

**/EVALUATING SOCIABILITY IN SMALL URBAN SPACES:/
A CASE STUDY OF THE MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA**

BY

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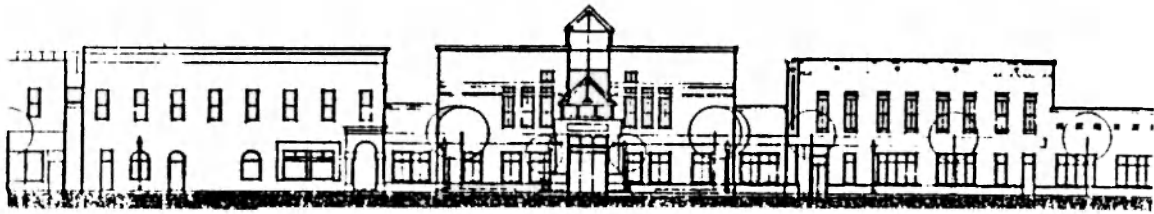
source of inspiration and whose patience, for a six-month-old baby, was incredible. And to my husband Tauqir, whose love and support kept me going, my strongest appreciations.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This thesis describes the first year's development of an urban open space---the Manhattan Town Center Plaza in Manhattan Kansas (Figure 1.1). The central question which this thesis addresses is whether this plaza is successful in terms of sociability, by which is meant the informal coming together of people in a place. This definition relies largely on the research of William Whyte and his book The Social Life of Small Urban Open Spaces (1980). In most general terms, this study analyzes the Manhattan Town Center Plaza in terms of environmental attributes that are conducive to social interaction in public open spaces. The research also seeks to discern some architectural elements that contribute to the sociability of an urban public space.

A key aim of this thesis is to help environment-behavior researchers learn more about small public spaces in smaller cities and the role that the physical environment and contextual attributes play in achieving sociability (Francis, 1987). A second aim of the thesis is to utilize the research findings to formulate some design guidelines that practically enhance the sociability of the



PLAZA ELEVATION LOOKING EAST

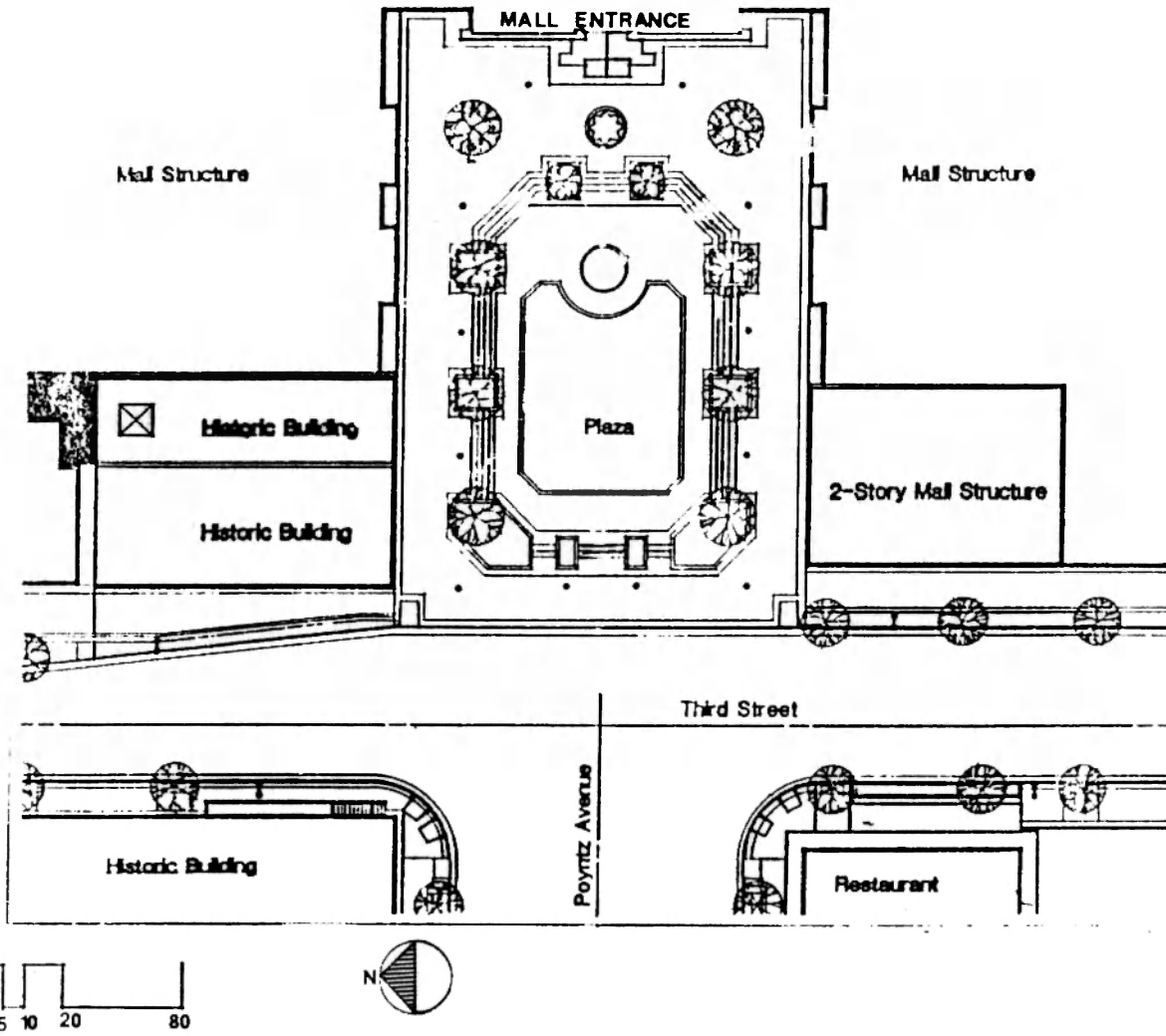


FIGURE 1.1 MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA

Manhattan Town Center plaza and urban plazas in general. A third aim of the study is to provide some initial research insights on plazas that other studies can extend and use to evaluate other urban outdoor plazas so that they become "positive environments for social interaction" (Iraola 1987, p. 3).

