

# The “Sprawl Repair Act”: Realizing Polycentricity in Metropolitan Spatial Structure

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## 1 ABSTRACT

Polycentric spatial structure within a metropolitan region is a common understanding of important economic and social dynamics. These nodes occur due to a variety of explanatory theories that range from Garreau’s edge cities, Krugman’s self-organization of the producer function, to planned decentralization by institutional authorities (e.g., London in the 1890s, Istanbul in the late 20th century – from Howard to Hadid). A new model – the Sprawl Repair Act – is being formulated by Duany Plater-Zyberk, the architectural and urban design firm that specializes in New Urbanism. Instead of developing on virgin land, the SRA attempts to “repair” suburban morphological sites into working “centers” much like Howard and/or Hadid conceptualized. Here, the opportunity to repair the suburban morphologies is through abandoned or underutilized shopping centers and/or large box development. The final portion of the paper is an examination of the site containing the Palm Beach Mall – once the largest enclosed shopping center in the southern part of the US – using SRA principles, as well as an assessment of the principles themselves in light of current revitalization knowledge and practice.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Despite overwhelming evidence throughout the 20th century, the dominant spatial image of the urban region was a place composed of a single dominant core and the “rest” as a monocentric settlement. While this assertion may be true at the scale of the “urban”, it is not true at the scale of the “metropolitan” where the appropriate characterization is “polycentric”. Metropolitan areas have been a fact of life for at least 100 years but this has been rarely recognized in formal discussions of spatial structure.

Virtually every major and mid-size urban agglomeration has multiple centers or nodes. Among the “known” properties are the polycentric spatial structure are the following: (1) there is a primary “center”, although its importance in terms of overall representation and ability to generate metropolitan-wide wealth is attenuating downwards; (2) there is a hierarchy of centers, perhaps expressed as a Christallerian or Loschian or other hexagonal landscape and/or as a Zipf power function, that consists of a number of “second order places”, a larger number of “third order places”, and so on. This characterization is especially representative for the spatial patterns of shopping and/or gathering places. At a more general functional and larger scale level, post-modern researchers provide a variety of visual metaphors of this polycentricity (cf., Soja, 1989).

The idea that cities and regions – and their constituent parts – have lifecycles focuses attention on the observable phenomenon that specific places and functions fall “out of fashion” and into a state of “disrepair” or “under-utilization”. These might be due to changes in demand, changes in technology, or changes in simply fashion. Places lose their “status” within the regional hierarchy of destinations. In such cases, planners often attempt to “revitalize” worn out places and functions.

The Sprawl Repair Act is not a government law or regulation at all. Instead, it was first formulated as a manifesto (e.g., <http://www.walkablestreets.com/Sprawlrepair.htm>) directed at large shopping centers (over 1M sq feet) that have, according to the authors, been undergoing a period of distress. The authors are the architectural firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), a seminal force in the creation of the Congress for New Urbanism and significant contributors to anti-sprawl Suburban Nation (2000). The manifesto was followed by a Sprawl Repair Manual (Tachieva, 2010) that covers a variety of situations and techniques.

This paper is organized as follows. We begin with a brief overview of theoretical frameworks that explain the dynamics of polycentric formation within metropolitan regions, concluding with the need to apply these principles at lower order nodes or town centers. We then describe more fully the Sprawl Repair Act (SPA) and the subsequent Sprawl Repair Manual (SRM). Then, we attempt a skeletal “repair” of the abandoned Palm Beach Mall (PBM), once the crown jewel of enclosed shopping centers in the Southeastern US. The final section of the paper is a discussion of the pros and cons of the SRA and subsequent SRM, given the range of considerations articulated in the theoretical section.

### 3 POLYCENTRICITY WITHIN METROPOLITAN REGIONS

There have been several attempts to theorize how “urban” grows to “metropolitan”. For example, Champion (2001, p.664) demonstrated that there are three ways in which polycentric structures can emerge: (1) the “centrifugal” mode, which is a spreading out phenomenon creating new centers which eventually rival the original CBD; (2) the “incorporation” mode, where a growing urban place might incorporate smaller centers; and (3) a “fusion” mode in which independent centers develop linkages and merge. This typology is very similar to the discussion in Simmonds and Hack (2000), which is arguably clearer. Here, the distinction is made among competing planning systems. In the UK (Abercrombie model), the polycentric structure for the region is by deliberately creating self-sustaining “new towns” well beyond the fringe (a version of the “incorporation” mode at a later point in time). In the Paris Region plan of 1965, new nodes are deliberately planned but with the simultaneous expansion of transport infrastructure (a version of the centrifugal mode without the spatial economic bid rent curve). Finally, the German experience is to “aggregate” formerly independent places into a single place, usually from a marketing or economic development point of view – such as the Rhine-Ruhr.

