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doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/1059156>

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RECOVERING A SENSE OF PLACE IN THE EDGE CITY

by

MICHAEL CHANCE PAGE

Under the Direction of Susan M. Walcott

ABSTRACT

The edge city is often criticized as being a center of placelessness. It is the devaluation and commodification of place in contemporary approaches to urban design and planning that is stifling the prosperity of place identity and subsequently the ability for edge cities to create 'a sense of place'. It is probable that a broadened understanding of the situational context and the role of human experience in place making can suggest alternatives to current practices that reduce place to location. Capturing the essence of place inspires superior strategies for producing place identity and a grasp on the meaning of how recovering 'a sense of place' is fundamental in turning edge cities from consumable space into real and lasting places.

INDEX WORDS: Sense of place, Place identity, Urban planning, Edge cities

RECOVERING A SENSE OF PLACE IN THE EDGE CITY

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MICHAEL CHANCE PAGE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Georgia State University

2005

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2005

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August 2005

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, William Michael Page (1944-2004)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Susan Walcott, Truman Hartshorn, and Charles Jaret for their intellectual guidance and support in my pursuit of this research. I am particularly indebted to Susan Walcott who encouraged me to pursue this degree, helped me gain professional focus, and served as my mentor over the past few years.

Further, I would like to thank the following professors of the Department of Anthropology and Geography at Georgia State University who inspired my interests in geography and cartography, Jeremy Crampton, Borden Dent, Truman Hartshorn, Paul Knapp, and Dona Stewart.

It should also be known that I could not have completed this thesis without the unwavering support of my family. I would like to thank the grandparents Fiona Page, Don Collier, and Janet Towslee for their time and assistance, my wife Rebecca for her patience and encouragement, and my children James, Camden, Ethan, and Helen for their beneficence.

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective of the research

As the contemporary urban landscape continues to sprawl further out from the central city, new urban centers crop up on the periphery. These new urban centers are unique, each marked by regional differences, age of progression, and their specific geographical context. These new urban centers also share many characteristics from their birth owing to the dominant automobile-based transportation system, social/lifestyle ideals, and economic drive.

Several interrelated objectives of this research center on theories of place and the phenomena of urban change. The research explores theories of place with specific focus on “sense of place”. To give this aim substance, the research looks at recent changes in the contemporary urban landscape through the phenomenon of the edge city. By looking at a specific maturing edge city it is possible to gauge its current context in relation to its past and possible future. Further, by examining the institutions that drive change in our edge cities and gauging public perceptions we can assess their potential in fostering a sense of place.

Although the phenomenon existed for quite some time, it was not until the early 1990s that these new suburban downtowns were coined as “edge cities” (Garreau 1991). In his book entitled *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (1991) Garreau set about defining these new areas. His work set the foundation for new urban studies. Edge City brought forth active debate and popularization to the discourse on the phenomenon of suburban downtowns while the majority of planners and geographers were looking at revitalizing traditional downtowns.

The edge city is a space of rapid growth and transformation. Garreau sees them signifying an urban revolution in that “Americans are creating the biggest change in a hundred years in how we build cities (Garreau 1991, p. 3).” He envisions the impact on society in an equally radical light. The new urban fabric is described as consisting of “multiple urban cores” located along the metropolitan fringe. Further, Garreau claims that they embody “new hearths of our civilization”.

The edge city emerged on the landscape because accessibility and convenience became an after-thought to the isolation of suburban life. Markets and large tracts of available land became commercial opportunities. Thereafter its situational dexterity and distraction of distance from downtown led to the inclusion of large-scale office parks. With rapid urbanization came density and the unavailability of large development tracts gave way to the high-rise office building. For Garreau the edge city is the new frontier. In his book he identified 123 true edge cities and 83 up-and-coming or planned edge cities. His edge cities are places with enormous retail complexes and glistening office towers situated near major highways. Garreau established five rules for a place to be considered an edge city (Garreau 1991, pp. 6-7):

1. Has five million square feet or more of leasable office space. Garreau compares this to downtowns;
2. Has 600,000 square feet or more of leasable retail space. Garreau identifies that commonly regional malls are primary places in the edge city;
3. Has more jobs than bedrooms. In other words, the population should rise in the morning and drop by the afternoon;

4. Is perceived by the population as one place. In Garreau's interpretation of place this means that the area "has it all;" entertainment, shopping, recreation, etc;
5. Was nothing like a "city" 30 years ago. This includes spaces what was once cow pasture.

The edge city has become an important reflection of modern Western society. The edge city represents a selling of urban places as a product, a zone of mass consumerism. Edge cities function as a focus of employment and a great place to conduct business. In many ways they serve as a new downtown providing a conduit to the new global economy.

Most edge cities do share a common face. As the developers of the edge city each sought out the highest and best use of their land, designs looked inward rather than considering how pieces fit with the whole. Types of buildings were often selected on what would be the most profitable and prestigious therefore developers selected to build shopping malls, mid-rise office towers, and hotels. Self-centered approaches defined both aesthetics and functionality. With this in mind, the space between buildings caused many of the problems facing the modern edge city (Ford 2000).

The automobile serves as a primary shaper of the edge city form as developers seek to convey how to move patrons, employees, and services to and from their buildings. Along modern streetscapes, transportation corridors are not designed to be livable or walkable, instead they are designed for the efficient movement of the automobile (Appleyard 1964). The streets of the edge city are not oriented for circulatory transit. They are designed to get people off the main road and into the parking lot or deck.

Although some residences exist within the boundaries of the edge city and more are on their way most have yet to develop strong residential components. A significant imbalance remains between the daytime and nighttime populations of the edge city. Because the majority of the people only work and shop in the edge city there is little interest in giving the edge city value and meaning or becoming its steward. Therefore the businesses that occupy its space manage the edge city, rather being overseen by a community of residents.

The deficiencies of the edge city came to light in recent years. Many edge cities are looking at ways to “retro-fit” the spaces between buildings and to make smarter choices in both the location of new buildings and their pedestrian connectivity. Although many of these fixes are intended to make the edge city a more functional and livable place, there should be deeper concern in making these places more meaningful to people.

While planners often write of giving a place identity or evoking a sense of place through design, they face a greater challenge in its implementation. We should consider too that the planner’s experience with place is often a temporary one. The common attitude prevails: “build it and they will come”. Although venues for civic elements can be built into the landscape, it is ultimately people that will make them a place. In this regard plans and strategies require a shared and contributory vision between planners, citizens, commerce, and government.

The human experience of place constitutes a fundamental building block to this vision. Experiences are very diverse among people who come in contact with place. By connecting the different ways practitioners and academics approach a sense of place and through an awareness of the various modes of experience we can start to build strategies to recover a sense of place.

We should consider what makes places great and lasting. By making connections between the concept of a sense of place and the evidence from a model edge city, Perimeter Center, in Atlanta, Georgia it is possible to address why implementing plans that include a sense of place can be so challenging. Only by connecting approaches to sense of place and erasing misconceptions can a sense of place in our edge cities be recovered.

1.2 Study area and spatial framework

Edge cities are the focus of this research because of their potential to be new places for urban living and their value to the metropolitan economy. Further, they function as the conduit for the global flow of people, products, and ideas. They play a central role of providing wealth for metropolitan areas and attracting regional investment. Corporations and business, in particular, find the edge city alluring because of modern amenities and the proximity to potential employees.

Edge cities however face the criticism that they are lacking character and individuality. This criticism is rapidly spilling over into the idea of the edgeless city, a new pattern of urban phenomena described by Robert Lang (2003). While a unique urban form emerges from the edgeless city it is its even lower density that presents opportunity for the edge city to hold to create useful public space.

Many edge cities sprung into being as an escape from government. A pull factor for many companies was the perception they would escape certain restrictions and be able to reduce tax liability. As edge cities have developed some have remained without a municipal government

while others have chosen to incorporate. Often it is county governments that provide basic administration and services for an edge city, there are limitations to the involvement that counties participate in because the county government must address issues, needs, and allocate resources countywide. Without a municipal government, investors and companies in the edge city find it necessary to self-tax, tend to the administration of city functions, and address issues such as marketability and imageability. Therefore, for edge cities to remain viable venues for commerce and office operations they must consider the implications of their own environment in terms of competitive advantage.

This M.A. thesis examines the edge city in Atlanta, Georgia known as Perimeter Center. It is located in the northside of Atlanta on the Interstate 285 beltway. The area lies between two communities, Dunwoody and Sandy Springs, which rapidly suburbanized in the 1960s. Perimeter Center became the target of office development and a regional shopping mall in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And according to Hartshorn and Muller, “the strategic location of Perimeter Center, adjacent to the Perimeter beltway to the south and the prestigious Dunwoody residential community of North Dekalb County to the north and east and the nearby premier residential communities of North Fulton County on the west, best explains its success (1986, p. 63).”

Today Perimeter Center thrives as a rapidly urbanizing suburban business district that houses the highest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Only a few decades ago the site was rural farmland and in the 1960s developer Michael Gearon targeted it for a regional shopping mall and office park complexes. Today, it is one of many major business hubs in the Atlanta region. Perimeter Center has extensive office developments, a wealth of retail venues, and a changing skyline. Perimeter Center is a good fit with the objectives of this research

because it is an edge city that is currently facing and addressing many of the common problems that plague edge cities in general.

1.3 Geography and the study of place

Although place is a fundamental concept in human geography, it is also an elusive one. The term “place” appears in our everyday language, but for geographers the term represents more complex, often philosophical, meanings. A renewed interest in geographical theories concerning place emerged in the 1970s. At the cusp of this debate Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan were two central figures.

Relph and Tuan shared similar humanistic viewpoints and explored place with a phenomenological approach, but were divided by discrete differences. Both Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) reconceptualized place through the lens of human experience by layering people and place as an integral whole. This idea of place merges people and place together, indicating reciprocity exists between them. Tuan engages the geography of place through the “psychological essences” and the “emotional attachments” of people’s perception and attitudes towards place. On the other hand, Relph sees place subject to human direct involvement as through the conscience intent or moral force of people.

Relph and Tuan influenced a new direction for the study of place that stepped away from the constraints of scientific geography and sought to bring back the human dimension. A response to the scientific “law-like” treatment of abstract space largely characterized the 1960s

and early 1970s. The view that place could not be mapped or measured introduced experience and the subjective to the concept of place.

The study of place later saw challenges to its meaning and creation with the addition of a social constructionist approach by geographers such as David Harvey. In contrast, an extension of the phenomenological approach by the likes of Robert Sack and philosopher Jeffery Malpas further explored the philosophical relationship between people and place. It is in the course of humanistic geographies and the philosophy of place that we find the foremost meanings of sense of place.

In the modern landscape, cities are touted as venues for the human aspirations for the future. It is important therefore to look at cities as places and question their true meanings. As Nicholas Entrikin suggests, “one of the goals of the modern cultural geographer is to interpret the meaning of places (Entrikin 1991, p. 58).” By gaining knowledge of the meaning and nature of place we can better maintain our existing cities as well as create new ones.

It is the direction of this research to consider theoretical approaches to the concepts of place and sense of place. By crossing several sub-fields, including cultural, economic, urban, and social aspects, the research incorporates humanistic and subjective principles in search of meaning and understanding regarding the phenomena of edge cities and sense of place. As Malpas suggests, place “is not founded on subjectivity, but is rather that on which subjectivity is founded (Malpas 1999, p. 35).” With this in mind, the research is an inquiry from the inside that observes and reflects while considering the interrelationships involved.

It will become apparent that there are many approaches and definitions of a sense of place. This is largely due to the differences in language and objectives between architects, urban

planners, geographers, and other academics concerned with the phenomenon. The research therefore seeks to bring together several of these approaches in order to find common threads and to share the possibilities of recovering a sense of place in our edge cities. By looking at evidence from a typical maturing edge city, Atlanta's Perimeter Center at the intersection of Georgia 400 and the Interstate 285 perimeter, it is hoped that such research will take a united rather than segmented course.

CHAPTER TWO: SENSE OF PLACE AND EDGE CITIES

2.1 Spatial Scales of Place

Throughout the history of human geography the term “place” has served a vital role in defining specificity for inquiry. In particular, place is equated with location and its associated distinct human and physical characteristics. The concept of place was emphasized in the discourse of geography surrounding the idea of dividing space into regions whereas areas of Earth could be distinguished from other areas based on similar physical and human characteristics. The region therefore became a central concept in the geographer’s toolbox, and with it places or areal units could be classified by similar or connected attributes. A region, however, is more than a collection of places. A region can be identified as a place itself.

There is no unit of measurement for place, as it can exist at a myriad of spatial scales. We could consider places to exist such as a nation, a region, a county, a city, a neighborhood, or perhaps even a waterfall in the woods or a special spot in your home in which you relax in. What unifies these different spatial scales is that people shape, identify, and experience place at each level. Because people become agents of place they give locations meaning.

In the 1970s, the concept of “place” reappeared in the discourse of geography as reaction to both the quantitative and radical geographies of the time. Of concern to some geographers was that more philosophical perspectives were being ignored and that humanistic approaches should also be explored. With this in mind, humanistic geographers set out to return to the forefront the importance of the individual, human agency, and the geographical imagination.

Thinking of place as meaningful location, John Agnew (1987) developed three fundamental aspects of place to include location, locale, and sense of place. Although on the surface we can see an immediate similarity between location and place, location is stationary in space. Using the term location implies a particular point on the map, a fixed site on the Earth's surface. This differs somewhat from locale in which it refers to a physical or material setting where social relations occur.

In the third fundamental aspect of place Agnew recognizes "sense of place" as a subjective and emotional attachment that people have to place. Humanistic geographers often refer to literature, art, and film for empirical resources. Novelists and filmmakers on the other hand often talk of evoking a sense of place in their work. In doing so, they attempt to put the audience inside the work as much as possible so that they can relate to being there. In such mediums the place is often imaginary but remains a place because both the author and audience are exchanging meaning by respectively producing and consuming a place.

If we can recognize place at many different spatial scales, then we can also relate a sense of place at different scales. Think of that special spot at home where you are most relaxed and at home. You may be able to think of a city or town that is familiar to you while others may seem alien to you. Or think of the nation in which you belong and gauge to what degree you would hold emotional attachment to it if you left for a considerable amount of time. How would you describe what it is like to be there to the citizens of another nation who are not familiar with your nation of origin?

What links the spatial scale of place is that humans identify place at all scales by associating meaning with them. By looking at place in terms of location, locale, and sense of

place, Agnew captures the peculiarities of place. Perhaps there is more to place than the fundamental aspects he has outlined? Even though the revival of a discourse on place in geography is relatively new, the term “place” and its translations have been an incessant part of language. Because place has so many different scales and meanings, exploring place remains a philosophical endeavor.

2.2 Place and Space

Place, space, and landscapes are very analogous terms. As we go about our everyday lives in the modern world we don't always value place as we once did and in many regards we transcend spaces more rapidly than our predecessors. Further, our landscapes tend to be less vernacular and more artificial than those of the past. Very similar to place, both space and landscape are terms in language that are not only used frequently but also have several different meanings. However, when we stop to really think of where we are in the world or where we have been, we can associate these terms with our experiences past and present.

It quickly came to the attention of geographers exploring the concept of place in the 1970s that the relationship between place and space needed to be dissected. Both Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan set out to further explore the meaning of place and how it differs from space. Of central interest to both geographers was the human experience with regards to place. Relph and Tuan clearly see people as agents of place and that it is ultimately people that give place meaning. For both geographers, place had further meanings than to just represent locations in the world, it was a concept and a way of being in the world.

In Relph's landmark book, *Place and Placelessness* (1976), he examines the relationship between place and human experience. Not only is his aim to bring forth a discourse on the essence of place, but also to find clues as to what makes places unique. What developed is a set of modes of experiences that further explores the different ways of being an insider or an outsider to a specific place. Relph states that "it is the special quality of insiderness and the experience of being inside that sets places apart in space (Relph 1976, p. 141)." If it is a collection of human experiences focused onto a specific point in space that separates that point from the surrounding spaces, then it is also that specific point in which humans have associated thoughtful meaning.

Relph's approach to place is tied to the movement of phenomenology that was triggered by Edmund Husserl's philosophical work in the early 1900s. It developed into a method of inquiry based on the premise that reality exists in the human consciousness as to how humans perceive or understand objects and events not in the physical sense but rather through psychological perceptions. *Place and Placelessness* was a direct response to the state of scientific geography of the time and sought to show how geography was so removed from the everyday lived world by making man, space, and nature objects for enquiry.

Relph identified a lack in knowing the essence of place and advocated a better understanding of human experience with regards to place. In doing so, he sought "to explore place as a phenomenon of the geography of the lived-world of our everyday experiences (Relph 1976, p. 6)." Relph's purpose is to show the value of his approach in the course of geographical inquiry while also issuing a warning that place extends beyond the confines of any one discipline because of its philosophical nature. Relph states that "if places are indeed a fundamental aspect

of man's existence in the world, if they are sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups of people, then it is important that the means of experiencing, creating, and maintaining significant places are not lost (Relph 1976, p. 6)." The intent of his search then is not about exploring the world without science but rather to seek wholeness to the concept and meaning of place.

Like much of the research on place, it becomes necessary to hash out the differences between place and space. Relph explains that "space is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analyzed. Yet, however we feel or know or explain space, there is nearly always some associated sense or concept of place. In general it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places (Relph 1976, p. 8)." Therefore, he sees a range between space as an abstract and place as the focus of experience. While there is a distinct difference between place and space there is also room between the two opposing concepts for degrees of actuality and capacities of experience to exist. With this in mind, space is not devoid of any meaning, nor is it characterized by a lack of human experience with it. In *Place and Placelessness* Relph considers classifying realms of space as outlined in Table 1 while recognizing that spaces do not necessarily fit easily into classification. The utility is that through the classification of spaces a spectrum of ideas, experiences, and activities can be explored in the pursuit of the varied meaning of place.

Given the classifications of space, the central role of the human being is evident. In the course of everyday life the individual is layered with an awareness of several of these spaces. As Relph explains, "the meaning of space, and particularly lived space, comes from the existential and perceptual places of immediate experience" (Relph 1976, p.28). While we can associate

space as having meaning, it is important to remember that the focus of meaning is embedded in distinct places. If space is a context, for place then it is the places within that comprise its meaning.

As Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, it is in places that we come to know the world. In his book, *Space and Place* (1977), he thinks of space as more abstract than place. For Tuan space is a medium of movement whereas places are pauses. The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space, as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (Tuan 1977, p. 6).” And it is in the pauses that we come to know places better and assign them value. Of course this is through a constant learning as we reinforce our experience with the paths, objects, and landscapes that comprise a space. Places solidify through the process of unconscious learning and by knowing them we know the world.

Tuan’s search considers the perspective of experience as an alternative to other methods explored by the spatial sciences. He is concerned with the way in which we think and feel about the places within layers of context, such as scale and time. His pursuit of the ‘insider’s’ view in the quest for meaning in humanistic space is apparent. *Space and Place* weaves three main themes. The human animal is examined, the difference between space and place is contemplated, and he explores the ranges of experience and knowledge.