LITERATURE REVIEW

No form of urban open space is as old as the urban square and plaza (Heckscher 1977, p. 17). Plazas and their equivalents have existed since cities began, yet little is known about how well the architectural and contextual attributes of these places support the behavioral aspects and sociability requirements of people (for a history of urban plazas, see French, 1983; Heckscher, 1977).

One valuable overview of research on urban plazas is a recent review article by Mark Francis (1987), who explains that "research over the past decade focusing on previously neglected aspects of open space quality has provided recognition of the social, psychological, and economic benefits of urban open space" (p.72). Francis further explains that "urban open space research originated from public awareness of the social failure of many urban open spaces" (Ibid.). Francis classifies most of the research

done on urban open spaces into two broad categories: first, case studies which involve descriptive analyses of real places such as parks, shopping malls and playgrounds. (e.g. Whyte, 1980; Appleyard, 1981; Eubank-Ahrens, 1985; Van Andel, 1985). Two important studies are William Whyte's (1980) research on plazas, and Donald Appleyard's (1981) study of the relationship of traffic to environmental qualities of neighborhood streets.

Francis's second category of research on urban open spaces is what he calls the "applied research approach," which "frequently responds to an observed problem in an existing open space, such as lack of use" (p.73). This second approach has been quite successful, as it has been used by non-profit environmental consultant groups, such as the Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (1978, 1981, 1984), which at present is involved in evaluating, programming and redesigning urban spaces like malls, plazas and parks throughout the United States.

Francis also points out a third approach to urban open spaces, which is a relatively new method of study called "action research." This approach "involves the direct and continuous feedback of research findings into policy, design, and future research, through using methods

and concepts from conventional research approaches" (p. 75). Examples include the work of Robin Moore (1983), who used children as active researchers; and studies of user-built gardens and parks (Francis ,et al. 1984; also see, Sommer, 1983; Weisman, 1983).

A fourth kind of open-space research that Francis discusses is studies of "settings-focused research." He explains that there are two types of open space settings: first, "traditional spaces" such as public parks, playgrounds and plazas; second, "innovative spaces" which are various forms of non-traditional environments, such as community open spaces, streets closed to vehicular traffic, and pedestrian malls. While discussing traditional open spaces in the city (p. 77-81), Francis briefly reviews the development of the research on downtown plazas. He argues that "the redevelopment of city centers in the 1960s and 1970s included construction of new downtown plazas as part of new corporate or commercial buildings. Building with private funds, plaza developers were granted zoning bonuses for providing open spaces."(p. 81). He also points out to significant research done on these plazas and this work includes Whyte (1980), Rutalidge (1976), Joardar and Neill (1978), and Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1988).

Rutalidge (1976) focused on the activities of one plaza--the Chicago First Bank plaza. He hypothesized that: (1) the plaza draws a variety of people; (2) it serves as a through walk or access way; and (3) it is adaptable for special events. The findings of his research confirmed all these hypotheses. Joardar and Neill (1978) studied ten downtown plazas in Vancouver. These researchers discovered that "subtle differences [such as diversity and articulation in configuration, and form, color, and texture in individual landscape elements] in configuration of small public spaces, have a significant effect on the plaza's enjoyment" (p. 487). While evaluating the Grace Plaza in New York City, Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone, (1988) discovered that it was purposely designed to discourage use by people. Rather, the primary objective of the designer, was that the plaza should serve as visual entrance for the Grace Corporation.

Francis also provided an overview of issues-oriented research. Topics that he describes include, comfort, stress, use/nonuse/misuse, developmental issues, aesthetics and perception, of urban open spaces (p. 88). He gives special attention to the concept of privatization and publicness. Francis (1987) suggests that the needs of a variety of user groups, such as children, teens and

elderly, should be taken into account at the programming stages of urban-open space design. He also stresses that these places should be publicly accessible. In other words, the amount of privatization should be reduced to a minimum and "people should have an access to an open space, freedom to use the space, to claim and change the space through their use," (p. 92).

Perhaps the most important research on plaza sociability is that of Whyte (1980). Whyte started his research on various urban open spaces in 1970, but eventually focused on urban plazas only. In his original study, Whyte studied sixteen plazas and three small parks, all in New York City (Whyte, 1980). Whyte argues that "what attracts people most is other people" (p. 19). He asserts that many urban designers and landscape architects design spaces as though "the opposite were true, and that what people liked best [in principle] were the places they stay away from [in practice]" (p. 19). Whyte argues that from World War II until the recent past, public spaces, such as parks and plazas, were designed to discourage heavy populations of people and maintain a low density. However, spaces designed on this criterion frequently suffered lack of use, an increased crime rate and vandalism (Francis 1987, p. 72). Whyte's research revealed that what people

think they desire in plaza design is often different from their actual behavior in plazas--i.e. seeking out plazas of sociability (Whyte 1980 p. 19).

In Whyte's argument for plaza sociability, there are three factors that are particularly crucial: (1) the location of the plaza in relation to potential users; (2) the relationship between the plaza and major pedestrian flows; and (3) the amount and variety of sitting space provided by the plaza. These three factors are crucial to this study, and, therefore, they are reviewed in detail here.

The first factor which is of primary importance for Whyte is the plaza location in relation to pedestrian flow. He believes that a plaza should not be isolated from larger populations of people. Thus, it should be located in a highly populated area, near heavily used streets or street corners. Whyte argues that people do not generally walk long distances to use a plaza, therefore, he argues that a three block radius is typically the effective drawing distance for a plaza (p. 16).

To maintain a constant flow of people, streets near the plaza should be a link between major activities such as

offices, shopping areas and restaurants. The street corner has its own significance since "a good plaza starts at the street corner. If it is a active corner, it has a brisk social life of its own." (p. 54) Whyte argues that busy street corners near plazas help maintain considerable traffic between plaza and corner.

