

## Commercial Land Use

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### Abstract

The map is composed of six thematic map layers showing the proportion of stores in each city that belongs to each of the five commercial location types plus a sixth type, dispersed stores. Downtown is typically the oldest and most central commercial location in the city. Shopping centres are designed, built and managed as a single unit, primarily for retail purposes. Pedestrian strips are those neighbourhood commercial streets, usually surrounded by residential areas, that are made up of individually owned stores. Arterial strips are the through streets that are lined with retail and service activities to serve people in automobiles. Industrial zones are extensive areas zoned for industrial use that nowadays are home to wholesalers, big-box retailers and a variety of services and small office buildings. Dispersed stores include stores that do not belong to any of the five commercial location types. The spatial distribution of the commercial structure also relates to the patterns of specialization in services, since those cities with strong specializations should have distinctive commercial structures in order to accommodate the specializations.

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The map shows the proportion of stores in the city belonging to each of the six commercial location types: downtown (initial map view), shopping centres, pedestrian strips, arterial strips, industrial zones and dispersed stores. For information on the methodology and a full definition of each commercial structure type, refer to the Commercial Land-use Data and Mapping portion of the document "6th\_Data and Mapping Notes on Service Industries".

### Geographical Description

Each thematic map layer shows circles proportional to the size of the census metropolitan area or census agglomeration in 1996. The cities are then ranked according to the proportion of land used by the six commercial types for a total of 1.00 and divided into five legend classes for mapping.

The proportion of pedestrian strips and industrial zones declines with city size, whereas the role of arterial strips and dispersed stores increases. The pedestrian zones are especially strong in the four largest cities (Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa), where a long commercial history, reinforced by a strong flow of recent immigration, has led to extensive strips oriented to ethnic markets. Arterial strips, in contrast, are strongest in the smaller cities, presumably those with lower population densities and a higher ratio of automobile ownership. Industrial zones are much more important in the very largest cities, and much less important in the very smallest cities. The proportions of land occupied by the downtown and dispersed

stores are good indicators of city size, with lower and higher values indicating smaller and larger cities, respectively.

The regional differences (Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario, Prairie provinces, British Columbia) show up in a variety of ways, and result from differences in language and culture, economic base and planning policies, as well as city size and recent growth paths. The most striking contrast is the difference in the role of the downtown in Ontario and Quebec. These two provinces make up the 'core' of the country, in that they contribute most of the manufacturing and distribution activity for the 'periphery', which are the other regions that generate primary products for export. The cities of the periphery (such as Thunder Bay, Ontario) provide goods and services for nearby rural areas. As such, they have especially strong downtowns. Manufacturing and mining centres in Ontario and Quebec, in comparison, tend to have spatially dispersed workplaces and more dispersed commercial activity. Shopping centres, it appears, are not affected by these differences, whereas the proportion of pedestrian strips tracks the distribution of the largest cities in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. Arterial strips are especially strong in the province of Quebec, while industrial zones are strong in Ontario and Alberta. There may be a political element here as well: compared to Ontario, cities in Quebec appear to support more informal kinds of locations - arterial strips and dispersed stores - which may be a reflection of fragmented municipal government and weaker planning legislation. When the ratios of stores per thousand population are compared, the cities of western Canada have substantially higher values than the rest of the country. The cities are not smaller, but they do serve more extensive trade areas, as shown in the analysis of service specialization (refer to the Specialization in Commercial Services maps).

Refer to the online Atlas of Canadian Commercial Structure for maps showing the commercial land-use types in the following cities: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa-Hull, Montréal and Québec.

## Downtowns

Downtowns are typically the oldest and most central commercial location in the city. Initially, they provided retail and institutional services, but over time much of the retail activity has migrated to the suburbs and the downtown has attracted a variety of other services into office buildings. The importance of the downtown varies widely from city to city. Smaller cities have relatively larger downtowns, as do cities with a strong indices of centrality because they provide services to a wide trade (market) area.

## Shopping Centres

Shopping centres are designed, built and managed as a single unit, primarily for retail purposes; they are therefore easy to identify. As a relatively modern innovation, introduced to most cities in the 1960s or later, they are usually located at

the edge of the city closer to the suburbs. Most cities have about 10% of their stores in shopping centres; this value is slightly higher in larger cities and in cities with a high growth rate.

### **Pedestrian Strips**

Pedestrian strips are those neighbourhood commercial streets, usually surrounded by residential areas, that are made up of individually owned stores. People walk from one store to the next, along the street. The street evolves over time in response to the needs of the community. In suburban areas, the strip may have begun as the downtown for an earlier village. In metropolitan areas, some strips have specialized in goods and services for various immigrant groups. Because pedestrian strips serve nearby communities within the city, their share of stores is greatest in cities with low indices of centrality (that is, fewer stores in the downtown). The highest shares for pedestrian strips occur in southern Ontario, southern Quebec and coastal British Columbia.

