

# THE “SPRAWL REPAIR ACT”: REALIZING POLYCENTRICITY IN METROPOLITAN SPATIAL STRUCTURE

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- Introduction
- Polycentricity Within Metropolitan Regions
  - Nodes + Economics + Policies
  - Existing Gaps
- The “Sprawl Repair Act” and *Sprawl Repair Manual*
- Research Problem
- Palm Beach Mall
  - Initial Mall
  - Growth and Decline
- Repairing the Palm Beach Site
  - Site Analysis
  - Urban Design Techniques
- Conclusions and Take Home Points

PRESENTATION  
OUTLINE

- **Polycentricity** is a commonality within **metropolitan** regions.
- Most every major and mid-size urban agglomeration has **multiple centers or nodes**
- There is much literature that describes the internal/external attributes and dynamics of polycentric spatial structure

## Theories of Polycentric Development

### ○ Nodes

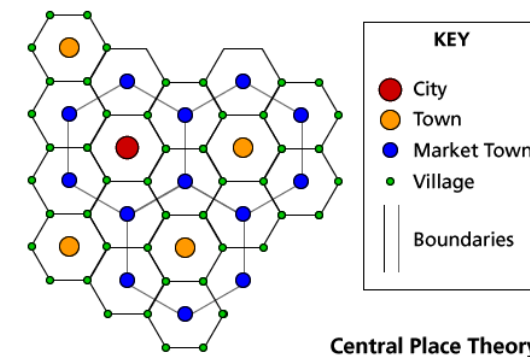
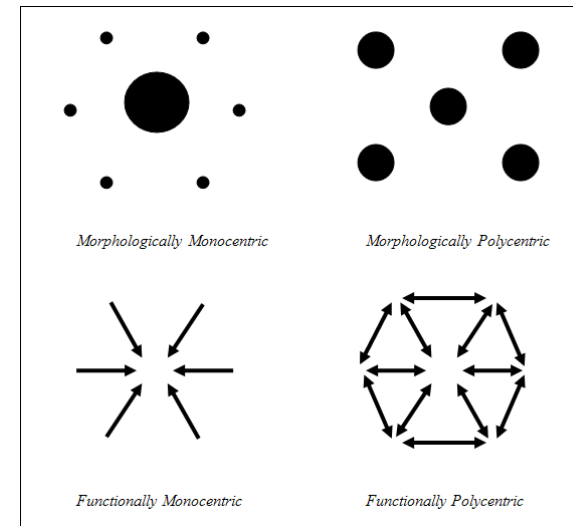
- Edge Cities
- Employment Centers
- Town Centers
- Themed Spaces
- Complementarity

### ○ Economics

- Cluster Theory
- Complexity Economics

### ○ Purposeful Decentralization

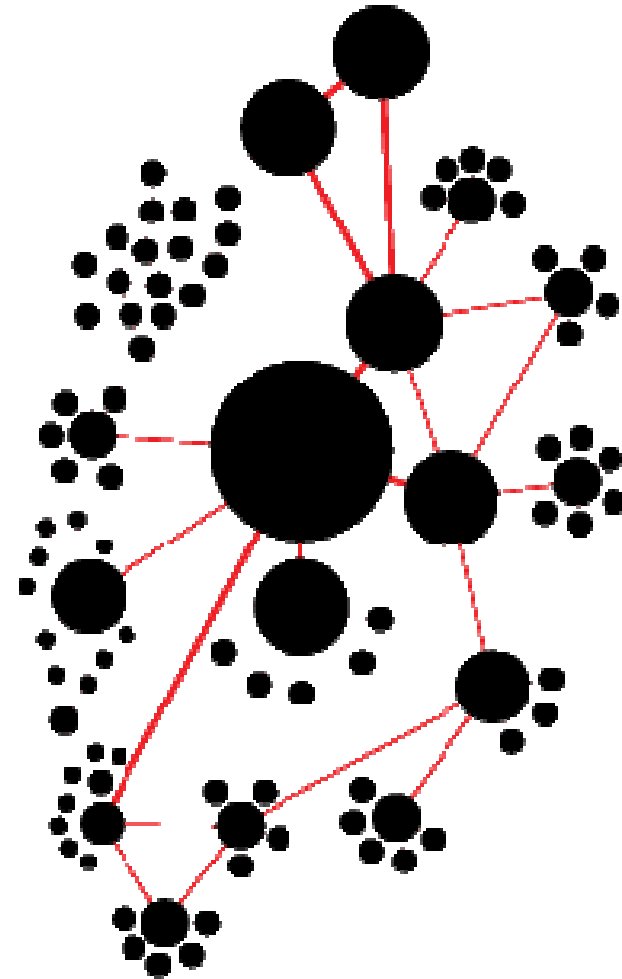
- London in the 1890/1900s and Ebenezer Howard
- Istanbul in the 1990/2000s and Zaha Hadid