The second major design factor that Whyte emphasizes in his research is the transition between the street and plaza, which he believes is another key to the plaza's success or failure. He suggests that this "transition should be such that its hard to tell where one ends and the other begins" (p. 57). Whyte argues that the relationship between the street and plaza should stimulate "impulse use," by which he means the quality of a space to draw people into it without hesitation or conscious attention. Whyte suggests two factors which facilitate a plaza's impulse use: first, the sightlines or visibility of the plaza; second, the use of beckoning devices such as steps, trees and entrance markings to draw people in. Whyte contends that the sightlines of the plaza are important because "if people do not see the space they will not use it" (p. 58). ^{He also} Whyte believes that a completely sunken plaza or a plaza above the eye level of the passerby will not stimulate impulse use. However, Whyte strongly recommends

slight level changes to accommodate a few comfortable steps which work as a beckoning device to enhance plaza use and image. Similarly, beckoning devices like trees and entrance markings if designed carefully could stimulate impulse use of a plaza.

The third important factor suggested by Whyte is the sitting space provided within the plaza space. He believes that "people tend to sit most where there is space to sit" (p. 28). Whyte contends that the seating should be: (1) physically comfortable; and (2) socially comfortable. Whyte's criteria for physically comfortable seating incorporate height which he believes should range in between twelve to thirty six inches; and width, which he argues should be a minimum of fourteen inches for seats with backs and a maximum thirty inches for seats used from both sides. Whyte describes sociably comfortable seating space as that space which provides a fair amount of choice to people i.e. "sitting up front, in back, to the side, in the sun, in the shade, in groups, off alone" (p. 28).

Besides these three factors, Whyte points out other elements that can contribute to a plaza's success, and these include food, sun, triangulation, and water. Whyte suggests that food can be one of the major attractions for

people in plazas. Whyte argues that provision of food places, such as built-in snack bars, and restaurants near plaza could considerably increase the plaza users. Whyte also believes that vendors sometimes can be strongest contributor of plaza sociability.

Whyte also believes that sun is a crucial factor which influences human behavior in plazas, as people tend to move with the sun in winter months to get maximum warmth. Further, he suggests that "triangulation" in plazas is another important mode of attracting people. Triangulation is defined by Whyte as "the process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as though they were not" (p. 94). Examples of this factor could be a street band, a person playing a musical instrument, or a physical element such as a sculpture or an inscription. The last factor which is suggested by Whyte is the introduction of a water body in the plaza. He believes that water attracts people, because they love to splash their hands or stick their feet in water, in certain leisurely moods.

A critical problem with Whyte's research is that he does not take into account the contextual influences on the plaza--in other words, the link the plaza has with the

larger downtown district around it. Clues to a plaza's contextual success are provided by Jane Jacobs in her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities (Jacobs, 1961). She contends that small urban spaces such as parks and plazas are creatures of their surroundings and the way these surroundings generate mutual support from diverse uses (p. 98). She believes that "places are directly and drastically affected by the way its neighborhood acts upon it (Ibid.). Further, she insists that these neighborhoods or surroundings should consist of highly diverse conditions. To generate diversity, Jacobs presents four conditions which, she says, are indispensable. First, she argues that urban areas should have a good mixture of activities, that is that there should be some primary uses, which are establishments which draw people to them for certain special purposes. Examples of the primary uses could be offices, factories, and educational institutions. She asserts, in addition to these primary uses, there should also be some secondary uses, by which she means uses which arise in response to primary uses, such as, restaurants, bars and shops.

Second, she criticizes long blocks for not providing enough turnings, thus, minimizing chances for social encounters. In view of this she recommends short city

blocks. Third, she recommends a diversity in the ages of buildings in a district. In other words she emphasizes the need for both new construction or costly renovation that attracts well established enterprises, as well as lower rent facilities that can house businesses with lower profit margins, in order to maintain varying economic yields.

Jacobs' fourth and last condition relates to the sustenance of high density in urban districts. In condition one, Jacobs emphasizes the primary uses that draw people into a district whereas, in the fourth condition the emphasis is on keeping people in the district. Jacobs contends that high densities play an important role in healthy street life and sociable urban spaces. As will be seen in chapter three, the first and fourth conditions were particularly important for the evaluation of Manhattan Town Center Plaza.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

If William Whyte and other urban scholars offer conceptual understanding as to how sociability happens in urban plazas, the next need is to find ways to analyze Manhattan Town Center Plaza in terms of that conceptual understanding. To do this, the thesis evaluates four major factors which are discussed in chapters two through five:

(1) the historical and socio-economic background of Manhattan, its downtown, and Manhattan Town Center Plaza (chapter two); (2) the physical design and context of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza (chapter three); (3) users' environmental behavior in the Manhattan Town Center Plaza (chapter four); and (4) attitudes of plaza users, designers, and policy makers (chapter five). The argument is that each of these four factors provides a way to assess the potential of Manhattan Town Center Plaza to foster social interaction. In the next sections, these four factors are discussed in detail, first in terms of their value for an evaluation of plaza sociability; second, in terms of methodology used to understand each factor empirically.

1. The Historical and Socio-Economic Background of Manhattan, its Downtown, and Manhattan Town Center

In chapter two of the thesis, the historical background of Manhattan, its central business district and Manhattan Town Center is investigated to examine the events leading to the decision to provide the public plaza for Manhattan. This historical information also provides an understanding of factors that influenced the plaza's design and policy decisions as well as users' expectations. In addition, an analysis of socio-economic factors is done to identify

potential users of the plaza and their demographic backgrounds.

The methodology used for this historical and socio-economic survey involved archival research. Materials consulted for understanding the historical data on Manhattan and Manhattan Town Center included: (a) 'Yes': Manhattan Kansas Downtown Redevelopment Plan (1979, pp. IV-2 - IV-3); (b) Kazerian's work on revitalization of the downtown Manhattan Kansas (Kazerian, 1982); and (c) newspaper articles in the Manhattan Mercury, a local newspaper; and the Collegian, a newspaper published by students at Kansas State University. Materials consulted for socio-economic data included: (a) the eligibility report of Central Business District redevelopment (1984); (b) 'Yes': Manhattan Kansas Downtown Redevelopment Plan (1979); and (c) Kazerian's work on revitalization of the downtown Manhattan Kansas (Kazerian, 1982).