Tuan associates space with movement and freedom and place with pause and security while considering the context of time. Both space and time-share the properties of flow or movement. As for place, time is important because attachment to place requires an investment of

Pragmatic or Primitive Space	<p>The space of instinctive behavior and unselfconscious action in which we always act and move without reflection; organic space rooted in things concrete and substantial; involves no images or concepts of space and spatial relations.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> The environment in which animals survive and function; the space needed for immediate basic human functions</p>
Perceptual Space	<p>The egocentric space perceived and confronted by each individual; has content and meaning inseparable from experience and intention; the space of action centered on the immediate needs and practices so as to devise structure.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Man's "field of domination" where the elements of importance and enjoyment are determined; "substantive space" that which is directly sensed by individuals (vision, touch, etc.)</p>
Existential Space	<p>The inner structure of space as it appears to us in our concrete experiences of the world as members of a cultural group; intersubjective where members share a common set of experiences, signs, and symbols; space constantly being created or remade by human activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sacred Space – comprised of archaic religious experience with symbols, sacred centers, and meaningful objects; often considered centers of the world because they intersect cosmic planes such as heaven, earth, and hell 2. Geographical Space – stems from man's basic awareness of the world, his experiences and intentional links with his environment. <p>Examples: Naming places, erecting paths and buildings, affinity to place as "dwelling"</p>

Table 1. *Pragmatic, Perceptual, and Existential Spaces in Relph's "Place and Placelessness"* Source: Relph

Architectural Space & Planning Space	<p>The deliberate attempt to create spaces without direct concern with the experiences of space; space is something to be manipulated</p> <p>Examples: individual buildings conceived and constructed in isolation; limited to the two-dimensional world of maps and plans.</p>
Cognitive Space	<p>The abstract construct of space derived from the identification of space as an object for reflection and the attempt to develop theories about it.</p>
Abstract Space	<p>The space of logical relations where space is described without necessarily founding those descriptions in empirical observations; created in the human imagination</p>

Table 2. *Architectural, Cognitive and Abstract Spaces in Relph's "Place and Placelessness"*

rich in quality and intensity of experience, not necessarily duration (Tuan 1977, p. 198). Further, Tuan sees a significant difference in experience between being “rooted” in a place than cultivating “a sense of place.” He explains, “a truly rooted community may have shrines and monuments, but it is unlikely to have museums and societies for preservation of the past. The effort to evoke a sense of place and of the past is often deliberate and conscious (Tuan 1977, p. 198).”

In contemporary urban forms such as the suburb or edge cities the factor of time is minor because such forms are constituted more by the present. Finding a truly rooted suburban district or edge city community is doubtful. Instead, modern places should engage deliberately and consciously in evoking a sense of place and of a past by considering, not the duration of existence, but rather by putting emphasis on quality and intensity of experience.

2.3 The Character and Meaning of Place

While many spatial scales of place exist ranging anywhere from a private and personal place to that of a nation, it is the city as a center of human activity and awareness with which we are concerned. Our particular focus is the city as it is experienced by the individual and interpreted by the consensus familiar with its landscape. Cities become place through the manipulation of the environment, the events that occur in its space, and the meaning that have become attached to them. The vitality and success of cities is quite important as you taken into

account the investments placed on them. Therefore it is investors that have quite an interest in what makes cities successful places.

The qualities or features of a place comprise its character, an essential element in its identity. Character extends beyond image. The design and structure of a place as well as its ornamentation give it character; however, its sense of community, event-based activities, and security are equally important.

Places also require frequent and meaningful contact. As Tuan suggests, places are pause, and in that pause we should be able to foster a sense of belonging through social activity. In coming in contact with place, one can experience a greater exposure to culture and experience interconnectedness. Frequent and meaningful contact by individual experience and by consensus endows place with poise, value, and a sense of being interminable.

It is evident that places have become a necessary phenomenon in human existence. Cities, in particular, have become for us a reflection while exposing an outward cultural image for interpretation. In many ways there is an unconscious ideal for many of us as to what cities and towns should be and a rudimentary conceptualization of urban layout consisting of an identifiable center with key avenues of activity. J.B. Jackson describes this ideal settlement pattern:

“Most of us, I think, have been taught that the ideal settlement pattern is one which is compact and clearly defined. A tight composition of streets and houses and spaces, with something like a landmark in the center, is generally considered normal and desirable: it is more picturesque, it is easier to control and, in earlier times, easier to defend. It encourages social interaction and it produces a

colorful street life; it is convenient for pedestrians. It has a sense of place (Jackson 1994, pp. 156-157) ”

In thinking of urban centers, J.B. Jackson brings up an interesting point that we share a common perception of what the city should be, at least in its design.

Sociologists, Orum and Chen, sift through philosophical foundation of place to better understand the role of cities. They suggest that cities are significant in our lives because “they represent places – that is, specific locations in space that provide an anchor and meaning to who we are (Orum and Chen 2003, p.1).” They argue that a flaw in urban social science is the disregard for the role of sense of place and personal connection with place. Therefore, they set about exploring the idea of place and its central role to our lives as human beings.

Orum and Chen argue that there are connections between people and place that are both natural and constant. They recognize what they call a “sense of placeness” in which connection with place becomes meaningful. These four “connections” include a sense of personal identity, a sense of community, a sense of a past and a future, and a sense of being at home (see Table 3).

Orum and Chen’s *Sociological Vision of Place* (2003) gives clues to how we can endow our designed spaces and built environment with a sense of place. In planning, urban design, and architecture the emphasis is on transforming space into place. Places, however, require people to give it meaning and character. In the course of experience, our attachments to place develop over time and define us as humans. As Orum and Chen suggest -- we give meaning to place it in turn gives us meaning and further venue to layer new meanings:

“Place, we must emphasize is a notion different from that of space with which it is sometimes conflated. Space is a medium independent of our existence in which

there exist objects (including other human beings), objects that behave according to the basic laws of nature. Place is a unique and special location in that space notable for the fact that the regular activities of human beings occur there. Moreover, because it is a site of such activities, and all which they entail, it may furnish the basis for our sense of identity, as human beings, as well as for our sense of connection to other human beings, in other words, our sense of community. Place, in other words, is that special site, or sites, in space where people live and work, and where, therefore, they are likely to form intimate and enduring connections (Orum and Chen 2003, p. 15).”

Place is undeniably central and natural to our existence throughout the course of human history. Further, it is apparent that in the future, place shall remain an important element in our lives. The phenomenon of centrality in human settlements highlights our ingenuity in using place to our advantage. By exploiting the social networks that develop in central places, people not only gain new opportunities, they gain a sense of interconnectedness that is vital to our well-being. We also recognize our most meaningful places as home whether in the past, present, or future.

A Sense of Personal Identity	All humans, regardless of where they may live or reside, experience a similar linkage between their own personal identity and the places they have lived.
A Sense of Community	Social groups ranging from family and friends to neighborhoods and communities develop a powerful sense of affiliation and common identity based upon their connections to places. Place and common identity become inextricably intertwined.
A Sense of a Past and a Future	The sense of place, as it becomes visible to philosophers through a sense of the body, with extension in space, provides the vehicle for understanding the past and the future of place. This sense of the past, as another place, then, is a sense that we have moved, bodily, from somewhere behind us and are moving forward.
A Sense of Being at Home	Perhaps the most fundamental connection we human beings have to place. The locales that placate us in the sense we are comfortable, at peace, and secure.

Table 3. *Orum and Chen's "Sociological Vision of Place"* Source: Orum and Chen

2.4 Image and experience

Places are nothing without the people who give them life. A person's association with a particular place forms the personal experience of place. These experiences are as diverse and unique as the people who live them. In *A Social Geography of the City* David Ley notes "a reciprocal relationship between spatial behavior and our mental image of the city (Ley 1983, p.

95) ” Therefore a sense of place is derived by our role in place and modified by our experiences with place. It often is filled with biases and sometimes a parochial attitude that is dependent on our role or position within social structure. Our unique urban image of place then is a construct from our place learning, everyday routine, and the social structure in which we involve ourselves.

In order to draw some conclusions or broad generalizations from the social structure of the edge city, we need to classify people by their role, position, and experience of place. In *Place and Placelessness* (1976) Relph explores the distinctions between types of people and their experience with place. In particular, he makes a distinction between the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ perspective of a place and suggests these experiences arranged in a continuum. "The various forms of space lie within a continuum that has direct experience at one extreme and abstract thought at the other extreme. Within this continuum certain types of space can be distinguished, for instance, that of unselfconscious and pragmatic experiences, the self-consciously experienced perceptual space of individuals, the built spaces of architecture, and the abstract space of geometry (Relph 1976, p. 8)." The possibility to encounter or recognize place among these spaces is directly related to the relationship of an outsider or insider with the space. It is through these spaces that a people develop a relationship with particular places and Relph explores the multitude of ways in which people experience a place and the relationships that develop. A sensibility of place is a direct result of both level of involvement or the depth of one’s relationship with place.

Relph adds to the discourse on place by identifying modes of experience with regard to place. For Relph, the essence of place is substantially tied to the different modes of experience.

Although place experience can be broadly defined by separating outsider and insider, there are also distinct differences among insiders and outsiders as outlined in Tables 4 and 5.

Insiders to a place have distinct knowledge of where they are in that place. In doing so, they also relate where they are to places, known or unknown, beyond the borders of the place they are in. As an insider they feel at best a sense of being at home, enclosed and secure and at worst they feel confident in their knowledge about the place they are in.

On the other hand, experiencing place as an outsider often implies a sense of danger or exposure. In many ways, the experience can be confusing or chaotic. However, if a place has thoughtfully invested in physical design and image as well as community and character it can erase many of these negative experiences.

As for the edge city, place is a vital commodity; and for those with significant investment in such a place, its preservation and success is very important. This explains the activity directed towards image and marketing; however, the more complex issue of evoking a sense of place is equally important. While critics may argue that the edge cities are nothing more than placeless centers of specific activities it should be noted that the criticism is tied to that of a larger trend in the contemporary American landscape.

In *The Great Good Place* Ray Oldenburg (1989) recognizes a deficiency in the informal public life of America. In this book he bears witness to the erosion of the casual core settings of public life that are important to the success of good towns and great cities. Oldenburg coins these casual core settings as “third space” and suggests that the only real solution is through awareness and action by local communities. He suggests society should take on the efforts of cultivating

The Outsider

Existential Outsider	A person has a strong sense of alienation or being out of place. The experience may be unpleasant, seem unreal, or even oppressive. Critics of the built landscape suggest this can be an unintentional side effect of suburban sprawl, the decline of rural communities, and the dissolution of downtowns.
Objective Outsider	A person intentionally or consequentially is involved with a place from the outside and may be tied to a particular place through study, design, management, or manipulation of a particular place. In other words, the scientific approach to place and environment.
Incidental Outsider	A person has very limited experience with a place or the place may merely serve as a setting for activities. Driving through a town, a person witnesses place but the experience is distanced. Also, a conference may be held in a particular city where attendees may not necessarily venture out and experience the city but rather opting for a mere gaze from a conference center.

Table 4. *Relph's "Outsider Modes of Experience"* Source: Relph

The Insider

Vicarious Insider	A person comes to know a place by secondary involvement. Place is experienced through media such as novels, movies, and even paintings.
Behavioral Insider	A person develops this by direct experience of place as they tend to its appearance and continually enhance their knowledge of the place. In many ways, it is your developing mental image of a place from within as you identify landmarks, paths, and points.
Empathetic Insider	A person who begins as an outsider but makes a strong attempt to understand a place more deeply. Relph sees this as an important way to come to know place through phenomenology.
Existential Insider	A person has a strong feeling of attachment and of being at home. “Place is experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection yet is full with significances.” Perhaps the deepest and most internal place experience.

Table 5. *Relph's "Insider Modes of Experience"* Source: Relph

these spaces rather than continue to leave the responsibility in the hands of planners and developers.

Oldenburg argues that this new trend in American social life began with the erection of automobile suburbs purchased by returning World War II veterans. Their promise was to build a new type of community but on the contrary they restrict community building and alienate the individual. Oldenburg suggests, “Though proclaimed as offering the best of both rural and urban life, the automobile suburb had the effect of fragmenting the individual’s world (Oldenburg 1989, p.4).” This change in the American landscape has encourages the individual’s everyday life to center around the poles of work and home. Oldenburg sees our homes as “private compounds” and argues that we have retreated to them and that we regard them as if they were the only option in which to host our informal social lives.

Oldenburg searches for common threads among informal public gathering places. His book explores the idea behind Main Street, the German-American Beer Garden, the English Pub, the French Café, and the American Tavern to better understand their social, psychological, and political contributions. Such places not only give venue for people to meet their basic human needs as social creatures but serve as both a social leveler and forum in which to conduct the affairs of community.

Oldenburg’s “third space” is an essential element in producing good towns, great cities, and a sense of place. It is through existing casual environments that we need not schedule or prepare and social interaction occurs by chance and with little investment. It is in this space we become at home in common. It is not our private space but rather a shared space in which we feel comfortable enough to engage with others to the extent we become rooted. After all, “the more

people visit a place, use it, and become, themselves, a part of it, the more it is theirs (Oldenburg 1989, p.41).”

Oldenburg’s great good place is not a place of social exclusion. It has a sense of place that makes it inviting and comfortable for both insiders and outsiders. Such places have their own human mechanisms, rituals, and pace for turning the outsider to insider. The problem remains however that such places are eroding from the American landscape in exchange for a commercial semblance of authenticity that denies us alteration for an informal public life.

Somewhere within the relationship between the physical venues of “third space” and the social alteration of its purpose lies both a rewarding informal public life for the individual and a positive sense of place for the location. While there is no concrete formula for building community, it needs both venue and purpose. Usually it is place that offers opportunity for people to interact but a place must have certain qualities and character that invite people to not only occupy it but to alter it for social purpose. Unfortunately, the organic growth of such places is denied, whether intended or not, as a consequence to the directions of the urban planner or designer.

The nature of informal public life is rather illusive in that it does not necessarily occur in the public spaces designated or allotted by urban planning. Instead, the best chances for an informal public life coincide with our pattern of everyday life. It is within these spaces we share that community can become incidental.

Place, in the sense that it is shared space, can only be defined by its connections with other phenomenon. It has no universal territorial limitations nor can we fit place in any coherent arrangement of categories. Place exists in “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991). In the

course of our everyday lives we share space with other people, and across the same landscape we all have individual experiences of place. Although we may exist in the same place, we go about our daily lives without really knowing our fellow humans in the shared spaces. However, in the minds of all these people exists an image of sharing place.

In *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991), examines the origins of nationalism. A central argument of Anderson's is the construct of a national consciousness through capitalist practice and modern developments in printing (Anderson 1991, pp. 33-46). Anderson explains how Europe reorganized itself via language-based print markets and thereby reinforced differences among regional language groups. It was through mediums such as newspapers that a sense of community flourished among readers. Anderson's argument suggests that people established distinctive collective identity because the medium was shared but based categorically on language.

Just as nations develop a national consciousness, so does the city. There is something uniquely "shared" as we share space and the experience of a place. The ideas and perceptions we have often shape themselves into a consensus and equate to attaching meaning to place. In some instances, what began as an intra-cultural exchange of ideas and perceptions become formalized as institutions or people were empowered in an attempt to gain a foothold on the manipulation of places. Our cities are microcosms of our national identity, and in this respect cities often wield cultural power to forge a city consciousness which in turn reinforces place making.

Yi-Fu Tuan looks at how language is used in the making of places and how this has been overlooking in geography's discourse. Language is a powerful force but we often take its

influence on human agency for granted. Words represent movement and action; they command as well as describe. Tuan explains the power of words:

“Speech is a component of the total forces that transforms nature into a human place . . . although speech alone cannot materially transform nature, it can direct attention, organize insignificant entities into significant composite wholes, and in so doing, make things formerly overlooked—and hence invisible and nonexistent—visible and real (Tuan 1991, p. 685).”

For edge cities, it is language and the power behind it that gives meaning to what has been built in former greenspace. In attempts to transform edge cities into real places those in power often construct place names and slogans.

Language, however, extends beyond the naming of places and marketing ploys. It is used in our everyday. We are therefore constantly engaged in place-making as we navigate, arrange, and command our environment. And in doing so we must be cautious in understanding it as shared space because language can be used as both a means to create and destroy. Tuan illustrates how we should approach language in the process of place-making:

“Taking language seriously has a number of intellectual consequences or rewards. It enables us to understand the process of place-making better by recognizing a force previously neglected, if not wholly ignored. It enables us to understand the quality (the personality or character) of place better, for that quality is imparted by, along with visual appearance and other factors, the metaphorical and symbolic powers of language. Taking language seriously shows, moreover, that the “quality” of place is more than just aesthetic or affectional, that it also has a moral

dimension, which is to be expected if language is a component in the construction and maintenance, for language—ordinary language—is never morally neutral (Tuan 1991, p. 694).”

Architects, urban planners, and policy makers perform crucial roles in place-making. In the process they should consider both the language and image of their design. From a planner’s perspective, Kevin Lynch explores the city form and its meanings for people in his landmark book, *The Image of the City*. He uses the concept of “imageability”, which he defines as “that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer (Lynch 1960, p. 9).” Lynch also considers that in many ways the mental image created by the structure and arrangement of physical places give them certain “legibility” or “visibility”. His highly imageable city equates to something that is apparent, legible, and visible.

Image is very important for newly designed spaces as investors seek to maximize land values. As Edward Krupat explains, “image serves four functions: it allows for mobility; it provides a general framework in which to organize activities; it allows the resident to feel emotionally secure; and it permits symbolic communication between people who share a common setting (Krupat 1985, p. 91).” And it is through vision and text that planners and designers attempt to communicate “imageability” to those in power. However, while it is often easy to express the concept on paper and speech it can be challenging to implement “imageability” on the landscape.

In thinking of the individual’s image and experience with a place it is often a group of “outsiders” that devise the structure of our urban places. Their task should be a moral one that not only represents their impression of an ideal place but also takes into account the needs and

desires of the people who occupy that place. Our new urban places should convey a clear public image while boosting mobility and efficiency but more importantly they should give us comfort, security, and aesthetic enjoyment.

2.5 History and authenticity

In our observations of place we should consider the element of time. There is continual movement and action in places because of human presence. Humans, by nature, are very mobile and directive in their actions. Because of their mobility and ability to enact they are constantly transforming place by their activities. Pred argues that previous geographers have overlooked the temporal in exploring place and have often looked at place as a fixed phenomenon or that humanistic geographers see place as “an inert, experienced scene (Pred 1984, p. 279).”

Pred’s notion of place is highlighted by change, process, and practices. For Pred place is a very human product in that “it always involves an appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space (Pred 1984, p. 279).” In other words, places are always in the process of becoming something new, an unfinished work.

