

Now, I would like to define this focus more precisely, because here is where our greatest traffic problems occur, and because the qualities that lend the city its vitality, its excitement, its distinction, its special atmosphere, are pretty well confined to a single district, as Mayor Jonsson pointed out, mainly the downtown area, the central area of the city; or, to use the jargon of planners, the core.

If we look out over any North American city from an airplane, we can identify immediately what the core is. The way the tight cluster of tall buildings abruptly thrusts up out of the surrounding plane of low-level structures is like a diagram or a graph measuring the concentration and intensity of life that springs suddenly to a peak in the core. It is the center of the city's economic, commercial, public, and cultural life. It determines, more than any other district, the city's special character or flavor.

Financially it is by far the most important element, the largest long-term investments are tied up there, and in many smaller cities, fully a fifth of the municipal tax revenues are raised on a patch of real estate that constitutes only a tiny fraction of the total acreage of the city.

Needless to say, the condition of a core is, or should be, the paramount concern of every city, for, as with the nucleus of a living cell, the health of the whole city depends directly on the health and smooth functioning of the core. And this is where the extension of the TOPICS program can be effective for every American City.

Fortunately, the core has a lot going for it. Because it is the prestige location, every major enterprise of the city and of the region insists on having its headquarters there.

The core is a magnet for investment, and, like a serpent periodically shedding its skin, it automatically renews itself under the impetus of private enterprise every 40 or 50 years, among the bases of mortgage leases or leases. It is tearing down outmoded buildings and replacing them with modern ones. It is this renewing virtue in conjunction with the public sector which is our opportunity to reconstruct and restructure the core before the century is out.

And Dallas is an example of this method. Today, for all its inherent vitality, the core is chronically subject to one peculiar disability that may be merely irritating, but can become as paralyzing and destructive as sand in the moving parts of a machine. This disability is, of course, congestion, the hampering of movement caused by sheer overcrowding.

And if there is any single factor essential to the smooth functioning of the core, it is movement, the free circulation of trucks, automobiles, and pedestrians within the core, and the easy access to it from outside it.

When mobility is hampered, the downtown district, instead of being the pride and the pleasure of the citizens, turns into a purgatory—all too familiar nowadays—of choked traffic, polluted air and noise—the constant complaints that we do hear.

Financially the effects of congestion are also severe, pushing up the cost of conducting business in the city until firms in some cases are eventually forced to sacrifice prime location and leave.

But for every firm that leaves, there are 10 others ready to take their place and live with the inconvenience for the sake of the location.