In this section, we review both the internal and external attributes of these nodes as well as some of the dynamics that give rise to the polycentric spatial structure. We then examine two possible “causes” or dynamics of polycentric spatial structures: (1) the economics of agglomeration (cluster theory, complexity economics); and, (2) the deliberate attempt by metropolitan-wide planning organizations – formal or informal – to purposefully decentralize activity over metropolitan spaces. From this review, a “gap” within polycentric spatial structure theory and practice emerges, this gap is that lower order nodes are not very well explored and understood. This gap in theory and practice is what leads our focus towards the Sprawl Repair Act and Sprawl Repair Manual is to reinvigorate the underutilized and abandoned lower order places such as the Palm Beach Mall into local and regional points of attraction.

#### 3.1 Nodes

Nodes within polycentric regions often exist at various scales and comprise of various functionalities. We review here some of the typologies in existing literature to help gain some insight into exactly what might happen to potential lower order sites for “sprawl repair” implementation.

##### 3.1.1 Edge Cities, Etc.

Although multiple centers have existed in metropolitan regions for a long time (Harris and Ullman, 1945), the beginning of popular study of them is normally attributed to Garreau’s (1991) *Edge Cities*. Garreau not only generated the specific phrase “edge city” but attempted to provide a precise definition: (a) five million square feet or more of leasable office space – the workplace of the Information Age; (b) 600,000 square feet of leasable retail space; (c) more jobs than bedrooms; (d) is perceived by the population as one place; and (e) was nothing like “city” as recently as thirty years ago (1991, p 6-7). Each criterion could provide a basis for analysis; and some, such as “perceived as one place” could be equated with the branding of locational attributes, a dominant feature of development planning in the late 20th / early 21st century.

Ten years later, Kasarda (2001) introduced the notion of “aerotropolis” – briefly defined as a new urban form comprising aviation-intensive businesses and related enterprises extending up to 25 km outward from major airports –that has spawned another thread of clarifications and implications (e.g., Stevens, Baker & Freestone, 2010; Prosperi, 2007, Schaafsma, 2003).

##### 3.1.2 Employment Centers

Garreau and Kasarda focus on a single class of place. A number of empirical studies have focused on the pattern of all sub-metropolitan centers. For example, Giuliani and Small (1991) identified five different kinds of centers in their study of Los Angeles: specialized manufacturing; mixed industrial; mixed services; specialized entertainment; and specialized services. An updated study (Giuliano et al, 2006) revealed similar patterns. Bingham and Kimble (1995) reported similar patterns of differences among “edge cities” around six Ohio cities. McMillen and Smith (2003) and Bogart (2006) apply trade theory and notions of competitive advantage and mutual dependency to characterize subcenters. This literature is satisfactorily reviewed by Sarzynski et al. (2005).



However, little attention is given within this mostly economic-driven literature the internal physical morphology of places (Scheer and Petkov 1998). Prospero (2006) is among the few that have examined the intersection of economic, physical, and political organization, in the case of four employment nodes in South Florida.

### 3.1.3 Town Centers

Town centers are something less of a regional node than edge cities. By usual standards, town centers often exist on smaller a physical area, they operate with a much smaller economic footprint and operate with a limited set of activities. There appear to be two useful definitions of “town centers”. The first, from the ULI where a town center is defined as an “enduring, walkable, and integrated open-air, multiuse development” (Beyard, 2007) that is an identifiable and busy public place, where citizens can strengthen their community bonds. Town centers are anchored by retail, dining, leisure, and residential uses and at least one other type of office, hospitality, civic and cultural uses. Most notably, ULI describes a town center as a place that evolves over time into the most diverse and integrated part a community. The International Council for Shopping Centers’ (ICSC, 2011) definition of town centers is specified by the town center’s retailing structures and spatial characteristics such as square footage, tenant types, number of anchors and trade areas size. For example, Open-Air centers are classified as strip/convenience, neighborhood, community, lifestyle, power center, theme/festival and outlet.

### 3.1.4 Themed Spaces

It is useful to consider any or all of the above nodes as centers of themed spaces. Both Kunzman (1996) and Hall (2001) have developed typologies of themed spaces. More recently, Knox (2008) argues that metropolitan areas are composed of nodes and realms, based in part on the idea of urban realms first developed by James Vance in the 1960s. Vance discussed urban realms as the result of a “general dispersal of functions throughout the metropolis has caused this evolution of the geographical unit of daily living-urban realm” (Vance 1990, p.502).

Lang and Knox (2009) argue that the number of realms is based on the size of the metropolitan region, natural boundaries, economic activity, and geography of transportation including highways and public transportation and that larger metropolitan areas will have more differentiated realms and-based on their economic characteristics and social mix-will have their own identities. Another evidence of polycentricity!