Pred draws upon the precepts of structuration theory and explains how when we are in a place we encounter an existing structure emplaced by the people who have power over a place or who have been there before. While we can think of structure in the physical senses, concrete buildings, roads, etc., there is also a structure within cultural practice. Places often carry within them an unspoken language for example of code of rules or laws that people whether insiders or

outsiders, are expected to follow. It is our actions in the present that shall shape the structure of place for people in the future.

Many places do have unique identities and foster a sense of attachment for us individually. Although other people may transcend their space unaware of the meanings that others have associated with it, a sense of place does exist for us through individual involvement with particular places. Further, some places project a sense of place that is evident by their attractiveness, not just in design but in spirit as well. In the writings of J.B. Jackson he considers how the interpretation of sense of place has sterilized over time but that people remain attracted to specific places. He suggests,

“... certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to, time and again. So the original notion of ritual, of repeated celebration or reverence, is still inherent in the phrase. It is not a temporary response, for it persists and brings us back, reminding us of previous visits (Jackson 1994, p. 158).”

Such places may be special to the individual but carry even more meaning when they are shared. It is in Pred's structures that we are connected with one another's past, present, and future, allowing us to share places transcending across time. This involvement across time gives people and places a history.

It is in our contemporary landscape that we have reassigned meaning to places both old and new. The edge city, our newest reflection of ourselves, represents our present lives as consumers and to give image to the future we strive to build bigger, better, and further apart.

Further, it is in our older cities that we capitalize and sometimes transform our past so that we can live out new experiences of our social memory.

Relph (1967) sees promise in observing and appreciating places “for what they are, and not in terms of mass values, or technical and intellectual attitudes or conventions (Relph 1976, p. 78).” Relph uses two modes of experience, “authentic” and “inauthentic”, which represent opposing attitudes about place. In short, authenticity is about being genuine and sincere in your attitude about a place whereas inauthenticity is the opposite, it represents no deep awareness of a place or even apathy towards it.

In looking at the contemporary landscape of the 1970s, Relph recognized change in the built environment in which placelessness was becoming more and more apparent. He describes this phenomenon as, “an inauthentic attitude towards places is transmitted through a number of processes or perhaps more accurately ‘media’, which directly and indirectly encourage ‘placelessness’, that is, a weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike and feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience (Relph 1976, p. 90).” In his argument, authentic relationships with place were becoming difficult because people could not become existential insiders to inauthentic places.

While the inauthentic landscape is completely visible to us, we usually go about our day unconscious of its meaning. We don’t often think about the forces of power behind our place-making. For us place has become an interface for consumption and zone for manufactured experience.

2.6 An end for place

The edge city is a place of hyperactivity, interconnectivity, and culture deficit. It is a place for the cosmopolite that Yi-Fu Tuan describes in *Cosmos and Hearth* (1996). The edge city is a place where people are detached from “hearth” and are busily in pursuit of “cosmos”. Recovering a sense of place requires finding a balance between Tuan’s two poles and adorning our space, the edge city, with place.

The literature of loss of place is budding. A particular focus lies in the loss of the meaning and connection for residents. One of the most contemporary writers on new urbanism and civic loss is James Howard Kunstler. He has written several books about the subject including, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Landscape* (1993) and more recently *The City in Mind: Notes on the Human Condition* (2002). Kunstler warns, “We’ll have to give up our fetish for extreme individualism and rediscover public life (Kunstler 1993, p. 275).” Kunstler’s brash interpretation of civic loss through urban design should compel contemporary urban planners to rethink designs in regard to the implications they impose on civic life.

In *The City in Mind*, Kunstler takes a closer look at the city. He explores consistencies and common threads of cities through history and probes urban design in search of causality of urban decline. There is a chapter that bashes Atlanta by describing how Atlanta’s development should serve as a cautionary tale to other cities about not selling your soul for the sake of development. David Goldberg, a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, remarks on Kunstler’s chapter “his only complement to our town was to include it among just eight cities

compromising a survey of the state of urban life in the Western World (AJC 1-20-02).” Kunstler provides a wealth of evidence on placelessness but he also expects a consensus of Americans, not planners, to revitalize civic life and public places. Kunstler’s writing may be a call against civic apathy but resolving the issues will require a greater transforming force than public awareness.

In *How Cities Work* Marshall (2000) explores “The End of Place” in part as a response to Kunstler’s colorful negativity toward the American landscape. Marshall sees possibilities for change but warns that it “involves taking on our entire transportation system (Marshall 2000, p.43).” Marshall discusses how the landscape has changed with the automobile. Before the automobile, he suggests that places were subject to centripetal forces. The focus of development lay in bringing everything in close proximity. In contrast, place is now marked by centrifugal force where scale of distance is multiplied. He describes cities today as a “giant salad spinner, spraying growth out over the countryside indiscriminately (Marshall 2000, p. 43).” The automobile made it possible for us to leave the urban places we once imagined as confining and seek our perception of the ideal place. Now that we are facing uniquely suburban problems such as an acute separation of functions, many recognize the value of central places.

Although Marshall agrees that the impact of the automobile was inevitable, he argues that the elimination of other forms of transportation and changes in construction practices within cities should have been avoided. In his view, railways merit reinvestment in order to provide both circulatory transit for our cities and to reach the places beyond. However, Marshall remains skeptical of their implementation because there are so many places and they are oh so scattered.

Equally skeptical is his contemplation of the fate of place in the modern landscape. He suggests we question that perhaps we are “poisoning ourselves in our pursuit of the most and the cheapest, and by resisting any attempt to examine whether those efforts have the side effect of destroying something we may vitally need, a place, a square, a home (Marshall 2000, pp. 59-60).” Akin to the erosion of Oldenburg’s “third spaces”, Marshall sees the disappearance of the town hall and neighborhood bar as a loss in unifying power for local communities.

The edge city has special prominence in Marshall’s view. After all, edge cities are a by-product of the expansive highway system that we have built over the past half-century. They represent for many a focus of incoherence. As Marshall suggests, “cities with a sense of place go back to the dawn of recorded history. The stories of cities without a sense of place began about 1945 (Marshall 2000, p. 63).”

2.7 Sense of place

Similar to place, the concept of a sense of place can be mystifying. Is a sense of place a personal and unique faculty that we find within ourselves? Is it something we can share with other people? Or is it intended to be a façade for placeless urban design and architecture? Consider J.B. Jackson’s perception of the concept:

“Most of us, I suspect, without giving much thought to the matter, would say that a sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learnt to know its peculiarities. It is my own belief that a sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the

result of habit or custom. But others disagree. They believe that a sense of place comes from our response to features which are *already* there—either a beautiful natural setting or well-designed architecture. They believe that a sense of place comes from being in an unusual composition of spaces and forms – natural or man-made (Jackson 1994, p. 151).”

Although a profusion of phenomena exists regarding place, the sense of place remains an elusive concept. It is particularly sensitive to the aim of the practitioner and the discipline of the academic. By fusing the various interpretations and approaches, three inter-related themes emerge surrounding the discourse of a sense of place: sense of place is an intention, a social imprint, and an ethereal nature.

The concept of a sense of place can be considered intentional through the efforts of architects, planners, and policy makers. The first theme of a sense of place is that it is the intentional legibility of place as designed by architects and planners that enable a positive orientation among its participants while fostering comfort, security, and well-being. The construction of a sense of place then is driven by language, symbols, and imagery as it is expressed on maps, plans, and presentation with the intent to implement the design without deviation onto the landscape. In it is design it intends to improve the quality of people’s lives and strengthen society while at the same time increasing efficiency.

The second theme surrounding sense of place is our social imprint on place as we transcend through space and time. It requires an understanding of man’s connectedness to place. In this theme a sense of place is the human relationship with a place that involves personal,

kinship, and communal ties in which experiences and attachments to place author histories.

Places are central to our being as they are both uniquely personal and consensually shared.

Aside from the original construction and intended use of a place, they are transformed and altered by people's involvement with a place. While a design can evoke a sense of place, it is humans who internalize and interpret it. With a heightened sense of place, people take special value in the places they occupy. People attach significant meaning to specific places to the degree that the place lives within them. The expression of people's special care and attachment to a specific place is often unspoken but reflected by the characteristics that comprise the place. Places then become special or sacred. In the third theme of sense of place, human agency and stewardship over place leads to tacit knowledge for the person and *genius loci* for the place. The *genius loci* then is the distinctive atmosphere or perhaps the spirit that people identify with a place.

In our contemporary urban landscape, places are becoming integrated through globalization. Through this global system flow products, people, and meanings at an ever-increasing pace. Since the 1970s, there has been much discourse on Relph's "erosion of place"; given our new global context there is growing concern it will accelerate. The homogenization of places means we have lost our sensitivity to the world. In the placeless world people have no significant ties to anywhere in particular, nor do they associate meaning or attachment. Such places will not fulfill our innermost social and spiritual needs and desires. Our modern lives are increasingly mobile with limited pause for meaningful interaction and reflection. If places are to become meaningful pauses in the course of our everyday lives it will require recovering a sense of place.

2.8 Why Edge Cities?

Many academics, planners, and developers are expressing that we need to rethink our spatial separations of where we live, work, and play. Unfortunately, the function of many edge cities emphasized businesses served primarily by the automobile and therefore they were not designed for pedestrian, residential, or civic uses. To understand the role of edge cities we must frame them in their current context as an integral part of an entire system and their associations with the traditional downtown and areas of sprawl.

The City in History (Mumford 1961) traced the evolution of cities from to the modern day urban center. Mumford sought the essence of what constituted the city. He took his readers on a journey of how despotic rulers created cities by forcing people to live closer together and how the people eventually found good reason to live in closer proximity to one another. But the book was not totally a celebration. It also included a cautionary tale of man's hand in the invention of cities.

Despite his affinity to the design of place in the city and his vision of a garden metropolis, Mumford saw a change in the development pattern of cities. The central city was spreading and he was witness to the precursor of urban sprawl. Most of Mumford's writing dealt with the debilitating effects of technology on urban life but he sought a way to make sense of the chaos in urban life.

After Mumford passed away in 1990, the urban fabric changed in many ways. In the central city economic decline had peaked, urban renewal plans were underway, and for many metropolitan areas sprawl was in full swing. By the nineties many suburban areas along the

metropolitan periphery constituted a new kind of city. Although differing in many ways from their conventional counterparts, they mirror much of the amenities found in the central city. These new urbanizing centers merged residential neighborhoods with concentrated retail and eventually workplace buildings and office parks.

In 1991, Garreau's *Edge City* was an important work because it brought attention to the new urban centers that were cropping up on the periphery. Further, it gave light to some of the defects of the edge city, which spurred more criticism about their lack of functionality and identity. There is some excitement in Garreau's work in that we are embarking upon new ways upon which to build our cities. Ironically, we find ourselves in a position where we must retrofit our existing suburban business districts just to make them livable.

In Johnathan Barnett's recent book *Redesigning Cities: Principles, Practice, and Implementation* (2002) he applauds Garreau for his insight on the phenomenon but also criticizes his assumptions that some of the defects of edge cities can be easily overcome. Barnett points out that many edge cities are only accessible by car and that buildings are isolated from one another because of a sea of parking lots. Other internal problems that he says Garreau overlooks are the lack of public space and public amenities. In short, Garreau thinks that the marketplace will bring about change in the edge cities and that many of the problems are mere growing pains.

The problem is that in some edge cities it is business as usual where the market dictates what is to be built and where. While some regional planning agencies advocate smart growth strategies, companies interested in locating to an edge city expect the advantage of cheap land and cost effective parking. Even in maturing edge cities where land values are soaring there is

still space between buildings for parking lots. And as Barnett illustrates in Table 6, at-grade parking is the most attractive.

Cost of an At-Grade Parking Space:	\$1,000 + land (good landscaping would be extra)
Cost of a Garage Parking Space:	\$10,000 to \$12,000 + pro rata share of land as garage is multi-story
Cost of a Sub-Grade Parking Space:	\$20,000 to \$30,000

Table 6. *Parking Space Economics* Source: Barnett



Figure 1. *MARTA Sandy Springs Station parking deck* Source: Author

The ability to continue to build at lower densities and to service the automobile attracts many of the “big-box” retail establishments to continue to utilize sprawling at-grade parking lots.

Further, many office building developers assume that their potential tenants are turning towards edge cities to escape such close proximities. Unfortunately, the attitude is that parking space is land in reserve and what is at-grade parking today is an investment to cash-in on the probable higher densities of the future.

Often the parking lots themselves are poorly designed. Their ingress and egress points center on getting people off and on the main street rather than considering cross parking lot connections. Frequently for automobile travelers to move building-to-building they will have to first get back on the main street only to exit again only several feet away. While some landholders work together to create inter-connectedness, the majority view in the edge city and similar suburban districts is inward looking and does not take into account the entire system. Rather than seeing the benefit of increased accessibility, they perceive a loss of control.

Another feature of edge cities are their close proximity to superhighways or more frequently highway junctions. Edge cities sprung up at many locations because of strategic access to the roadway. While one superhighway is a great facilitator, two are even better. Barnett criticizes that “edge cities were the unplanned consequences of highway policies designed to move people between previously existing destinations (Barnett 2003, p. 169).” Further, he explains that they emerged without the proper infrastructure in place. While it is evident that most edge cities are plagued with significant internal traffic issues, their utility lies in the ability to provide services to an extended area. Their accessibility often allows them not to just be just local centers but regional ones as well.

As Barnett points out, edge cities are shaped by conventional zoning practices where areas near interchanges were rezoned to allow for gas station, motels, and other services intended

for the traveler. Zoning practice by local governments usually “put the interchange in the place that would be the center of civic consciousness and the most valuable development in a traditional downtown (Barnett 2003, p. 169).” Further, the trend tends to be towards an abundance of commercial zoning in all directions allowing for lower density development separated by the quadrants of the interchange.

Each quadrant of the interchange contains a different focus of development rather than being of mixed use. Many edge cities developed in the locations where a regional mall sprung up like the Perimeter Center in Atlanta that is the subject of this research. As such areas mature and vertical growth begins, their skylines resemble spread-out downtowns. This pattern develops in part because of land values and the ease of creating at-grade parking. Most developing edge cities contain no impetus to use space efficiently nor to consider indirect consequences. Further, without tax revenue focused to provide the needed infrastructure many edge cities find themselves with only a handful of main roads rather than a network. A primary problem is that the main roads within the edge city are widened and adapted to accommodate expanding traffic problems when the focus should be on creating an actual street city optimized for internal traffic flow.

Edge cities are very unique in that they have come to be in a relatively short period of time. While urban planners such as Barnett recognize flaws in their development, edge cities that emerged on the American landscape in the past few years now need to face the problems associated with unplanned growth and poor zoning practices. As we shall see later in this research, a movement exists to “retro-fit” the edge city and correct some of the structural issues that plague them.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data

Multiple sources of primary and secondary data contributed to the qualitative descriptive data to provide a window on the cultural landscape of Perimeter Center. Data collection sought knowledge of Perimeter Center in both its current and historical context and to gain multiple perspectives of the environment. Local histories (Davis and Spruill, Martin, Perkins, Price) were used to understand the evolution of Perimeter Center while news reporting, area studies, and government sources (Atlanta Regional Commission, Barry, Frankston, Fuji and Hartshorn, Hall, Jaret, and Walcott) presented current trends and context for Perimeter Center. The secondary sources were considered perspectives of the observations and measurements of historians, journalists, and geographers while the primary data sources represented a sample of public perspective. The scope of the data is limited in its ability to identify and define the whole environment in detail; however, it gave opportunity for data triangulation.

The researcher's role was that of a participant observer. Primary data was collected based on direct observations that utilized photography, field notes, and interviews. The field notes and photographs were collected on three separate visits to the area. The primary purpose of the observations was to note the physical changes in the environment and thus to compare this with information from secondary data sources.

The interview data was collected from a variety of respondents and was purposely chosen at random and based on opportunity. The only information respondents were given as to the

purpose of the research was that the interview sought their perspectives and perception of the area that is becoming known as Perimeter Center. Detailed personal data including race, gender, or age was not recorded. The interviews were designed to gauge the respondent's level of involvement and familiarity of Perimeter Center and to record their personal perception of the area.

The secondary data (Atlanta Regional Commission, Davis, Fuji and Hartshorn, Jaret, Martin, Perkins, Price, U.S. Department of Commerce, Walcott) consisted of a review of planning brochures and documentation, case and area studies, news reporting, local histories, and census data. The secondary data were utilized to gain the perspectives of planning professionals, the media, and to frame a current context of Perimeter Center. The data were collected prior to any field research or human subject interviews.

3.2 Methodology

In the edge city the geographer must grapple with developing a geographical commonsense of place while attempting to visualize a more objective model of the environment as a whole. Edward Relph reminds us "a commonsense of place requires careful observation, critical reflection, and an awareness of interrelationships (Relph 1997, p. 225)." Relph's understanding pursues these abilities with heed for the individual subjective experience of place. Therefore sensible observation, classification, interpretation, and representation are the objective of the methods exercised.

Both real estate developers and businesses invest significant financial interests and promotional efforts in Metropolitan Atlanta's Perimeter Center. Because Perimeter Center lacks a formal municipal government, local businesses and investors maintain a high-level of involvement in the function of the city. All agents concerned seek to continue the growth trajectory of Perimeter Center astride two county lines and its luring power for the Atlanta region as a whole. With this in mind, this research considers urban change and public perception of Perimeter Center's prospects for the future.

An examination of recent initiatives, promotional brochures, and planning documents from organization such as the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Perimeter Community Improvement District (PCID), and the Perimeter Transportation Coalition (PTC) focuses on the specific ways these organizations seek to improve the efficiency and quality of life in Perimeter Center. A cross-comparison of intent and implementation gauges both the success and compatibility of these organizations. The actions of these institutions are useful in identifying what edge city problems remain.

The language of the institutions involved in Perimeter Center's planning, maintenance, and promotion extends beyond our primary questions regarding a sense of place. Consideration is made for all aspects that aid in making Perimeter Center viable and lasting. Therefore, this research explores the relationship of sense of place and the physical and situational elements that make a place great such as its accessibility, the uses and activities, social life, and the elements of comfort, security, and image. While there is evidence that the PCID is effective in gaining infrastructure improvements, there is a curious lack of active pursuit in community building

initiatives and opportunities for an informal public life for the citizens that may one day call Perimeter Center home.

Academics and practitioners have differing approaches with regard to the concept of a sense of place. By making connections among the literature three interrelated themes of sense of place emerged as an intention, a social imprint, and as something ethereal. In regard to developing a sense of place, the definitions of these themes will be connected with evidence from Perimeter Center in order to hash out prospects of recovering a sense of place in Perimeter Center as applied to edge cities in general.

