2	0	1	**3**	1	0	2	**3**	**0**	**0%**
A5. Food	10	6	4	**20**	5	5	3	**13**	**-7**	**-35%**
A6. Furniture, Furnishings and Appliances	4	3	1	**8**	1	1	1	**3**	**-5**	**-63%**
A7. Hardware, Tools and Building Supplies	1	2	4	**7**	1	5	2	**8**	**1**	**14%**
A8. Sundries	0	0	2	**2**	1	1	1	**3**	**1**	**50%**
A9. Other Goods	5	7	6	**18**	4	3	5	**12**	**-6**	**-33%**
Total Goods	31	23	23	**77**	25	18	20	**63**	**-14**	**-18%**
B. Services										
B1. Automotive	4	0	3	**7**	1	0	2	**3**	**-4**	**-57%**
B2. Building, Installation and Tool Repair	6	4	3	**13**	3	3	1	**7**	**-6**	**-46%**
B3. Financial	5	5	6	**16**	9	4	8	**21**	**5**	**31%**
B4. Food and Beverage	3	2	2	**7**	11	6	1	**18**	**11**	**157%**
B5. Personal	12	7	5	**24**	9	6	7	**22**	**-2**	**-8%**
B6. Professional	1	7	7	**15**	3	2	14	**19**	**4**	**27%**
B7. Other Services	2	4	5	**11**	6	14	8	**28**	**17**	**155%**
Total Services	33	29	31	**93**	42	35	43	**120**	**27**	**29%**
Total Goods and Services	64	52	54	**170**	67	53	61	**181**	**11**	**6%**

CHAPTER 4: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DUNBAR RETAIL DISTRICT

This chapter discusses the weaknesses and threats, as well as the strengths and opportunities, presently experienced by the Dunbar retail district. This analysis, together with the survey findings reported in Chapter 5, will be used to identify some priorities for improvement in Chapter 6.

"Taking in" Dunbar street, one is struck by the juxtapositions of the old and the new, the small and the large, the loud and the quiet, and the 'contradictory' streetscape elements between old housing units converted to retail and the recent, four-storey, modern structures that accommodate a mixture of uses.

A general impression is that Dunbar lacks visual consistency and property upkeep. Graffiti claim their place on the side walls of buildings; and garbage receptacles are here and there filled to capacity. A sense of continuity is missing from the intermixing of old storefronts, modern glass openings and paved store-parking at the mall frontages. Outside some stores, people park hastily to purchase what they need, and within moments they are out of sight. Perhaps they are rushed for time, or perhaps they simply cannot find a place to sit and linger on the street. Yet those who do walk on the street seem to enjoy themselves, taking their time to go from store to store and occasionally stopping to carry on conversations with community people they know. Couples dressed in sporty attire stroll with their dogs toward the neighbourhood park. Others exit from the community library and head to the nearby coffee shop for an afternoon caffeine boost. On one corner, the shop owner of a food market asks an old woman how her son is doing while busy arranging the merchandise for sale. Here and there, people are running their errands from one store to another. The street is never 'saturated' with people, although it is evidently occupied by neighbourhood residents for most part of the day.

All this unfolds a picture of the contrasting characteristics of the Study district. On the one hand, it is vexed by problems of visual disharmony, inadequate maintenance and development pressures. On the other hand, it is gifted with friendly people, rich amenities and a local ambiance. More recently, the problems seem to have taken their toll and overshadowed the potential the Study district possesses as an attractive community shopping street. At present, Dunbar embodies few of the elements of a successful community retail district as postulated and discussed in Chapter 2.

4.1 Weaknesses and Threats

Table 4.1 provides a summary view of the results of the situational analysis conducted on the Dunbar study site.

Property Blight

Dunbar consists of many old buildings that are physically and functionally obsolete. Recent investment interests in properties along Dunbar Street have done little to improve the overall physical environment; they have concentrated mainly on the clearing of sites to make room for new developments rather than the rehabilitation of old buildings. The un-attended and dilapidated structures speak to the presence of blight. Blight is commonly used by urban researchers to refer to the decline of a retail district (Berry, 1963; Jacobs, 1969; Elsamny, 1976). Blight can exist in many forms, and the forms of blight affecting Dunbar are largely physical and functional in nature.

"Physical" blight is typically associated with older areas but can also occur in more recent areas where buildings are constructed poorly and inadequately maintained or rehabilitated. "Functional" blight occurs when changes in technology render the buildings in an area inefficient or obsolete. For one example: the size of many supermarkets built during the 1950s is now too small for profitable operations. Another example could be that old housing units originally converted to accommodate small-scale retail operations no longer provide adequate space for a new phase of business expansion. In Dunbar, physical and functional blights are present; but they are unevenly distributed along the street. Figure 4.1 shows a Dunbar building that suffers from physical and/or functional blights.

Table 4.1: The Dunbar Study District: Weaknesses and Threats, Strengths and Opportunities

Weaknesses	**Strengths**
- Property Blight	- Accessible Location
- District Image	- Relatively Stable Community
- Business Cooperation	- Local Atmosphere
- Traffic Volume and Speed	- Specialty Stores
- Merchandise Mix and Quality	- Nearby Amenities
Threats	**Opportunities**
- Retail Chain Stores	- Zoning Amendment
- Ethnic Shifts	- Community Visions
- Competition from Adjacent Districts	- Business Improvement Area (BIA)

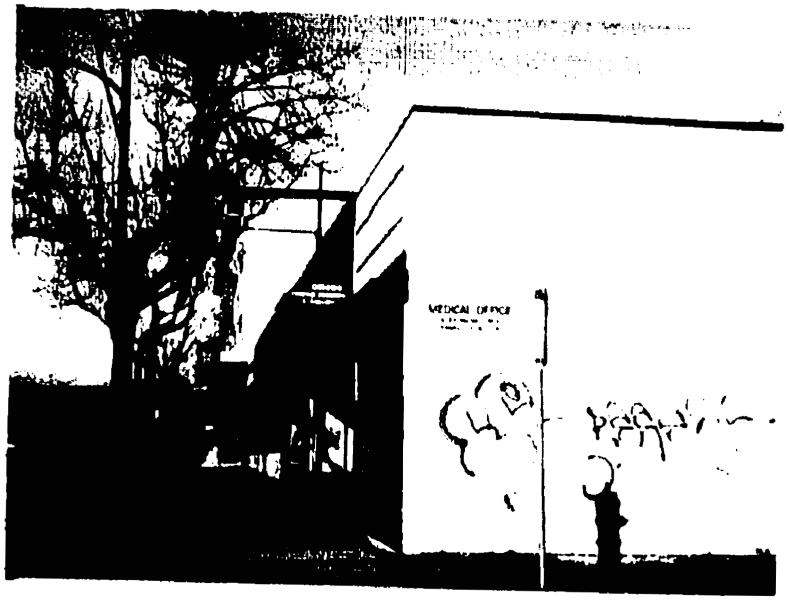
Figure 4.1: Blight in Dunbar

According to a study conducted by the City of Vancouver, approximately half of the structures were over 40 years of age in the Dunbar study area in 1970 (City of Vancouver, 1970). This figure has remained steady until recent years, when modifications in C-2 regulations fuelled some redevelopments in all three Dunbar shopping sub-areas. Still, a significant number of old buildings remain amidst the new developments. The 1970 study also assigned ratings based on building condition, general appearance, vitality and character of Vancouver districts. Dunbar received a rating of 2.65, well below the 2.90 benchmark for what was considered an "acceptable" condition. Blight has been a major feature for a long time; and it is still much a part of the Dunbar environment. The reason for this is twofold: Independent property owners are reluctant to invest in their properties for fear of tax increases; in most cases, it is more economically beneficial for them to completely redevelop their property than to renovate the original building (Vaisbord, 1999, pers.comm). Tenants also avoid building rehabilitation due to the possibility of rent increases. Second, the unwillingness of small businesses to re-invest in the building is directly related to the viability of their business; many are struggling to stay afloat and are thus wary of large expenditures that may not produce a commensurate return.

District Image

Adding to the issue of blight is a poor or unattractive street image. Along some stretches of the shopping district, particularly in Dunbar South, the sidewalks are "bare" – they have little vegetation and minimal street furniture (Figure 4.2). Besides the dully-designed lampposts and the widely spaced trees, nothing exists to provide shoppers the comfort of strolling along the streets. Few stores are adorned with interesting awnings or the kinds of signage that could help improve their look appeal to casual shopper or the visual stimulation and excitation that strolling shoppers like to enjoy. Street accessories such as benches and flower plantings are almost non-existent, apart from certain sections in Dunbar Central. The general appearance is drab and uninviting to pedestrians, which partly explains why the streets are only sparsely peopled most times of the day.

Figure 4.2: Bare Sidewalk



Dunbar also suffers from a lack of a unified "community theme". Apart from the displays of a few businesses named after the community, nothing indicates to the shoppers that they are within the Dunbar community shopping district. The lengthy distances between the three sub-areas further accentuates the fragmentation of the district. A unified community theme that could be provided by various streetscape devices and storefront decorations has been mentioned in the Visions Program but has not been seriously considered for implementation.

<u>Business Cooperation</u>

Part of the reason for Dunbar's poor physical environment is the lack of cooperation and communication between businesses. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, a loosely formed merchant association exists, but its efforts have helped only very little in improving the local business climate and the visual and environmental status of the street. The association's ineffectiveness is largely due to a lack of commitment on the part of individual merchants and an absence of clear leadership. The association is fairly young, formed only in 1992 as an outcome of the first-held "Dunbar Days" sidewalk sale. Its short life is likely another reason why it has not been as effective and organized as the merchant associations in neighbouring shopping districts such as Kerrisdale and West 10th Avenue, which have been in place for more than 50 years.

One indication of a lack of collaboration has been the installment of individual property protective measures to combat increasing property crime rather than joining hands to create a community security patrol. Another example is the lack of support given to an urban design proposal for Dunbar Central presented by a local architect a few years ago (Spielgement, 1998, pers. comm.).

In summary, the merchants are unwilling to collaborate and initiate collective efforts for district improvements. Without such efforts, together with a united business front and theme approach, the present merchants will find themselves vulnerable to the external forces of redevelopment that are already underway and changing the district in some significant ways. The new property developments will likely fragment Dunbar's business community and the street environment even further by bringing in franchise operations that are even less community-minded than the present complement of merchants who have a longstanding stake in the district.

Merchandise Mix and Quality

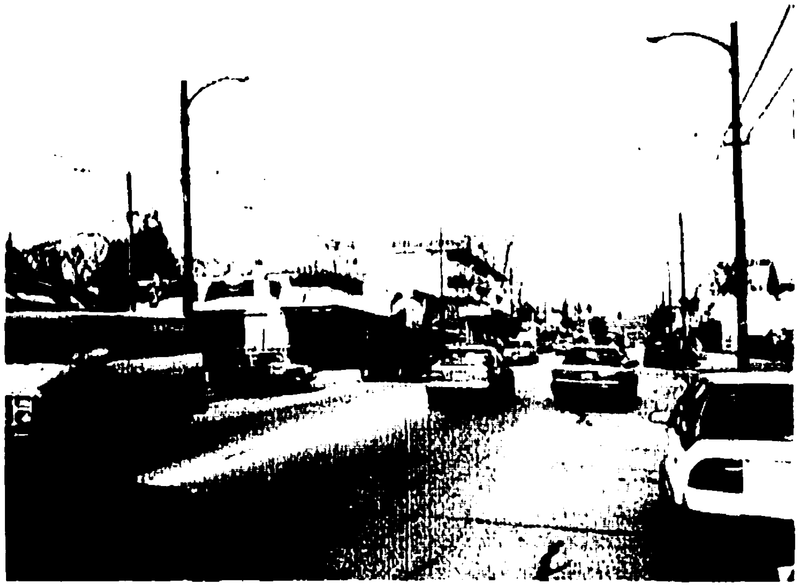
Dunbar suffers from inadequacies in merchandise mix and quality. It provides a full range of neighbourhood functions but serves inadequately as a community shopping district. Specifically, it lacks the range of comparison goods usually found in shopping districts of community ranking. According to the definition given by the Urban Land Institute (1984), a community shopping district should have a junior department store, variety store, or discount department store as a major component, along with a relatively wide range of comparison merchandise. In Dunbar, the major retailer is a supermarket, the anchor store for a small, neighbourhood-ranking shopping centre. The selection for comparison goods such as clothing, jewelry and furniture is highly limited, and these types of items account for less than 15% of the total retail outlets in Dunbar.

Most of the merchandise in Dunbar are low-end, apart from a few popular specialty stores offering unique products. Few shoppers go to Dunbar for comparison goods, as shown by the survey results in the next chapter.