### 3.1.5 Complementarity

Finally, there is a general understanding that these “sets of centers” act in a cooperative versus a competitive mode (most of the time). For example, Grant and Nijman (2002) have demonstrated that Mumbai has three downtowns: the Kalbadevi area, the Fort area, and Nariman Point. While there may be some competition among center, the major point is that the metropolitan region need all of these functions, and sometimes more than one of each.

Similar patterns exist in many cities, as three examples indicate. In New York, it is fairly to see the different functions accomplished by Wall Street, the entertainment district at Times Square, and the sports arenas in the neighboring state of New Jersey! In Istanbul, the development of Levent and Maslak represents as much a desire not to infringe on the historic core (the historic core is undesirable as a place for trans-national global companies) as it does of new sets of accessibilities and locations. Even in (relatively) smaller Wroclaw, the global business district, the major shopping areas, and the new “trade center” are located far away from the historic “center”.

## 3.2 Economics

A driving element behind polycentric spatial patterns is rooted in the economics of urban agglomerations. Economic theories such as cluster theory and complexity theory are vital in the exploration of dynamic polycentric patterns and this paper uses these theories to understand the economic dynamics that influence success or failure of a node.

### 3.2.1 Cluster Theory

Economic cluster theory is one explanation for the realized polycentric spatial structure. Economic clusters are not simply a concentration of economic activity, but rely on complex internal organizational dynamic.

Porter’s industrial cluster theory (2002) focuses on how to know and measure the existence and value of a set of economic activities – and its application to urban areas (1995) appear most appropriate for the design of new cluster. Yet clusters are more than unsubstantiated policy tools and can be empirically verified. At the evaluation level, Van den Berg et al. (2001) provides a clear set of intuitive criteria to assess existing and emerging clusters. Focusing on different sectors (cultural, electronics, telecommunications, health, media, and tourism), Van den Berg et al. (2001) lay out three broad potential criteria that include: (1) spatial economic conditions (strong local demand, intra- and inter-regional accessibility, quality of life, and ‘cultware’); (2) cluster specific conditions (initial size and development, cluster engines, strategic interaction, and level of new firm formation); and (3) organizing capacity (strong shared vision, political/social support, and public-private partnerships). Mommaas’ (2004) criteria to evaluate clusters include: horizontal aspects; vertical aspects; internal organization factors; external organizational factors; integration and/or openness; specific development paths; and spatial organization. These are all recognizable terms in the language of agglomeration and urbanization economics (cf. Bogart, 2006). Indeed, Kloosterman and Musterd (2001) applied this mode of thinking to study polycentricity in the Randstad region.

### 3.2.2 Complexity Economics

Another type of framework comes from complexity theorists (e.g., Krugman, 1995; Portugali, 2000; Batty, 2005). Complexity economics rejects traditional assumptions - closed system, equilibrium - and argues instead that economies are open, complex and adaptive systems with endogenous evolution. Moreover, it is built on a constellation of seemingly unrelated primitive theories from behavioral economics, Marxian economics, institutional or evolutionary economics, Austrian economics, and even Adam Smith.

In complexity theory, economic systems are intrinsically evolutionary, developing towards higher internal organization but allowing for the possibility of involution processes. Most importantly there is a feedback system that is similar to the ideas provided by cluster theorist, except control is derived from internal forces instead of from the top or outside. There is a direct attempt to demonstrate macro-level rules and patterns using micro-level behaviors without assuming the idealized market actors (perfect knowledge, greed, budget constraints) of traditional approaches. For example, Pareto’s law can be demonstrated to arise from self-organization.

## 3.3 **Purposeful Decentralization Policies**

The second major cause of polycentric spatial development is the direct result of planning policies, particularly in Europe and Asian contexts (and generally not available in the US. Our purpose here is to illustrate how planning hegemonies create eventual spatial structures.

### 3.3.1 London in the 1890/1900s and Ebenezer Howard

Ebenezer Howard prided himself on being the “inventor of the Garden City idea” and his tireless devotion to the project of decongesting the modern metropolis (see also Neuman (2005) on the compact city fallacy). For the Garden City, Howard wanted to build small, self-contained, green belted cities in the rural countryside. The Garden Cities of To-morrow illustrates the vision of “a group of slum less, smokeless cities”. He wanted the cities to be cooperatively owned and to be economically independent (not commuter suburbs).

These principles were never realized; instead they became sub-metropolitan centers. Letchworth and Welwyn are known places in the greater London metroscape.