While developers, planners, and promoters are working towards creating a place identity and sense of place for Perimeter Center we should consider how and to what extent the public perceives this intent. Through a series of human subject interviews we can focus on how people operationally define functions within Perimeter Center and gauge both identity perceptions and Perimeter Center's potential to be considered a new downtown. Fourteen random interviews were conducted to gauge the respondent's level of involvement and familiarity of Perimeter Center and to record their personal perception of the area. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

The interviews took place over the course of three weeks in the spring of 2004. The questions were devised prior to the interviews and were exactly the same for all of the interviews. The questions were organized in questionnaire form. The sample was gained by several methods including a classified ad posting and by directly approaching subjects. The interviews were conducted on the basis of convenience for the respondent therefore interviews were either done in person, over the telephone, and in a few instances over email.

Interviews were conducted in three stages to gain background information about the subjects, to classify them as an insider or outsider, and to gain a deeper knowledge of perception among those who considered themselves insiders. In the first stage subjects were asked about their occupation, length of time in Atlanta, commute to work and public transportation experience. Stage two was designed to measure their experience and to classify them as an insider or outsider with regards to Perimeter Center.

Respondents we asked if they were familiar with the term Perimeter Center and if they knew the area by any other names. Further, they were asked if they live, work, or have visited the area recently and they were asked what functional purpose the area served and if they consider Perimeter Center a city. Personal impressions were also collected such as comfort and safety and if they would consider the area as livable and a place to purchase or rent a residence.

The interview was taken to stage three only if the respondent self-identified as an insider and was confirmed as such by the interviewer. In stage three questions revolved around their perceptions of Perimeter Center. Respondents were asked to identify the central place or point of Perimeter Center, the direction and identity of adjacent places, and public places within the district. The respondents were also questioned as to how they move about within Perimeter Center and what activities they pursued during their visit with some discussion on their knowledge or participation in community or cultural events. Respondents were then asked to consider their experiences with Perimeter Center and to give their impressions of the area under four separate subject headings. Respondents commented on accessibility, uses and activities, social life, and comfort, security, and image.

Data collected from the interviews was reviewed and categorized based on the interviewer's assessment of if the respondent was an insider or an outsider. The respondent's categorization was identified in the first section of the questions as outlined in Appendix A. The criteria for being an insider was not only if someone worked and lived in Perimeter Center but it also included person who frequented the area and expressed knowledge of the area. The data was further referenced according to Relph's insider and outsider modes of experience. However, it should be noted that both the vicarious insider and objective outsider modes (see Tables 4 and 5) were not considered. The interview was designed to capture a public perspective of people who have direct experience with Atlanta at the regional scale but to also reveal those who had direct experience with the specific area of this research and to compare the two perspectives. The vicarious insider was not included because it does not involve the direct experience of place and the objective outsider was not included because the mode does have some direct impact on place but remains distanced from the actual place.

An initial comparison was made between insider and outsider responses to detect any major differences in place perception. Insider responses were analyzed for striking similarities, differences, and patterns. The data collected in the public human subject interviews was then compared to both the direct observations and perceptions of the researcher and the perceptions expressed by the secondary data sources.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERIMETER CENTER

4.1 Historical development

A review of an area's history often reveals clues as to why certain events unfolded upon its landscape. Until the 1960s, the area now known as Perimeter Center was by no means rich in history in terms of human mark upon the land. Following the removal of Creeks and Cherokees from this part of Georgia in the early 1800s, pioneer settlers primarily from Virginia and the Carolinas passed through on their way to points further south in search of prime farmland.

According to local historian Jim Perkins, the area was “bypassed due to the unfavorable farming conditions . . . with its rough landscape of hills and ravines” (Perkins undated, p. 1-2). When the land was finally settled and farms cleared on appropriate plots it was obviously a process of “in-filling”. Much of the area remained family farms separated by rural woodlands due to the area's topography. Development was concentrated further south in DeKalb County, centered on the town of Decatur.

Key towns, communication stations, and areas of commerce such as Cross Keys, Chamblee, and Dunwoody emerged in areas adjacent to Perimeter Center. Many roads in the area were originally Native American trails. New ones evolved from long driveways built by farmers to connect themselves (Perkins). Many of these centers were vital to the area's progression although growth and change were relatively slow in the mid-to-late 1800s in comparison to development in other areas around Atlanta.

Another influence on regional development was the connectivity the railroad provided to these newly forming communities. Roswell Junction, created in neighboring Chamblee, became an important stop in the Atlanta-Charlotte line. Then in 1880 Dunwoody connected on a spur line. Barrington King built a line linking his Roswell textile plant with the Atlanta-Charlotte line to reach external markets more efficiently (Price 1997, p. 441). Although no significant change registered in the Perimeter Center landscape, it is important to note the events occurring around the area, as they are instrumental factors leading to the land becoming a target for development.

Astride the Fulton and DeKalb boundary, Perimeter Center is most intertwined with its neighbors the city of Sandy Springs and the town of Dunwoody. On the DeKalb side locals commonly refer to the area as Dunwoody, connected to its situational context and its history. Dunwoody remained an isolated farming community until the turn of the century. Well connected by roads and railroad to Atlanta, the town became an attractive place for wealthy people to build vacation homes.

With the popularity of the suburban lifestyle in America, the area was identified as a desirable place to live. In a review of mid-century planning documents by the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC 1968) reveals that plans for the area fixated on preserving its residential character. ARMPC's stated regional goals sum up the planning perspective of the time by suggesting that "central Atlanta should remain the region's largest and most intensively developed business center, accommodating activities that cannot as well be located elsewhere: in government, business and professional services, finance, retail trade, and entertainment and the arts" (ARMPC

1968, p. 30). During the 1950s and 1960s residential migration expanded despite the fact that there were “no big chain grocery stores, no drug stores, no department stores, no car dealerships, no offices (Davis et al 2002, p. 13).”

Dunwoody and the Perimeter Center area took a drastic development turn in the 1970s. Interstate 285 was completed from Buford Highway westward to the Fulton County line, and soon thereafter a boom in economic development ensued. The area began receiving national media attention as a prime relocation spot. However, many planners argued the position that retail and office developments needed to remain near the central city and questioned the feasibility of locating new development to the suburbs. Mike Gearon was the first major developer to speculate on land in Perimeter Center. Gearon was quoted in an interview during this time as saying that, “The geographic center of downtown Atlanta is no longer downtown. It’s Ansley Park golf course. And the center of disposable income is close to North Druid Hills Road (Martin 1987, p.547).”

Construction of Perimeter Mall (1971) and adjacent office building developments ushered in rapid new changes for the area. Dunwoody, in particular, saw it as a mixed blessing. Once an isolated farming community, the northern part of DeKalb worked hard to insure that office developments remained low-density, low-rise, and not too close to existing residential neighborhoods. Dunwoody and the Dunwoody Homeowner’s Association found themselves engaged in lawsuits with commercial developers to protect the area from commercial encroachment. Suddenly there was competition over zoning, and the area quickly became a space of commodification. Disputes raged between developers and nearby residents and between both counties.

In the 1980s however, restraints on development heights and restrictions on residential densities were reduced, allowing urban development to accelerate. This was not a push to make the area any more livable but was instead a response to the rising demand of space and the need to attract new investments and tenants. It was the foresight of Perimeter Center's investors that pushed them to seek the highest and best use of Perimeter Center.

The speed at which Perimeter Center rose to an edge city out of rural farmland is nothing short of amazing. If anything, it could be considered a modern boomtown taking only thirty years to become one of the most sought after locations in the country. The ever-changing skyline shows that Perimeter Center is a slowly maturing edge city whose future is still evolving.

4.2 A strategic location

Perimeter Center is located approximately 15 miles north of Atlanta's downtown area. It is geographically situated immediately to the north of Atlanta's Interstate-285 and east of the multi-lane state tollway Georgia 400, connecting downtown with Atlanta's northern suburbs and beyond. Perimeter Center is well connected with the central city via the Georgia 400 toll road and the mass transit opportunities provided by multiple bus routes and its excellent proximity to three subway terminals outside the central city.

For over two decades, Atlanta's Perimeter Center has been a popular location for corporate headquarters (Walcott 2000). Companies located within Perimeter Center take an active role in addressing the area's central concern of maintaining an upward pattern

of economic growth and enhancing the quality of life. With strong ties to external economies, much of Perimeter Center awaits economic recovery.

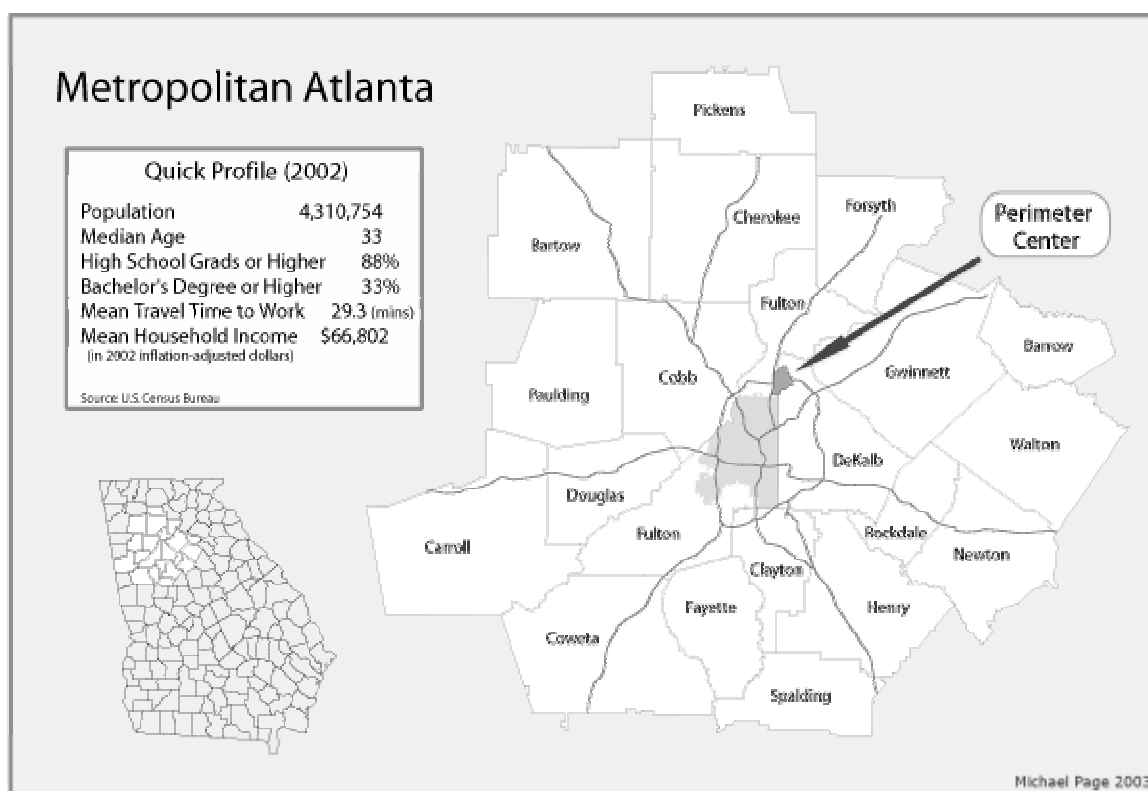


Figure 2. *Overview map of Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

While the shift to an urbanized growth in Perimeter Center is related to its vertical development, the district was created from rural farmland by surges of development based on need and economic momentum, afforded by opportunity. In many ways development in the district grew from an organic planning that managed to attract business and capital but marginalized several functional issues. As Lewis Mumford suggested more than 40 years ago, "organic planning does not begin with a preconceived goal: it moves from need to need, from opportunity to opportunity, in a series of

adaptations that themselves become increasingly coherent and purposeful, so that they generate a complex, final design, hardly less unified than a pre-formed geometric pattern (Mumford 1961, p. 302)." The net result is a highly desired district with significant flaws in circular mobility, uneven temporal land use, and place ambiguity. In recognizing such flaws, the Perimeter Center Community Improvement District (CID) actively pursues measures to "retrofit" the area's infrastructure to correct problems presented by a lack of good planning and unchecked organic growth. By addressing transportation, land use, and quality of life issues, Perimeter Center should retain its magnetic image as a prime location for retail, business and professional services, and corporate headquarters.

In recent decades Atlanta not only grew exponentially, it experienced significant sprawl and developed several economic centers that are distanced from the Central Business District (CBD). In combination, these economic centers play an essential role in the regional economy. In particular, there has been a significant growth in the location of corporate headquarters to the north of Atlanta's perimeter highway, Interstate-285 (Walcott 2000).

Growth in the Perimeter Center area has remained steady since the 1970s, developing in tandem with regional economic trends. While low-rise office parks were developed in the early 1970s (Fuji and Hartshorn 1995), more recent building has included mid to high-rise building. The area suffers from an acute deficiency in mixed-use developments, residential living space, public parks, and no identifiable "town center" other than the Mall. The strengths of Perimeter Center include its modern communications infrastructure, a strong retail component, the presence of upscale-large

capacity hotels, a regional medical complex, and the fact that it is home to the highest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in Metro Atlanta.

4.3 Atlanta's multinucleated landscape

Metropolitan Atlanta is a very interesting and complex city. Atlanta formed a focal point of the American Civil Rights Movement as well as leading the regional economy of the Southeast. In the past forty years the Atlanta region grew from just over a million people to almost four million. The rampant metropolitan growth in the metropolitan area however was extremely uneven and characterized by such immense sprawl that Atlanta has become a poster child for the phenomenon. A catalyst can be found in flaws of the 1989 Georgia Planning Act that gives very little binding power to land use plans and is marked with zoning ordinances that are designed to segregate land uses rather than bring them together (Jaret 2003, p.170).

In the 1980s the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau began a promotion campaign to improve the city's image, in the course of which the city's slogan became "Atlanta: The City without Limits". A chapter in *Urban Sprawl* (2002) illustrates just how fitting the slogan of "The City without Limits" is for the Atlanta context:

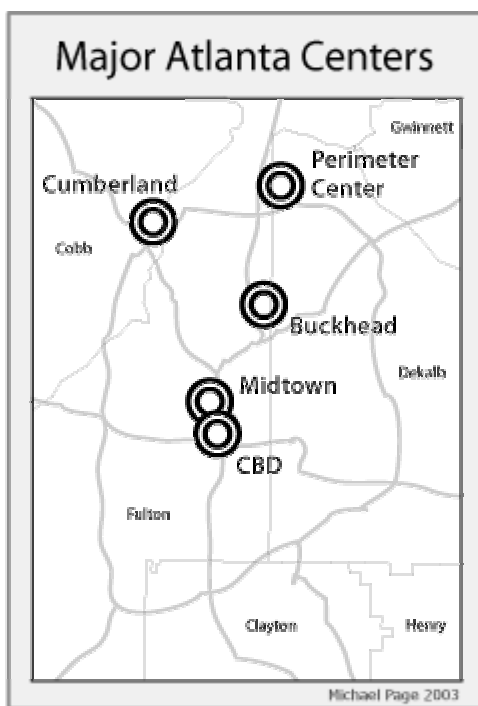
" . . . a metropolitan area that had no boundaries hemming in outward expansion – no coastline, no mountain range, no wide river or canyon, and no national park or other large preserved place that limited the extent or direction of new growth. Furthermore, neither national and regional

economic conditions nor the state and local political legal systems' land use policies placed many limits on the amount of new suburban subdivisions, condominium complexes, office parks, shopping malls, corporate campuses, and wide roads that could be built (Jaret 2002, p. 166).”

Atlanta's sprawl cannot entirely be attributed to the unlimited availability of space. As suburban neighborhoods sprung up along the urban fringes in the 1940s, concern grew over how to get the workforce from the new suburbs to the central city where the concentrations of jobs were at the time. The Lochner Report (1946) stated that Atlanta was in need of a highway to connect work and home. Atlanta officials agreed and sought funding to begin the large-scale project. More money became available with the unveiling of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. The system had a profound effect on the urban morphology of Atlanta: “Rather than being a conduit for suburban access to the city of Atlanta, the highways have made outlying areas more accessible, and places near highway exits have become nodes of development (either low-density sprawl or high-density “edge cities”) that appear farther and farther from the city (Jaret 2002, p. 177).” The impact of Atlanta's highway structure is evident with a glance at the major centers in Atlanta (see Figure 3).

Hartshorn and Muller (1989) refer to the high-order, multifunctional activity centers that emerged in the suburban ring around Atlanta as “suburban downtowns”. Since the late 1970s, the spatial organization of the city shifted from central city dominance to a multinucleated landscape. The Atlanta CBD experienced a marked

decline in its share of economic prominence within the metropolitan framework. In recent decades, economic activity has been shared among multiple centers. While often in limited competition with each other, the new urban centers and the CBD has become an important collective economic engine for the metropolitan Atlanta economy and the region at large (Walcott 2000).



- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 1920-1940 | Spillover/Specialization |
| 2. | 1940-1960 | Dispersal/Diversification |
| 3. | 1960-
Present | Infilling/Multinucleation |

Table 7. *Erickson's growth model of the suburban space economy* Source: Erickson

Figure 3. *Major Atlanta Centers*
Source: Author

Hartshorn and Muller (1989) expanded upon Erickson's (1983) growth model of suburban economic development to explain the emergence of suburban downtowns. Erickson's model classified the growth stages of the suburban space economy and described three stages of evolution (see Table 7) with emphasis on economic pattern

changes. Hartshorn and Muller modified Erickson's model by supplementing it with a fourth stage (see Table 8). In doing so, the space economy acquired an urban face.

In Hartshorn and Muller's case study they recognized two locations that exceeded the CBD in terms of office space and locational prominence -- Cumberland/Galleria and Perimeter/GA-400-- both of which are on the north side of Atlanta. In a later study, Fuji and Hartshorn (1995) examined four distinct downtowns in Atlanta, which included Cumberland/1-75 (Galleria), Perimeter/GA-400, Buckhead/Lenox, and Atlanta's CBD. Employment location data was classified into three areas: retail, FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate), and services. Results of the study indicated that there was employment growth in each downtown. However, Perimeter/GA-400 and Cumberland/1-75 experienced the highest employment growth between 1970 and 1990.

Fuji and Hartshorn's study identified the changing patterns of the urban-economic landscape of metropolitan Atlanta area. Their findings indicated that the CBD remained an important facet of Atlanta's multinucleated character and that the downtowns of Atlanta enjoyed excellent connectivity. The study also demonstrated the competitive advantage of Perimeter Center and its strategic location, which enabled it to attract business.

“The Perimeter/GA-400 downtown possesses the most balanced employment profile of any Atlanta downtown in the 1990s. The highest concentration of large corporate office headquarters functions in the Atlanta market further distinguishes the Perimeter Center/GA-400 area today (Fuji and Hartshorn 1995, p. 694).”