Traffic Volume and Speed

Traffic along Dunbar Street, 16th Avenue and 41st Avenue has been a long-time concern of community residents and merchants alike (Figure 4.3). As noted in section 3.3, these three streets are classified as primary arterials in the City Transportation Plan, which means they carry high volumes of car traffic at all hours. The high speed at which cars travel and the absence of designated pedestrian crossings make it unsafe and/or uninviting and inconvenient for shoppers to go from one side of the street to another. Such discourages shoppers from parking and making a lengthy shopping excursion on foot. It hinders the possibility of Dunbar succeeding as a pedestrian-oriented, community-theme district. Further, the width and slope of 16th Avenue is particularly troubling to pedestrians; and it too acts as an impediment to developing a cohesive shopping district.

Figure 4.3: Heavy Traffic and Pedestrian Unfriendly Width/Environment on Dunbar Street



On the other hand, high traffic volumes can be advantageous to businesses, as they increase the threshold and range for a business zone by bringing in more shoppers from further distances. However, that is more the case for planned automobile-oriented shopping complexes, where parking space is abundant and shoppers are not required to share the right-of-way with cars. In the case of Dunbar, high levels of car traffic, if not managed properly, can be detrimental to the pedestrian atmosphere that is so critical to its success.

Retail Chain Stores

Dunbar has long been a shopping district occupied primarily by small, independently-owned businesses. However, the retail landscape is gradually changing as more and more corporate retailers move into the district. Retail chains are not altogether newcomers in Dunbar; among the earliest were Safeway and Shell (Vancouver City Directory, 1939), and prior to the 1950s only two or three retail chains were present at any one time. Today, more than ten retail chains are present within Dunbar – including for example, the IGA supermarket, the Mac's convenience store, fast food outlets such as Dominoes Pizza and Subway, and a number of banks and gas stations. It is important to note that the retail chains operating in Dunbar are for the most part "convenience" type outlets. Unlike the neighbouring shopping district, Kerrisdale, Dunbar has not seen the appearance of retail chains with a merchandise focus in comparison goods (such as GAP, Shoe Strings, etc.).

It seems reasonable to expect that retail chains will exert increasing preeminence on Dunbar's retail landscape in the not-too-distant future. Only retail chains and extremely well-to-do individual businesses can afford the higher rents in the new, mixed-use structures, of which construction has quickened in Dunbar over the past decade. These new developments provide the wider storefront and larger space requirements desired by most chain stores.

Retail chains pose a threat to Dunbar in so far as they radically alter its retail streetscape. The changes incurred by retail chains on traditional, 'unplanned' retail strips have been observed elsewhere in Vancouver. Along Robson Street many small businesses and narrow storefronts that once defined its unique flavour were displaced by chain stores with wide, architecturally-uniform facades. The same happened along West 4th Avenue and Broadway, although to a lesser degree. Although it is true that retail chains contribute to the vitality of a shopping district because of their immense draw of consumers, they can very much destroy the original character of a shopping district; and they usually create traffic and parking problems that arouse the concerns of nearby community residents. With redevelopment now occurring at a faster pace, Dunbar must manage the arrival of retail chains carefully if the intimacy and local nature of its shopping district, which are critical to the community identity, are to be preserved – and even enhanced.

Ethnic shifts

The Dunbar community was originally people of British descent; however, in recent years the anglophone population has dwindled in size and proportion. Particularly, there has been a dramatic increase in the Chinese ethnic group. From 1981 to 1991, the number of Chinese residents multiplied more than threefold, reaching a total of 2,050 (10.2%) from the original 590 residents (3.2%) in 1981 (City of Vancouver, 1994). Slighter increases were observed in the "Other" ethnic groups (mostly East Indian, Spanish, and Filipino), and Italians, which now account for about 8% and 1%, respectively, of the present population compared to 6% and 0.2% in 1981. Accompanying these ethnic shifts, there was a net decrease of 355 (2.2%) in the number of English residents.

These shifts in the ethnic profile can have significant implications for the local business environment. Already, several second-hand and consignment stores have been affected by the influx of affluent Chinese who are less inclined to patronize those stores than their Canadian-European neighbours. Generally, the

Chinese prefer to shop in areas with up-scale chain stores, as brand name products are of more importance to them than price or convenience. Many of the long-time residents and merchants therefore see these recent ethnic shifts as a threat to the traditional identity of the Dunbar shopping district and to its prosperity as well (Wuschke, pers. comm.). The emergent ethnic Chinese market is already evident along Dunbar Street where merchants have included Chinese characters in their advertising signs to attract business from this newly-arrived consumer group. This trend can be viewed as more of an opportunity than a threat; the more diversified ethnic make-up of the community could lead to the emergence of more interesting and diversified businesses, thereby contributing to a revitalization of the Dunbar shopping district.

<u>Competition from Adjacent Districts</u>

Two major neighbouring shopping districts also serving a community function are Dunbar's major competitors. One is in Kerrisdale, located approximately 10 city blocks east of Dunbar South at the intersection of West Boulevard and 41st Avenue (Figure 4.4). The other is in Point Grey, along 10th Avenue between Tolmie and Discovery Streets. Both are "unplanned" pedestrian-oriented retail strips located in communities with similar population and income characteristics as the Dunbar district; and they both belong to the same hierarchical ranking as Dunbar within the Vancouver retail structure.

Kerrisdale is the single largest competitor because of its location on 41st Avenue, shared by Dunbar South, and because of its more advanced shopping functions. Kerrisdale offers a much wider selection of goods and services. In addition to a full range of convenience goods and services, and some of the city's most popular up-scale boutiques and specialty goods stores.

Figure 4.4: Kerrisdale Retail District

Point Grey also draws shoppers from the Dunbar community. Anchored by a Safeway grocery store, Point Grey is patronized more for convenience goods and personal services rather than comparison or specialty items. Point Grey and Kerrisdale have both been identified by a previous retail study as major competitors to Dunbar (UBC, 1966). Their impact on Dunbar will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Kerrisdale and Point Grey are not the only shopping districts considered close to Dunbar. Retail districts such as Arbutus, Oakridge, Broadway and Kitsalano also capture market share from Dunbar, but these are not considered as major competitors because the nature of businesses in those centres vary a great deal from Dunbar. Arbutus and Oakridge are both planned shopping complexes, and therefore cannot be used for strict comparison. While Kitsalano and Broadway are retail strips similar to Dunbar, they have evolved over the years to serve a regional function, attracting shoppers from communities city-wide.

4.2 Strengths and Opportunities

Accessible Location

The location of the Dunbar study district along major arterials can be viewed as a strength, even though it causes traffic problems and shopper impediments, as discussed in the previous section. The three sub-areas on Dunbar Street are all easily accessed by cars from residential neighbourhoods in all directions. Accessibility is further enhanced by the designation of Dunbar Street, King Edward and 41st Avenues for pedestrian, cycling and transit improvement targets in the City Transportation Plan (1997). In addition, a number of greenways designed to create pleasant and safe environments for walking and cycling have been proposed for the Dunbar community. These improvements will provide more transportation choices for Dunbar shoppers and conceivably, allowing for more convenient and safer shopping trips.

Another strength of Dunbar is that two routes providing direct access to UBC - 16th and 41st Avenues - pass through its shopping district. On top of a large student population, a moderately large and high-income population resides on the University Endowment Lands. Along with the Point Grey district, Dunbar is a major shopping district within reasonably close proximity to this population.

Relatively Stable community

Dunbar has always been known as a stable suburban community, mainly for its high home-ownership. In 1991, 81% of Dunbar dwellings were owner-occupied, as compared to only 41% city-wide. People also tend to stay long in the community; between 1986 and 1991, only 48% of Dunbar residents changed their place of residence, a figure 10% lower than city-wide. This relative stability speaks to a strong sense of belonging in the community, which in turn tends to assure a regular customer base for the shopping district.

Local atmosphere

Dunbar has a unique local atmosphere that is matched by only a few other community shopping districts in Vancouver. Part of this owes to the high proportion of long-time local merchants who live in the area, and who feel a strong sense of belonging to the community. Unlike Kerrisdale, Dunbar has not been taken over by franchise and chain operations, although the situation is rapidly changing, as noted earlier. Dunbar also has a reputation for good service and friendly ambiance. Some businesses add a personal touch to the shopping experience by extending special neighbourhood services to regular customers. Stong's supermarket, for example, offers delivery services within the community by telephone requests.

Specialty Stores

One positive feature is a number of neighbourhood stores that provide highly specialized products ranging from ethnic foods to collectibles; for example: the Italian-Canadian Delicatessen and A Touch of Wool, both located in Dunbar Central. Specialty stores are an asset because they draw customers from outside the community who seek hard-to-find items. They increase the customer base of Dunbar and help to revitalize the business environment. As most of them are small in scale and storefront dimensions, they contribute to the intimacy and friendly atmosphere of the district. Their uniqueness also makes the street environment more inviting for shoppers.

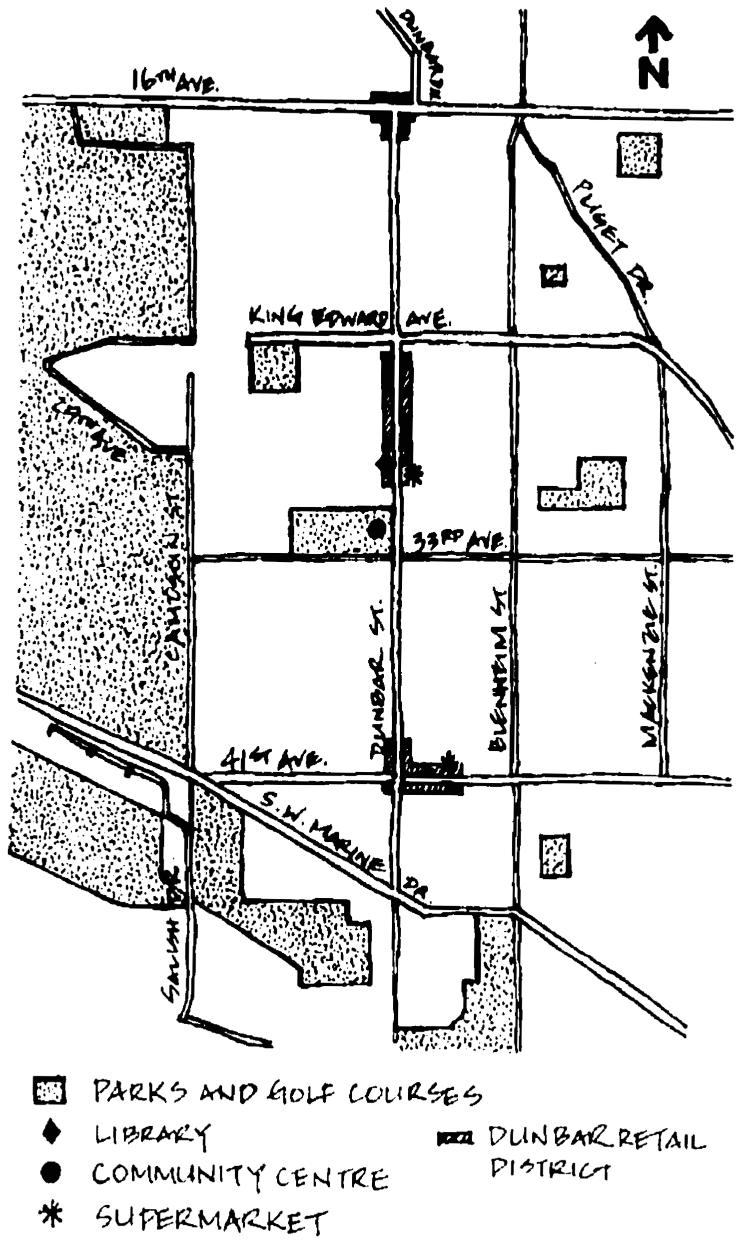
Nearby Amenities

Dunbar is particularly well endowed with cultural and recreational amenities, some of them within the shopping district, and some others in the immediate vicinity of it (Figure 4.5). As discussed in Chapter 2, rich surrounding amenities can be a key factor of success for a community shopping district. Amenities help to increase business volume by creating chances for spontaneous buying; and they also make shopping more convenient and enjoyable by allowing customers to combine several purposes in one "outing".

Dunbar boasts several neighbourhood parks, the largest being Memorial Park West on the southern edge of Dunbar Central where the community centre is located. Facilities in the parks include playgrounds, tracks, baseball diamonds and football fields. Adding to the richness of sporting facilities are two private golf courses, both to the south of the community. Possible linkages of the various parks by greenways and pathways as conceived in the Community Visions will further enhance the attractiveness of this area for motorists, pedestrians, transit commuters and bikers alike. Dunbar is also home to a public library and two supermarkets that are very popular among local residents.

Another distinguishable feature of Dunbar is the breathtaking views of the mountains to the north and the ocean to the south. Such a geographical setting is unmatched by other community shopping districts in Vancouver.