### 3.3.2 Istanbul in the 1990/2000s and Zaha Hadid

The Istanbul metropolitan region has experienced the entire set of urbanization, industrialization, and globalization processes within the last 50-70 years, growing from 1M to 12-17M, depending on whose count one believes. There is a deliberate plan, on the part of the Istanbul Metropolitan Planning organization to decentralize economic activities in an attempt to decentralize population. Significant “centers” are being planned, such as expansion of jobs and residences in the direction of the Attaturk airport.

On the Asian side of the metropolitan area, the area of Kartal was designated to become a major “center” with a population of over 1M. The key to the idea was to commission Zaha Hadid to develop a conceptual



master plan for the area. This volumetric, visually stunning, plan is now being marketed to potential investors.

### 3.4 Gaps – Dealing with Existing Spaces

Aside from the “new” and “stunning”, it is often the places further down the hierarchy that become “broken” and in need of planner intervention. These “broken” spaces are often former center spaces that has completed their lifecycle as an active and central node and transformed into a existing space that is neglected and unused.

An example of this “broken” space is the Palm Beach Mall located in West Palm Beach, Florida. Once the glittering icon of suburban retailing throughout the 70’s and into the 90’s, the mall is now closed. It is these kind of unattended, former central nodes that planning initiatives such as the Sprawl Repair Act aim to repair.

## 4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research structure of this paper has three parts. First, we review the formulation and principles of the “Sprawl Repair Act”. Second, we apply its planning rubric and principles to the abandoned Palm Beach Mall site. Third, we provide an assessment of that exercise in light of the theory of polycentric spatial structure.

## 5 THE “SPRAWL REPAIR ACT” AND SPRAWL REPAIR MANUAL

The “Sprawl Repair Act” is not a government law or regulation at all. It is instead a manifesto issued by the architecture firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) issued in April, 2009 and was followed up by the Sprawl Repair Manual (Tachieva, 2010). DPZ is most famous for its inception of the New Urbanism concept, as illustrated by the Congress for New Urbanism ([www.cnu.org](http://www.cnu.org)) and various publications including *Suburban Nation* (2000).

The Sprawl Repair Act itself is a manifesto that can be used to reduce sprawl in Florida and other states, it was primarily drafted to help Florida officials address the issue of dead and dying shopping centers and malls throughout the state. The main goal of the act is to revitalize shopping centers by retrofitting these former nodes into dense, walkable, mixed-use, transit-connected town centers. By revitalizing these dead spaces into robust commercial nodes, transit between these nodes would strengthen to create a viable polycentric spatial region all the while preventing further urban sprawl because of the recycling methods of reusing dead spaces.

The resulting Sprawl Repair Manual is a in depth guide book for officials, planners and developers that offers step by step methods of transforming dead or dying spaces (box stores, malls, neighborhoods, communities) into revitalized nodes.

### 5.1 Where-asses

As with most manifesto’s there are a number of “where-asses” that provide the context for the resolutions that follow. The “where-asses” contain a number of problem statements, as follows (some combined):

- Whereas the State of Florida aspires to retrofit its inventory of auto-dependent suburban sprawl into compact, walkable, diverse, and transit-ready communities that are more socially equitable, consume less petroleum and generate fewer greenhouse gases,
- Whereas the public servicing of suburban sprawl disproportionately consumes the tax base of Florida’s municipalities,
- Whereas the Baby-Boom Generation, the largest demographic among Florida residents, will not be well served by being able to live only in auto-dependent suburban areas, & Whereas the Millennial Generation, the second largest group and the most important to the future workforce of Florida, has shown that they prefer urban areas,
- Whereas the existing investment in suburban sprawl must not be allowed to become uncompetitive and thereby lose value & Whereas the current financial crisis has opened certain real estate assets in Florida to transformation and that the principal among them are underperforming malls and shopping centers,

- Whereas shopping malls are sizeable greyfield sites large enough to sustain a rebalancing of investment on their open parking lots, and that such rebalancing would entail the addition of dwellings, offices, hotels, schools and civic structures, with the result being town centers,
- Whereas these town centers would revitalize the housing subdivisions around them that might otherwise become obsolete,
- Whereas retail nodes have been overbuilt by as much as 400% and that much of the land they occupy is under single ownership and open to repurposing,
- Whereas such retail nodes are located along arterial roads with a great deal of already-committed Right-of-Way, convertible to Urban Complete Street capacity,
- Whereas such retail locations are usually well placed regionally for service by streetcar and bus rapid-transit, as emerging transportation options,
- Whereas Florida’s focus on arterial highways has helped rural mobility, but has not supported the finer grained urban street networks that encourage vital modes like walking, cycling, and transit, and,
- Whereas the immediate neighborhoods would be less inclusive to oppose the redevelopment of a retail node than new greenfield development or densification by infill,