2. The Physical Design and Context of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza

In chapter three of the thesis, an analysis of the architectural design and location of the plaza is conducted. This analysis helps to evaluate the contextual fit of the plaza in terms of its physical surroundings.

This analysis also helped to understand the plaza formally and behaviorally. This evaluation is carried out through a description and analysis of such physical attributes of the plaza as overall size, amount and kind of seating, spatial relationship to major pedestrian flows, and so forth.

In terms of methodology, this physical analysis was done using five means: (1) a mapping survey, conducted to identify land uses and activities surrounding the plaza; (2) data from County and City Data Book 1988, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (1988), which helped to assess population amounts and change in Manhattan; (3) information from the Housing and Population Data Handbook (1977), which provided data for densities in Manhattan including the downtown and area around the plaza; (4) the Town Center Mall and Plaza's architectural plans, which were reviewed to evaluate physical elements within and around the plaza (see appendix A); and (5) photographs of the plaza, taken by the author, which provided data on the plaza's architectural character, as well as users' activity in the plaza.

3. Studying Environmental Behavior

Observing peoples' behavior in the plaza is an integral part of the thesis and is discussed in chapter four. Plaza

behavior was observed to determine: (a) the various ways people used an the plaza environment; (b) the opportunities and constraints the plaza environment presented; and (c) the relationships between different activities taking place in the plaza environment (Zeisel, 1981, p. 111).

This analysis involved photography and behavior mapping done by the author. Behavior mapping is "a tool social scientists have developed to study people's activities in a systematic way "(Davies, Love and Ziegler, 1981, p. 26). It was used in this study to document sequences of behavior in the plaza. Figure 1.2 illustrates the base map used in the research; users were differentiated by sex, age, and whether alone or in groups. The mapping was done on two days of the week--Tuesday and Saturday. These days were chosen, since some differences in usage of the plaza were expected due to contrasting public routines on weekdays and on weekends.

During the two days of observation, three specific times were allocated for the behavioral mapping procedure: (a) a morning period from 9am to 10am, which documented use during the first hour after the opening time of mall; (b) a lunch period from 12 noon to 1pm, which included the formal lunch hour at offices around the plaza; and (b) an evening

DATE
TIME
TEMP.

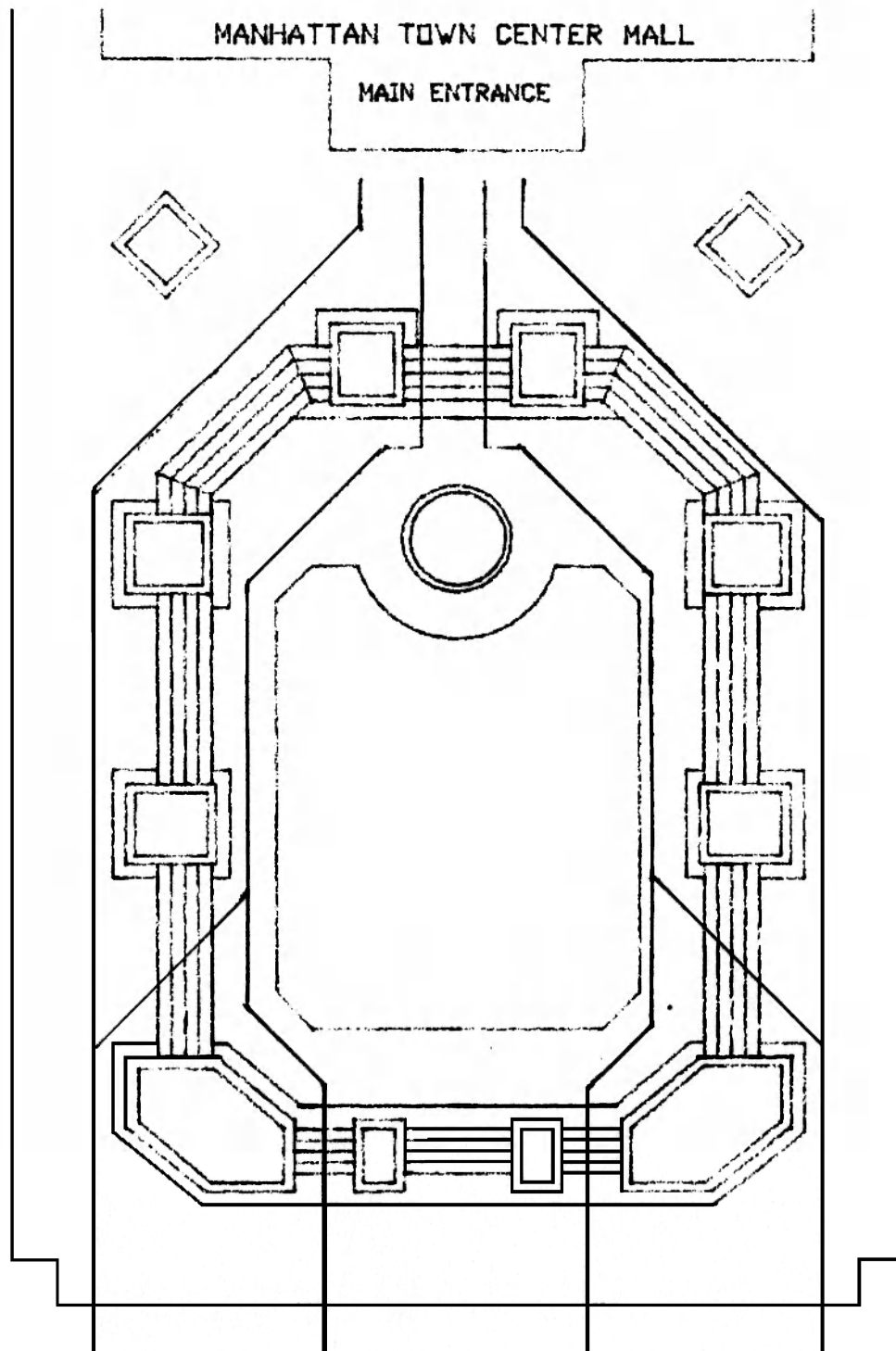


FIGURE 1.2 BASE PLAN USED FOR BEHAVIOR MAPS

period started from 5pm to 6pm, which included the time when offices and most of the businesses in the older downtown closed. These three specific times were chosen to identify any changes in user behavior over the duration of one day.