Figure 4.5: Major Amenities within and surrounding the Dunbar Retail District



Zoning Amendment

The current C-2 zoning regulations governing the three sub-areas of the Dunbar shopping district present an opportunity for retail revitalization. Until the lifting of residential disincentives in 1989, commercial property in Dunbar remained static and received little interest from the developers. With only single family homes abutting the retail strips, the density was simply not high enough to generate sufficient retail demand (Sullivan, May 28 1997:13). Now, the situation is different, as new regulations permit up to three storeys of residential units above ground floor retail space. The value in the revised regulations lies in the ability for developers to create additional residential units, which will provide more housing choices for community residents and increase the retail customer base.

According to Helen Spiegelman, former president of the Dunbar Residents' Association, residents of Dunbar support the new mixed-use developments spurred by changes in C-2 zoning. Change is good as long as the residents are involved in shaping the new development, and that it does not happen in a piecemeal fashion without reference to the Community Vision (Spiegelman, 1998, pers. comm.). As for the merchants, the views are more mixed. While Janet Dadson, former president of the Dunbar Business Association, welcomes the opportunity to intensify commercial property for the reason of possible increases in business volume, other merchants are concerned about increases in rents that usually follow redevelopment (Dadson, 1998, pers. comm.).

The C-2 zoning amendment presents an opportunity for Dunbar to increase the viability of its retail district. New mixed-use property developments, with designs that are sensitive to the "neighbourliness" of the retail district and the liveability of adjacent residential areas, can help to revitalize the street environment and increase business volume. Chapter 6 will elaborate on the role of zoning on retail revitalization.

Community Visions

Chosen as a pilot community in the City's Community Visions Program, Dunbar is given an opportunity to involve local residents and merchants in the improvement of its shopping district. The Visions Program focuses the efforts of all stakeholders and assists them in formulating clear objectives for change. The Program fosters communication and collaboration among the various Dunbar community groups. For the first time, people of

Dunbar are given a chance to join their efforts with the City and make their envisioned future happen.

As a new initiative, the Visions Program is still in its infancy stage. It was recently adopted by City Council in September 1998 and has just entered its second phase. Undoubtedly, the Program has taken off to a good start, as indicated by the high attendance rates in the program workshops. The program should continue to serve as a vehicle for mobilizing people, financial resources and skills in improving the Dunbar retail district.

The Business Improvement Area (BIA)

BIAs, as explained in Chapter 2, is another city initiative designed to help communities toward a better business environment. In the past, Dunbar had been presented with the opportunity to form a BIA, but nothing actualized because of a lack of commitment on the part of the merchants. As a merchant association is a requirement for the formation of a BIA, and Dunbar did not have one such organization until 1992, the possibility of a BIA has not been given serious consideration by the community to date.

As Dunbar enters an unprecedented phase of transition, there needs to be an organizational structure to oversee the development of the district as a whole: a function that could be fulfilled by a BIA. Recently, the City reviewed the BIA program and simplified the process for setting up a BIA in community shopping districts. Dunbar should take advantage of this opportunity to incorporate BIA as part of its improvement program.

In summary: the results of the situational analysis discussed in this section reveal the many physical environment and socio-economic issues confronting Dunbar. Specifically, Dunbar falls short in providing an attractive physical environment for its shoppers. Old buildings need to be renewed and more and better public spaces are required for sitting and social gatherings. Fast moving traffic and the pedestrian unfriendly width of Dunbar Street also need to be addressed to provide a safer shopping environment. The big "spread"/distance between the three sub-areas further prevents Dunbar from becoming a successful shopping district and efforts should be made to concentrate retail activities around a community focus. Notwithstanding its problems, Dunbar demonstrates much potential to become a more successful retail district, owing to many desirable community characteristics. It has a relatively stable residential population, which means that there exists an established local customer base for future expansion in retail goods and services.

It also embodies rich amenities that act as a draw for both "local" and "non-local" shoppers. Furthermore, the renewed interest in mixed-use property development sparked by recent changes in commercial zoning presents an opportunity to expand shopping facilities and customer base.

In Chapter 6, a development scenario addressing some of the most important aspects identified in the situational analysis will be presented for the Dunbar retail district:

- A more attractive shopping environment providing better public spaces and safer streets for pedestrians shoppers.
- A stronger community focus with the concentration of retail activities in the "central" location.
- An enhancement of existing amenities to capitalize on their abilities to draw shoppers from within and outside the community.
- A larger development envelope – through appropriate zoning measures – for mixed-use property developments and alternative housing to increase the level of retail goods and services and local customer base.

CHAPTER 5: DUNBAR SHOPPER SURVEY-QUESTIONNAIRE: FINDINGS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

This chapter looks at the distribution, preferences, and spending patterns of Dunbar shoppers. The findings will be used in the development of future directions and improvement measures for Dunbar in Chapter 6. Six issues are of interest:

- Where do Dunbar shoppers come from and how are they distributed spatially? – the "trade area"
- What transportation did Dunbar shoppers use to arrive at their destination?
- For what purposes do people go to Dunbar? and how often do they go there?
- Why do people choose to shop in Dunbar? and how satisfied are they with the types of goods and services offered there?
- Which other retail districts do Dunbar shoppers go to and why? – the "competition"
- What is the spending behaviour of Dunbar shoppers?

5.1 Dunbar Shopper Survey

To answer the above questions, an on-site shopper survey was developed (Appendix A). Such surveys are commonly used to examine shopper origins, their needs and wants and spending behaviour (DeMarco, 1999, pers. comm.; Maas, 1998, pers. comm). The survey consists of 15 questions, grouped into four parts, and was designed to take about five minutes to complete. A first draft, pre-survey questionnaire was conducted on 30 pedestrians. During this test, it was found that some questions needed rewording; and the survey questions were therefore revised.

Two researchers conducted the survey over a two-day period in February, 1999, including a weekday and a Saturday. The two interviewers stood in the approximate centre of each of the three sub-areas within the Dunbar district, one on each side of the street. Interviews proceeded randomly, by interviewing the first shopper to pass the interviewer after the completion of the previous interview; where the "first person" declined, the interview was conducted on the next willing shopper to pass the interviewee.

One hundred survey-questionnaires were conducted – a standard sample size for a population of around 25,000 (Maas, pers.

comm, 1999); the residential population of Dunbar in 1991 being 20,535.

5.2 Survey-Questionnaire Results

5.2.1 Shopper Origins and Distribution

Trip origin

Figure 5.1 shows that the majority of shoppers arrived at the survey point from "home". Only minor shares of customers came from "Work" and "Other" originating points. Thus, Dunbar mostly depends on the local community residential population for the support of its businesses. The low workers population reflects the location of Dunbar in a quiet residential suburb, where office space is as yet very limited.

To find out the geographical distribution of Dunbar shoppers, respondents were also asked for the closest intersection to their points of origin. The locations are mapped and presented in Figure 5.2. As Figure 5.2 shows, the majority of survey respondents come from the immediate vicinity of the Dunbar retail district, with 64% in the primary trade area. The primary trade area was determined by delineating the area in which the highest density of home locations fall, a method used by a City of Calgary retail study (1993). According to the study, this is the preferred method because it represents actual shopping behaviour and automatically accounts for all the major trade area-affecting variables including ease of access, physical barriers and merchandize mix.

Figure 5.1: Trip Origin

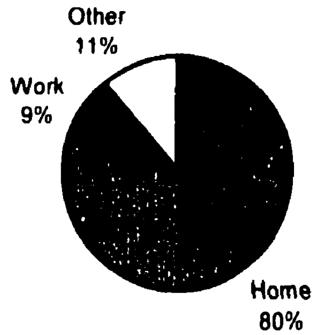
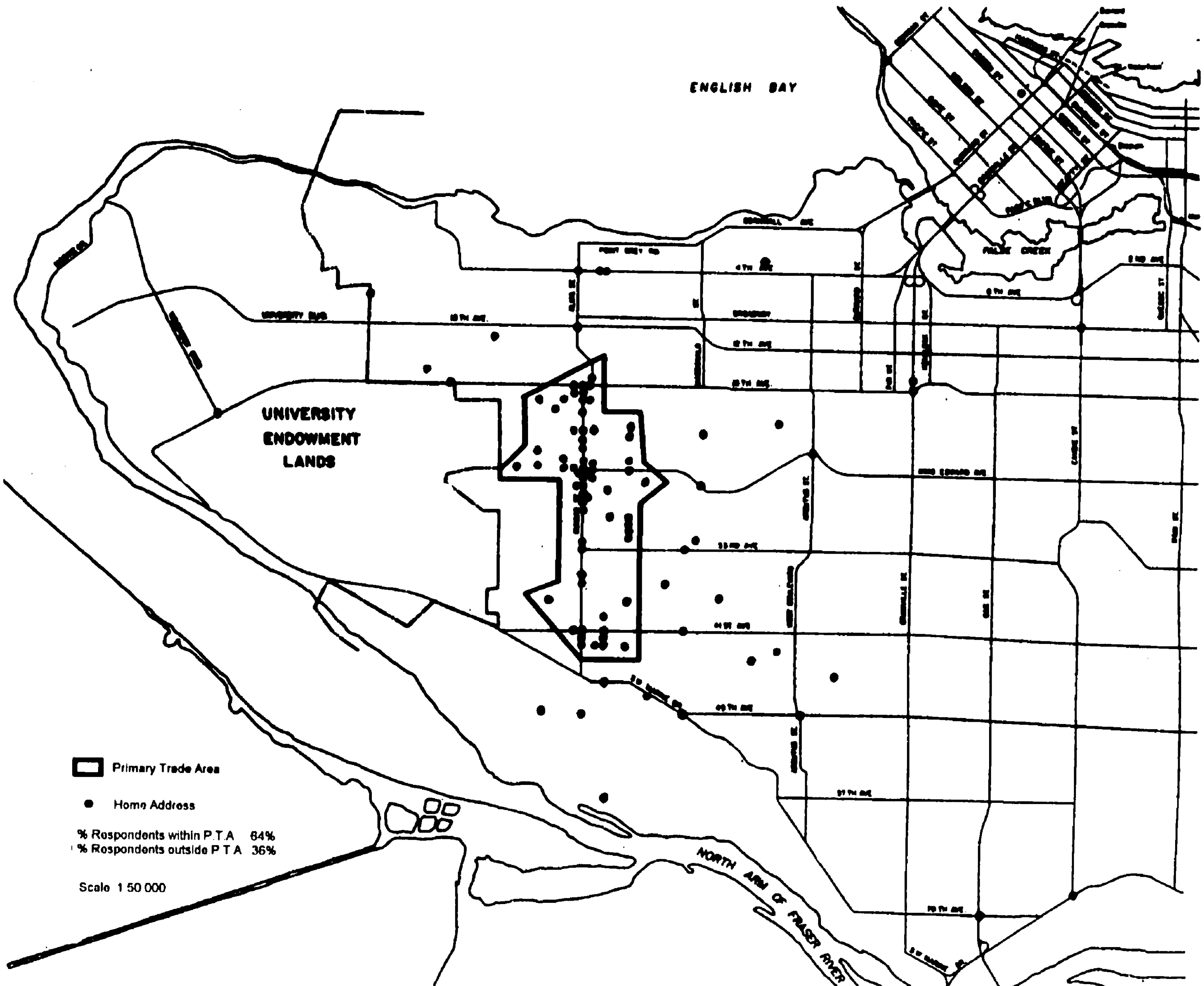


Figure 5.2: Distribution of Dunbar Shoppers – February 1999 Survey



Relating to the concept of the core and its hinterland in the Central Place Theory (discussed in Section 1.1), the shoppers are distinguished by "locals" – those who come from the local neighbourhoods, and "non-locals" or "hinterlanders" – and those who live outside the local area. Locals are the main supporters of Dunbar businesses and they play a vital role in sustaining the Dunbar retail district. The lower proportion of "hinterlanders" (36%) indicates that Dunbar has limited draw for outside shoppers.

5.2.2 Trip Mode and Parking

A little more than half of the shoppers drove to the Dunbar shopping district -- 41% had walked, and only 8% had biked or used transit. The high automobile use suggests that certain functions in Dunbar attract people from further distances, such as consignment and specialty stores. It may also indicate the attraction of some automobile-oriented stores in the district, including two strip malls and a few larger retailers (i.e., Shoppers Drug Mart, IGA) with easy access and ample parking.

Figure 5.4 confirms the adequate parking provisions in Dunbar. 92% of the shoppers were able to park close to where they intended to shop.

Figure 5.3: Trip Mode

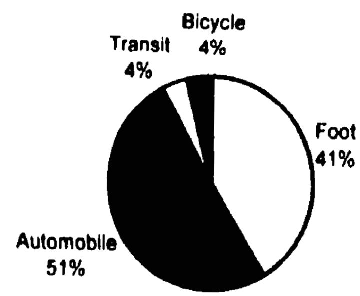
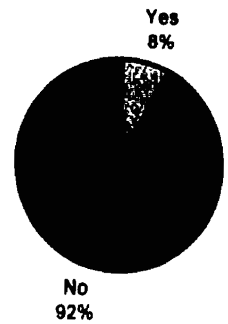


Figure 5.4: Parking



The high proportion of people who walked to the Dunbar shopping district (41%) supports the finding that a high percentage of shoppers (64%) are "locals".

