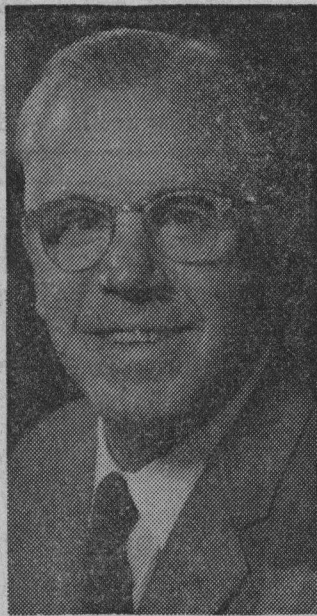


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The Problems And Challenges Of The Pacific Garden Mall

EDITOR'S NOTE: — The problems and the challenges of the Pacific Avenue Garden Mall are the subject of this recent memorandum by Dr. Richard U. Ratcliff, which is being distributed by the Downtown Association of Santa Cruz. In his analysis of the mall, Ratcliff proposes a strategy to maintain the mall as the dominant commercial district of the county. Ratcliff has had teaching assignments in various universities and is a member of the city redevelopment commission. The Sentinel reprints the paper as a public service to the downtown community.



Dr. Richard U. Ratcliff

The Common Concern:

In communities all over America, the Downtown has evolved as a centrally-located service area in natural response to the needs of the people. To this district has been drawn a concentration of merchants, professional and personal services, institutions and governmental offices to serve the needs of the citizens at a point at the focus of major transport routes — the most convenient place for the greatest number of persons to reach. In no other area can the consumer find such a variety of goods and services.

It is to the benefit of the community which is served by Downtown that this district continue to provide the highest level, in quality and variety, of goods and services desired by the consumers. It follows that the prosperity of the business enterprises and the professionals depends upon their success in meeting these local needs. There is, therefore, a full community of interest between business and consumer which supports a common motivation to insure the maintenance of Downtown as a productive and vital community service area.

It is important to the continuing vitality of Downtown that it remain the dominant shopping district in the county.

It is favored by a great many important advantages which cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

First, there is the advantage of a historic momentum in buying habits and established relationships between merchant and customer.

As the focal point of the visitor industry, the city and its Downtown are in the best position to serve the seasonal consumers.

Central Santa Cruz is the focus of the largest concentration of employment in the county and the greatest daytime population, who are potential customers for goods and services conveniently available near places of work.

Downtown offers many types of goods and services of a specialized nature which are not available elsewhere in the market area. The most important of these specialized services are in the government offices — local, county, state and federal.

Santa Cruz is the medical center of the county, and while doctors have deserted Downtown, their offices and clinics are close by and our hospitals draw patients, their relatives and friends to Santa Cruz from the entire county.

Finally, considering all goods and services now available Downtown, there can be no other commercial district in the county where such an extensive variety exists and where a visitor has such a wide choice in combinations of errands which he may pursue.

The Challenge:

In recent years the central business districts of most cities have faced the destructive competition of suburban shopping centers. Contributing factors have been suburban growth, stagnation in the central city, desertion by industry and by middle- and upper-income households.

However, in the Santa Cruz market, the central city has continued to grow and industrial employment, never a major factor, has been maintained.

But the suburbs have expanded and the central city is slowly shifting its demographic structure in the direction of smaller households, a higher proportion of young adults and a smaller ratio of elderly, particularly in the low-income categories.

Total population in the market area has reached a level high enough to generate the emergence of what may become a regional shopping center on 41st Avenue.

It is possible that the city of Santa Cruz, its merchants and its government, have overreacted to this threat and that the initial impact of the opening of Mervyn's will recede after consumers have tested the offerings in the Capitola Mall.

On the other hand, should Penney's desert the Downtown for the 41st Avenue nucleation, a major shopper attraction would be lost and the competitive power of the Capitola Mall would be materially strengthened.

Meeting the Competition:

With or without Penney's on 41st Avenue, the Downtown will suffer in some degree by the burgeoning of suburban shopping facilities. To neutralize or minimize the damage, the obvious strategy is to enlarge the offerings of goods and services in the Downtown so that it meets the competition.

The obvious first step in this direction is to identify and analyze the specific merchandise and services which are available in the suburbs and not in Downtown.

The next step is to work out the ways and means for filling those gaps in current Downtown offerings.

It is generally recognized that Santa Cruz residents make substantial purchases "over the hill" in Santa Clara County and in Salinas and Monterey. An analysis of the nature of the goods purchased in these areas by Santa Cruz shoppers might be a first step toward finding ways to provide such goods in Downtown Santa Cruz.

It is elementary that free and convenient parking is an important attraction of suburban shopping centers. As shopping center merchandise offerings are expanded in variety and increasingly include items heretofore available only Downtown, the attraction of the parking convenience differential rises in geometric proportion.

Free and convenient parking will offset a few extra miles on the freeway provided that the shopper can find in the shopping center items which are competitive with offerings Downtown.

The significance of this well-known aspect of buying behavior is that sufficient and convenient parking Downtown is essential in meeting suburban competition.

At the same time, steps may

be required to ease traffic congestion in the Downtown area where it may cause shoppers to reject Downtown in favor of less frustrating driving conditions in the suburbs.

The Strategy in Summary:

To maintain Downtown Santa Cruz as the dominant commercial district of the county so that it may best serve the consumers in the trade area, the following program of action is required to meet the competition (a) in availability of equivalent goods and services, (b) in adequate parking of equal convenience, (c) in ease of vehicular movement, i.e., no congestion, and (d) to create a market atmosphere (Pacific Garden Mall, the Downtown Marketplace):

Step 1 — Catalogue specific goods and services which are available in suburban facilities and in nearby cities but not in Downtown.

Step 2 — Devise ways and means to cure the deficiencies of Downtown to:

- expand lines in existing outlets.
- attract new outlets in neglected lines.
- insure replanning by the city in harmony with these goals.
- enlarge parking facilities.
- improve vehicular circulation.

Pizza Night Benefits PTA

As a fund-raiser for Scotts Valley's Vine Hill Elementary School PTA, the Pizza Company in Kings Village shopping center will donate 15 percent of its profits received from 6-9 p.m. Wednesday.

Those wishing to help the school out are encouraged to attend during this time.

Another ongoing fund-raiser is the collection of aluminum cans for recycling every Friday before 9 a.m. at the school. Cans should be placed in the box by the school's office. The collection will continue through the school year and proceeds will help build a handball court.

Disabilities Board

The Area Developmental Disabilities Board VII will meet Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Monterey.



Open Sunday

Downtown: 12 to 5

Rancho Del Mar, Aptos: 11 to 4