To provide a longitudinal, developmental picture of the plaza and user behaviors, the plaza was examined in three stages during the first year of its life cycle. The first stage was the pre-opening stage, which was defined as the one week before the formal inauguration of the mall on Monday, October 26th, 1987. This pre-opening stage covers the period of Tuesday, October, 20th, 1987, to Sunday, October, 25th, 1987. The main research objective of this stage was to study the physical characteristics of the plaza and also to record plaza behaviors and activities taking place in order to estimate the potential of the plaza to invite activity without the influence of the mall.

The second stage--what was called the opening stage--began on the opening day of the plaza (October 26th, 1987) and extended through three weeks duration until Monday, November, 14th, 1987. Three weeks were chosen as a length of time for the opening stage because this period was thought to provide an adequate length of time in which to

examine sociability of the plaza in its opening weeks. The study of this stage was significant because it provided a picture of plaza activity during a period that is special in that the mall was used by individuals who might not later return to the mall and plaza, thus providing an opportunity to observe behavior in the plaza when it was most used. In other words, during this stage, the mall attendance and number of people in the plaza was larger than later attendance, when the mall had become taken-for-granted and an ordinary part of Manhattan and its surroundings.

The third stage--the post-opening stage--began almost one year after the opening stage, on Oct 1st, 1988. This stage was critical because it helped to determine the differences in behavior observed at the beginning period of the plaza and a latter stage when the novelty of the plaza had diminished.

4. Evaluation of the Public and Professional Attitudes

A fourth important part of the thesis research, discussed in chapter five, is interviews with plaza users, people inside the mall, and professionals responsible for the plaza's creation and policy--the plaza designer, the mall manager, and a city office representative. The value

of interviewing users is emphasized by Zeisel (1981), who believes that it is important to know "in-depth how people define a concrete situation, what they consider important about it, what effects they intended their action to have in the situation, and how they feel about it" (p. 137).

The analysis of interviews with plaza users led to identification of the criteria used by people to evaluate the plaza environment. The outcome of the users' interviews also facilitated the analysis and evaluation of the actual behavior of people seen on the plaza, the contextual influences, the designer's intentions, and the physical attributes of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza.

Originally, users' interviews were scheduled to be conducted in the plaza during the post-opening stage of research. Those people interviewed would include all users who stayed in the plaza for more than five minutes. In practice, however, this criterion had to be changed, since very few people stayed that long in the plaza. The new criterion used was anyone in the plaza who expressed an interest in speaking to the interviewer (i.e. author). Ultimately, the number of plaza users was so limited that it became necessary to use mall-users to generate an adequately sized sample. The criteria used for selecting

the person to interview inside the mall was the same as the one used in the plaza, i.e. an interest in speaking to the interviewer. Altogether 105 interviews were conducted, thirty four in the plaza over a period of two and a half weeks and sixty seven inside the mall within one day. Since the mall management did not allow the interview process to continue for more than one day.

In the interviews, three types of questions were asked and related to: (1) activity and usage patterns; (2) physical features of the plaza; and (3) users' parking behaviors. In addition to these three main topics, questions about the demographic characteristics of the users and two open-ended questions regarding the future of the plaza were included (for a complete copy of the questions see appendix B). A thorough analysis of these interviews is provided in chapter four.

CHAPTER TWO
HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF MANHATTAN,
MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER, AND
MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA

In order to conduct a complete assessment of the factors influencing sociability of Manhattan Town Center Plaza, it was necessary to analyze the historical and socio-economic background of Manhattan. This history of the city is largely drawn from Kazarian's work (1982) on the redevelopment of Manhattan's downtown and from the city's daily newspaper, the Manhattan Mercury. This historical analysis is important because it identifies the events leading to the decision to provide a public plaza for Manhattan Town Center.

The History of Manhattan

As was the case for much of Kansas, Manhattan was settled before the American Civil War. Settlers chose Manhattan, not only to take advantage of free available land, but also for the political purpose of influencing the vote on the slavery issue. Anti-slavery organizations in the Eastern states provided financial assistance and protection through hostile Indian lands to encourage settlers to move to Kansas.

In 1855, the New England Emigrant Aid Society brought the first settlement colony to Riley county. These settlers founded the town of Poleska, located in the southwestern part of the present city limits of Manhattan. Later in that same year, two other settlements were established, and the three communities merged to form a new town, which was named Boston. In June, 1855, a fourth group of settlers, bound for western Kansas, joined the Boston community rather than continue their journey west. To comply with a condition of their New York investors, the name of the settlement was changed to Manhattan. The political incorporation was completed in 1857 (Kazarian, 1982, p. 25). Manhattan became the county seat a year later in January, 1858. The founding of the Bluemont College (now Kansas State University) in 1859 was a major development in the growth of Manhattan. The existence of the college resulted in steady physical growth and economic prosperity for the town.

After gold was discovered at Pike's Peak in 1858, travelers further stimulated the economy of Manhattan, as Poyntz Avenue was used as a main route to the gold fields. Serving travellers became a primary reason for the development of Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan's main street,

since a number of hotels and boarding houses were constructed as the travel increased. Another growth factor in the economy of early Manhattan was the extension of the railroad service, which reached the banks of Blue River in 1866.