### **Arterial Strips**

Arterial strips are those through streets that are lined with retail and service activities catering to automobiles and their drivers: service stations and dealerships, fast food outlets and free-standing retailers.



Photograph of Merivale Road, Ottawa, Ontario

These areas developed during the last half of the 20th century, as new activities emerged to serve the changing needs of suburban consumers. Planners try to bring them (and the traffic they generate) under control by supporting the development of planned shopping centres and/or industrial districts in competition. The distribution shows that the cities in Quebec have much higher proportions of stores in this category than cities in Ontario. In contrast cities in western Canada have low proportions.

## Industrial Zones

Industrial zones are difficult to identify in the field. They are extensive areas zoned for industrial use, and nowadays also include wholesalers, big-box retailers and a variety of services and small office buildings.



Photograph of Merivale Industrial Zone, Ottawa, Ontario

These are specialized destinations, often oriented to other businesses; not the kinds of places you stumble upon by accident. As the most recent form of commercial concentration, they are most often found in rapidly growing cities, especially the largest cities. Since industrial zones support a wide range of specialized activities they usually benefit from commercial specialization as indicated by the index of centrality. The distribution indicates that cities in Ontario and the Prairies have higher values than cities in Quebec, the Atlantic region and British Columbia.

## Dispersed Stores

The dispersed stores are those activities that are left out when all the commercial polygons in the city have been mapped. They include the traditional activities such as service stations and convenience stores, as well as clusters of stores that are too small to qualify as commercial polygons. In most cities, some 30% of stores are assigned to this category, with higher proportions in small cities and slow-growth cities. Since dispersed stores seldom serve consumers living outside the city, they tend to be relatively more important in cities with low indices of centrality. Like arterial strips, they may also be an indicator of weaker planning legislation that permits commercial activity outside designated commercial zones. The distribution of dispersed stores shows cities with low proportions in the Prairie and Maritime provinces, and cities with higher values in Ontario and Quebec.

To properly interpret this map, please consult the document "Data and Mapping Notes on Service Industries".

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## Definitions of underlined terms

**Census Agglomeration:** A census agglomeration (CA) is a large urban area (known as the urban core) together with adjacent urban and rural areas (known as urban and rural fringes) that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core. A CA has an urban core population of at least 10 000, based on the previous census. However, if the population of the urban core of a CA declines below 10 000, the CA is retired. Once a CA attains an urban core population of at least 100 000, based on the previous census, it is eligible to become a CMA. CAs that have urban cores of at least 50 000, based on the previous census, are subdivided into census tracts. Census tracts are maintained for CAs even if the population of the urban cores subsequently fall below 50 000. A CA may be consolidated with adjacent CAs if they are socially and economically integrated. This new grouping is called consolidated CA and the component CAs are called primary census agglomerations (PCAs). (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

**Census Metropolitan Area (CMA):** A census metropolitan area (CMA) is a very large urban area (known as the urban core) together with the adjacent urban and rural areas (known as urban and rural fringes) that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core. A CMA has an urban core population of at least 100 000, based on the previous census. Once an area becomes a CMA, it is retained as a CMA even if the population of its urban core declines below 100 000. All CMAs are subdivided into census tracts. A CMA may be consolidated with adjacent census agglomerations (CA) if they are socially and economically integrated. This new grouping is known as a consolidated CMA and the component CMA and CA are known as the primary census metropolitan area (PCMA) and primary census agglomeration(s) (PCA). A CMA may not be consolidated with another CMA. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

**Index of Centrality:** While the size of the market determines the amount of service activity within a city, it may have more service activity than indicated by the size of the market, and this surplus of facilities is called "centrality". A high index value of centrality implies that the city is serving an extensive region outside the city, as well as the urban market itself. Conversely, a deficiency of service facilities suggests that the city's external role is quite limited, or that it may even import goods and service from nearby centres.

**Market:** The potential for sales in a defined area.

## Map Sources

### Commercial Land Use

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## **Related Web sites (1999 – 2009)**

### **Federal Government**

Industry Canada. Strategis. Canada's Business and Consumer Site

[http://www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/ic\\_wp-pa.htm](http://www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/ic_wp-pa.htm)

Strategis is produced by Industry Canada a department of the Federal government which employs over 5,500 people across Canada. The department's mission is to work with Canadians to build a growing competitive, knowledge-based economy.

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census Dictionary

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/92-351-u/4064723-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/info/census96.cfm>

### **Other**

Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity

<http://www.casca.ryerson.ca/>

Queen Street: The Dreams of the City

<http://www.rbebout.com/queen/2pworld.htm>

## The Atlas of Canadian Commercial Structure

<http://www.cscs.ryerson.ca/research/jim/CommercialAtlasCanada.html>