- Nodes within polycentric regions often exist at various scales and comprise of various **functionalities**
- Polycentric spatial patterns is rooted in the **economics of urban agglomerations**
- **Planning policies** create eventual spatial structures
- In these polycentric metropolitan areas, a **hierarchy** develops in which cities and regions and their constituent parts have **lifecycles**
- A **lifecycle** may shift into **disrepair** and lose status due to issues such as:
  - Changes in demand
  - Changes in technology
  - Changes in fashion and popularity

## Gaps-Dealing with Existing Spaces

- Gaps
  - It is the places on the **bottom** of the **polycentric hierarchy** that are broken and in disrepair- in need of planner intervention
    - Often they are former center spaces and active central nodes that have completed it's **life cycle**
- Current new urbanism models attempt to recycle these broken morphological sites into **repaired nodes**
  - Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ)



# THE STATE OF FLORIDA SPRAWL REPAIR ACT

DPZ | Architects and Town Planners –April 18, 2009

- Whereas the State of Florida aspires to reformat its inventory of **auto-dependent suburban sprawl** into compact, walkable, diverse, and transit-ready communities that are more socially equitable, consume less petroleum and generate fewer greenhouse gases,
- Whereas the public servicing of suburban sprawl disproportionately consumes the tax base of Florida's municipalities,
- Whereas the Baby-Boom Generation, the largest demographic among Florida residents, will not be well served by being able to live only in auto-dependent suburban areas, & Whereas the Millennial Generation, the second largest group and the most important to the future workforce of Florida, has shown that they prefer urban areas,
- Whereas the existing investment in suburban sprawl must not be allowed to become uncompetitive and thereby lose value & Whereas the current financial crisis has opened certain real estate assets in Florida to transformation and that the principal among them are underperforming malls and shopping centers,
- Whereas **shopping malls are sizeable greyfield sites** large enough to sustain a rebalancing of investment on their open parking lots, and that such rebalancing would entail the addition of dwellings, offices, hotels, schools and civic structures, with the result being town centers,
- Whereas these town centers would revitalize the housing subdivisions around them that might otherwise become obsolete,
- Whereas **retail nodes have been overbuilt** by as much as 400% and that much of the land they occupy is under single ownership and open to repurposing,
- Whereas such retail nodes are located along arterial roads with a great deal of already-committed Right-of-Way, convertible to Urban Complete Street capacity,
- Whereas such retail locations are usually well placed regionally for service by streetcar and bus rapid-transit, as emerging transportation options,
- Whereas Florida's focus on arterial highways has helped rural mobility, but has not supported the finer grained urban street networks that encourage vital modes like walking, cycling, and transit, and,
- Whereas the immediate neighbors would be less inclined to oppose the redevelopment of a retail node than new greenfield development or densification by infill,

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## SPRAWL REPAIR ACT

## Resolutions

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



# The Sprawl Repair Manual

Step-by-step methods of repairing dilapidated communities and sites into complete functional nodes.