By 1884, the importance of Poyntz Avenue to the economy of the community had been firmly established. The growing population of Manhattan brought refinement to community life, and by 1913 Manhattan enjoyed big-city amenities such as street lighting, a sewer system, and gas utilities (Manhattan Mercury, June, 1980, [special edition], p. 3). An 1889 census of Manhattan recorded a total population of 2,750; in 1907 the town population had reached 4,664. After 1907, there was a steady growth in the population of Manhattan (ibid.). Since 1950, this growth has continued and has involved a consistent twenty-percent increase per decade. (Kazarian, 1982). At present, the population of Manhattan is 33,750, excluding Kansas State University students (City and County Data Book 1988). For 1988, including a Kansas-State-University student enrollment of 19,000, Manhattan's population is approximately 52,750.

Manhattan Today

Today, fifty-six percent of the persons employed in Manhattan are involved with either public administration or services. This statistic is due to the fact that Manhattan is a county seat; includes a major university; and is situated near Fort Riley, a large military installation. Manhattan's dominant economic activity is retailing, which involves eighteen percent of its employed population.

There are five major retailing areas in Manhattan (Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1): the Central Business District, which includes the old downtown and the Manhattan Town Center; Aggieville, a shopping area adjacent to Kansas State University; Westloop shopping center, a retail area in the western part of the city; Village Plaza Shopping center, a second retail area also in the western part of Manhattan; and Walmart/ K-mart Shopping Centers, located at the eastern periphery of Manhattan (Kazarian, 1982). The five major shopping areas of Manhattan serve as the market area of twelve counties, as shown in figure 2.2.

In this thesis, the most important of the five retail areas is the Central Business District, since the Manhattan Town Center Plaza is located there. Economic reports define the Central Business District as a regional shopping

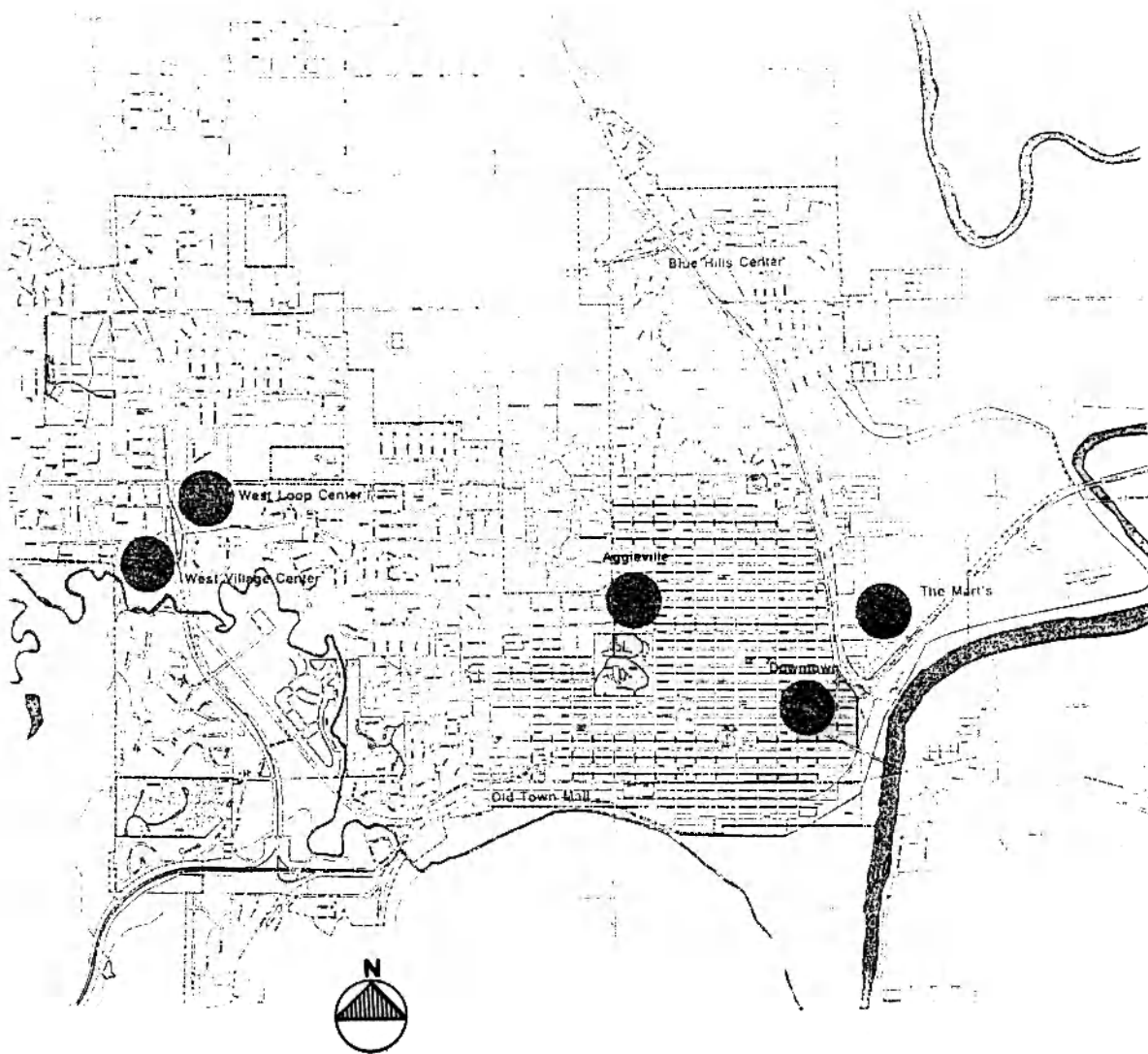


FIGURE 2.1 MANHATTAN SHOPPING AREAS
(source: "Yes," 1979)

TABLE - 1
MAJOR SHOPPING AREAS OF MANHATTAN
RETAIL SPACE COMPARISON

| | retail space sq.ft | Percentage of total % |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| DOWN TOWN | 208,350 | 25 |
| TOWN CENTER MALL | 179,306 | 21 |
| WEST LOOP | 82,150 | 9.7 |
| THE MARTS | 135,050 | 16 |
| VILLAGE PLAZA | 161,200 | 19 |
| | ----- | ----- |
| TOTAL | 818,440 | 100 |

(Kazarian, 1982, Town Center Mall management, 1987.)