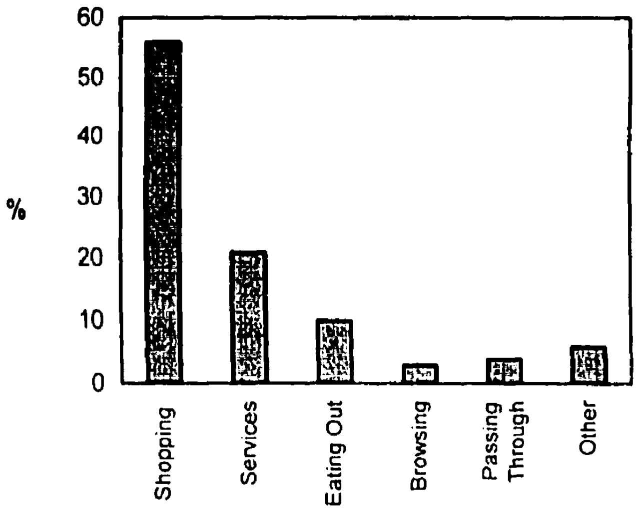
5.2.3 Trip Purpose and Frequency

About half of the respondents (56%) were in the district for the purpose of shopping at the time of the interview (Figure 5.5). A relatively large proportion (21%) was in the district for services of a financial or personal health nature. Only 3% of respondents stated they were browsing without a clear idea of what they wanted to purchase.

These data indicate that people generally do not go to Dunbar with the "window shopping" or "just looking" attitude. This may be due to the low selection of comparison goods in the district as concluded in Section 4.1.

The respondents who stated "Other" purposes were primarily in the district for a walk; but they had no intentions of patronizing the stores or services. A few indicated they were in the district because of an amenity -- such as the library or the park -- supporting the finding that amenities can and do draw people to a shopping district (Chapter 4).

Figure 5.5: Trip Purpose



Survey participants were also asked how often they visit the Dunbar retail district. Close to two-thirds of them (64%) responded 'more than once a week' (Table 5.1). This allows us to suggest that Dunbar can be easily accessed by most of its shoppers. It also suggests that Dunbar serves a convenience function, in that people frequent it for everyday needs.

Table 5.1: Trip Frequency

Trip Frequency	Percent
Everyday	19
2-3 times a week	45
Once a week	15
Once every 2 weeks	8
Once a month or less	13
Total	100

The 13% of shoppers who patronize Dunbar once a month or less mostly came to the district for special items such as antiques and consignment clothing. This indicates that certain stores in Dunbar appeal to consumer from further distances.

5.2.4 Dunbar District Selection Factors

The district selection factors provide information on why the respondents choose to shop in the Dunbar district. In this context, survey participants were also asked for suggestions on additional retail businesses in the Dunbar shopping district they feel help to better satisfy their expectations and needs.

As expected, convenience is by far the most stated reason why respondents choose to shop in Dunbar. As Figure 5.6 shows, 54% of responses were "convenience", followed by 20% "types of stores" and 16% "other". Shoppers were asked to name specific stores that they visit regularly; Table 5.2 provides a list of the most frequently named stores. Stong's supermarket tops the list with 28 frequency counts, or 17% of the total responses. The majority of other named businesses were also of a convenience nature, such as Home Hardware and Money's Drycleaning. It is noteworthy that four of the businesses – Shopper's Drug Mart, IGA, Starbucks and Macs - are retail chains, indicating the chain stores are gaining a stronghold in Dunbar. The only comparison goods store in the list is Cheapskates (consignment clothing and sporting equipment).

Shoppers who responded "Other" mainly said that they patronize Dunbar because they want to support small neighbourhood businesses. Others gave the reason that they used to live in the neighbourhood and therefore have established ties with certain stores. A few liked the fact that they could accomplish more than one task in a single trip to Dunbar, e.g. shop after exercising in the park.

Figure 5.6: Reasons for selecting Dunbar

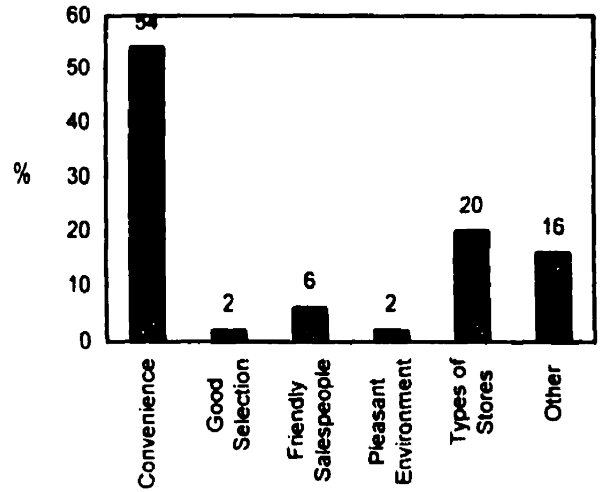
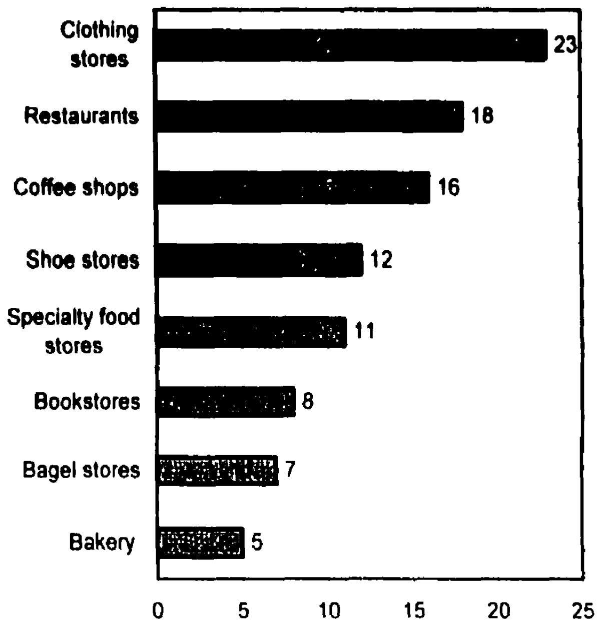


Table 5.2: Businesses Most Frequented by Survey Respondents

Business	Frequency	Percent
Stong's Supermarket	28	17
IGA Supermarket	25	15
Shopper's Drug Mart	25	15
Home Hardware	15	9
Starbucks	13	8
Canadian-Italian Deli	12	7
Money's Drycleaning	10	6
Stationery 2000	9	5
Video Plus	9	5
Liquor Store	7	4
Cheapskates Consignment	6	4
Thorntree Café	5	3
Mac's Convenience Store	4	2
Total	168	100

Survey participants were asked to name additional businesses they would like to see in Dunbar. Figure 5.7 shows the percentage breakdown of responses in the most cited store types. Clothing is by far the most frequently indicated, and together with shoe stores, account for 35% of all suggestions given. This confirms the lack of comparison goods stores in Dunbar. Food and beverage services are also very much desired; many respondents commented there are not enough cafes providing outdoor patio seats for them to "hang out". Others mentioned that more specialty food and baked goods are needed in Dunbar.

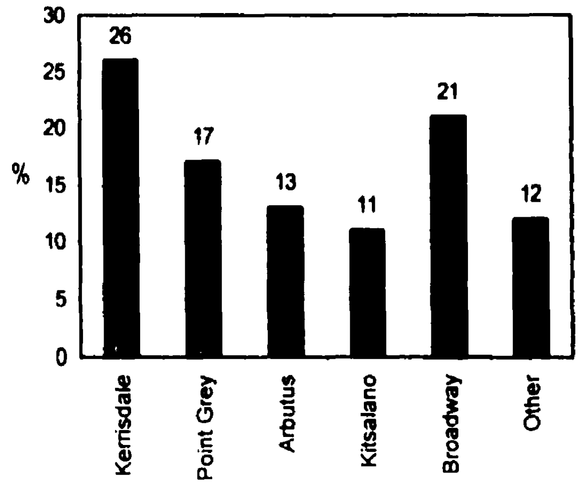
Figure 5.7: Additional Stores Desired



5.2.5 Other District Selection Factors

Survey respondents were asked to name the other shopping districts that they visit regularly besides Dunbar. The results are somewhat consistent with the findings of the situational analysis in Chapter 4; viz., Kerrisdale is the number one competitor, (26% of total responses). Broadway and Point Grey follow with 21% and 17%, respectively.

Figure 5.8: Other Districts Visited by Dunbar Shoppers



The Other locations frequently mentioned include Oakridge Centre, which is a regional shopping mall, and Granville Street between Broadway and 16th Avenue.

How often and why do they go to the other shopping districts? As Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show, most of Dunbar shoppers visit the other districts once a week or once every two weeks. It is reasonable to conclude that many Dunbar shoppers rely on other shopping districts for products and services that are either unavailable, inadequate or not satisfactory in Dunbar.

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 summarize the responses given to why they choose to go to the other districts. Close to half of these responses (45%) were "Types of Stores", followed by 19% "Convenience" and 18% "Good Selection". It should be noted that the top-two other district selection factors were the same as what attracted people to Dunbar (indicated in Figure 5.6). Notwithstanding, "Good selection" received one of the lowest responses in Dunbar; thus lending confirmation to observations in Chapter 4 that Dunbar lacks the range of product choices offered by its competitor retail districts. Notably, some of the reasons mentioned under "Other" were "Lower Prices", "Easy Parking" and "Habit".

Table 5.3: Frequency of Visits to Other Shopping Districts (Number of Responses)

n=145	Numbers					
	Everyday	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once every 2 weeks	Once a month or less	Total
Kerrisdale	3	8	8	13	5	37
Point Grey	3	4	8	9	1	25
Arbutus	0	4	7	5	3	19
Kitsalano	2	2	3	6	3	16
Broadway	1	3	11	12	3	30
Other	2	3	6	4	3	18
Total	11	24	43	49	18	145

Table 5.4: Frequency of Visits to Other Shopping Districts (Percentage of Responses)

N=145	Percentages					
	Everyday	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once every 2 weeks	Once a month or less	Total
Kerrisdale	8	22	22	35	13	100
Point Grey	12	16	32	36	4	100
Arbutus	0	21	37	26	16	100
Kitsalano	12	12	19	38	19	100
Broadway	3	10	37	40	10	100
Other	11	17	33	22	17	100
Total	8	17	29	34	12	100

Table 5.5: Reasons for Choosing Other Shopping Districts (Number of Responses)

n=177	Numbers						
	Convenience	Good selection	Friendly salespeople	Pleasant environment	Types of stores	Other	Total
Kerrisdale	8	11	1	10	19	3	52
Point Grey	7	2	1	1	17	2	30
Arbutus	7	5	0	1	11	2	26
Kitsalano	4	1	1	2	5	0	13
Broadway	5	6	0	2	19	6	38
Other	3	7	0	0	8	0	18
Total	34	32	3	16	79	13	177

Table 5.6: Reasons for Choosing Other Shopping Districts (Percentage of Responses)

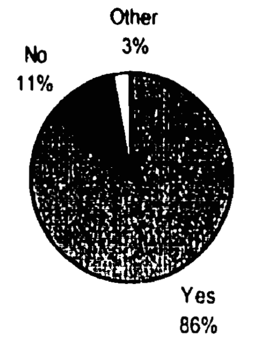
n=177	Percentages						
	Convenience	Good selection	Friendly salespeople	Pleasant environment	Types of stores	Other	Total
Kerrisdale	15	21	2	19	37	6	100
Point Grey	23	7	3	3	57	7	100
Arbutus	27	19	0	4	42	8	100
Kitsalano	31	8	8	15	38	0	100
Broadway	13	16	0	5	50	16	100
Other	17	39	0	0	44	0	100
Total	19	18	2	9	45	7	100

5.2.6 Purchasing Behaviour

Questions were asked to discern the purchasing characteristics of Dunbar shoppers. Particularly, whether people were there with clear intentions to buy; what they bought at the time of the survey versus what they normally buy; and how much on average they customarily spend in the district.

The majority of respondents (86%) were in Dunbar for the purpose of shopping (Figure 5.9). The 11% who replied "no" were mostly made up of passing-through pedestrians. Some were in the area for an amenity such as the library or the community centre and had no shopping purpose. The "Other" response category was mainly those who were unsure of their decisions.

Figure 5.9: Purchasing Decision



Shoppers were asked to provide information on the products and services they purchased on the day of the survey, and what they normally purchase when they come to the Dunbar district. Figure 5.10 shows that, by far, the most purchase were made in groceries, totaling 34% at the time of the survey and 31% normally. The high proportion of grocery purchase indicates the community significance of the two supermarkets and retail food stores in the Dunbar district. Other major categories of purchase included "Personal Care Items" and "Food & Beverage". Some of the purchases in the "Other" category mentioned by respondents were pet food, sporting goods, and video rental service. In most categories, the discrepancy between what was purchased on the survey day and what was normally purchased is not great.