1 Pre-1960	2 1960-1970	3 1970-1980	4 1980-Present
Bedroom Community	Independence	Catalytic Growth	High-Rise/High Tech
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High rates of city-to-suburb migration - Suburban residents tend to work in central city - Low order convenience goods available - High order retailing remains in central city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High order retail decentralizes via regional mall - Becomes a magnet for other business activity - Location-cost differential between city and suburb vanishes - Suburban office parks emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maturation of economic development - Agglomeration - Specialized office functions - High-income housing communities develops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Locational prestige - High-rise developments - Decked parking structures - Upscale “cluster” housing

Figure 8. *Hartshorn and Muller's growth model* Source: Hartshorn and Muller

The four downtowns of Atlanta are vital foci that stimulate regional economic growth. With recent downturns in the economy, local leadership is even more concerned about retaining existing businesses and luring new businesses to the area. Maintaining the highest and best use of the land within Perimeter Center is vital to both the local and the regional economy. With this in mind, it is beneficial to examine current trends at the local level in order to provide case studies for comparison or reveal possible indicators of a regional scope.

4.4 Perimeter Center and the regional economy

Today, land use in Perimeter Center is primarily divided between retail and office space. The district has become an ideal location for business and professional services, and corporate headquarters. Supportive services to local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and printers thrive in this district. Such services reap the complementary benefits of retail establishments that expand beyond the corporate consumer base and attract regional consumers. Therefore, blends of retail and office land uses bring Perimeter Center into Edge City status.

In an analysis of location choices by business and professional services and subsequent agglomerations in places like Perimeter Center, Gong and Wheeler (2002) recognized the necessity to decompose the agglomerations into specific factors. A survey of previous research led to a hypothesis that the “location of business and professional services is positively related to labor characteristics such as educational attainment and

flexible female part-time workers, to convenience in transportation such as access to public transit and highways, and to closely related functions such as corporate headquarters (Gong and Wheeler 2002, p. 345).” These researchers supported earlier descriptive work by conducting two regression analyses of data collected between 1982 and 1992.

Edge City	Square Feet (millions)	Metropolitan Area	Direction from CBD	Miles from CBD
Costa Mesa	28.5	Los Angeles	South & East	33
Post Oak (uptown)	21.1	Houston	West	6
Tysons Corner	17.9	Washington	West	10
Cumberland Galleria	17.6	Atlanta	North & West	10
Southfield	17.5	Detroit	North & West	13
Perimeter Center	15.9	Atlanta	North	12
Troy	13.6	Detroit	North	17
LBJ Freeway	13.2	Dallas	North	10
Far North Dallas	12.3	Dallas	North	17
South Bay/LAX	11.6	Los Angeles	South	10
Total	169.2			

Table 9. Office space among the top ten edge cities in *Office Space, Top Ten Edge Cities (1999)* Source: *Black's Guide to Office Leasing* as in Lang, 2003

Gong and Wheeler (2002) spatially classified the data into concentric suburban rings originating from the CBD. In their analysis, it was revealed that between 1982 and 1997 the highest positive percentage of change in business and professional service employment occurred in the suburban rings of 6 to 10 miles and 11 to 15 miles while the CBD experienced a negative change. Both Perimeter Center and Cumberland are within this zone and are distanced approximately 10 to 12 miles from the CBD. Therefore, they assessed that in Atlanta “most growth occurred in suburban business centers such as the

Perimeter and Cumberland, leading to a relative decline in the central city and a clear trend toward suburbanization between 1982 and 1997 (Gong and Wheeler, 2002, 356).”

Through a detailed analysis of corporate data sets and surveys, Walcott (2000) illustrates the locational choices and patterns that occurred in Atlanta between 1960-1997. Atlanta’s preferred “suburban wedge” to the north of the central city and the “magnetic pull of new highways” is further explored. Walcott confirms, “firms with 500 or more employees are distributed in the center of the city and around the northern periphery, on and north of the Perimeter Center (Walcott 2000, 201).” Although the distinct locational advantages of Perimeter Center are apparent, the locational choices made by executives explain that human and economic factors are as equally important.

In a sample of CEOs across Atlanta, Walcott surveyed several variables of locational choice for major firms. The top three reasons respondents gave for their locational choice included land cost and lease terms, labor market, and highway access. Although specific locational choices within the business community of Perimeter Center have not been surveyed, the results of Walcott’s survey can easily be recognized in the Perimeter Center context. While land costs in Perimeter Center have significantly increased in the past few decades, it is a prime location from which to attract employees from nearby upscale and middle class neighborhoods. Further, the district has excellent access to highways and mass transit.

In the case of Perimeter Center, a location survey could be adapted to measure the gravitational pull of Perimeter Center. As illustrated by Walcott, CEOs do exhibit some hierarchical patterns in reasoning. However, a more accurate measure of Perimeter

Center's advantages would include a place specific scaling, using the variables in Walcott's survey (see Table 10). A temporal and place specific measure could prove useful in gauging current marketability of Perimeter Center.

In the Perimeter Center market, corporate leadership apparently needs to respond not only to administrative and planning necessities but to also develop effective marketing strategies. The self-taxing Perimeter CID effectively organizes the district's administration, solicits development funds, and pursues planning goals. However, the success in Perimeter Center is not linked to any municipal government entity but rather the business leadership of the district that is divided between the two county boards of Fulton and DeKalb within the CID framework. With a yearly average of \$2.5 million coming from commercial property owners the CIDs have been able to leverage their funding to gain \$200 million to make infrastructure improvements (Hall, 2004). The focus of these projects has been to address the circulatory transit problems for cars, bikes, and pedestrians.

Companies with regional offices located in Perimeter Center are beginning to understand the effects on the landscape instigated by rapid growth and minimal planning. Concerned over attracting quality employees and preserving the locational value of Perimeter Center, several companies are working together to address critical issues.

<u>Reasons</u>
Land Costs/Lease Terms
Labor Market
Highway Access
Visibility/Prestige
Tax Policies
Client Base
Airport
Major Suppliers
Other Firms

Table 10. *Variables used in Walcott's survey*
Source: Walcott

Many of the problems that the edge city faces include traffic congestion, the design of its built environment, and identity.

The most obvious problem in the Perimeter Center area is traffic congestion and the elements that propel it. There is an extreme temporal flux in the way people use the space. The area is heavily weighted towards a daytime population and therefore lacks a twenty-four hour “mixed-use” environment. People drive to work there and park in car garages and at lunch they get in their car and drive to the mall for lunch or for some quick shopping. The daytime population departs in the afternoon, leaving the area dependent on adjacent single-family neighborhoods for after-hours retail activity. This jobs and housing imbalance causes the space to be hyper-traversed and only compounds the problem.

Another deficiency aiding traffic problems is the lagging opportunities in circulatory transit. Perimeter Center could benefit greatly with the addition of pedestrian or bicycle opportunities common in real downtowns. With the presence of three rapid rail stations in the area and a wide variety of retail, office, and service functions it is only logical to find a better way to interconnect these nodes without the automobile.

Another key problem in Perimeter Center lies in its **lack of identity**. As mentioned earlier, Perimeter Center’s only history is its roots as agricultural farmland. Perimeter Center is therefore in the beginning stages of identity creation. Unfortunately this is hampered by the lack of a 24-hour population, and the area is often perceived as merely a space of consumption. The primary residential focus has been on adjacent neighborhoods and the common perception has been that these groups are “consumers”

rather than “civic” patrons. Likewise, adjacent neighborhoods retain their identity ties with places like Dunwoody, Chamblee, or Sandy Springs.

With many of these problems in mind, the key actors involved in ensuring Perimeter Center’s success are engaged in developing strategies to address these problems. Because the area lacks singularity in its government/administration focus, several non-governmental planning and development organizations have been involved or created. These include the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Perimeter Community Improvement District (PCID), and the Perimeter Transportation Coalition (PTC). These organizations address the primary objective of area shareholders to continue Perimeter Center’s pattern of economic growth while attracting new investment. Their real challenge is channeling funds appropriately so that the whole area comes together as a cohesive urban center that is livable.

4.5 Retrofitting Perimeter Center

Perimeter Center is a perfect example of a maturing edge city and is a space of rapid and aggressive incorporation. It has become a vital regional player in attracting new companies to the South. In many ways the county governments cannot keep pace with development in the edge city. Often funds from the private sector need to be channeled to preserve vitality and maintain growth trajectories. One response is the creation of a Community Improvement District (CID). The Perimeter Center Community Improvement District (PCID) was formed in 1998 to represent DeKalb County businesses and Fulton County businesses for a charter period of six years.

Although the organization is formed by state legislation, it operates as an independent private sector organization. In many ways it resembles typical neighborhood or business associations. It collects money from business while also vying for state and federal funding. Therefore it maintains a close relationship with the county governments and the Atlanta Regional Commission. The PCID reports that it will yield an average of \$1.2M annually in special tax funds that will be directed to infrastructure improvements and the promotion of transportation alternatives. Progress is already underway and several side/crosswalks have been added or corrected. Therefore the PCIDs main target will not only be to improve existing lines of communication but to decrease automobile traffic and emphasis. In this regard the PCID is involved in place making where the focus is on separating pedestrians from automobiles.

In concert with the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), funds were directed to create a comprehensive analysis of Perimeter Center. The purpose was to direct development in the area and provide a plan and a coherent purpose. The study published in 2002 initiated a community character survey deemed the "Perimeter Compass". Data collection was in the form of a rated-scale survey containing both visual and textual elements. The survey came in two forms, detailed and abbreviated.

The "Perimeter Compass" yielded what was described as four "compass points" for formulating a vision for development. The "compass points" addressed land use, transportation, implementation, and sense of place. The first "compass point" seeks to bring households and jobs into balance, preserve existing single-family neighborhoods,

and preserve space in general. The second basically seeks to enhance internal circulation, create better through traffic flow, and improve pedestrian mobility. The third is to devise an effective implementation direction. The fourth is the concern of this M.A. thesis, the creation of a sense of place.

While the plans enshrine Perimeter Mall as the primary focal point for Perimeter Center, The Perimeter Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) seeks to create a identifiable “town center” adjacent to the Mall with a clearly defined open space designed to be used for outdoor events/gathering. The plan will create thematic walkable districts each centering on live/work, entertainment, and shopping respectively. Finally, the plan calls for standardization in design and development.

The initial review of the plan is quite impressive and the completion of any of the proposed improvements would be worthwhile. On the surface, Perimeter Center seems the optimum space for such development, but with what substance could it be melded? The creation of compact and walkable mixed-use communities may be the latest buzz in planning but it has not often been the reality. Lang in fact recognized that development in the metropolitan periphery has cultivated “a diffuse pattern of commercial corridors and isolated office parks that are spread out over hundreds of square miles and are not recognized by the public as being of a single destination (Barnett 2002, p. 11-12).”

Perimeter Center transitioned from the site of suburban fringe shopping mall to an edge city with a primary focus on the office market. Evidence suggests that the focus is now shifting to the retail market while a lack of housing remains apparent. Although Perimeter Center possesses a limited residential component, it does contain several

beneficial amenities that make it a desirable location. The aging Perimeter Mall went through several processes of redevelopment over the years. Its owners have obviously seen a repeated return in their investment that prompted many upgrades. The mall is also well connected to consumers in adjacent communities, regional visitors using the Interstate highway and mass transit. More than ample surrounding retail exists, but unfortunately many of these shops are not as easily accessible without an automobile.

In Perimeter Center's southern end lies a well-connected trio of hospitals including Saint Joseph's, Northside, and Children's Hospitals. Nearby is a full complement of medical office buildings. This agglomeration is well situated with its own MARTA rail station in a central location. Not only does this cluster provide great opportunities for employment, it also serves adjacent neighborhoods.

Although Perimeter Center encompasses a wealth of amenities and is optimally geographically situated for regional access, there are certain flaws that can be attributed to its previous experience of unguided growth. The PCID did a great job in identifying the flaws of Perimeter Center's topography. The organization's promotional packets describe how Perimeter Center can be a stronger place by addressing issues of interconnectivity, attracting a 24-hour population, and increasing the connection between commerce and the surrounding community. Goals include both long-range plans and short-term improvements, primarily in the area of transportation and mobility. The PCID seeks to implement several pedestrian improvements such as adding three miles of sidewalks and making twenty-two intersections pedestrian friendly. The plan includes several streetscape projects to make pedestrians feel safe and welcome.

The PCID is also considering ways to make circulatory transit within Perimeter Center easier and to give people more options. Several attempts occurred to get a consolidated shuttle service off the ground and to encourage biking, but the course is slow because of reliance on the automobile and the difficulty in funding such projects. Road improvements are proving the most successful in the area. Existing bridge improvements and a new fly-over bridge both have plans to accommodate alternate modes of travel other than the automobile and will better connect the fragmented portions of Perimeter Center.

The PCID also claims that it is committed to bringing community together in the area, but it is unclear whether this is the business community, residential community, or both. However, PCID's acknowledged concern about the importance of an identity and a sense of place is a step in the right direction. The PCID does take a proactive approach in informing and communicating with both businesses and people in the area. While the PCID's vision includes concepts of identity and sense of place, implementing such an endeavor can be a daunting task.

Sense of place seems a mere footnote in the LCI plans for Perimeter Center. A place cannot be given proper and positive identity simply through the use of marketing and iconography. Further, retrofitting Perimeter Center with an identity and a sense of place will require much more than the manipulation of the physical space. While infrastructure and functionality are key components in making a place better, designs and promotional efforts should abandon their vision of the idealized place in exchange for a practical vision on creating what people need to make Perimeter Center their own.

CHAPTER FIVE: EVIDENCE FROM PERIMETER CENTER

5.1 Urban change

Atlanta's north side experienced several waves of growth and urban recycling since the 1980s.

“The north side has seen the spread of ever more expensive and exclusive cul-des-sac suburban divisions and gated communities, larger and more extravagant malls, buyouts of old suburban, split-level residential areas that are replaced with post-modern office towers, and growth of the suburban “edge-city” complexes (Jaret 2002, p.179).”

It is in and around edge cities, such as Perimeter Center, that many changes occurred of a more urban character than further out in the suburbs.

According to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Perimeter Community Improvement Districts (PCID) the population was 38, 134 in 2000 with 30,618 households. The ARC bases the Perimeter Center population and housing count as a section of tracts within the Chamblee Superdistrict based on the 2000 U.S. Census using census tracts 101.01, 101.09, and 101.10 in Fulton County and 212.02 and 212.07 in DeKalb County. In map depictions both the ARC and the PCID are conservative in delineating the borders of Perimeter Center to include only the business areas rather than claiming some adjacent residential areas. On the other hand, the ARC includes the residential areas in its measurement of population and housing at the census tract level. Therefore, the map delineation and census tract measurement is an inaccurate match. Entire tracts extend population and housing counts well into adjacent areas like Sandy

Springs, Dunwoody, Chamblee, and North Atlanta. Figure 4 shows the census tracts used by the ARC.

It should also be noted that the Fulton County side of Perimeter Center is now being claimed as a part of the recently incorporated city of Sandy Springs. Therefore, there may be some future debate as to what constitutes the border between Perimeter Center and Sandy Springs. Another possibility is that Perimeter Center will become a functional part of Sandy Springs however it is too soon for speculation.

There are significant inconsistencies in both the written and illustrative designations of the Perimeter Center area. The census block map in Figure 5 uses key transportation routes and natural features that are also utilized by the U.S. Census Bureau and gives some balance to the visual map delineation presented by the ARC and the census blocks that should be included as part of Perimeter Center by analysis of author. Further, measurement was taken to the block level with appropriate consideration of adjoining residential areas thus gaining a more accurate count of both population and housing in the Perimeter Center area. In this case, Perimeter Center had a population of 12,697 in 2000 that overwhelmingly self-identified as white (See Table 11) spread among 7,891 housing units.

The ARC classifies most of its socioeconomic data from the designated Chamblee Superdistrict, which includes the Dekalb portion of the northern arc of I-285 and the north side of the I-85 corridor. The total population was 110,589 for the superdistrict in 2000 of which 32,737 self-identified as black or other races. Therefore it should be noted that the superdistrict is fairly diversified from upscale Dunwoody homes to the

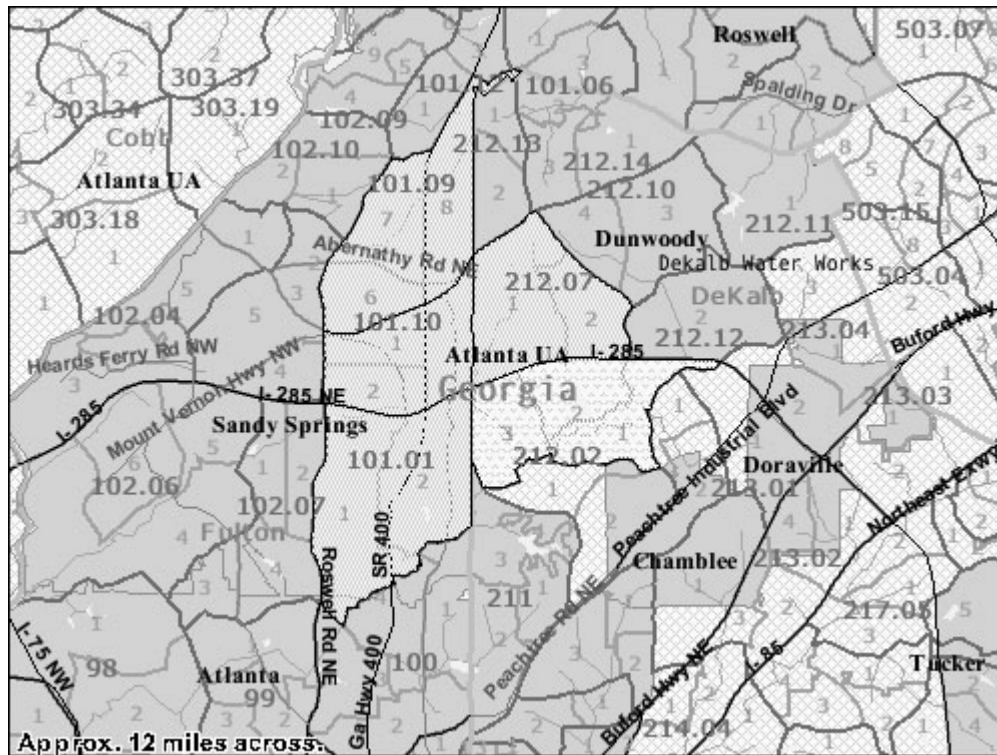


Figure 4. *Map of Perimeter Center as illustrated by census tract, 2000.*
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

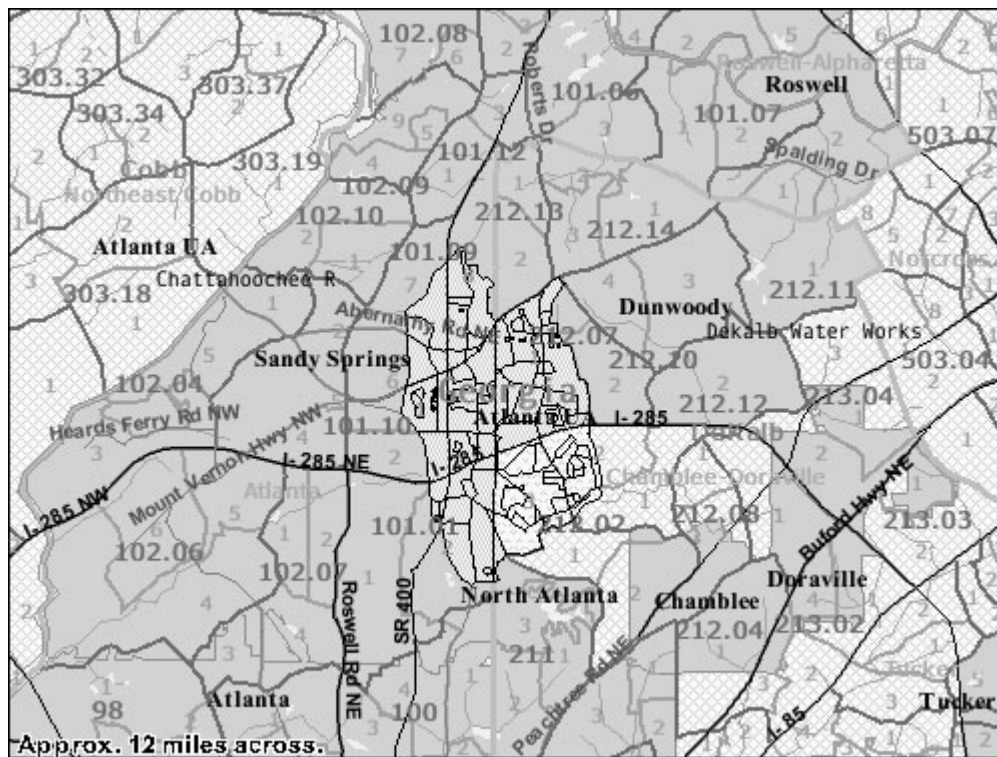


Figure 5. *Map of Perimeter Center as illustrated by census block, 2000.*
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Asian and Hispanic neighborhoods along the Buford Highway corridor, which are becoming known as the International Village. Further, the cities of Doraville and Chamblee are also located within this superdistrict.

