



Toronto: Guidelines for Core Development

Reported by Schneider in *Polycentric Cities*

Toronto provides the following classification of cores for its core plan and strategy.

Classification

1. Major Centre

Basic Function:

These centres represent the main central cores of the respective municipalities. They are designed to serve at least the total municipality in which they are located. Movement to them is usually of a comparatively long distance either by private car or public transportation.

Examples of Activities:

- Offices – Private: Major office buildings.
- Governmental: Local (perhaps main municipal offices), provincial and/or federal.
- Institutional Activities: Health and welfare services; major libraries.
- Retailing: Major shopping centre with large department stores and food stores.
- Business and Personal Services: Banks, post office, restaurants, etc.
- Cultural and Entertainment Activities: Movie theatres, restaurants, etc.

Size: Office Employment: approximately 10,000-40,000 square feet; Retail: 400,000+ square feet of gross leasable area*

2. District Centre

Basic Function:

These centres fall somewhere between those serving regional and those serving local needs. They are not designed to serve a complete municipality, yet they are larger than local in terms of their service area.

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Examples of Activities:

- Offices – Private: Perhaps one or two major office buildings with other office space on second floors, etc.
- Governmental/Institutional: Branch health and welfare offices; branch libraries.
- Retailing: Moderate sized shopping centres, junior department stores, food stores, etc.
- Business and Personal Services: Banks, restaurants/coffee shops, cleaners, etc.

Size: Office Employment: approximately 5,000-10,000 square feet.; Retail: 150,000~ square feet of gross leasable area*

3. Local Centre

Basic Function:

These centres are to provide for local needs and services. They would normally be reached by short auto trips or on foot.

Examples of Activities:

- Offices – Private: Medical, dental, and legal services based on local practices; insurance and real estate, etc.
- Retail: Convenience stores.
- Services: Cleaners, hair care, etc.

Size: Office employment: approximately 1,000+; Retail: 50,000 square feet of gross leasable area*

Guidelines for a New Node Certain guidelines should be followed to encourage a successful node. These guidelines are set out below, and do not require individual elaboration. *These guidelines constitute a package; that is, they are cumulative rather than separate.* (Note: These guidelines are quite similar to those used in the original plans for downtown Chicago, Minneapolis and other cities. *Note also the emphasis on the need for politicians and public officials to understand these and the admonition that they should be used as group, not individually.* (Italics supplied)

1. *The comfort and convenience of the pedestrian is of paramount importance in the design of the node.* Space designed at a human, pedestrian scale, minimizing and/or eliminating physical and psychological barriers within the node is preferred. Building facades at the street level should be continuous, and streets designed so that the pedestrian can perceive that crossing from one side to another is both easy and safe.

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2. *A wide range and number of services is desirable and perhaps necessary to help make the node relatively self-sufficient for office workers. Services should include a variety of eating establishments and retail stores, plus entertainment, recreation and personal services. Hotels provide useful amenities for businessmen and employees. The larger a node, with more varied and numerous services, the more it is a magnet; the reverse is also true.*
3. *Residential densities, greater than normal suburban densities, will be required adjacent to the node to help support a wide range of services. This could be in the form of relatively dense house form buildings (at densities of at least 50 persons per net residential acre) or in the form of higher density apartment structures. It is important to provide a catchment area of residential uses that will rely on the services offered in the node. Success in creating a node is more likely in a location which already has a catchment area of residential uses supporting a range and variety of existing services.*
4. *A straightforward street system is required for a successful node, with many short blocks, and streets forming the basis of an easily understood public space system. As well as a good internal movement system, the node will demand streets which link up with an arterial road network.*
5. *A compact node is much more likely to be successful than one that is spread out. Compactness implies that new construction is on land as close as possible to existing development. Since surface parking lots detract from compactness and thus pedestrian amenities, parking should be encouraged above or below grade.*
6. *Good auto access is required in all directions since the private car is used for many business trips to other parts of the Metropolitan area, and is required when there is more than one destination in a particular trip. Transit is required for many employees, and the modal split will increase in favour of transit as the node grows. A node has a greater chance of success if it is in the middle of an active trading area, rather than at its edge.*
7. *A successful node requires adequate land designated for office development, yet not so much that the node is not compact. Success is most probable if a nodal location is chosen where there are existing retail and service uses, where there is a good base to build on.*
8. *Office space densities in the node should be set at a level high enough that sites developed early in the life of the node will not need to be redeveloped for at least 30 years, and also high enough that at the 20,000-employee level the node will be relatively compact. Perhaps no density limitations should be set to ensure the development of a successful node; in fact, it is probably important to require a right density at a minimum of 4.0 x coverage.*
9. Nodal development is incremental, and as it reacts to a changing and political economic climate, is spasmodic, reaching maturity in a minimum of one decade, and more probably over a twenty year period.

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10. The proximity of housing serving executives and/or the location of social facilities serving executives will help to ensure that the node will become successful.

11. *It is important that residents, politicians and planners have the understanding of the elements of a successful node and a very positive desire to create a successful node. If neither quality is present, or if nodal development is agreed to only reluctantly, it is possible that qualifications will be imposed that severely limit the opportunities for nodal development.*

None of these guidelines can really stand alone. The successful node is a combination of the factors set out above.

**The Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centres, 1269; Washington, D.C., Urban Land Institute, quoted in: Shopping Centres, 1971; Ontario Association of Ontario Land Economists.*

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