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents spend less than $200 in an average month in the Dunbar district. While most of them spend relatively little in the Dunbar shopping district, a surprising 12% of the respondents stated they spend more than $500 in an average month. These people are the ones who depend heavily on local stores and services; they constitute mainly the elderly who are less mobile and unable to travel to other shopping districts as they wish; and also families with young children who patronize the many children-oriented retail stores in the Dunbar Central area.

Figure 5.10: Purchase by Category on Survey Day and Usual Days

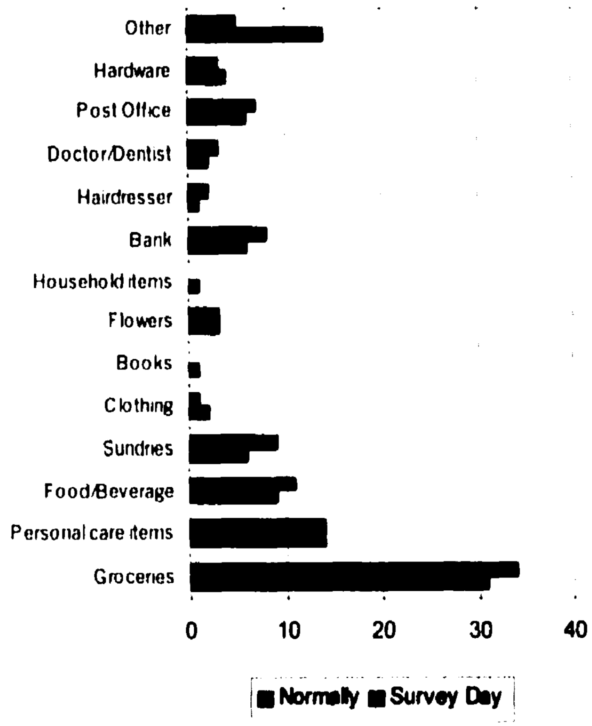


Table 5.7: Monthly Purchase Amount (Percentage of Responses)

Monthly Expenditure ($)	Percentage
<200.00	66
200.00-299.99	14
300.00-399.99	4
400.00-499.99	4
Equal or >500.00	12
Total	100

5.2.7 Additional Findings and Comments

The last question asks the participants for comments. Many expressed opinions and provided comments on some of the major issues concerning the present and prospective situation for Dunbar.

It appears that Dunbar shoppers are polarized in their opinions: One group of shoppers is strongly against growth (or expansion) in the district; they argue that the district now serves their needs perfectly and does not require any expansionary efforts to increase its competitiveness (apart, possibly, from minor street improvements). They are extremely critical of the new mixed use developments sprouting up; the spread of these developments will threaten the "charming", "like home", and "neighbourly" feeling of the district. They also believe that additional housing units along the retail streets will increase density to a level that can adversely affect the community, its character, etc. While supportive of small, locally-owned businesses, this group does not want to see them being squeezed out by rents and taxes that customarily accompany property redevelopments. One respondent -- a local resident and merchant -- commented that this type of development "disrupts the balance" of the community shopping district because the value of the property is no longer in line with an economic return.

The other group sees development in a different light. They feel that expansion of the district is very much needed – as it is now structured, the district does not provide enough product selection. New developments in recent years are viewed as positive change; they will bring in more up-scale stores and make Dunbar more competitive with its counterparts. Many see Kerrisdale as the model for change, where high quality shoppers goods and specialty food stores have made that area a success, both at the community level and city-wide. Retail chains and franchise operations, they said, are not necessarily harmful; they could bring benefits to the district, such as expanding the customer base and rejuvenating the street environments with newer storefronts. Retail chains like Starbucks are enjoyed by many residents in the community, and they are seen to contribute greatly to the shopping atmosphere. A few also mentioned that the lack of housing choice in the community could be improved by more mixed-use developments. All in all, this group thinks that change is inevitable and/or desirable for an old retail district like Dunbar; and so far, the changes have been mostly beneficial.

5.2.8 Synopsis of Key Findings

Key findings from the shopper survey-questionnaire are now summarized.

- The majority of Dunbar shoppers originate from nearby residential neighbourhoods, indicating that Dunbar has a relatively small market area.
- Dunbar shoppers travel to the district mainly by foot or automobile. Most of those who drove state that they did not have trouble finding parking close to where they intended to shop.
- People are mostly in the district for purpose shopping and personal and/or financial services. Some were in the district for other amenities such as the library and parks.
- Close to two-thirds of shoppers visit Dunbar more than once a week, suggesting that the district can be easily accessed and is frequented for everyday needs.
- Convenience was, above all, the number one reason for shopping in Dunbar. Shoppers are also drawn to the district because of the types of store found there. All except one of the stores most frequented by Dunbar shoppers served a convenience function. A few chain stores were also named.
- Clothing stores and eating and drinking places were the most desired additional businesses in Dunbar
- Kerrisdale, Broadway and Point Grey are the major competitors of Dunbar. They are frequented by Dunbar shoppers for the types of stores, particularly those offering comparison types of products/comparison shopping.
- The majority were in Dunbar with clear intentions to buy. Major catergories of purchase include groceries, personal care items, and food and beverage. Two-thirds of buyers spend less than $200 in an average month in Dunbar.
- New mixed-use property developments are seen by the shoppers as both a blessing and a curse in the Dunbar retail district. While some feel that the developments will help revitalize Dunbar by expanding the customer base, others fear that they will drive out small businesses and destroy the original intimacy and character of the district.

From these findings, a number of implications can be drawn for the future development of the Dunbar district. First, development efforts should focus on accommodating the needs and wants of the local population, as they are the main supporters of Dunbar businesses. This involves identifying the key groups within the local population who will become the largest spenders on retail goods and services into the next decade. Second, development proposals will need to address automobile and pedestrian traffic to facilitate accessibility by car and by foot. Special emphasis should be given to making the shopping district more pedestrian-friendly and letting cars enter without threatening pedestrian safety. Third, amenities such as the library, community centre and parks should be better integrated in the development proposal to enhance the ability for shoppers to engage in other activities in one stop. Fourth, while convenience functions attract most shoppers, more comparison goods and eating and drinking places are required to increase the competitiveness of Dunbar with other shopping districts such as Kerridale and Point Grey. It is expected that as the district image improves and the local customer base expands, more comparison retailers will seek locations within Dunbar. Fifth, improvement efforts should try to preserve as much of the original intimacy of the district as possible. This means that new mixed-use buildings should take on forms and designs sensitive to existing structures.

CHAPTER 6: NEW DIRECTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS FOR DUNBAR

The intent of this chapter is to propose new directions for Dunbar and the planning implementation measures needed. They deal specifically with the Dunbar unique set of problems and characteristics.

From the theoretical expositions and the findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in Chapters 1 to 5, a plausible future is proposed for Dunbar. A development scenario is conceived with the aim of improving Dunbar to increase its chances of success as a community retail district. The key factors of success were discussed in Section 2.1.2. The planning implementation measures for Dunbar presented here are directed toward incorporating those factors and further, to addressing some of the key weaknesses and threats identified in the situational analysis in Section 4.3.

6.1 The Approach to an Improved Future

The scenario is expansionary and optimistic, and it foresees expanding the present boundary of the Dunbar retail district to increase its economic viability, strengthen its role as a "Neighbourhood Centre" for community residents, revitalize certain segments of the street environment, and to improve Dunbar's competitive position vis-à-vis such districts as Kerridale and Point Grey. A "full-length" strategy for Dunbar Street (3.5 Kilometres, three sub-areas) would not be practical. Development should rather be focussed, and a concentration of effort and resources should be considered. Therefore, a development scenario should focus on the Dunbar Central area to reinforce the idea of a "Neighbourhood Centre" (as articulated in the Vancouver CityPlan, Section 2.2) and to allow it to serve as a sort of centripetal force in unifying the community.

This proposal is supported by five major findings:

- Among the three sub-areas, Dunbar Central is the most appropriate area for expansion because of its "central" location on Dunbar Street and its largest range of goods, services and amenities.
- Good public spaces are lacking in Dunbar. An expansion of the retail district will – or could – provide more and better public spaces for community events, and for informal social interactions and gatherings.

- Many shoppers feel that the district, as it is now structured, does not fully serve their needs. An extension of retail frontage will add to and likely diversify the level and range of retail goods and services available to them.
- Two main groups characterize the population of Dunbar: aging baby boomers and maturing young adults. With the majority of dwelling units now being single-detached homes, existing housing choices are limited for these two population groups as they progress through various stage of life. Expansionary development can add to the diversification of housing types in the community, and to help satisfy the present and foreseeable future market – demographic demand factors in Vancouver.

6.1.1 Expansionary Scenario: Justifications and Assumptions

Currently, the population of Dunbar is approximately 20,000. As demonstrated by the shopper survey findings in Chapter 5, this local population constitutes the core patrons of Dunbar businesses. Thus, expansion should be primarily focussed on addressing the needs and wants of this core population. With foreseeable demographic shifts in Dunbar, the retail district, as it is currently structured, will likely become inadequate or not optimally attractive for its residents into the next decade or so. A second-order objective should be to enhance the attractiveness of Dunbar Central for the 36% of shoppers living outside the primary trade area; with the expansion, it is expected that the area will capture a greater share of non-local shoppers, particularly as comparison goods outlets increase in number.

From 1981 to 1991, Dunbar experienced a population increase of 1,250 (City of Vancouver, 1994). Into the next ten years (1999 to 2010), population increases will likely accelerate, for two reasons. First, the lifting of residential penalties in C-2 zones in 1989 (discussed in Section 2.3.2) will likely add more housing units to the community, as already witnessed in the quickening pace of mixed-use and higher density housing developments on Dunbar Street. Second, the improvements articulated by the Community Visions Program would likely have taken effect and the Dunbar community will attract more people to move there. With these two forces in place, it is not unreasonable to predict a net increase of 5,000 over the next ten years, bringing the total community population to 25,000 in 2010.

As the population increases, so will the number of households. The core population of Dunbar is made up of primarily baby boomers and young adults. Into the next decade, household structure will change as the boomers grow older and young adults mature. It is also anticipated that there will be more seniors (empty nesters) and more young singles and couples who will require other types of housing (particularly multi-family dwellings) that are more affordable than the traditional single-detached homes. At present, the average household size in Dunbar is 3.0 (City of Vancouver, 1994), which yields approximately 6,700 housing units when divided into a population of 20,000. Into 2010, the average household size will shrink as changes in demographics take place. This means there will be an increase in the number of households while the sizes of individual households become smaller. Assuming that the average household size in Dunbar will decline to 2.8 and population will rise to 25,000 in 2010, the number of households should increase to approximately 8,900 over the next decade or so.

Such changes in population and household structures will also likely be accompanied by an increase in the total amount of disposable income spent on retail businesses in the community, making an expansion of retail goods and services feasible for the future.

In addition to increases in local population, number of households and disposable income, the expansionary scenario is based on the following assumptions and reasoning:

- Continued growing prosperity, i.e. no serious or prolonged economic decline in Vancouver: this will allow the same or more money to be spent per household on retail goods and services over the next ten years.
- The continuous trend of retailers and business offices, etc. seeking lower economic rents: Dunbar's rents (property costs) are still low relative to the more developed neighbouring communities such as Kerrisdale and Point Grey; and will remain so for the foreseeable future.
- Seniors and young adults spend a relatively large proportion of their disposable income on retail goods and services. These two population groups will be the main supporters of Dunbar retail businesses.
- There will be no significant lowering of single-family housing prices relative to incomes. Therefore, young adults and retirees will be choosing the more affordable, single-family attached and multi-family housing types.

6.2 Key Development Components

6.2.1 Zoning Changes

The principal planning measure in realizing the expansionary scenario is zoning. Rezoning needs to occur for two purposes:

- Extension of the current Dunbar Central C-2 zone boundary
- Designation of multi-family – and higher density -- housing in areas in close proximity to retail and personal services establishments in Dunbar Central.

Dunbar Central Zone Extension

Currently, Dunbar Central stretches four and a half blocks, between King Edward Avenue and West 30th Avenue (Figure 6.1). The area embodies approximately 800 metres (2,700 feet) of lineal retail frontage (both sides included). With a projected population growth of 25% (from 20,000 to 25,000), and with a net increase of 2,200 households (from 6,700 to 8,900) and some rise in average household retail expenditure over the next ten years, it is estimated that the central area needs to be extended to accommodate at least an additional 200 metres (670 feet), or 20% to 25% additional frontage, in order to serve the expected growth adequately. To ensure that the property market operates competitively, i.e. to keep land costs at competitive rates, two to three times the desired amount of frontage/land area to be converted to retail should therefore be made available over the ten-year period. This means that an additional 400 to 600 metres (1,300 feet to 2,000 feet) of retail frontage should be incorporated in zoning.