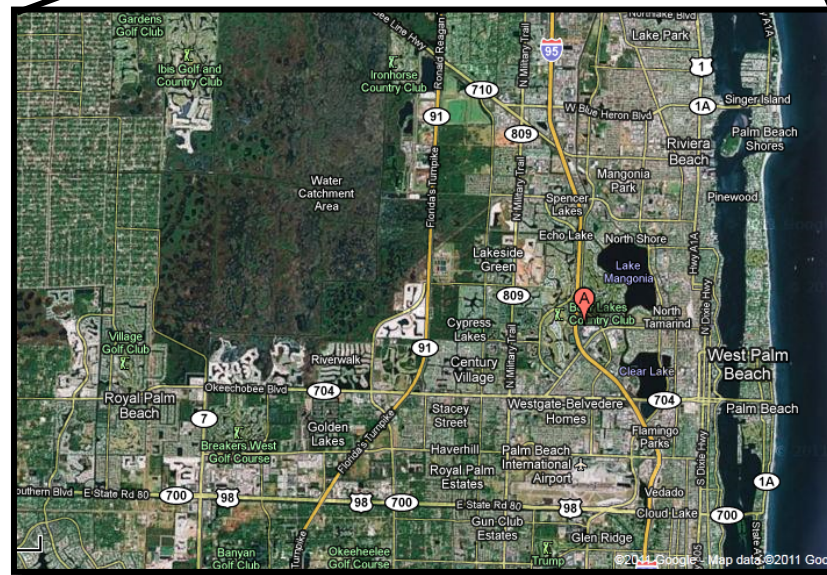
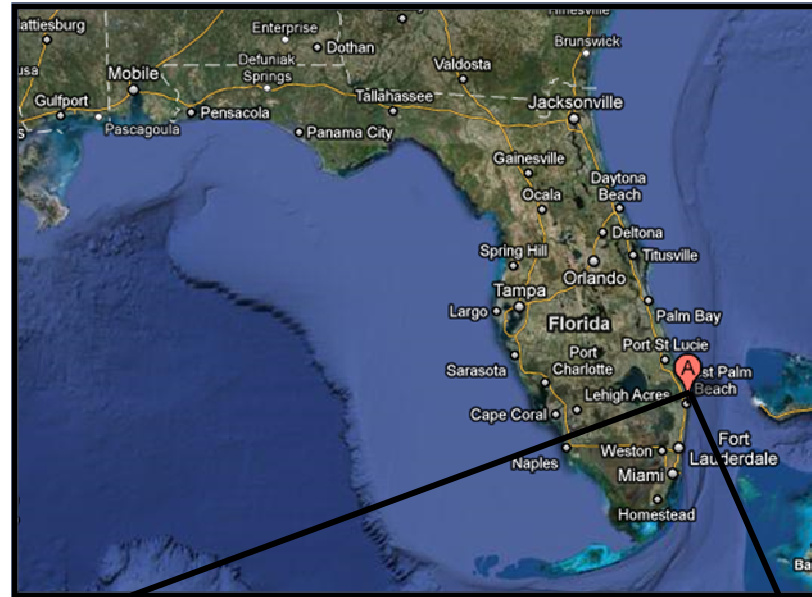


SPRAWL REPAIR  
MANUAL

We applied the principles of the “Sprawl Repair Act” and the steps of the *Sprawl Repair Manual* to the abandoned Palm Beach Mall in West Palm Beach Florida and we critique the results in light of current theories in polycentric spatial structure

# Initial Mall

- Opened in 1967
- First fully enclosed climate-controlled mall in the State of Florida
- Once the largest mall in the SE United States
- Hugely successful during the 70's and 80's



## Growth and Decline

- Decline: New shopping destinations, high crime incidences, bad management
- Closed January, 2010
- Existing Solution Ideas: No active plans.



Palm Beach Mall, 2007.