## 5.2 Resolutions

The SRA manifesto continues, as: The State of Florida Sprawl Repair Initiative is hereby adopted as policy and the Florida Department of Community Affairs is directed:

- To draft policy and corresponding model ordinances intended to enable the retrofit of shopping malls and shopping centers into dense, walkable, mixed-use town centers,
- To establish protocols that encourage the incorporation of model policy and ordinances into municipal zoning codes and subdivision regulations,
- To mandate that the associated policies be incorporated into the updates or amendments of local Comprehensive Plans,
- To develop Urban Complete Streets in cooperation with the mandates Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction efforts of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to serve these centers with a balanced, diverse set of travel modes,
- That the adoption of the amendments and the model ordinances be a condition of receiving Florida and Federal infrastructure funding,
- That there be developed a set of legal incentives including but not limited to: (a) permitting by-right, (b) replace of traffic impact exactions and other state mandated assessments with a fair mobility fee, (c) opportunity for special state taxing districts for public improvements to sites, and (d) funding for design and construction of the parking and transit infrastructure enabling development
- For the purpose of encouraging a human habitat that is hospitable and accessible to more Floridians while lessening environmental impacts of the State.

The focus on the manifesto is clearly on shopping centers. The appendix contains references to 48 regional enclosed malls in the State of Florida that “have been experiencing significant declines in traffic and sales (sic, the list includes some of the most profitable and organizational savvy malls in the State)”.

## 5.3 The Sprawl Repair Principles and Subsequent Manual

Appendix 2 of the manifesto evolved into the publication of The Sprawl Repair Manual (Tachieva, 2010), which covers a number of opportunities for improving the urban design of underutilized suburban spaces, included shopping centers. The book is organized into six parts. The first part covers the basic choices, challenges and opportunities to move from sprawl to complete communities; the second part outlines two models and techniques of the sprawl repair method; third part discusses repair at the regional scale including sector mapping, tools, and void analysis; the fourth part focuses on repair at the community scale, including various types of residential subdivisions, various commercial land uses, and business parks and edge cities,



as well as Lang's edgeless city buildings, part five discusses repair at the street level. Chapter six deals with repair at the block scale, while chapter seven discusses repair at the building scale.

## 6 PALM BEACH MALL

A brief history of the Palm Beach Mall is instructive in understanding both the evolution of the "where-asses" in the SRA and the "opportunity" for repair. In this section, we briefly describe its development and history.

### 6.1 Initial Mall Growth and Decline

The Palm Beach Mall was once a grandly successful shopping mall in West Palm Beach, Florida. As the first fully-enclosed climate-controlled developed in the State of Florida and the largest mall in the Southeastern U.S., it has a prime location off Florida's major interstate and it has been renovated twice. However, competition from newer shopping destinations, high crime rate, and bad management (including tentative speculations about redevelopment) caused the mall to decline into an abandoned state. The shopping center is perceived as a dead mall and it closed its doors in early 2010. As of this writing (February 2011), out of the 125 store spaces, three remain open: JC Penney and George's Music, which have outdoor entrances, and a Firestone auto-aftermarket store on an out parcel.

The Palm Beach Mall was opened in October, 1967 by the DeBartolo Corporation. The founding anchors included J.C. Penney (which moved from the historic core of downtown West Palm Beach, 5 km Southeast), Jordan Marsh, and Richards. Soon after, the mall featured Walgreens, Lerner Shops, the grocery store Food Fair, Woolworth, and a quadraplex movie. In 1980, a major renovation and expansion included the addition of Burdines, with a parking garage, Lord and Taylor and the replacement of Richards with Sears. In 1987, the grocery store was replaced with a food court. The former terrazzo floors were replaced with tiles and design concepts popular in the 1980s – including skylights and high ceilings, were introduced. Following a murder in the food court in 1999, the 2000 renovation replaced most of the mall's interior features again, but competition from both a new mall in Wellington (14 km Southwest) and a revitalized town center named "City Place" in downtown West Palm Beach, created oversupply and competition problems for PBM. High crime rates in the area increased investor uncertainty and stores either chose shorter leases and/or left.

Despite assertions from the previous owner, Simon Properties that the mall would remain open, the Palm Beach Mall closed for good in January, 2010. Simon eventually sold the property to Orix and the site still remains inactive. Redevelopment is hampered in part by ownership issues: JC Penney still owns the land where its store resides and two department store "boxes" and "land" are still owned by the companies.

### 6.2 Existing Solutions Ideas

Currently there are no active plans for the site. Communication from the City of West Palm Beach Planning and Zoning Department is that no redevelopment plan is under current review. Current owner Orix has not submitted any development proposals for formal application review. The legal issues regarding land ownership in "portions" of the mall that they "own" have not involved any staff from the City's Planning and Zoning Department.