To achieve this desired retail frontage, the physical boundary of Dunbar Central should be extended south to 33rd Avenue to link up with the Dunbar Community Centre (Figure 6.1). This will establish connectivity between shopping and other community amenities. Extension in the other direction is not recommended because of two major impediments for a continuous pedestrian shopping environment: a considerable drop in topography beyond 26th Avenue and the intersecting of Dunbar Street by King Edward Avenue – a wide arterial carrying high volumes of automobile traffic. At the south, an extension beyond 33rd Avenue is not desired because the shopping area needs to be kept within comfortable walking distance for pedestrian shoppers.

The area proposed for rezoning is currently single-family residential. Rezoning of the area to C-2 (the current zoning governing Dunbar Central, explained in Section 2.2.2) could be preceded by a zoning impact study that addresses the impacts on surrounding residential areas.

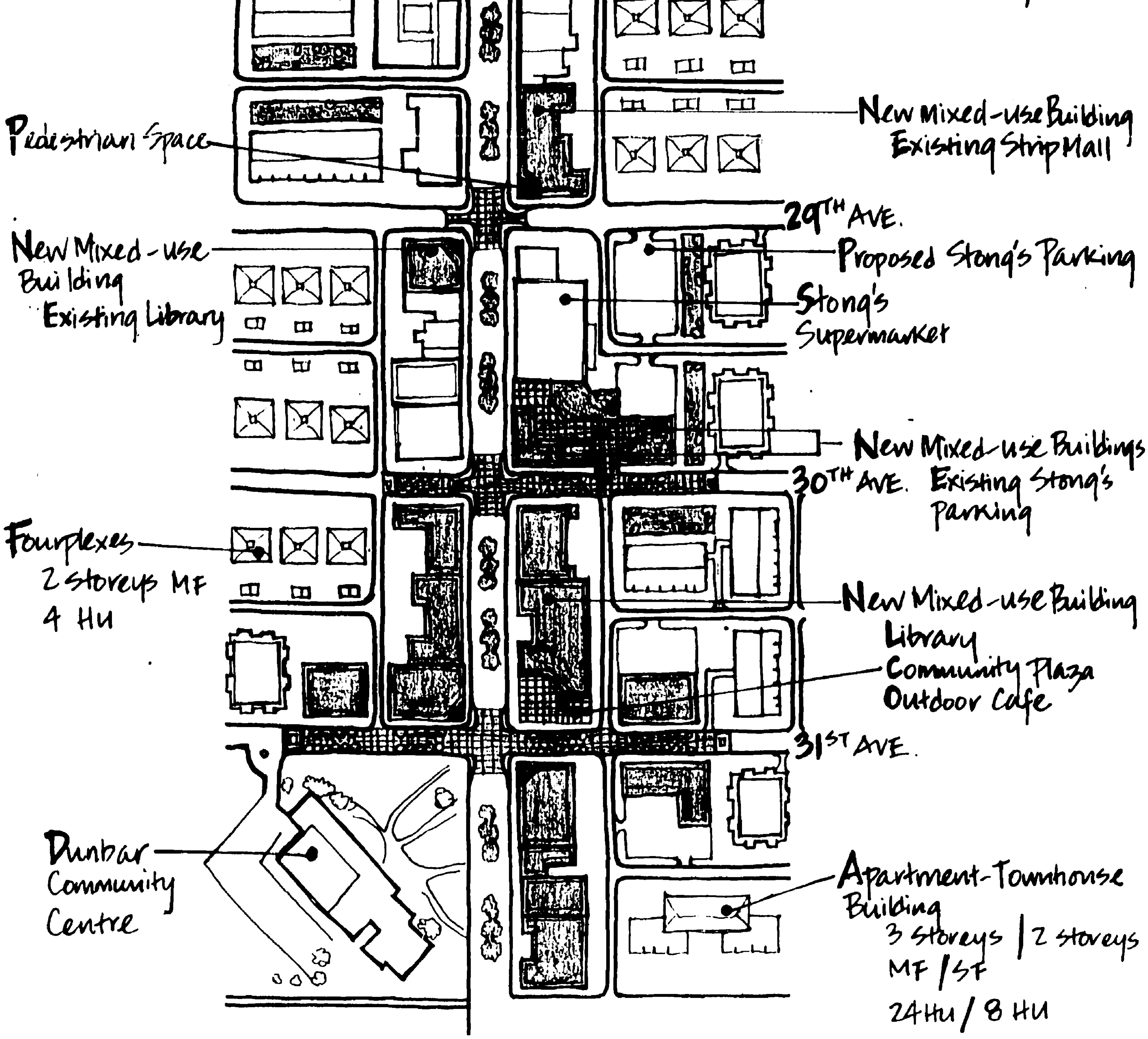
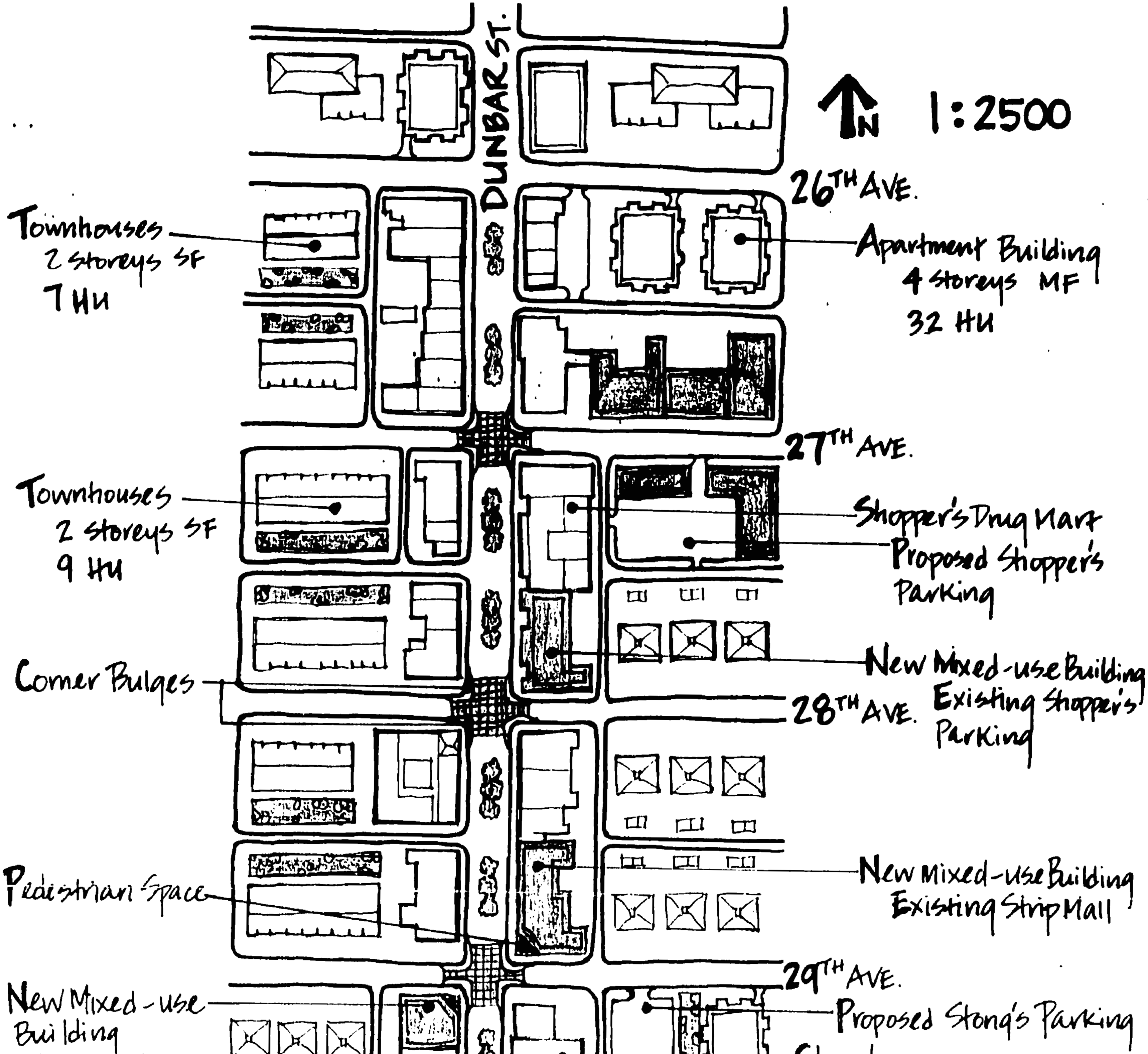

Pedestrian Space
New Mixed-use Building
Existing Strip Mall
29TH AVE.
New Mixed-use Building
Existing Library
Proposed Stong's Parking
Stong's Supermarket
New Mixed-use Buildings
30TH AVE.
Existing Stong's Parking
Fourplexes
2 storeys MF
4 HU
New Mixed-use Building
Library
Community Plaza
Outdoor Cafe
31ST AVE.
Dunbar Community Centre
Apartment-Townhouse Building
3 storeys | 2 storeys
MF / SF
24HU / 8 HU

Figure 6.1: Dunbar Central Development Plan



Multi-family Housing

Dunbar's demographic structure – with aging baby boomers and maturing young adults – requires that more housing choices be provided. Between 1986 and 1991, there was a 16.2% increase in the number of children under 14 years of age. As this group matures, and as they move out of their parents' homes, they will require housing in its most economical forms. With the high property values in Vancouver, it is unlikely that, as first time buyers, they will be able to afford single-family homes. Moreover, a recent housing projection shows that the number of mature households in Dunbar (occupied by those over 55 years), will increase almost twofold, from 2,465 to 4,660 from 1991 to 2021 (City of Vancouver, 1998:17). These figures suggest that Dunbar needs more diversified dwelling types to meet the changing housing demands into the next decade.

Dunbar Central is surrounded by single-family homes. This residential density is too low to support expansion and diversification in retail goods and services. As architect/developer Kalke argues, "Dunbar's commercial area will depend on residential density to keep it vibrant and viable" (Vancouver Courier, May 28 1997:13). Thus, rezoning of certain single-family/detached residential areas into multi-family zones is needed to expand local customer base for the Dunbar retail district -- as well as to increase housing choices – and in complementary fashion, retail choices.

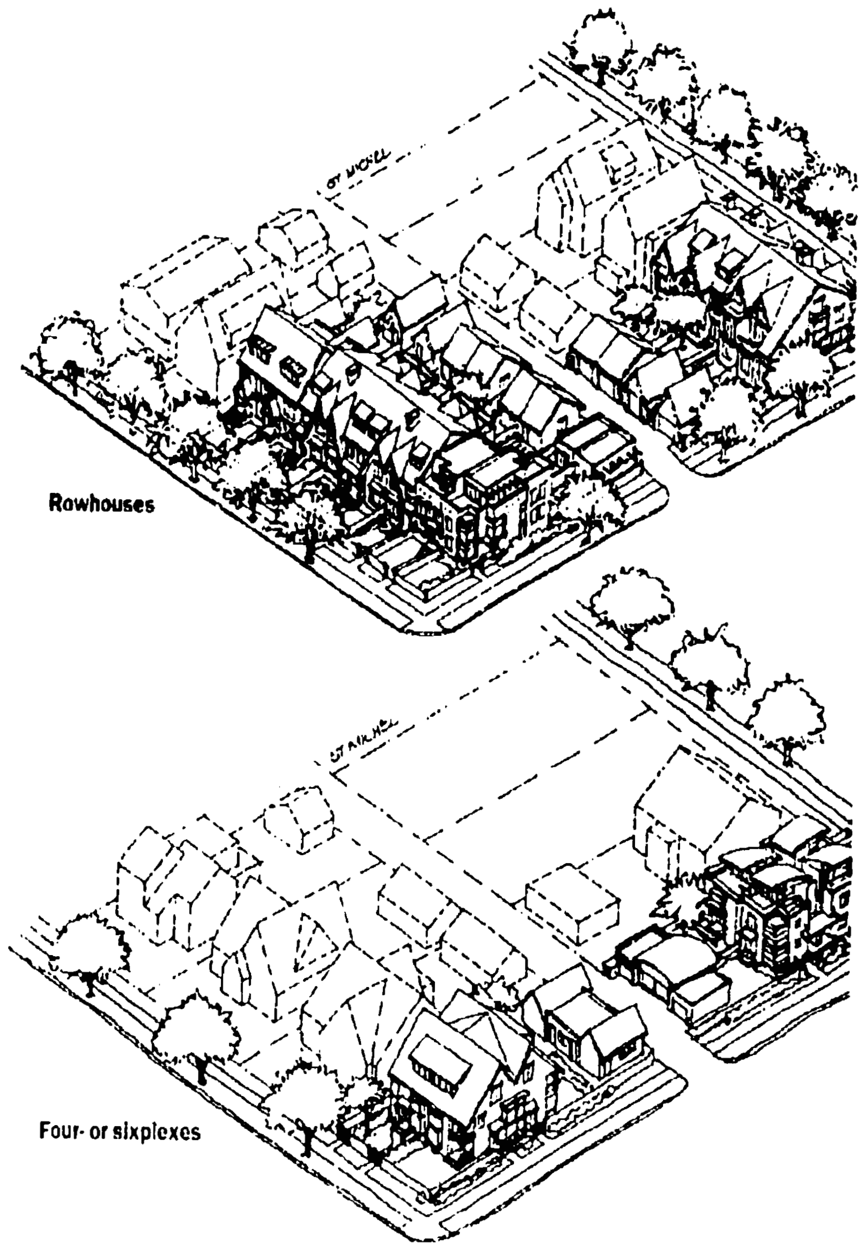
In Kerrisdale, the zoning of multi-family housing immediately adjacent to the C-2 strips has worked effectively in stimulating the local business environment. In an expansionary perspective, Dunbar would want to increase its residential density, particularly around the C-2 zones, in order to generate more diversified goods and services.