# PALM BEACH MALL

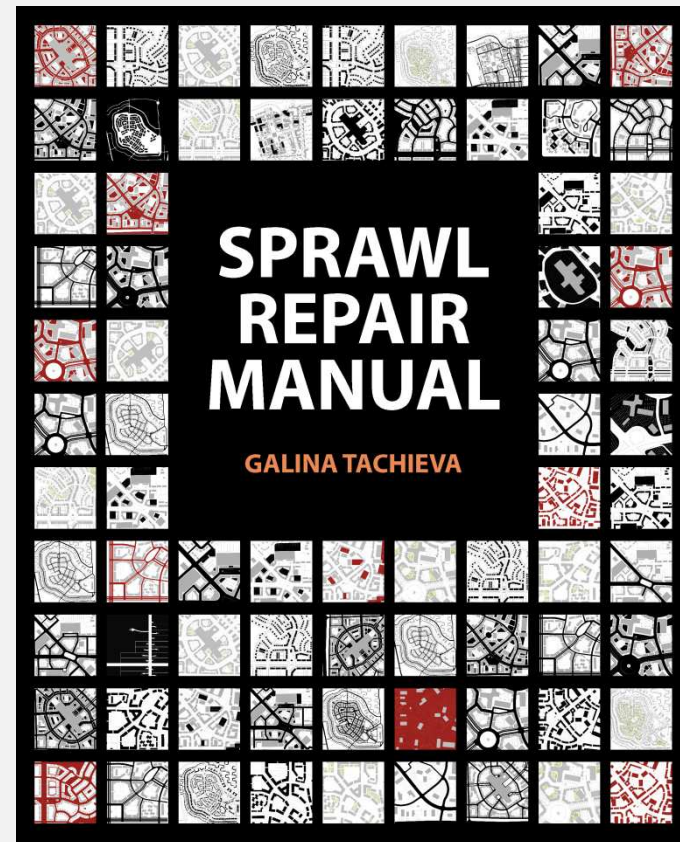
# WE SLIP ON OUR NEW URBANISM HAT

## THE STATE OF FLORIDA SPRAWL REPAIR ACT

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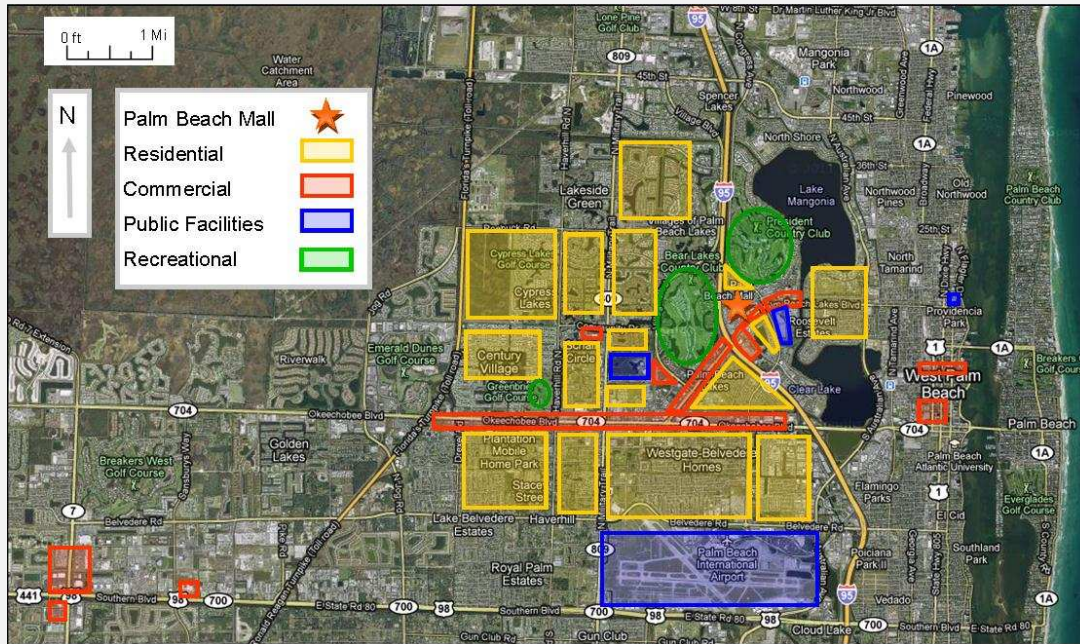
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REPAIRING THE PALM BEACH SITE WITH “SPRAWL REPAIR”