Services are the leading category of employment providing 38,989 of the 124,525 jobs reported in 1999 by the ARC. The second provider of jobs is the retail trade with 18,663 jobs while transportation, communications, and utilities, wholesale, and F.I.R.E. share similar levels producing just over 14,000 jobs each. Among the superdistrict there seems to be a good balance between employment and population figures. However, the

White	10,762
Black or African American	847
Asian	777
Two or more races	183
Some other race	97
American Indian or Alaskan Native	21
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	10
Total Population	12,697

Table 11. *Racial breakdown of Perimeter Center by census block, 2000.* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

superdistrict is somewhat skewed statistically because of there are striking differences between areas within the superdistrict. In terms of social dynamics, employment, and functions Perimeter Center has much more in common with nearby Sandy Springs than Doraville, Chamblee, or the Buford Highway corridor.

In Atlanta people tend to operate at the regional scale. Home, work, and leisure spheres can be separated by great distance. Perimeter Center and other places are beginning to see the value in becoming complete home, work, and leisure environments. If places become balanced in office space, retail establishments, homes, and public space there is a possibility that individuals and families would carry out all spheres of life within the same place. Perimeter Center is on a path to add more residential and retailing to balance with existing office space. With an equal balance of functions Perimeter Center does begin to exhibit city-like qualities. However a problem exists. While we can make places to include more mixed-use developments or make areas more livable, do people really have the freedom of choice as to where they work, where they live, or where they can afford to shop?

There are two interesting changes in land use that have emerged on the landscape of Perimeter Center in recent years. New developments in the area are characterized by residential in-fill and brownfield redevelopment. Much of the local housing boom occurred on the fringes of Perimeter Center from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. However, the boom in office developments of the 1980s increased land values and spurred zoning changes. Scattered throughout the residential, office, hospital, and retail developments in Perimeter Center either buildings were removed to make room for new

ones or the spaces in-between that were not originally targeted for development are now being developed.

In one particular instance, an entire residential neighborhood, Lake Hearn built just to the south of Interstate 285 in the early 1960s was bought out for office space speculation and torn down in the early 1980s. That same space now contains high-rise offices, hotels, and restaurants along a parkway connecting the hospital district with Ashford-Dunwoody and Peachtree-Dunwoody (see Figure 6). The parkway is well landscaped and equipped with a very nice sidewalk although pedestrians rarely use it. The largest of the towers houses the eastern regional offices of Hewlett-Packard.



Figure 6. *Perimeter Summit Parkway, 2004* Source: Author

Although there is no significant retail use along this parkway, a residential component is cropping up. A large-scale condominium project exists beyond the trees in Figure 6. Just behind the photographer stands the location of a future townhouse development that skirts some single-family neighborhoods to the south. It is among these

older single-family homes that infill residential redevelopment is occurring wherein a few homes on large lots are giving way to many upscale homes on small lots.

An increasingly common occurrence is the total removal of an existing house to build a newer and more expensive house (see Figures 9 and 10). The market has rendered many houses obsolete and they become the target of redevelopment to sell more expensive homes. In Figure 9 the house being built on this lot advertises a sale price of \$839,900. Older two or three bedroom homes in the same and surrounding neighborhoods, such as those in Figures 7 and 8, sell in the range of \$200,000 to \$250,000. The new homes often have four or more bedrooms, three or more bathrooms, and typically have a three-car garage.

This interesting phenomenon of removing older structures to make way for new ones is also occurring among the aging office developments built in the area. The trend in the past for many of these office developments has been a multi-story building within a sea of at grade parking. Some of these large-scale horizontal developments are being removed to reconfigure the space to its highest and best use. Figure 11 was once the site of Bellsouth, a large regional telecommunications company. The company erected a much larger pair of buildings closer to the central city, leaving this site vacant for many years. In place of the building in Figure 10 will be a much larger mixed-use development, Perimeter Place, with both a retail component and a condominium high-rise. Several restaurants will also locate in this development, along with big-box retailers such as a Super Target, Ross, and a Loehmann's.



Figure 7. *Split-level renovated house near Ashford-Dunwoody Rd. built in the early 1960s, 2004* Source: Author



Figure 8. *Ranch-style house near Ashford-Dunwoody Rd., originally built in the early 1970s, 2004* Source: Author



Figure 9. *House in same subdivision as Figure 7 removed for new development, 2004*
Source: Author



Figure 10. *New infill home being built near Peachtree-Dunwoody Rd., 2004* Source:
Author



Figure 11. *The former site of Bellsouth offices, 2004* Source: Author

Figure 12 illustrates the removal of another office building that stood vacant for several years. Multistory construction is already underway at this site (see Figure 13). Some other newer office developments of similar size, a swath of new apartment homes to its rear, and a strip-mall flank the building with big-box retailer Wal-Mart which is expanding to compete with the new Super Target. Directly beside this building remains one of the few historic features in Perimeter Center, the Spruill Gallery, which was once a local farmhouse.



Figure 12. *The removal of a vacant office building, 2004* Source: Author



Figure 13. *New construction at the same site as Figure 12, 2005* Source: Author

The big-boxes and multi-story office complexes still dominate the landscape (see Figure 14). However, there is beginning to be more residential in-filling, such as townhomes, as well as larger apartment developments. Unfortunately many of these new residential components remain somewhat disconnected from nearby office and retail functions because of a universal lack of pedestrian orientation in Perimeter Center, rather than considerations of distance.



Figure 14. *A major home improvement warehouse and a wholesale membership club,* 2004 Source: Author

Neighboring Dunwoody Village has made attempts at aesthetic uniformity in its retail shops, which produces mediocre success in evoking a sense of place. However, it is the presence of individual often-independent boutiques, shops, and restaurants that do give it character. The dilemma for Dunwoody Village is that its was still designed for the automobile where people to not make multiple stops on foot instead the travel from parking lot to parking lot for functional stops. There is not much of a chance for informal public engagement unless it is centered on a specific event. In many ways, Dunwoody's center is used to serve adjacent neighborhoods that are really only accessible by automobile.

A similar situation exists in Perimeter Center where attempts to evoke a sense of place is primarily an aesthetic consideration. Perimeter Center has multiple power centers surrounding the mall. Congruency and connectivity among destinations is a key issue for making the area functional to the pedestrian as well as the automobile. A visitor to a hotel or that has arrived by mass transit should be able to access all the power centers without having to walk through a sea of parking lots, maneuver across landscape borders, or have to walk on the fringe of a busy street. Instead, destinations should also feel connected either by automobile, circulatory transit, or on foot.

A significant barrier to this possibility hinges on the attitudes of developers and overcoming the distance between destinations. Past developments have been very inward looking in that they want to become the single primary destination for potential customers. In doing so, they often isolate themselves even to the degree of disconnecting their parking lots with adjacent ones. Power centers may be competitive among themselves but by spatially isolating themselves they miss out on agglomerative pluses, for example, complementary retail or services. Further, if the LCI plans are implemented without deviation from the original plan the power centers that are best connected with the town center, Perimeter Mall and outlying areas, will benefit the most.

The Perimeter Mall has also gone through significant changes and renovations in recent years. The mall's original design anchored by two department stores has been expanded to four today and its inward focus has morphed now to create a street-facing complex with several boutiques and restaurants. Further, the aging J.C. Penny department store was torn down in 2003 and replaced by a new Dillard's store in 2005 while Bloomingdale's took over and renovated the space previously occupied by Macy's. Macy's had recently merged with Rich's and the new Macy's took over the site formerly operated by Rich's.

Several projects in the works gives heed to future mixed-use development. The emphasis on retail in recent years involves eight power centers that ring around the mall retail core. While the office market still languishes, more retail and housing promise to make the area more mixed-use in the future. The new 42-acre Perimeter Place development which includes a Super Target and a Archer Farms as retail anchors also includes a 325-unit apartment project and a 27-story, 220-unit condominium tower (Barry

2004). Many of the shops will include apartments above the storefronts. Although many development projects still cater to the automobile, the presence of a 24-hour population is evidence that Perimeter Center is moving towards creating a truly walkable and livable environment.



Figure 15. *Perimeter Mall facing Ashford-Dunwoody Rd., 2005* Source: Author

The Perimeter Community Improvement District (PCID) has also been very successful in attracting investment and attention to several improvement projects. The PCID works hard to push the “fly-over” bridge project. This 20 million dollar project will be instrumental in connecting the southern section of Perimeter Center with the larger northern section (Hall, 2004). The proposed “fly-over” bridge consists of a 4-lane

divided roadway that includes pedestrian and bike paths. Its purpose is to alleviate problems with circulatory access rather than bring people on and off the Interstate.

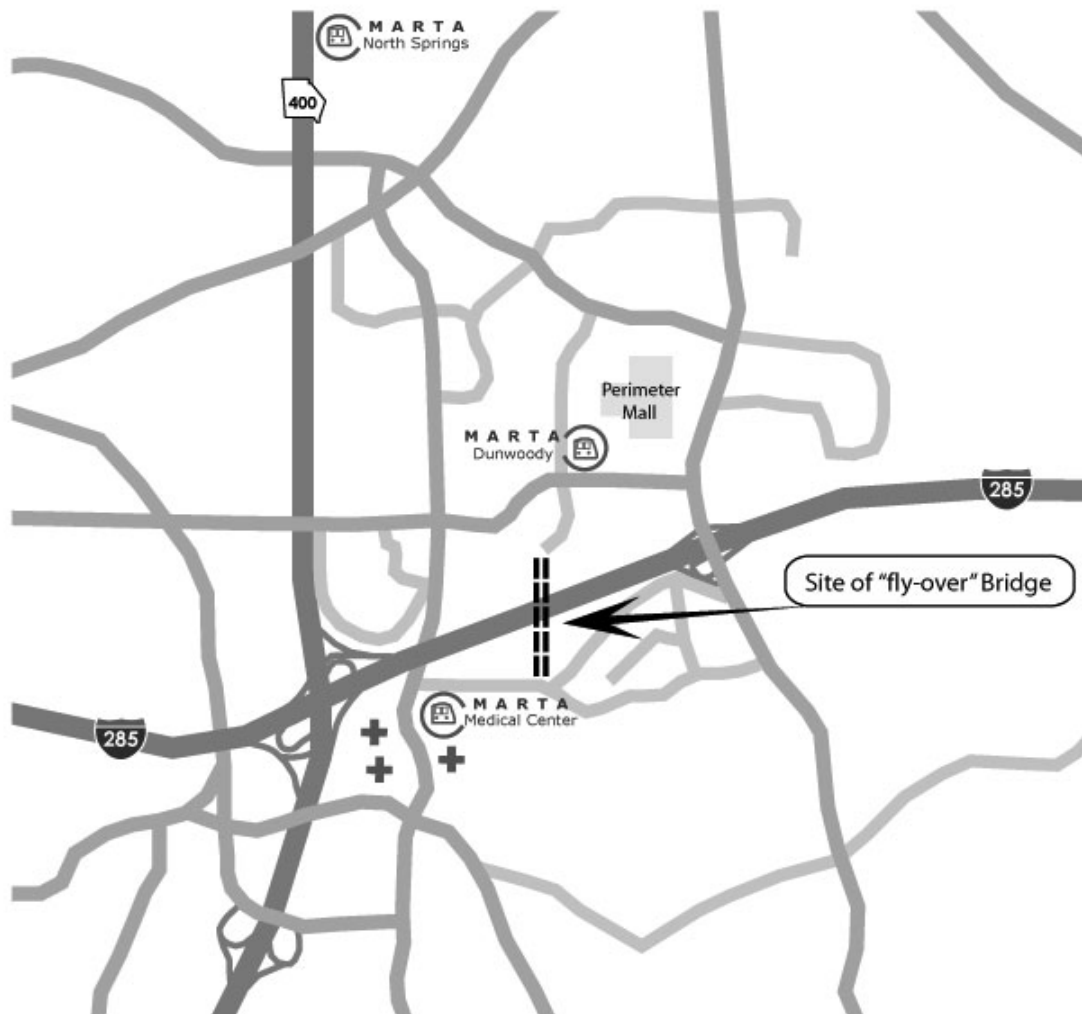


Figure 16. *Map of location of “fly-over” bridge at I-285, 2005* Source: Author

While the project is designed to address traffic congestion it will also give greater pedestrian access from southern portions of Perimeter Center to the Dunwoody MARTA station to offices and residential areas just south of the Interstate. The project will also strengthen the connection between the medical offices and hospitals of Perimeter Center with the shopping, hotel, and restaurant area. It is probable this new connection will

contribute to easing public fragmentation perceptions. The project was originally slated to begin in 2004 but construction actually began in the summer of 2005.



Figure 17. Southern site of “fly-over” bridge at I-285, 2005 Source: Author

A priority initiative pushed by the PCID involves pedestrian improvements. The primary focus of these infrastructure investments is the area surrounding the three MARTA stations in the vicinity: Medical Center, Dunwoody, and North Springs. Over \$5 million in pedestrian improvements are underway (Frankston 2004). Many areas around the MARTA stations were more conducive to automobile access rather than the pedestrian, due to the large distances between developments and large parking decks and surface lots between buildings.



Figure 18. Northern site of “fly-over” bridge at I-285, 2004 Source: Author



Figure 19. Northern construction site of “fly-over” bridge at I-285, 2005 Source: Author



Figure 20. *Hammond Drive sidewalk improvements near Ashford-Dunwoody and Perimeter Mall, 2004* Source: Author

Figure 20 shows the implementation of the pedestrian project on Hammond Drive. Pedestrian traffic has always been highly concentrated in this area because of nearby retail and hotel uses. People often dodged traffic or cut through landscape borders due to the lack of proper crosswalks or sidewalks. The photograph in Figure 20 was taken from the Dunwoody MARTA station platform, to the left is Perimeter Mall, to the right is a power center, and in the background of the photo is the Crown Plaza and Ravinia office

complex. Pedestrian improvements will not only make the area safer but will also make the area more aesthetically pleasing no matter how you choose to access the area.



Figure 21. *Intersection and crosswalk improvements, 2004* Source: Author

The sidewalks shown in Figure 20 are part of a larger initiative to make pedestrian improvements throughout Perimeter Center. As shown in Figure 21 there have also been upgrades to crosswalk functionality and aesthetics including decorative traffic lights. The previous design of many intersections in the area demonstrated no regard for pedestrians.

Another changing aspect of Perimeter Center concerns the stratification of people using the space. The three transit stations in the area have facilitated a greater spatial interaction of people from other parts of Atlanta with the area. Transit brought improved access for service workers to the area and new customers to the retail establishments. But the increase of spatial interaction can also draw the socially undesirable. It is probable

that crime, vagrancy, and panhandling may increase. In one particular observation a panhandler solicited a row of luxury cars rather than pedestrian passersby. Such urban realities, however, should be expected in a place becoming exceedingly urban.

Perimeter Center is marked with significant changes that are typically urban in character. In many ways, the administration of Perimeter Center faces a growing challenge. Perimeter Center is building new high-rise condominiums, gaining more upscale retail and restaurants, expanding its office market, and incorporating many infrastructure improvements to facilities. Without a municipal government, however, Perimeter Center needs to appeal to the two counties that bisect the area for services or find alternative solutions.

5.2 Edge city problems remain

Despite many urban changes and improvements, an encounter with Perimeter Center may still prove disorienting. Walking through Perimeter Center one may be baffled by the sidewalk that ends or wonder about the safest way to get across the street. One may have to drive an extra mile often sitting in traffic just to get to an office just across the freeway. Then, of course, there is the challenge of shopping by car where it is necessary to get back on the main thoroughfare just to get to the adjacent retailers or big box retailers because parking lots and decks remain unconnected. While one may appreciate the lush landscaping in the median of the road, one may begin to wonder where there might be a park to take the dog for a walk or to enjoy a rejuvenating lunch in an open space before that hectic afternoon at the office. Unfortunately, a visit to

Perimeter Center shows there is a long way to go before this edge city is truly livable.

The biggest improvements in Perimeter Center to date are the intersection improvements and new sidewalks. However, many sidewalk and interchange improvements remain incomplete. In some places crosswalks exist without sidewalks and in others sidewalks exist with no crosswalks. Referring back to Figure 21, beyond the intersection improvement there is no sidewalk. Despite these facts, Perimeter Center is gaining a pedestrian friendly reputation. Once the project is complete the biggest challenge will be to get more people out of their car when traveling in and around Perimeter Center.

The Perimeter Transportation Coalition (PTC) and others have attempted to offer shuttles for employees during peak traffic times such as lunch or during the holiday season. During peak shopping times of the year the surface parking lot at Perimeter Mall reaches capacity. Figure 22 is an example of shuttles that exist but implementing any circulatory transit system, even company shuttles, remains problematic.

Several roadway improvements are proposed but are often subject to a review of adjoining proposals and the release of key transportation studies that often involve the Interstate Highway and Georgia 400 Tollway. Perhaps the most dramatic of these improvements will be “fly-over” bridge, as it will connect a new live and work development with the center of Perimeter Center while offering road traffic another venue. Implementation of any of the roadway improvements frequently becomes snagged by delays.