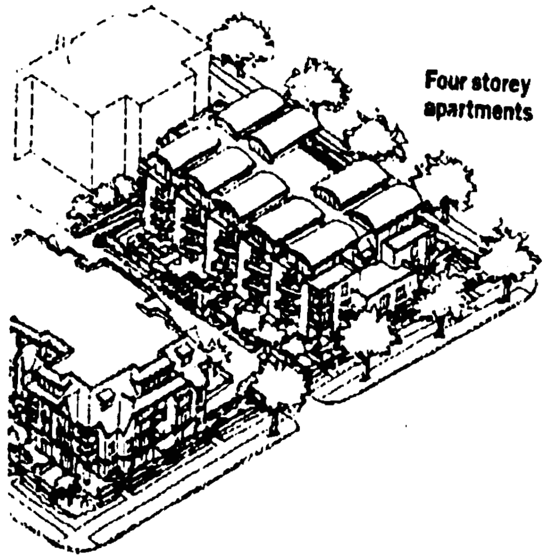
Multi-family housing adjacent to Dunbar Central should not exceed four storeys in height to ensure compatibility in form and scale with the mixed-use buildings within the Central area. New housing should take on a variety of low to medium density forms, such as duplexes and fourplexes, townhouses/rowhouses, and/or low-scaled apartments (Figure 6.2). Some of these housing forms can be designed to be more affordable and at the same time provide certain features of family homes, i.e. individual yard space, private entry, etc. These alternative housing types should enable Dunbar residents to stay in the community as they move through various stages of life. For example, as young adults leave their parents' homes, they will be seeking smaller dwelling units that are more affordable; similarly, seniors with grown children who have left home to establish their own families could move from single-family homes to seniors' apartments that require less maintenance.

Seniors housing especially should be concentrated in Dunbar Central: as Section 4.2 described, it is the most "complete" area in terms of shopping facilities and amenities. As seniors make up for close to 15% of the community's population, rezoning of residential areas should aim toward providing adequate seniors' housing to accommodate their mobility restrictions and bring them closer to their daily shopping and personal service needs.

The proposed densification of residential areas in Dunbar Central will add approximately 1,000 housing units to the community, accommodating close to half of the additional number of households in 2010. The remaining household increase should be absorbed in the north and south areas in the latter phases of development, after the expansionary proposals in Dunbar Central have taken effect.

Figure 6.2: Examples of New Housing Abutting Dunbar Central Source: City of Vancouver, 1997





6.2.2 Mixed-use Property Development

As discussed in Chapter 4, new mixed-use property developments are becoming increasingly prevalent in the Dunbar retail district. More new mixed-use developments will help with the functional expansion of the Dunbar district by providing varying retail space and storefront requirements for different business establishments. Moreover, due to the higher rents usually accompanying mixed-use developments, more up-scale stores and retail chains tend to locate in them, thus allowing for more diversified products and services. This can, in turn, trigger an increased business volume for the smaller, local and independent merchants.

<u>New Library Mixed-use Building</u>

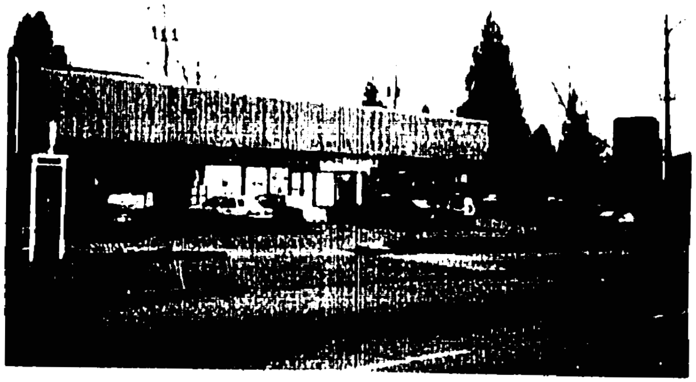
The Dunbar library, located on the corner of Dunbar Street and West 29th Avenue in the central area, is currently housed in an old one-storey building that is now obsolete. The library could best be relocated to a new mixed-use building on Dunbar Street and 31st Avenue, diagonally across from the Community Centre. This is thought to be a better location for the library because it will bring amenities to a focal point (at the intersection of Dunbar and 31st Avenue), ensuring connectivity to the existing Community Centre. In addition to the library, the new building should provide retail spaces at grade, a level of office space for community groups, and two storeys of residential units above. The development will also incorporate a Community Plaza (with an outdoor café) for community gatherings and retail promotion events. Such an establishment would help to increase street activity as well as reinforce the community presence within the shopping district.

The original library site could then be redeveloped to a mixed-use building to allow more efficient and profitable use of property. It should take the form similar to some of the recent mixed-use buildings, with retail at grade and three storeys of residential units above.

Strip Mall

The strip mall in Dunbar Central (Figure 6.3) has been identified by the Community Visions Program participants as being disruptive to retail continuity and character. The concrete parking lot in front of the building breaks the intimacy of retail frontage and is uninviting to pedestrian shoppers. It should be redesigned to human-scale, mixed-use building to bring the building closer to the sidewalk so that pedestrian access, not automobile access, is emphasized.

Figure 6.3: Strip Mall in Dunbar Central



Stong's Supermarket and Shopper's Drug Mart Parking Lots

Together, Stong's supermarket and Shopper's Drug Mart parking lots currently occupy approximately 75 metres of valuable retail frontage space on Dunbar Street (Figure 6.1). Like strip mall parking, these lots disrupt retail continuity and hinder the ability of Dunbar Central to become an attractive shopping area. Therefore, parking for these stores should be relocated to sites immediately behind them, away from the retail streetfront (Figure 6.1). The existing parking lots could then be redeveloped to mixed-use buildings to provide additional retail frontages and residential units.

On Stong's parking lot, specifically, mixed-use redevelopment should incorporate additional pedestrian space to that provided by the proposed community plaza at 31st Avenue. This is thought to be an appropriate site for increased pedestrian movement/activities because Stong's is a popular community store; and, as the survey findings show, it is the most frequented business in Dunbar (Table 5.2).

6.2.3 Traffic and Parking

The expansionary scenario – with added retail spaces and housing densities -- will likely result in higher traffic volumes and parking demands. Increased traffic volumes will likely be experienced by Dunbar Street and the intersecting avenues and create a pedestrian unfriendly shopping environment.

Traffic Calming Measures

To facilitate pedestrian movement in Dunbar Central, particularly around Stong's and the proposed community plaza, sections of 30th and 31st Avenues should be blocked off to automobile access (Figure 6.1). This would help create a more pedestrian-friendly environment around key nodes. Automobile movement along Dunbar Street remains unchanged; however, corner bulges ("throttles") are added to throttle traffic at intersections. Moreover, intersections are made more visible by the use of rumble-strips, a paving material with a distinctive texture and colour that signals to cars of pedestrian crossings.

To further ensure pedestrian safety, the speed limit should be reduced from 50 km/h to 40 km/h in Dunbar Central. Speed reduction signage should be placed at the two entry points – 26th Avenue and 31st Avenue – to remind motorists to slow down as they enter this "Centre". Speed reduction has been done in Kerrisdale where traffic slows down significantly upon entry into the retail zone. This helps increase retail sales: motorists are more likely to notice merchandise displays in the stores when they slow down and hence, the increased likelihood of purchase.

Parking

The shopper survey clearly indicates that parking is not a problem (Section 5.2.2). Although expansion in the Dunbar Central area will likely generate more demand for parking spaces, it is expected that street side parking alone will serve the anticipated demand. There are plenty of opportunities for street side parking on Dunbar Street and intersecting avenues, in addition to several store parking lots. Therefore, additional parking provisions are not considered necessary, at least for the initial stages of development (5 to 10 years).

6.3 Dunbar Business Improvement Area (BIA)

The expansionary scenario requires the establishment of a Dunbar BIA to provide a funding mechanism for improvement proposals. A BIA, as discussed in Section 2.2, provides a steady source of funding for area improvement because once instituted, it demands commitment from all merchants and property owners within the BIA boundary.

The initial priorities of the Dunbar BIA should be directed toward issues associated with the physical environment.

Property blight

As discussed in the situational analysis (Chapter 2), a number of older buildings within the retail district are plagued by blight and need to be rehabilitated and maintained. Most required as simple as a fresh layer of paint and minor window or roof repairs. Others need to be rid of graffiti that has become an eyesore in all three sub-areas.

Community theme

The three sub-areas should be united with a community theme to strengthen district identity. Key points at 26th Avenue and 31st Avenue on Dunbar Street should be marked with prominent features announcing entry into Dunbar Central. Year-round lamppost banners displaying community related elements should be used to reinforce a sense of locality.

Sidewalks and public spaces

Additional street furniture, particularly benches and garbage receptacles, are needed in Dunbar Central. The situational analysis revealed that seating is limited and garbage over-spill is a problem. Also, street accessories such as hanging flower baskets, planting boxes and festive lighting should be added to the sidewalks and proposed pedestrian spaces to enliven the street environment.

The next stage of the Dunbar BIA should be aimed toward the organization of events to help promote local businesses. Currently, the Dunbar Day Sidewalk Sale, which takes place once a year, is the only promotional event in the community. Similar events involving outdoor activities, displays, food and entertainment should be encouraged to raise awareness of Dunbar as the place to shop, live, and play. These events would take place at the proposed Community Plaza.

6.4 Phasing of Development

Expansionary development should occur in two phases within a period of 5 to 10 years. The initial phase should focus on Dunbar Central and surrounding areas to reinforce its status as the "centre". This means that, as a "Neighbourhood Centre", Dunbar Central should become easily discerned by its longer retail frontage, more diversified retail businesses, varied housing forms and higher residential density relative to Dunbar North and Dunbar South.

As development succeeds in Dunbar Central, it is expected that Dunbar North and Dunbar South will follow suit. A second phase of development – say six or ten years out -- should involve applying rezoning to areas immediately adjacent to the north and south areas. However, the emphasis on Dunbar Central would be retained by limiting the potential and allowable development envelopes in the north and south areas through appropriate zoning and urban design measures.

6.5 Other Issues in Retail Development and Revitalization

Communication for Change

The implementation of an expansionary scenario will likely receive oppositions from certain community members; particularly those most directly affected by the zoning changes. Many people in Dunbar are long-time residents and/or merchants who are used to the way the community has always been and who have stayed because they feel a sense of belonging to the community. Change, especially in the expansionary sense involving retail extension and residential densification, will likely be seen by some as threatening to their way of life. Thus, the City should carry out and pay for neighbourhood facilitation sessions to inform concerned groups of the rational behind change and the processes entailed. Specifically, a greater effort must be made to help community groups understand the goals of the CityPlan and the community-level ideas and aspirations. The Community Visions Program has made a good start; more issue-specific facilitation programs will have to follow with each component of property expansion -- i.e. zoning changes, traffic and parking, site-specific building design.

Involvement of Local People

While a BIA generates funding and leadership for retail improvement projects, it does not guarantee or make it a pre-condition that there be involvement from local people. A BIA has better chances of succeeding when large numbers of local people are willing to contribute the necessary skills and volunteer labour (Vaisbord, 1999, pers. comm.). To encourage the involvement of residents beyond the member of the Dunbar Residents Association, an alternative program is needed. One way to encourage the desired commmunity participation in retail revitalization is by granting monetary rewards to community groups with well-defined objectives. The City of Seattle, for example, through its "Neighbourhood Matching Fund Program", has successfully funded many community projects, many of them focussed on retail districts such as Dunbar (City of Seattle, 1999); specifically, a "Involving all Neighbours Fund" has greatly increased the participation of local residents in community improvement. The City of Vancouver should emulate such a program to increase the likelihood of success of a BIA in Dunbar.

Mixed-use Building Design

The survey findings in Chapter 5 reveal that some shoppers see the new mixed-use buildings as being incompatible with existing architectural character (Figure 3.4). For example, a 1997 four-storey mixed-use building in Dunbar Central (corner of Dunbar Street and West 26th Avenue) received much criticism from local residents (Figure 3.4). Its straight façade, sharp edges and a long continuous awning show little sensitivity to adjacent buildings.