Previously there had been discussion on a life style/big box mix as part of a knock down and rebuild plan for the site that included luring IKEA and/or Bass Pro Shops into the mix. However, the owners never submitted application or plans to the department for review. The only "plans" seen were conceptual, shown and then taken back as part of a charette by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, who conducted the exercise to look at what could be done to meet Simon's programmatic needs. The Mayor of West Palm Beach Lois Frankel has been quoted saying that the closing of Palm Beach Mall is "very exciting news" because redevelopment could mean thousands of jobs for the local job market; however the process of just creating proposals has not received enough solid interest to proceed with redevelopment. This situation hints that there are other complex economic and spatial dynamics in the region that needs to be considered first.

## 7 "REPAIRING" THE PALM BEACH MALL SITE

Using the Sprawl Repair Manual (2010) as a guide, the following is quick "proposal" of a site analysis, the application of urban design techniques, and a discussion of regulatory/management techniques and incentives.

## 7.1 Site Analysis

The Palm Beach Mall is an 80 acre site in West Palm Beach. Within a 1 mile radius there is a strong existing residential structure, along the corridor of Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard between North Congress Ave and Okeechobee Boulevard are commercial plazas and centers, but there is no urban core to serve the immediate neighborhood communities. This site is also well connected in its transportation network, located directly east of I-95, with easy highway access. The West Palm Beach Tri-Rail Station is less than 2.5 miles to the southeast. Local buses offer service between from areas west/east and north/south as well as the recently built West Palm Beach Intermodal Transit Center. Figure 1 shows the current over-use of surface parking space; the high visibility and high accessibility of the site.

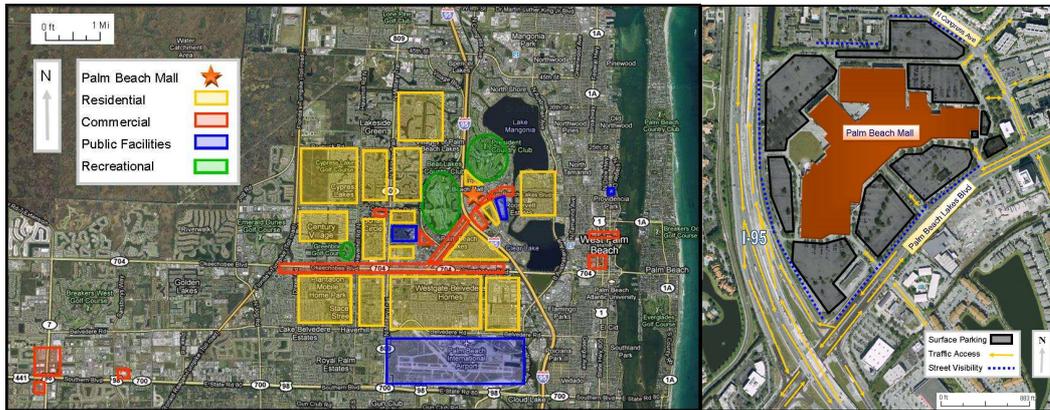


Figure 1: Palm Beach Mall Site Analysis

The 2008 PCensus demographic estimates show that the population of West Palm Beach City has increased from 82,103 to 99,186 between 2000 to 2008 (a 20.8% increase); and, the population is projected to grow by 10.6% over the next five years. In 2008, 54.4% of the City's population was White alone, 33.6% were Black or African American Alone, 21.4% were Hispanic or Latino and 5.4% were Some Other Race. The median age for the City is 38.6 with an average age of 39.9. The projected median age range for 2013 is 40.2. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of households in West Palm Beach grew from 34,769 to 42,428 (22% increase); it is projected to increase by 11% over the subsequent five years. The average household income in the City is estimated to be \$64,463 in 2008 and it is projected to increase by 11.7% (to \$71,999) over the next five years. The 2008 per capita income for this area is \$28,164. It is estimated that 10.7% of the West Palm Beach population over 25 has earned a Masters, Professional, or Doctorate Degree and 17% has earned a Bachelor's Degree.

### 7.1.1 Evolution or Devolution

A sprawl repair assessment of the surrounding area shows that the surrounding characteristics and amenities create a potential for economic and urban evolution. The existing neighborhood structure, viable infrastructure/utilities and financial viability shows that this site has the potential for an evolution into a complete community. The size of the site is over 3 million square feet and the mall's sprawl type is categorized as "Regional Center" with the repair type as "Town Center" at a community and/or regional scale. This type of town center will have a service area of 5 to 15 miles and is considered to have a high repair priority because regional commercial nodes have the best locations for transit, employment generation, and potential financial incentives.