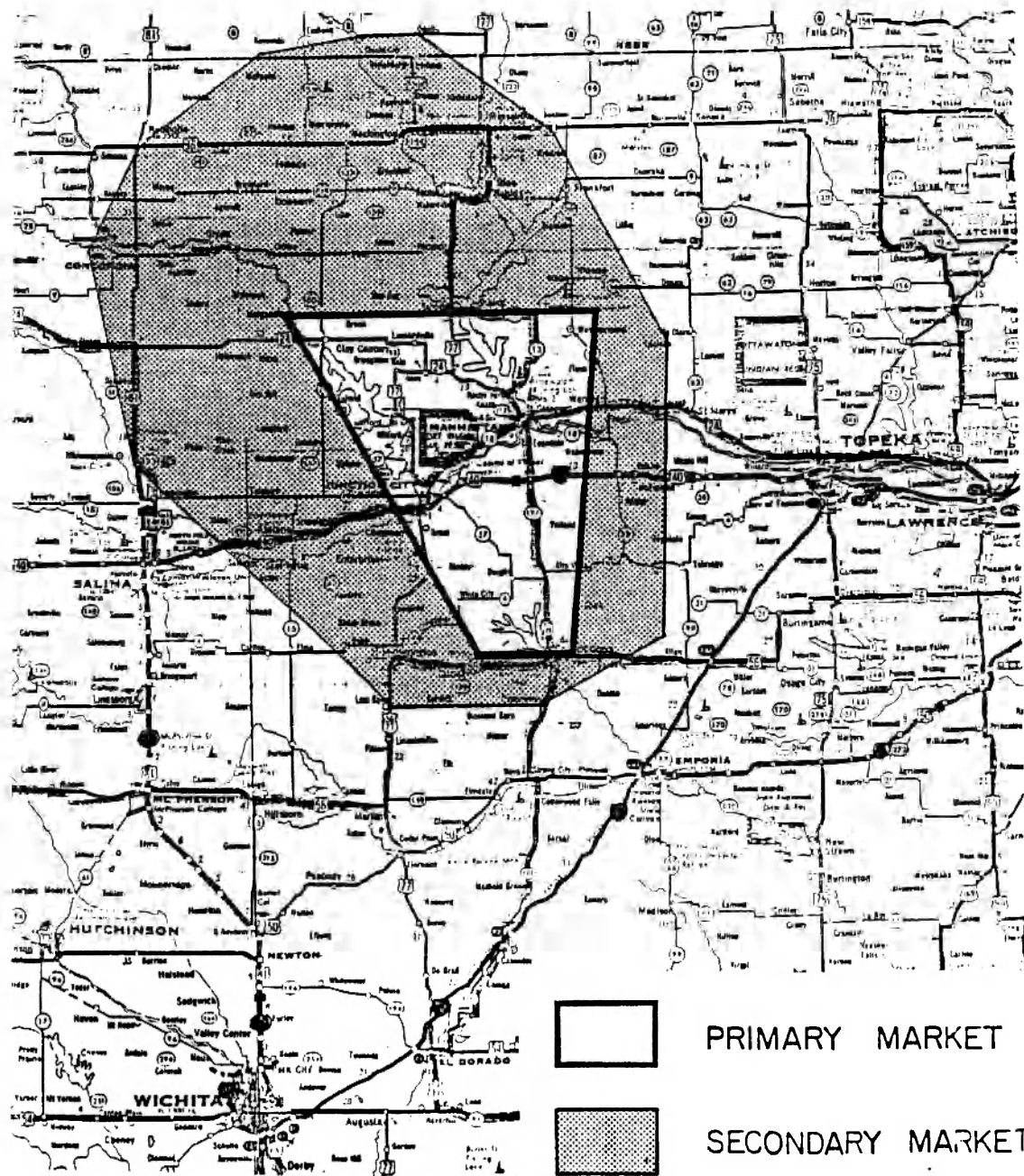


FIGURE 2.2 MANHATTAN MARKET AREA
 (Source: Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984)

area serving a city population of approximately 43,000 and a regional population of approximately 181,000 (Manhattan Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984). The Central Business District is a mixed-use area of residential units, offices and retail activities providing the largest and most important center of activity in the Manhattan trade area.

The Central Business District has traditionally played a major role in defining the overall quality of life in Manhattan (Eligibility Report of Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984). As described earlier in this chapter, the economic foundation of the downtown was built by the travellers to Pikes Peak; however, the end of travellers heading West brought a major change in the activity of Manhattan's downtown, as many hotels and boarding houses disappeared and Manhattan's downtown became a major regional retail area (Manhattan Mercury, June, 1980, p. 3).

A gradual retail desertion of the downtown started in the 1960s, with the development of the peripheral shopping centers mentioned above. Although the Aggieville retail area was established in 1898 (Manhattan Mercury, University edition, August, 1988 p. 7), this shopping area weakened

the downtown's economy only minimally, since Aggieville mostly served Kansas State University students rather than the larger Manhattan community. More damaging to the downtown economy was the establishment, in 1962, of Westloop shopping center, followed by the opening of the Village Plaza and Walmart/K-mart shopping areas (Wang, 1975, p.18). With their convenient parking and competitive prices these retail areas drew customers from the downtown.

The decrease in downtown economic activity resulted in its deterioration, which ultimately became a major community concern beginning in the late 1960s (Kazerian, 1982). Construction of the Town Center Mall and the present face lift of the old downtown are attempts to recapture a highly influential user group--the regional shoppers. Apparently, this solution is working very well, at least presently (Karen Davis interview, April, 1989). The question still arises, however, as to whether the redevelopment has actually enlivened the old downtown and its new focal point--the plaza (Central Business District Redevelopment Project, 1981).