To ensure design compatibility of prospective developments with existing structures, a design review should be made compulsory for all new mixed-use buildings. At present, the C-2 zoning regulation only requires certain projects –those with conditional densities or uses – to go through design review. Projects that meet the basic C-2 regulations are granted "outright approval" without review on architectural design elements. More specific design guidelines need to be articulated with regard to building appearance and character. For example, part of the design guideline might require that new buildings take on characteristics of mixed-used buildings that have been received well by shoppers in other districts. For example, on 4th Avenue, certain mixed-use constructions with a breaking up of scale, smaller storefronts and individualized awnings have made them more pedestrian-friendly than the ones on Dunbar Street (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4: Better Mixed-use Building Design: Small Storefronts, Awnings, Upper Setbacks, etc.
Source: City of Vancouver, 1997.

6.6 The Key to Success

To succeed in the expansionary scenario, more issue-specific studies will have to be carried out. For example, rezoning will have to be preceded by a site-specific zoning impact study; and likewise, an addition in parking will require a traffic-engineering study. It is not in the scope of this project to carry out such studies; but rather, the study has sought to identify key areas that need to be addressed and to propose rather well-accepted implementation strategies that can lead to a better retail environment in Dunbar.

The expansionary scenario will require an incremental approach. Phasing the development over time will lessen the demand on resources at any one time. As well, it will enable the readjustment of priorities as market conditions change and alternate between "up" and "down". In general, however, the initial stages of development and revitalization should focus on Dunbar Central for concentrated expansion and to strengthen its role as the "Neighbourhood Centre". The receptivity to, and effectiveness of changes in, Dunbar Central will help to determine the extent and the degree of property/retail developments required in the north and south areas in latter stages.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In older communities like Dunbar, the close interplay between retail districts and the surrounding residential areas is a key consideration. Developed over time in an incremental fashion, older retail districts, built upon a "main street" - ribbon morphology, can constitute an important part of community identity. It was the intent of this Master's Degree Project to reveal the reciprocal relationship between communities and their retail districts, in an effort to emphasize the role of retailing in revitalizing communities.

Vancouverites have stated they want "complete neighbourhoods" with localized shopping, services and amenities (Vancouver CityPlan, 1995). To arrive there one must begin with developing and strengthening the established neighbourhoods. Vancouver is confined geographically by a number of physical restraints; without the ability to expand outward, Vancouver must utilize its limited land resources more efficiently. Pressing the situation is a growing population that requires more retail goods and services, housing, and amenities. This means that development expansion and intensification in community retail districts are needed to meet future demands.

This project has discovered that community retail districts work best when they are not truncated. That is, when they are continuous and not spread over lengthy distances. Improvement proposals are most likely to succeed when efforts and resources are concentrated on a key "Centre". Dunbar is a mature suburban community; it possesses the right combination of physical, demographic and socio-economic characteristics for the implementation of an expansionary program. This project sought to create the conditions for focused expansionary development and to encourage certain kinds of space-making within the retail district.

Dunbar is undergoing a period of transition not experienced in the past. With renewed interests on its retail district, this transition phase provides an opportunity for all stakeholders of the Dunbar community to join hands and work toward a prosperous, more viable future.

REFERENCES

Barry, Daniel D. 1998. "Retailing". *Institutional Investor.* September, 52-53.

Bennett, P., Fallavier, Pierre., & Fisher, Ian. 1998. *Dunbar's Commercial Areas: Room for Improvement?* Unpublished Paper, University of British Columbia.

Berry, Brian, J. L. 1963. *Commercial Structure and Commercial Blight.* Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago.

Berman, Barry & Evans, Joel R. 1998. *Retail Management: A Strategic Approach.* Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

British Columbia Directories Limited. 1979 and 1999. *Vancouver Directory: Street and Avenue Guide.* Vancouver: British Columbia Directories Limited.

Calthorpe, Peter. 1993. *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Communities, and the American Dream.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Carol, H. 1960. "The hierarchy of central functions within the city". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers.* 50, 419-38.

Cheney, Peter. 1999, March 2. "Mom-and-pop stores at crossroad". *Globe and Mail*, p. A3.

City of Calgary. 1993. *Pedestrian Retail Survey: Preliminary Report for Discussion.* Calgary: City of Calgary Planning and Building Department.

City of Calgary. 1996. *Pedestrian Survey: 1996 – Kensington-Louise Crossing.* Calgary: City of Calgary Planning and Building Department.

City of Vancouver. 1997. *Community Visions Program: Dunbar.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

City of Vancouver. 1995. *CityPlan: Directions for Vancouver.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

City of Vancouver. 1996. *Community Profile: Dunbar-Southlands.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

City of Vancouver. 1996. *Vancouver A to Z: Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about our city.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

City of Vancouver. 1971. *Suburban Commercial Study.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

City of Vancouver. 1979. *Understanding Vancouver.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

Coupland, Andy. 1997. *Reclaiming the City: Mixed Use Development.* London: E & FN Spon.

Davis, Chuck. 1976. *The Vancouver Book.* North Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd.

Dawson, J. A. 1980. *Retail Geography.* London: Croom Helm Ltd.

Dawson, John A. 1983. *Shopping Centre Development.* New York: Longman Inc.

Diggins, Joyce. 1983, November 30. "Touring Vancouver's West Side". *The Vancouver Courier*, p. 36.

Diggins, Joyce. 1983, December 7. "Around Dunbar". *The Vancouver Courier*, p.36.

Duany, Andres., & Plater-Zyberk, Elizabeth. 1991. *Towns and Town-Making Principles.* Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Forty Years Ago. 1946, October 11. *Vancouver Sun*, p. unknown.

Foot, David K. 1996. *Boom, Bust, and Echo.* Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross.

Francisco, Jim. 1998. *Calgary BRZs: The First Fifteen Years.* Calgary: City of Calgary Planning and Building Department.

Gans, Herbert. 1962. *The Urban Villagers: Group & Class in the Life of Italian-Americans.* New York: Free Press.

Garner, Barry J. 1966. *The Internal Structure of Retail Nucleations.* Evanston: Department of Geography, Northwestern University.

Gehl, Jan. 1987. *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Hall, Ken. 1986. "Strip Centers Again in Vogue for Retail Space". *Across the Board.* 5, 38-40.

Jacobs, Allan B. 1993._*Great Streets.* Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* New York: Random House.

Jones, Ken., & Simmons, Jim. 1987. *Location, Location, Location: Analyzing the Retail Environment.* Toronto: Methuen Publications.

Jones, Ken., & Simmons, Jim. 1990. *The Retail Environment.* New York: Routledge.

Katz, Peter. 1993. *The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Knox, Paul L. 1994. *Urbanization: An Introduction to Urban Geography.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

LeGates, Richard T., & Stout, Frederic. *The City Reader.* London: Routledge.

Levatino, Adrienne M. 1978. *Neighbourhood Commercial Rehabilitation.* Chicago: National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

Lewison, Dale M. 1994. *Retailing.* New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company.

Macdonald, Bruce. 1993. *Vancouver: A Visual History.* Vancouver: Talonbooks.

McIntyre, James Lewis. 1985. *Mixed-Use Development Along Suburban Vancouver Streets.* Unpublished Thesis, University of British Columbia.

Morrill, Richard. 1987. "The Structure of Shopping in a Metropolis". *Urban Geography.* 8, 2, 97-128.

Nasar, Jack L., & Julian, David A. 1995. "The Psychological Sense of Community in the Neighbourhood". *Journal of the American Planning Association.* Chicago: American Planning Association. 61, 2, 178-187.

Neale Staniszkis Doll Architects. 1991. *C-1 & C-2 Zoning Study for the City of Vancouver.* Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Department.

O'Brien, Larry., & Harris, Frank. 1991. *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

Ratcliff, Richard Updegraff. 1949. *Urban Land Economics.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Robson, Colin. 1993. *Real World Research.* Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Smedman, L. 1997, April 23. "Dunbar Finds Growing Up Hard To Do". *The Vancouver Courier,* p. 13.

Strauss, Marina. 1999, March 2. "Quebec Store Chain To Buy Ontario Rival". *Globe and Mail,* p. B1, B11.

Sucher, David. 1995. *City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village.* Seattle: City Comforts Press.

Sullivan, Ann. 1997, May 28. "Density Key To Vibrant Dunbar, Developer Tells Neighbourhoods". *Vancouver Courier,* p. 13.

Urban Land Institute. 1987. *Mixed-use Development Handbook.* Washington D.C.: ULI.

Whynne-Hammond, Charles. 1985. *Elements of Human Geography.* London: Unwin Hyman Limited.

Wynn, G., & Oke, T. 1992. *Vancouver and Its Region.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Buckham, Catherine. January 1999 - February 1999. Planner, Planning Department, City of Vancouver, BC.

Dadson, Janet. July 1998. Former President, Dunbar Business Association, Vancouver, BC.

Francisco, Jim. January 1999. Planner. Planning and Building Department, City of Calgary, AB.

Weidner, Harv. May 1998. Planner, Planning Department, City of Vancouver, BC.

Maas, Paul. January 1999. Planner, Planning and Building Department, City of Calgary, AB.

Masamdar, Utpaul. December 1998 – February 1999. Planner, Planning and Building Department, City of Calgary. AB.

McBride, Michael. February 1999. President, West 10th Avenue Merchants Association, Vancouver, BC.

Spielgement, Helen. July 1998. Former President, Dunbar Residents Association, Vancouver, BC.

Stekl, Monica. March 1998 – August 1998. Assistant Planner, Planning Department, City of Vancouver, BC.

Vaisbord, Peter. August 1998 - April 1999. BIA Director, Planning Department, City of Vancouver, BC.

APPENDIX A: DUNBAR SHOPPER SURVEY

Location and Time of the Interview (for interviewer use only)

Interview Location

North	1
Central	2
South	3

Interview Time

Weekday AM	1	Weekend AM	3
PM	2	PM	4

Good morning/afternoon. I am a graduate student conducting a survey on the Dunbar shopping district for my Master's Degree project, a partial requirement for the degree Master of Environmental Design (Planning). It will only take approximately five minutes. All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. You may skip any of the questions or terminate the interview at any time. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Section A: Trip origin, trip mode, trip purpose

1. Where have you just come from to get here?

Home	1
Work	2
Other (Specify)	3

2. What is the closest street intersection to your home/work/other?

_______________ and _______________

3. How did you travel here?

By foot	1
By automobile	2
By transit	3
Other (specify)	4

3a. Did you have trouble finding a parking space close to where you wanted?

Yes	1
No	2

4. What is your major reason(s) for being here at this time?

Shopping	1
Services	2
Eating out	3
Browsing	4
Other (specify)	5

Section B: Shopping preference and frequency

5. Why do you choose to come here?

Convenience/proximity to home	1
Good Selection	2
Friendly salespeople	3
Pleasant environment	4
Types of stores	5
Other (specify)	6

6. On average, how often do you come here?

Everyday	1
Two to three times a week	2
Once a week	3
Once every two weeks	4
Once a month or less	5

7. Can you name any stores and/or services here that you go to regularly?

1. ____________	4. ____________
2. ____________	5. ____________
3. ____________	6. ____________

8. What additional stores or services would you like to see in the Dunbar retail district?

1. ____________	4. ____________
2. ____________	5. ____________
3. ____________	6. ____________

Section C: Purchase rate, purchase made, and purchase amount

9. Have you, or do you intend to, purchase any products today?

Yes (proceed to 10)	1
No (proceed to 11)	2
Other (specify)	3

10. What types of goods and/or services?

Groceries	1
Personal care items (prescriptions, shampoo)	2
Food/beverage	3
Sundries (newspaper, candy, tabacco)	4
Clothing	5
Books	6
Flowers	7
Household items (furnishings, appliances)	8
Bank	9
Hairdresser	10
Doctor/Dentist	11
Post Office	12
Other (specify)	13

11. In an average month, how much do you spend on goods and services in this district?

Below $200.00	1
$200.00 - $299.99	2
$300.00 - $399.99	3
$400.00 - $499.99	4
$500.00 or more	5

Section D: Other shopping districts

12. Which other shopping districts in the Vancouver west-side do you visit regularly? (circle all that apply)

Kerrisdale (W 41 Ave & W Blvd.)	1
Arbutus (Arbutus Village)	2
W 4 Ave	3
Point Grey (W 10 Av & Sasamat St)	4
Broadway	5
Other (specify)	6

13. On average, how often do you go to those districts?

Everyday	1
2-3 times a week	2
Once a week	3
Once every 2 weeks	4
Once a month or less	5

14. Why do you choose to go to those districts?

Convenience	1
Good selection	2
Friendly Salespeople	3
Pleasant Environment	4
Types of stores	5
Other (specify)	6

15. Please provide any additional comments you have on the Dunbar retail district:

____