## 7.2 Urban Design Techniques

Figure 2 describes applicable urban design techniques that can repair the Palm Beach Mall site. These techniques combined with the site analysis will create the preliminary proposal for the Palm Beach Mall



Deficiencies of PBM	Urban Design Techniques
Excessively large footprint for single-use building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Convert site into a neighborhood town center</li> <li>✓ Introduce mixed-use fabric surrounding the building.</li> <li>✓ Introduce national tenants and smaller local businesses</li> <li>✓ Keep mall structure and revitalize into a core retail galleria</li> </ul>
Weak pedestrian circulation and walkability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Utilized surface parking area and construct connecting pedestrian walkways and thoroughfares</li> <li>✓ Develop framework of streets, plazas and squares surrounding the core</li> <li>✓ Introduce civic and green space uses</li> <li>✓ Connect roadways to northern neighborhoods</li> </ul>
Excessive surface parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Replace surface parking with garage parking</li> <li>✓ Create blocks of mixed-use buildings (office/retail/residential)</li> <li>✓ Use to build high building and occupant density</li> </ul>
The only defined public space is inside shopping mall, lack of civic space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Utilize excessive parking area to create green space/civic space</li> <li>✓ Create civic space within the core galleria</li> <li>✓ Lengthen the northwestern canal into site to create a lake/park</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Urban Design Techniques to Utilize for Palm Beach Mall Site

Figure 3 is a site proposal for Palm Beach Mall. Urban Design techniques have been used to increase circulation, reduce excessive parking, increase green and civic space and create urban density. This proposal is centered around commercial, retail and restaurants (over 65%) and green space and civic space (25%). Residential is kept at 10% because of the abundance of surrounding suburbs. To accommodate the projected future demographic, civic space is recommended to be: theater house, library and/or art/cultural center. The urban core is recommended to be medium to high-end retail/dinning while the periphery contains larger department stores, theater, offices and low to medium-end retail. General urban zone is recommended for a mix-use of mom and pop type local retail and medium-end retail.

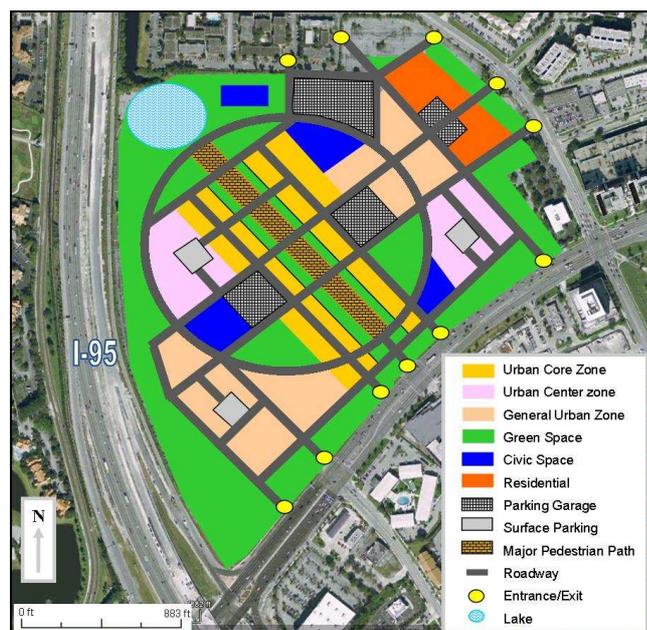


Figure 3. Palm Beach Mall Site Proposal

### **7.3 Regulatory and Management Techniques, Securing Incentives**

Current single-use, segregated zoning and policies are a hindrance to creating a thriving community. As seen in the past, these types of regulatory techniques often propel urban sprawl and create urban decay. The Palm Beach County government should consider introducing new planning methods such as model ordinances, form-based codes, and architectural standards to replace existing land use plans and techniques. Incentives for sprawl repair implementation at the Palm Beach Mall site may come from local, state and federal levels such as density bonuses, and fast permitting, TIF, BID, redevelopment grants, CDBG, tax credits, land assembly initiatives and public-private partnerships.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

### **8.1 The Sprawl Repair Act is a Great Idea, Focuses Attention**

The urban landscape within South Florida is truly littered with underutilized land uses. For whatever reason (greed, bad planning decisions, stupidity, the natural lifecycles of economic and other opportunities), repairs must be done. DPZ is being very clever with introducing the “repair” notion. While the Sprawl Repair Manual (Tachieva, 2010) contains a host of opportunities, it is clear from the “where-asses” and the proposed policies that the shopping center represents the prime target. The Palm Beach Mall site is perhaps the iconic “opportunity” in the state.