Figure 22. A Perimeter Center Shuttle, 2004 Source: Author

Public and open greenspace constitutes another key edge city problem in Perimeter Center. What might be public space in Perimeter Center actually remains private. The focus of public activity therefore occurs in places of consumption, such as the mall. This space is often promoted as public. A prime example of a private public space is Perimeter Mall's food court. During holiday periods there is usually some sort of public activity. For example, a trick-and-treat for the kids is held during Halloween and often there are displays and music during Christmas.

Although a few people can be observed in a parking lot here and there, Perimeter Center is not by any means a high traffic pedestrian area. The streets are for the automobile and the sidewalks are strictly to get people from one place to another. Perimeter Center is all about movement and its sites or locations for pause are well controlled. There are no public parks or squares in Perimeter Center. If one is lucky

enough to work for one of the large office complexes, they can find a small plaza or footpath dedicated for that firm's employees but these spaces are not public by any means.

With so much privately managed public space and virtually no accessible public space it seems that the Perimeter Center is not really a city at all. Where we were once citizens of the city we are now customers of the edge city. Charles Jaret effectively sums up the private character of the edge city by stating that, "without a public governmental structure, local needs or problems are not addressed through normal political channels, and land owners, property managers, and planners in these edge cities invent private mechanisms of control over roads and space (though they are not accountable to the general public, at least not through the usual process of representative democracy) (Jaret 2002, p.180)." This dilemma raises some very serious questions as people choose the edge city as their home.

Some planners contend that there should be more public involvement in the decision-making process. Barnett asserts, "involving the public in long-range regional planning issues builds a constituency for new kinds of planning and design (Barnett 2003, p.8)." But we should also consider what would happen in our edge cities if sedentary residential communities do emerge. To what degree will businesses and land investors share power with citizens? What mechanism will fill the role of municipal government and how will it be funded?

5.3 Economic Prospecting

The recent economic downturn in 2003 and 2004 concerned almost everyone with a vested interest in the success of Perimeter Center. In particular, landholders are experiencing an uncertain time. Therefore, the long-term objectives of improving transportation, quality of life, and optimizing land use is directly influenced by the largest of the stakeholders in the Perimeter Center market seeking to at best expand or a least sustain land values in the district.

Current news reports in 2005 regarding the Perimeter Center market illustrate both concern and optimism. Despite recent increases in office space availability and decreases in office rents, reports indicate that two new massive mixed-use projects are on the drawing board. Combining these projects “would add another 2 million square feet of office, retail, and multifamily housing space” to the district (Schenke 2003). While there is concern as to the logic behind the construction of new office space in a market with a significant amount of empty space, many developers see its potential in stimulating the market or as an opportunity to use the “mixed-use” label to get their properties zoned for a wide variety of development opportunities. Another recent report suggests that landholders are working harder to market available office space by offering aggressive drops in rates and incentives such as turnkey delivery of space, or free rents/credits (Sinderman 2003). Further, indications suggest that landholders are becoming more flexible in accommodating potential tenants. Current trends indicate that the market in Perimeter Center is not only reflecting a downturn in the economy but is also responding to maturation of its land use and internal economy.

While there is concern over the construction of new office space, the reality of such a project, given the current circumstances, is that developers may have large-scale ambitions but construction will probably occur in stages that are responsive to market demands. The mixed-use projects probably would begin by developing the residential component first. In Perimeter Center there is a well-recognized lack of housing within walking distance to area office space. Therefore a centrally located residential project could boost the available labor market if units were affordable, which in turn would attract several classes of business. With landholders of existing office space offering lower rents and incentives, an opportunity exists to attract a diversity of businesses. Thus, the office space currently on the drawing boards can be directed towards attracting higher rents while maintaining the ratios between the district's prestige factor and affordability.

Although it may be problematic to compare edge cities to the traditional downtown because of significant differences in administration and governance, they are districts of significant regional economic investment. They also serve, in part, as "engines" for regional growth. Being tied to the global market is a large part of this dynamic as new technological advancements and global flows of people, products, and ideas continue to expand. With this in mind, the edge city attracts many start-up firms attracted to the edge city because of amenities and potential contacts. Garreau contends "although nationally known corporations get a lot of press when they relocate to Edge City, they are not the quoin of capitalism there. It is the young, fast-growing entrepreneurial start-up—especially in high technology—that is the mark of Edge City (Garreau 1991, p. 29)." The locational interest by both large and small corporations stratifies the edge city and with it has made development sensitive to market fluctuations

posing challenges for planners. Often development is based on need and economic momentum afforded by the presence of opportunity.

Planning and development efforts should keep in check the nature of the edge city composition by recognizing the delicate balance between the economic costs for businesses and grand scale plans associated with building prestige and functionality. By addressing transportation, land use, and quality of life issues, Perimeter Center should retain its magnetic image as a prime location for retail, business and professional services, and corporate headquarters. However, in order for Perimeter Center to maintain its competitive advantage it must go beyond assessment and management of its planning and administration practices and develop strategies to market Perimeter Center as a “place”.

5.4 Perimeter as a place

Places are often named by or for the people who had power over them in a variety of capacities. This is sometimes merged with the idea of naming places for topographic features or landscape impressions. Some interesting observations can be made in considering how the places around us are named or in the case of Perimeter Center how that name is promoted via marketing strategies. The perception of Perimeter Center as a place varies greatly between the insiders who regularly occupy its space and those concerned with its outward projection, but overall it gets its moniker from the “Perimeter Highway”, Interstate 285.

Michael Gearon speculated on the open land where Ashford-Dunwoody intersected with the soon to be built Interstate. “From the beginning, Gearon’s firm envisioned Perimeter Center as an architecturally- and density-controlled, aesthetically pleasing campuslike park that would incorporate retail and office activity in a rustic setting (Hartshorn and Muller 1986, p. 59).” The initial vision was nothing close to a city as there was to be Perimeter Mall and the office complexes of Perimeter Center. Perimeter Center, which is quite an oxymoron, took root because it was a suburban business center on the Perimeter Highway. In name, Perimeter Center perhaps does not lend itself well to evoke a sense of place. With Sandy Springs newly incorporating and claiming authority over the Fulton county side of Perimeter Center it is possible that the area may become a power center more associated with Sandy Springs rather than an entity that stands alone.

As a participant observer in this research I would like to consider where I currently reside, on the southern fringe of Perimeter Center. The area really has no place identity and I have heard these residential neighborhoods described in many ways but rarely have they been associated in name with Perimeter Center. If we were to look at Atlanta as a collection of places, and assigned a hierarchy of known places, you would find that the immediate area holds very little identity except for its proximity to other places. Even though Perimeter Center is more convenient for a majority of functional activities, my actual address suggests a closer association with the city of Atlanta, which is quite a distance away. In some instances the area is referred to as North Atlanta but this could represent a local government power struggle over territorial influence.

The name of the street I live on is Navajo Trail and was certainly named after the Native American tribe that is the most populous in existence today. The problem, however, is that this tribe has absolutely nothing to do with this region of the United States. The contemporary home of the Navajo people lies on a reservation, on land that stretches through parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. In fact, if you were to use a map you would notice the street arrangement and presence of cul-de-sacs that make up the neighborhood of Nancy Creek Heights. By surveying the street names you would find that the builder was impartial to any one tribe in that he made a good attempt to represent them all. In short, this naming trend reflects the authority suburban builders in this area had over the space in the 1950s - 1970s.

Looking at the map a little closer you will find a creek giving some meaning to Nancy Creek Heights. A survey of neighbors were asked why it was called Nancy Creek Heights and rather expectedly every person associated the name purely with the creek, as if it were the only source of the name. While examining local histories to answer the question, it was discovered that settlers only sparsely populated the area in 1818 and that there were frequent, and not always friendly, contacts with Native Americans. Some records state that the creek was named for Nancy Baugh Evins because her husband commented that she “would rather be cooling her feet and fishing in the creek than cooking and cleaning (Price 1997, p. 109).” Now the place name was beginning to make sense beyond that of just being near the creek because an association could be made with a piece of local history.

The latter part of the neighborhood’s name describes the topography as “heights”. Although the land does lie in one of the highest elevations surrounding the creek, it is by

no means the only one. It is probable that “heights” was added not only because of topographic description but also because the term implies prestige, a mechanism often employed in real estate marketing.

Let us consider the author’s perception about the location and how it is described to other people. It is important to remember that this knowledge is limited by the scope of personal experiences, and by the framework of time. How I describe my home to other people of course is dependent on the audience. For example, if I am at a convention in another city I will simply tell them I live in Atlanta. If they seem to have some knowledge of city I may perhaps inform them that I live in the northern part of the city, however, if I am discussing the location of my home to someone who lives in Atlanta the situation because slightly more problematic. Now if I lived in the town of Dunwoody just to the north of Perimeter Center then it would be a simple description because it has a socially recognized label and history. Since I don’t live in Dunwoody or any other recognized town I have to use other descriptions. As you might think it would be logical to associate my place in the world with Perimeter Center since I live in its immediate edge. After all it is a formidable and maturing edge city. However, in my discussions with neighbors they do not seem to recognize themselves as living in Perimeter Center. Instead, they use landmarks to describe where they live. Often they describe the location of the neighborhood by explaining that it is on Ashford-Dunwoody Road just inside the Perimeter. Other key landmarks that people give reference to is Perimeter Center’s retail center, “Perimeter Mall”, a nearby private school, “Marist” or a local baseball park and lake, “Murphey Candler”.

The main point is that Perimeter Center and adjacent residential areas lack community and suffer from a weak sense of place. There is no solid community center. Instead, residents must associate with adjacent communities based on their personal preference. Organized activities are more likely to occur in neighboring Sandy Springs or Dunwoody. What is occurring is that activities in and around Perimeter Center are not strongly integrated. The office and retail center for the area is Perimeter Center while the focus of the community activity is Dunwoody.

The segregation of functional and social activities causes significant problems regarding place identity. The primary problem lies in that both Dunwoody and Perimeter Center retain unique identities. Either they will have to come together as one urban center or Perimeter Center will have to experience major changes in both its vertical growth and density, boost its residential component, and foster a strong and active community component.

In 1992, Atlanta's mass transit subway system developed plans for a station adjacent to Perimeter Mall. From the beginning the station was identified as the Dunwoody Station. The station opened in 1996 and has become one of the busiest stations on the MARTA line, outside of downtown. To meet demand the station now flanks two multi-level parking decks. Between the mall and the station rise several more parking decks clearly labeled as only serving the mall. Aiding in Perimeter Mall's success is the significant investment in multi-level parking decks and of course the close proximity to mass transit as illustrated in Figure 24.



Figure 23. *Twin towers view from Dunwoody MARTA station, 2003* Source: Author

Perimeter Mall is associated with being a central point for Perimeter Center. Ironically the Dunwoody Station lies merely a short walking distance from the Mall but a significant distance from Dunwoody Village, the central point of Dunwoody. A traveler headed to Dunwoody Village from the transit station would have to wait for a bus or take a cab, although cab availability is extremely limited in the area.



Figure 24. *Northern view from Dunwoody MARTA station, 2003* Source: Author

Obviously Dunwoody's involvement with Perimeter Center overlaps, but to what extent do they share place identity? Although three mass transit stations serve the Perimeter Center area, labeling the central station as Dunwoody Station certainly makes it difficult for Perimeter Center to gain a foothold as a named place. However, the station gained its name prior to the marketing efforts by the PCID to boost the identity of Perimeter Center. Although in the proposal stages the section of the north line was often referred to in the media as the Perimeter Center line, the actual center station of this three-stop stretch was assigned Dunwoody by MARTA authorities. Being that the proposal was in the early nineties it is possible that the authorities recognized the line as connecting Dunwoody with Atlanta and although the term Perimeter Center existed it was primarily being used to describe the business district rather than an all-encompassing regional term.

During MARTA's proposal process the public probably associated the area more as Dunwoody than Perimeter Center, however, changing the name from Dunwoody station to Perimeter Center station could aid in the identity crisis of the area. After all, MARTA authorities have been known to change station names before. Therefore, a move to change the name would be in line with the marketing goals of the PCID and the LCI "sense of place" compass goal.

Developing place identity is emphatically tied to human experience. Over time the combination of experiences cling to the physical space and a sort of consensus identity develops. Of course it is important to keep in mind that agents engaged in place making work to direct this identity both from the inside and outside.

Considering the human experience in Atlanta's Perimeter Center, the value of

Relph's modes of experience becomes apparent as both insiders and outsiders associate with the place in many different capacities. These associations and capacities comprise a consensus of identity and image for Perimeter Center. The balance of degrees of involvement structures its identity. Therefore we should look at how people use the space within Perimeter Center as well as how it is viewed from the outside.

Relph's contribution to the study of place, in particular the modes of experience, provide a valuable tool to consider the place identity of Perimeter Center. As Relph points out, four modes of insideness include vicarious, behavioral, empathetic, and existential, as well as three modes of outsideness including existential, objective, and incidental. He also warns that such classifications are subject to significant overlapping. Further, it is important to understand that over time an individual's mode of experience may shift such as where one was once an outsider but now an insider.

In applying Relph's modes, Perimeter Center was chosen to explore the concept of sense of place because of my original empathetic and my behavioral insideness with regards to Perimeter Center. Not only do I experience Perimeter Center on a regular basis via behavioral patterns of everyday life, but I also frequently attempt to better understand its essence as a place and how to care for its future. But let us consider Relph's other modes of experience in the Perimeter Center context and see how such roles contribute to place making and identity.

Perhaps the most difficult to grasp is the experience of a vicarious insider. Vicarious insideness requires an experience of becoming familiar with a place through some sort of secondary source or medium. A popular example would be the places we become familiar with that are real or imaginary in movies and television. We bear

witness to place by seeing it and hearing it but the experience is often limited to these two senses.

Although Perimeter Center does not appear in popular mediums such as movies or television, it does exist in other mediums. As illustrated, Perimeter Center hosts a number of Fortune 500 regional headquarters. With a considerable amount of office and retail space to rent, promoters devote a significant portion of money to create advertising and publicity campaigns to attract tenants and investors. Transition kits that include a wide variety of media are often created to welcome visitors and create insiders. As individuals and companies are drawn to places like Perimeter Center through media they not only come with preconceived notions of place they also move to Perimeter Center with a comforting sense of insiderness.

Edge cities are unique in terms of population composition and use. In particular there is usually a considerable lack of permanent housing and a significant imbalance between the daytime and nighttime populations. The edge city has been typecast as an area with an abundance of office space but limited housing, choking traffic congestion, expansive parking lots, and “big box” retail. When we look at the composition of the people using the space in the edge city it is evident everyone is from somewhere else. After all, edge cities are relatively new places and often lack rich histories as such.

Perimeter Center serves specific and often limited functions to different individuals. A commuter from across town may only come to the area for work. A shopper from the adjacent neighborhoods in Dunwoody may only come to shop. Due to the lack of a significant 24-hour population finding an existential insider, someone who feels really at home in the edge city, can be extremely difficult to find.

Although it is slowly changing, the majority of housing within Perimeter Center consists, of apartment homes reflecting the transient nature of the population. What degree of existential insiderness can be expected from a population that came from somewhere not too long ago and perhaps rents living space with the premonition that the current stay is only temporary? Further, what are the chances for effective place-making and the opportunity for long-term community building?

Without a significant amount of personal investment and attachment to Perimeter Center, to what degree can a sense of place exist? Without a strong consensus of place identity established among the people that use the space within Perimeter Center it will be difficult to sustain the regional and economic prominence of Perimeter Center. In short, the burden of maintaining an inauthentic sense of place from an insider point of view will fall primarily upon the group of companies already involved in the direct administration of the district.

It is important to understand the forces engaged in place identity because they originate from within and from the outside. Relph's three modes of outsidership include the existential, objective, and incidental. One extreme as an outsider lies in only hearing about a place and not experiencing it. This is separate from the modes of outsidership where people experience place as an outsider.

The opposite of the existential insider, who experiences the most intense place attachment, is the existential outsider. This type of outsidership represents the most unpleasant experience of a place. Criticism of modern urban design and architecture suggest that this experience has become commonplace due to the homogenization of places and loss of unique character in specific places.

In part this criticism stems from a lack of truly understanding the place by the people who are most involved in shaping its future and designing its spaces. The mode of experience of place for planners, designers, and policy makers is usually objective. A place is seen as milieu, open for manipulation. Outsider agents such as these play an expanded role in both its construction and preservation. Therefore they are instrumental in creating a forum in which to expedite sense of place.

For most edge cities, administration responsibility falls upon companies with the most significant investment. They enlist support from regional planning agencies, private consultant firms, and government. Therefore the edge cities are maintained with much of the same purpose for which they were created in the first place: to optimize investment returns. In other words, place has become a vital commodity and it is up to a consortium to devise the best suited image, marketing strategy, and identity for the edge city.

While it is certain that the planner, the resident, the worker, and the visitor experience Perimeter Center in different ways, it is their collective impressions, actions, and actions that propel the processes involved in constructing the identity of Perimeter Center. In the realm of our everyday we may find ourselves in the role of the 'insider' or in the role of the 'outsider' dependent on what space we currently occupy and what place we are interacting with. In these capacities, whether 'insider' or 'outsider', we usually engage in very specific activity when in specific places.

The combinations of these modes of experience, all with differing intensities, give the edge city an awkward sense of place. Unfortunately, Perimeter Center was designed with the incidental outsider in mind. The evidence lies in its centerpiece, a regional mall. The district was never envisioned as a place to dwell but rather a place to conduct

activities. First it was a shopping hub for surrounding neighborhood suburban sprawl and later it became an ideal location for high-rise office buildings. The district was designed to draw in people and money rather than create community.

The value of community is only now being realized. However, the problem lies in this imbalance of personal experience with place. Without a substantial number of existential insiders it is extremely difficult to build community. While Perimeter Center has become a successful commodity its chances of becoming a real and lasting place now hinge on the enterprise of community and character.

5.5 Public Perspective

Capturing public perspectives through random interviews we can sense, categorize, and codify experience. The respondents selected were based on opportunity but were rejected if they did not reside within the Metropolitan Atlanta Area. The objective of the interview focuses on how people operationally define function within Perimeter Center and to gauge both identity perceptions and Perimeter Center's potential to be considered a new downtown. These interviews were conducted in three stages to gain background information about the subjects, to classify them as an insider or outsider, and to gain a deeper knowledge of perception among those who considered themselves insiders.

Most of the respondents had at least ten years experience living in Atlanta and there were no respondents with less than five years experience in Atlanta. Out of the fourteen respondents, seven self-identified as Perimeter Center insiders and seven did

not. It was the intent of the interviewer to interview both insiders and outsiders but there was no selection of subjects based on a pre-classification except for subjects having less than five years of experience in Atlanta were not included.

All respondents were asked about their commute to work and whether or not they utilized public transportation. None of the insider respondents claimed they lived near where they work. Further, there were no respondents that claimed to use public transportation on a regular basis. A few insider respondents commented on the convenience of using MARTA for access to the airport and identified it as very important feature of Perimeter Center.