# Site Analysis



EVOLUTION OR DEVOLUTION		
POTENTIAL FOR:	YES	NO
Neighborhood Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Viable Infrastructure and Utilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Robust Housing Stock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Viability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>THREE OR MORE?</b>	<b>THREE OR MORE</b>
<b>DECISION</b>	<b>EVOLUTION</b>	<b>DEVOLUTION</b>
<b>OUTCOME</b>	Neighborhood center Town center Regional-urban core	Remain as is Replace with agricultural land Revert to natural open space

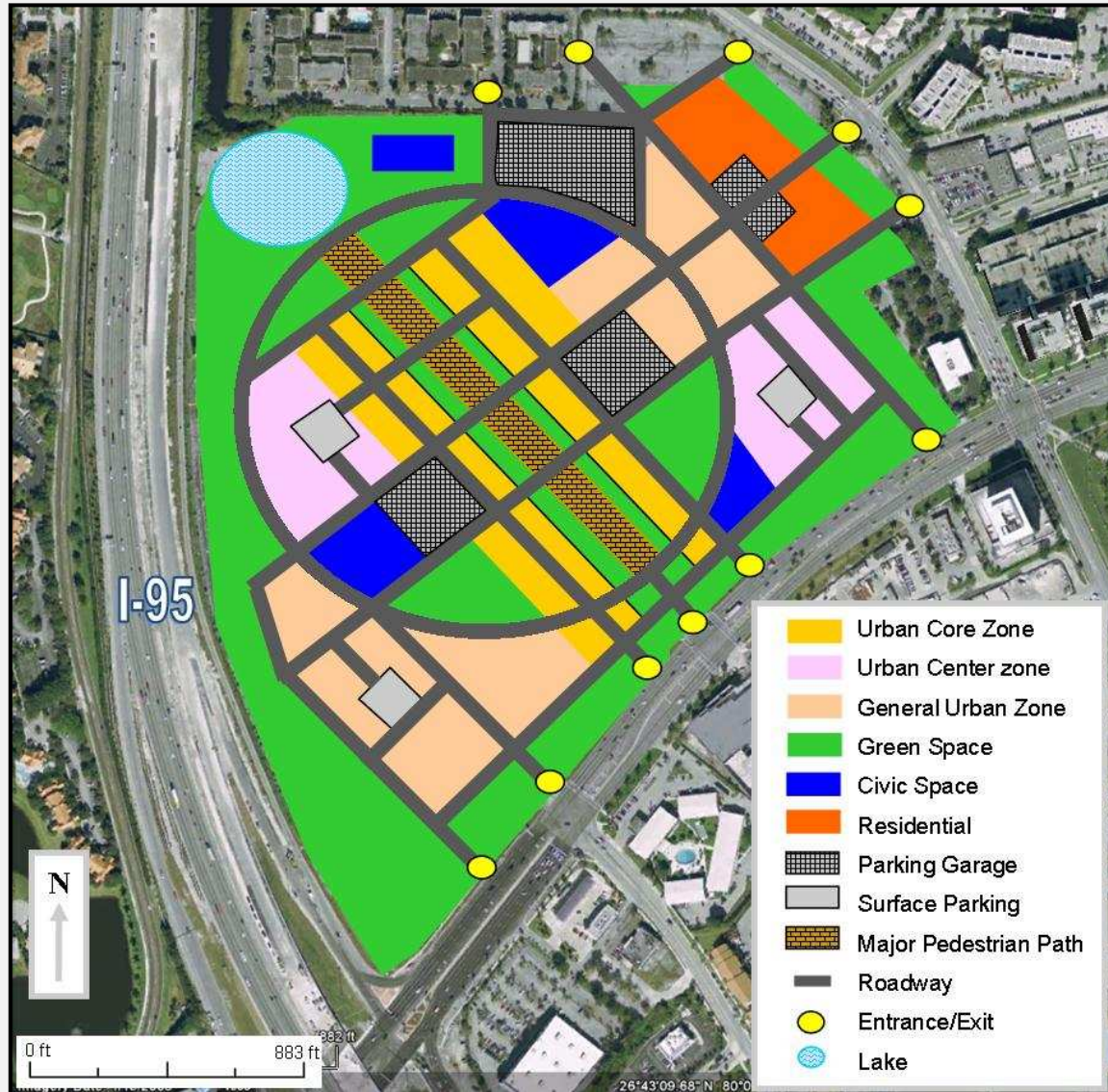
Over 3 million sq ft.  
 •Regional Center with the repair type of “Town Center”  
 •Services 5-10 miles  
 •“high repair priority” = best location for transit and employment generation