DPZ’s role in the creation of the New Urbanism movement provides a unique stage from which to focus attention on the problem of “sprawl repair” (Talen, 2010). The eventual realization of a true, functional polycentricity in our metropolitan areas mandates the need for higher understanding of economic, design, and management considerations. The “urban designs” of DPZ through its “sprawl repair” agenda are most welcome.

### **8.2 The Sprawl Repair Act is Only a Partial Conceptualization of What Needs to Be Done**

While the urban design solutions contained in the “Sprawl Repair Act” and the SPR could be viable, the approach is limited (or understated) in terms of needed economic and management considerations. For example, symptomatic of the largely “architectural” approach is the illustration in the SPR (p. 270) that recommends a solution and an arrow to a former building with the phrase “convert building for new use.” Form follows function, someone once said and finding a “new use” is the first question, before “repairing” the site. Below, we raise a number of additional considerations that must be included in any attempt to realize polycentricity through sprawl repair. We use the Palm Beach Mall site as a case in point in developing these considerations.

#### **8.2.1 It is, as the where-asses state, still somewhat of a market and real estate game**

The Palm Beach Mall site is at a prime intersection of I-95 and Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard. The internal spatial structure of West Palm Beach is usefully illustrated as a three-pronged fork with the base in downtown. The southern axis (Australian Avenue) leads to a corporate park and airport. The middle axis (Okeechobee Boulevard) leads to the western suburbs. The northern axis (Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard) performs the role of both access and of a by-pass, since it merges with the middle axis about 1.5 km West of I-95. The site has high visibility.

The greater West Palm Beach area is one of the major “nodes” that makes up the polycentric spatial structure of South Florida. In theory, the West Palm Beach node should be both specialized, having “some sort of competitive advantage over other nodes” and also diverse enough to allow for most local functions. Evidence suggests that the competitive advantage of West Palm Beach is the government. It is a major judicial center, with courts from all levels of government as well as being the home of Palm Beach County government. Part of the answer to “what goes on the mall site” should be “what is needed to fill out the profile of this node.” To simply assert that a different retailing solution is best is – as seems to be demonstrated – perhaps short sighted. The “highest and best” use question has yet to be asked, at least by the public sector planners (who seem to be quite reactive)! The proposed solution – create a “town center” – is too generic.



### 8.2.2 What exactly is a “Town Center”?

Town centers are a generic solution to many types of revitalization strategies. Every municipality wants one – they seem to be “fashionable.” However, they all have one characteristic – they are a tough proposition to keep vital. Evidence is mounting that town center problems appear from the concept of the optimal “mix,” studies from Gerbich (1998) has reconfirmed that the anchor, food court and mall store categories are heterogeneous groups. Each category retains its own “externality generating roles” so that shopping centers require a unique combination to operate favorably. The SPM’s assertion to find “new uses” does not guarantee a successful shopping center. Apparently, the development community has not gotten that down yet. The “original mix” works for a short period of time, but the “entertainment value” has a short life cycle. The ability to “evolve” (a desire, stated by the ULI) becomes problematic and the evidence on the ground is that “town centers” generally fail (other than some shopping centers called “town centers” that are not either in “towns” or “centers”). Often a town center is more than an architectural expression, should there be a “town center” built in the PBM site? Perhaps!

### 8.2.3 Could the PBM site be “Something Else”

The PBM site could be a “sub-node” within the WPB “node,” but the functionality needs to be worked out. There are a number of ways to find such functionality including economic base or minimum requirements analysis. Knowledge of why edge cities work, economic clustering techniques, and concepts from complexity theory on circular causation and feedback mechanisms could also go a long way in finding alternative uses.

Some back of the envelope calculations by the authors suggest that the WBP node is deficient in a number of industrial categories including wholesaling, warehousing, or light manufacturing. While these activities are clearly not as glamorous as a stunning new shopping center, the high degree of accessibility of the site suggests that critical functions within the overall economy could be accomplished on the PBM site.

### 8.2.4 Begin a Regional Dialogue About Polycentricity, Hierarchical Structures, Etc.

Fixing idiosyncratic situations one at a time, while “nice”, will not fix the overall problem of understanding regional spatial structures and dynamics. Designing a formulated and ideal urban node will not guarantee success if the current and future regional market is not carefully analyzed and plans are drafted in accordance. A regional approach is necessary, developers and owners will have to have some understanding of the potential of their resource (site). The polycentric spatial structure of a metropolitan region is grounded in its economic, social and market dynamics. The way regional nodes change over time (grows, dies, sustains, interacts, overwhelms other nodes) are included in numerous explanatory theories; these theories need to be incorporated into the framework of “sprawl repair” and revitalization strategies. It is vital to recognize the functionality and dynamics between and within regional nodes; otherwise the lifecycle of a newly repaired site may be vulnerable to further premature demise.

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