A primary aim for the interview was to discover how many respondents had used or were familiar with the term, Perimeter Center. All the insider respondents had heard of or used the term Perimeter Center however most did not consider using the term to describe the area to others. It was also noted that some insider respondents had difficulty in recognizing the difference between Perimeter Center and Perimeter Mall. As for outsider name recognition, three out of seven had never heard the name Perimeter Center and the other four respondents associated more familiar names such as Dunwoody or Perimeter Mall.

Respondents were also asked if they considered Perimeter Center to be a safe and friendly place and were asked if it were somewhere one could take up residence. While both insider and outsider perspectives suggested Perimeter Center was a safe and friendly place, none of the outsider respondents recognized Perimeter Center as a place one could live. Further, it should be noted that the majority of insider respondents live within close proximity to Perimeter Center. In one case, a respondent who works in Perimeter Center

but does not currently live there is considering renting an apartment. Interestingly this respondent suggested that Perimeter Center was indeed a community rather than its own city. Most respondents did not consider Perimeter Center to be a city and only one insider and two outsiders thought it as such. Most considered the primary function of Perimeter Center to be that of a business and shopping district and some of the insider respondents went on to include entertainment as a secondary function.

Insider respondents who self-identified as such were asked to continue to the third stage of questions. The respondents were asked questions regarding place perception, modes of mobility, and social activity and then asked to give their overall impressions of Perimeter Center based on four subject areas. Some common ideas were shared however there were also some unique impressions obviously due to variation in personal experience.

All of the insider respondents identified Perimeter Mall as the central place or point for Perimeter Center. However, the respondents did not consider this space as necessarily a public space nor suggested it was the center of their activity in Perimeter Center. This observation suggests that Perimeter Mall is a dominating factor for Perimeter Center in its image as a place. In many instances it was difficult for respondents to separate the terms Perimeter Center from Perimeter Mall and the impression was that adjacent areas were to be included in the identity of the mall. Several respondents could not identify any public places in Perimeter Center and most of these respondents hesitated to include Perimeter Mall as a public place. Notable places mentioned as public were Hammond Park and the MARTA station.

Although several respondents associated Hammond Park with Perimeter Center, its ties are rather questionable. After all the 14 acre park is considered by Fulton County as a key public space specifically for the Sandy Spring community. With the newly incorporated City of Sandy Springs it will be interesting what will become of the community building and park. With the Fulton portion of Perimeter Center being included as part of Sandy Springs the potential for the park to actually be Perimeter Center greenspace is very unlikely.

Interview questions were also directed towards identifying the edges to Perimeter Center and as to what adjacent communities exist beyond these edges. Most insider respondents recognized Sandy Springs to the West and Dunwoody to the North and very few respondents gave names to adjacent communities to the East or South. It should be noted that both Sandy Springs and Dunwoody are in immediate proximity to Perimeter Center and development overlaps somewhat between these areas. As for points East, a few respondents recognized the town of Chamblee, which is actually to the Southeast of Perimeter Center however I-285 and a considerable amount of land devoted to single-family dwellings separate the two. It should be noted that the ARC recognizes Perimeter Center as part of the Chamblee Superdistrict. To the south of Perimeter Center proves the most interesting because it is mostly made up of residential neighborhoods with a few schools and shops but this area clearly lacks much identity beyond the road to which they are linked.

Insider respondents were also asked to give their impressions of Perimeter Center in terms of accessibility, uses and activities, social, life, and comfort security and image. Although a common perception was that Perimeter Center was a highly congested area,

all insider respondents commented positively on how easily accessible Perimeter Center is. A few of the respondents added that it was necessary to avoid Perimeter Center at peak times and that when possible they plan their trips to avoid traffic.

There were no negative comments about comfort, security, and image however most respondents were not aware of the PCID's efforts in image or identity making for Perimeter Center. Insider respondents however rated the social life of Perimeter Center as non-existent or very limited. Social activities were considered to be more of a personal nature and there was almost no awareness of any public, cultural, or community events that take place within Perimeter Center. Only one respondent reported ever attending a cultural event within Perimeter Center. As expected, uses and activities were typical described as dining and shopping experiences and the area rated well among respondents for these activities.

An overall observation is that the evolution of the area we are calling Perimeter Center revolves around the presence of Perimeter Mall. Most people associate the area with this shopping venue rather than the marketed image of a Perimeter Center. Prior to the construction of the Mall, the area was primarily used as farmland. The question then is to consider the success of the area becoming recognized as Perimeter Center. Based on this set of interviews success appears slow, however, it is probable that as Perimeter Center gains stronger ground in becoming mixed use with a considerable residential share that more people will consider Perimeter Center as both a place and a community.

The only negative comments that respondents had for Perimeter Center was the traffic problem but many also gave the area high marks in accessibility. Walking and biking seem to be more on the minds of urban planners and architects rather than the

actual public. While most respondents agree these improvements are good and necessary they do not seem to envision a future Perimeter Center in which they will not use their automobile. It is obvious that significant changes will have to be made to alter this perception.

Perhaps the most crucial problem for Perimeter Center is the recognition of the public that it serves multiple functions. The primary functions were business and shopping which illustrate that Perimeter Center is thought to be a place of mobility and commerce rather than a place of pause. Bringing in more residential, entertainment, cultural, and other community-based activities such as festivals and concerts would certainly alter function-based perceptions.

It should also be noted that within Perimeter Center is a large regional healthcare agglomeration that was not mentioned by any of the respondents interviewed except for one person. Possibly the respondents did not recognize the agglomeration as within the geographical borders of Perimeter Center but I would also suggest that perceptions are so centered on business and shopping that public services are perhaps overlooked or that people integrate healthcare as another corporate enterprise. Regardless it became evident that in the minds of the respondents the common perception was space in Perimeter Center was functionally fragmented rather than being recognized in whole.

Perceptions among the actors engaged with Perimeter Center differ greatly among insiders, outsider, planners, and promoters. There is marked difference between local public perceptions and the perceptions of planners and promoters who are trying to convey to outsiders seeking either a place to locate their business, open a shop, or to select a home. The local public perception tends to resist the Perimeter Center identity

and exhibits reluctance as to what success the planned changes presented by the PCID will produce. While the local public does acknowledge the success of the Perimeter Center in terms of business and shopping it is not a place in which they seek to take special care or have considerable attachments to.

In considering the three inter-related themes that sense of place is an intention, a social imprint, and an ethereal nature, we can conclude that architects, planners, and policy makers are considering place-making in their design and marketing efforts. However it is obvious more attention needs to be placed on community-building events and venues. The cultivation of places of pause would encourage the possibilities for Oldenburg's "third space" to take root. Such places are not necessarily designated as public nor set aside for that particular purpose and it is certainly more likely that the outward appearance of "third spaces" will vary significantly while maintaining common essential elements among them.

It is within informal gathering places that are both easily accessible and distinctive in character that people will feel comfortable and find the vital human contact necessary to their being. Such a place needs to be inexpensive or free to visit, within walking distance from home or a easy frequent stop in the course of one's everyday life, and should offer the ability to easily enter into a conversation with others or to meet friends. More importantly, a successful third place would create the social binding that would prove essential in both fostering community and creating a sense of place.

From the beginning, Perimeter Mall has been the central focus of the area now being called Perimeter Center. While the function of the mall is to give venue to the sale of merchandise and services, often its promoters have hosted community events but such

efforts primarily serve to draw customers and build loyalties. A flaw in its inception is that it was very inward looking and only accessible by automobile. It should be noted however two factors have been introduced to make it more outwardly appealing. The first is that Perimeter Mall is now very easy to access from other places around Atlanta by way of rapid transit which certainly drives more traffic to the mall as a destination because it is now linked. The second factor is that the mall has been fronted with both shops and restaurants facing the main street, Ashford-Dunwoody Rd. While the mall has made strides in both making it more accessible and more welcoming, the issue of “third space” remains unaddressed.

Both the local public and planners agree about the dominance of the mall and therefore the plans of the ARC LCI are wise to focus activities with regards to sense of place to areas directly adjacent to the mall. The social imprint of Perimeter Mall has taken several years to develop and therefore it would be probable that an active effort to solidify an identity of the area under the name Perimeter Center will succeed over time. Not only should the mall be outwardly welcoming and appealing in all directions but it should also seek key anchors of social activity where people could easily congregate and engage socially.

Perimeter Center is not a significant place of pause but rather a zone for commerce and mobile activity therefore gaining a sense of place will be a daunting task. A step in this direction however will revolve around curing the functional balance while cultivating “third spaces”. It is not a simple cure that can be stamped on the landscape but rather something that will have to be built within the course of the public’s everyday life.

The distraction for developers is that there may not appear to be an immediate return on one's investment but they should bear in mind that good places sell themselves.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Recovering a sense of place

Edge cities no longer reflect their original inception as suburban business districts and regional malls, nor do they resemble the traditional downtown of our social memory. Some may even argue they are not cities at all. In reality edge cities form a focus of our regional economy, provide an interface to the global, and are rapidly becoming the homes of people. As our edge cities mature it is undeniable they are a breed apart from traditional cities.

Giving the edge city a twenty-four hour population gives it a real future for people to share place. By doing so they will write new histories for the city. The real challenge for the edge city will be to foster a sense of community among a highly mobile cosmopolitan population. Further, it will require human agency and stewardship to create specific special places within Perimeter Center that could evolve into *genius loci*. And lastly, if the edge city is really to be the future focus we must think closely about for whom we are designing it: the visitor, the individual, the community, or the automobile.

Searching Perimeter Center for a sense of place presents a difficult challenge. It is not something that can be mapped or measured, nor can we apply laws to it. Instead, we use it in our intentions towards designing space, we use it in our everyday actions to build and shape place, and over time we give it new heights by adorning place with special meaning. Unfortunately, little evidence exists of a consensual sense of place in Perimeter

Center. It seems a disoriented place whose population is asked to buy something or move on. No effective public squares or green spaces exist for people to congregate or rejuvenate. Without a real town center, it is hard to find anything similar to civic or communal space. For all these functions there is only the mall.

While the Atlanta Regional Commission's plans call for an identifiable "Town Center" near the mall, there is no time scale for putting this into production. It takes investment, and many investors are holding back until the office market recovers. Despite this dilemma there is evidence that local organizations such as the ARC, PCID, PTC, DeKalb and Fulton counties have worked well together. Although this and other place-making enhancements are being held back, the initiative remains set and for the most part is agreed upon. In the immediate future, the best opportunity towards a sense of place lies in the streetscape projects going on now. These developments make the space between buildings more aesthetic and pedestrian appealing offering improvement in access and in individual orientation. Further, they have potential to be facilitators in the encouraging the creation of destinations for "third space".

A sense of place is an intention, a social imprint, and ethereal. It is through the intentions of architects, planners, and policymakers that edge cities become legible, orienting the people that occupy them while offering comfort, security, and a sense of well-being. By designing spaces that optimize a sense of place, people can work towards becoming citizens rather than residents. Through social interaction and community building, experiences and attachments to the edge city will become shared and over time give the edge city history. It is speculated that as people develop a strong bond with the

edge city, consensual knowledge of it will become tacit and specific places within will become sacred.

The real challenge for Perimeter Center lies in implementing the projects that offer the best promise for place-making and filling them with placemakers. While many of these projects are designed to make Perimeter Center a more livable edge city, civic patronage is a missing ingredient in the Perimeter Center landscape. The best opportunity to cultivate this is through alluring informal social gathering places where people not only have rewarding experience but also bind socially. Therefore, heed should be given to the social evolution of people and place in attempts toward fostering community and creating a sense of place. As promoters of Perimeter Center seek to reinforce identity-building strategies, new residents can gain a sense of belonging somewhere in the world, which could lead in turn to civic pride and better stewardship of Perimeter Center.

6.2 The course of place

The expression of sense of place contains varied meaning depending on its application and audience. Even invented symbolic landscapes are designed to evoke a sense of place. In the contemporary urban landscape the homogeneity of place becomes evident where everyplace becomes familiar. A monolithic architecture dominates the view from the road awash with a unique character and meaning. This chapter considers what we have lost in our past course and contemplates the future course of American urban planning and design.

The talented eye of J.B. Jackson saw the flaws in our course over fifty years ago. He commented on how Europeans were aghast at our never-ending landscape and its monotony. The criticism is unchanged since Jackson's time and became widespread through authors like Kunstler. How then can a sense of place exist in such a monolithic urban landscape? How can the consensus gain a conscious awareness of place and be able to distinguish one from another?

It is necessary to consider what is meant by sense of place. Where did it come from and how can we benefit as a society by it? J.B. Jackson traces the meaning of a sense of place through time:

“It is an awkward and ambiguous modern translation of the Latin term *genus loci*. In classical times it meant not so much the place itself as the guardian divinity of that place. It was believed that a locality -- a space or a structure or a whole community – derived much of its unique quality from the presence or guardianship of a supernatural spirit. The visitor and the inhabitants were always aware of the benign presence and paid reverence to it on many occasions. The phrase thus implied celebration or ritual, and the location itself acquired special status. Our modern culture rejected the notion of a divine or supernatural presence, and in the eighteenth century the Latin phrase was usually translated as ‘the genius of a place,’ meaning its influence (Jackson 1994, pp. 157-158).”

The contemporary use lies a bit further away from a more spiritual sense of place. Architects, urban planners, and policy makers are very aware of the concept of sense of place, but the meaning is confined to the atmosphere and quality of environment.

Place should have a very important significance. After all, we all hold dear particular places that have special meaning to us. As Relph suggests, “there is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences (Relph 1976, p. 43).” It is this personal relationship with place that we, by nature, want to share. The edge city consists of a space of movement with little opportunity for pause. Perhaps this is why we often long for somewhere else like a beach house or a cabin in the mountains. People need both pause and places with special meaning. While people apparently desire a sense of place in their lives, recovering in our contemporary urban landscape remains difficult.

7.3 Conclusion

The evidence from Perimeter Center suggests that there are rapid changes occurring that include removal, renovation, and new construction of office, residential, and infrastructure. These new developments should give service to making Perimeter Center a functional and livable place rather than a repeat of some of the past planning and development mistakes as outlined in this research. Only by examining the past mistakes, looking at current attempts to retrofit and market, and by giving account to public

feedback and perceptions can we begin to recognize the important role of place-making in our edge cities.

The chance for recovering a sense of place hinges on the presence of good places that have balanced strength in both functional and leisure activities, community cohesion and social opportunity, ease of access and connectivity, comfort and security, and public image. Agents of the edge city should recognize the ties between design, functional activity, economics, and public place. The intent of agglomeration economies will be better served through good public places because they give venue to social interaction and community building which in turn creates stewards of the city.

In many ways a sense of place involves looking at the bigger picture of design and implementation projects and the city as a whole. Planners, developers, and managers of Perimeter Center should consistently approach their efforts as components of a larger strategy. While there seems to be uniformity and consistency in designing the idealized place and promoting an image of a sense of place for Perimeter Center, such efforts should be grounded in the fact that cities are lived spaces. After all, good cities are not just designed to be livable and walkable they must have an organic relationship with the people who occupy them.

The planners, developers, and managers of Perimeter Center should consider four points while devising their strategy for a sense of place. First, annual events and festivals should be included in plans directed at place identity and promotion. Second, places that best offer a chance for an informal public life to occur should be cultivated. Third, informal gathering places should be spatially compatible with the destinations of everyday tasks.

And finally, priority should be given to designing places for people rather than for visual aesthetic or some sort of idealized place.

Both the public and planners recognize Perimeter Mall as the primary focal point for Perimeter Center. Planning efforts should give priority to creating an identifiable “town center” adjacent to the Mall with a clearly defined open space designed to be used for outdoor events/gathering. Such a plan will not only create thematic walkable districts that will combine multiple functions but it will be a true step in giving venue for a sense of place to develop.

Regional planning efforts such as the ARC’s Livable Centers Initiative appear effective in communicating real solutions for creating good urban places. The problem, however, lies in implementing such grand schemes because of funding issues or deviations from the original plan. Developers and managers of edge cities should carefully think through their investments in place and maintain a balanced strategy.

Good public places provide visitors, citizens, and employees with a positive orientation of where they are in the world while fostering comfort, security, and a sense of well-being. More importantly, there should be places for pause between functional destinations that encourages us to engage in and strengthen social relationships. It is through frequent and meaningful contact we should be able to pursue community and strive to recover a sense of place.

6.4 Future research

While considerable thought has been put in to how we can make places better, not enough research exists as to how we can communication these new ideas effectively and how we can make the implementation process more efficient. In both the case of Milton Keynes and Perimeter Center, significant challenges to implementation are apparent. Future research in urban policy could be directed at streamlining the process and bridging the gap between planning and development.

More research should examine the new residential fabric of maturing edge cities. As we begin to populate these cites and call them home, there will be new civic challenges in a place that is highly privatized and often lacks a municipal government. Edge cities lag behind other areas in terms of mixed-income and cultural diversity. More research will provide insight in how we can socially balance our edge cities. In short, we need to explore ways to make maturing edge cities resonate in our social memory.

There exists significant research in geography and other disciplines that explores the human relationship with the city. If the edge city is our future city, we should focus on how it compares with our urban places of the past. Research could include looking at the modes of experience so that we can better grasp perceptions, attitudes, and values.

And finally, it should not be forgotten that the edge city is a vital component to the regional economy. Researchers in economic geography should be keenly aware of the human aspects of place. After all, it will be the edge city with a competitive advantage in

sense of place that will become a real and lasting place, truly benefiting from the new global economy.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

The purpose of the interview is to gather perspectives and perceptions of the area that is becoming known as Perimeter Center.

Background Questions (all interviewees)

1. How long have you lived in the Atlanta Area? If you moved here from somewhere else please explain.
2. Describe your commute to work. Do you use public transportation? What is the distance of your commute (one way)?
3. What is your occupation?

Section 1 (all interviewees)

1. Have you ever heard of an area in Atlanta called Perimeter Center? If so, do you prefer to describe this area in other ways or by another name?
2. Do you live or work within or very close to Perimeter Center?
3. Have you visited Perimeter Center recently? If so, what was the purpose of your visit?
4. Would you describe Perimeter Center as a safe and friendly place? Is Perimeter Center somewhere you would consider buying a house or renting an apartment?
5. In your opinion what is the primary function of Perimeter Center?
6. Would you consider the area a city? Explain.

Section 2 (insiders)

1. What would you consider the central place or point of Perimeter Center? Why?
2. What communities/cities/areas border Perimeter Center? Please give their direction.
3. What are some public places in Perimeter Center?
4. What is your preferred method of travel in and around Perimeter Center? Do you ever travel on foot or bicycle in and around Perimeter Center?
5. Have you ever attended a cultural event such as a concert, festival, or art opening in Perimeter Center? If so, describe.
6. Based on your experience with Perimeter Center please give your impressions of Perimeter Center with regards to the following four subjects:
 - a. Accessibility
 - b. Comfort, security, and image
 - c. Uses and activities
 - d. Social life