## REPAIRING THE PALM BEACH SITE WITH “SPRAWL REPAIR”

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

REPAIRING THE PALM BEACH SITE WITH “SPRAWL REPAIR”

# Resulting Site Proposal



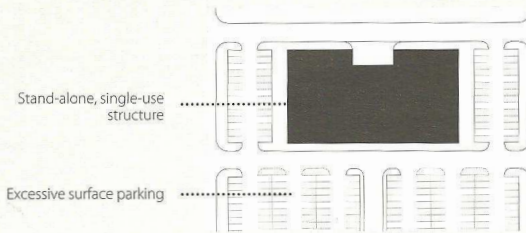


## BIG BOX

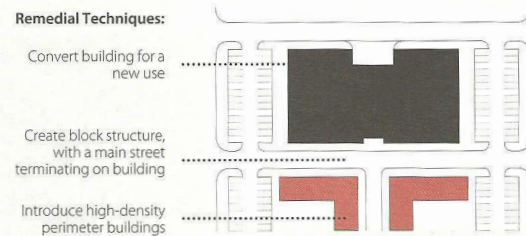
Big-box retailers often abandon buildings for new ones farther out. With so many going out of business, even more are available for redevelopment. These proposals offer different levels of intervention. The first keeps the building as is, with liner buildings in front. Its use may remain retail, or it can be converted for large

occupants such as a satellite college campus, or even a parking garage. A more radical approach (figure 7-20) densely develops the entire site. Perimeter buildings and garages are added in front, and the building is renovated. The creation of new streets and a block structure is crucial to both options.

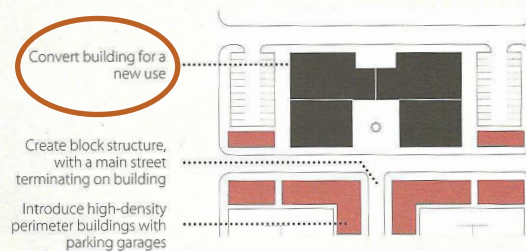
**Deficiency:** Car-oriented building type



**Outcome One:** Liner buildings



**Outcome Two:** Converted structure and complete urban blocks



Does “The Sprawl Repair” actually realize polycentricity in metropolitan regions?

Not completely

CONCLUSION  
S

- The Sprawl Repair Act focuses attention on underutilized land use and The Sprawl Repair Manual introduces clever “repair” method to create places of opportunity
- What about polycentric attributes and dynamics?

1. Nodes within polycentric regions often exist at various scales and comprise of various **functionalities**
2. Polycentric spatial patterns is rooted in the **economics of urban agglomerations**
3. **Planning policies** create eventual spatial structures of the metropolitan region

- Why does it have to be a town center?

Urban design solutions is only a **partial answer**

- A regional approach is necessary and developers must understand the potential of the site
- Polycentric spatial structure and it's development is grounded in the region's **economic, social, and market** dynamics
- Explanatory theories need to be incorporated into the framework of “sprawl repair” and revitalization strategies

THANK YOU!