The History of Manhattan Town Center

To understand the historical and political events leading to the construction of Manhattan Town Center Mall

and the plaza, the author read city documents and relevant newspaper articles. The City of Manhattan's original aim for Manhattan Town Center was to create an intensive retail activity center in the eastern portion of the city's Central Business District (Manhattan Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984). The movement to strengthen the Central Business District as a retail center started several years before the completion of the Mall. In 1968, the Manhattan Land Use Plan was adopted by the City Commission. The plan states that the commercial-development needs of Manhattan will be met by maintaining the Central Business District as a regional shopping center (Collegian 27th, October, 1987).

A review of articles focusing on the new mall pointed out that the construction of Manhattan Town Center required acquisition and demolition of nine downtown blocks. Articles also discussed the grief of Manhattan's residents on the destruction of almost half of the old downtown and the closure of Poyntz Avenue at its eastern end. In early 1971, a controversy began between Manhattan residents opposed to the new mall, including those who were to be relocated, and the city officials, who were in favor of mall construction (Collegian, October, 1987, p. 1; Kazerian 1982, p.12). The city officials' effort to ameliorate

citizens' complaints included the promises of a better environment and a better economic climate for the downtown, as well as provision for cultural and social activities, especially as they might be promoted by a plaza.

After successfully acquiring land for a regional shopping center--a struggle of almost eleven years--the city requested proposals from developers for a downtown redevelopment project in 1979. Forest City Enterprises, Cleveland, Ohio, was selected, and in 1980, preliminary plans for the project were developed to include the construction of a shopping mall in the 100-200 blocks of Poyntz Avenue. Besides the construction of the mall, downtown redevelopment plans included improvement of retail and additional office space, streetscape improvement, building facade rehabilitation, and construction of a public plaza (Central Business District redevelopment plan 1984, p. 32)(Figure 2.3).

In 1986, construction of the mall structure began, and the Manhattan Town Center officially opened on October 26th, 1987 (Kansas State Collegian. Oct 27, 1987). The enclosed shopping mall and associated parking involves a total area of approximately thirty-one acres. The mall itself occupies approximately 300,000 square feet of which

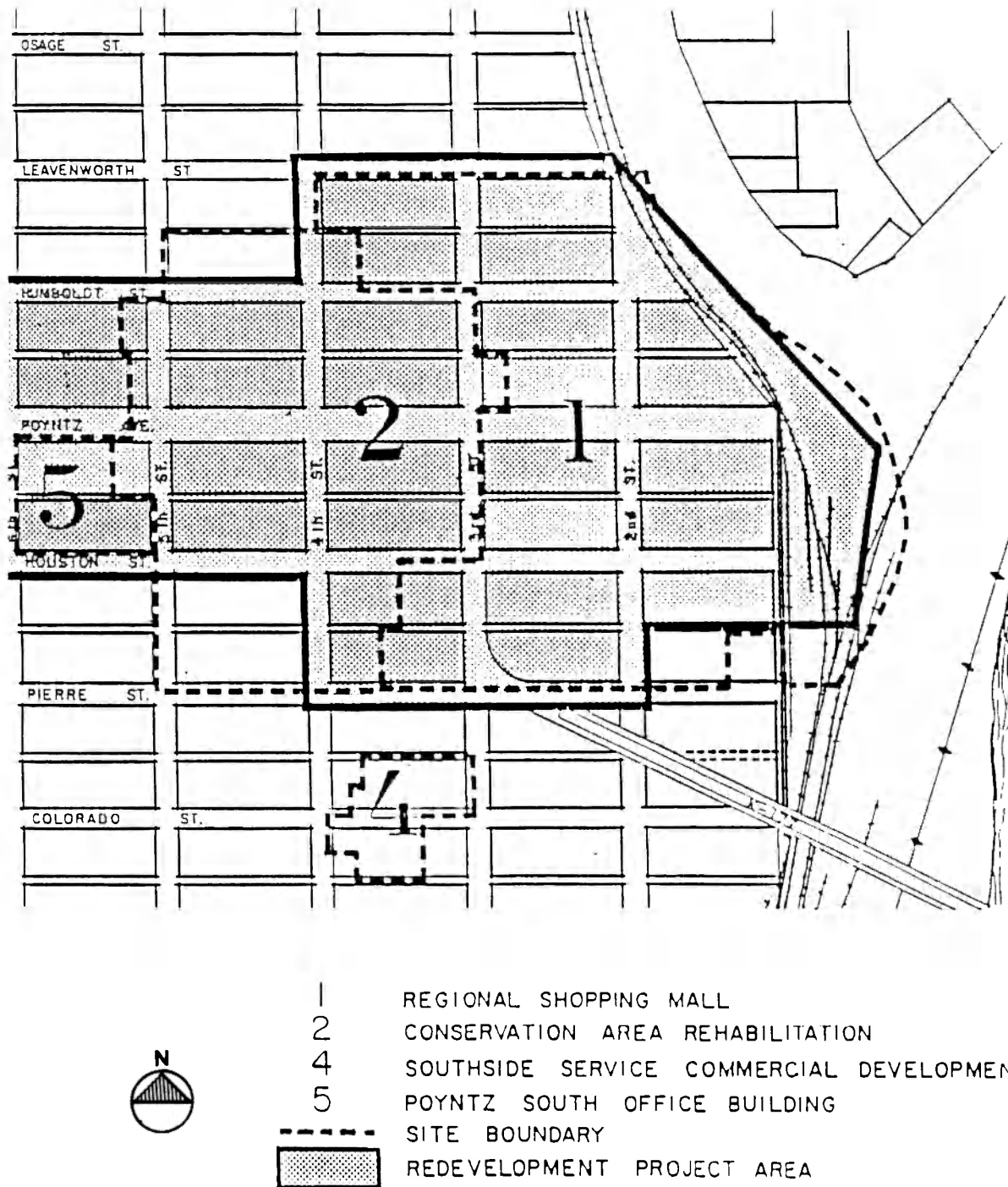


FIGURE 2.3 DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREAS
 (Source: Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984)

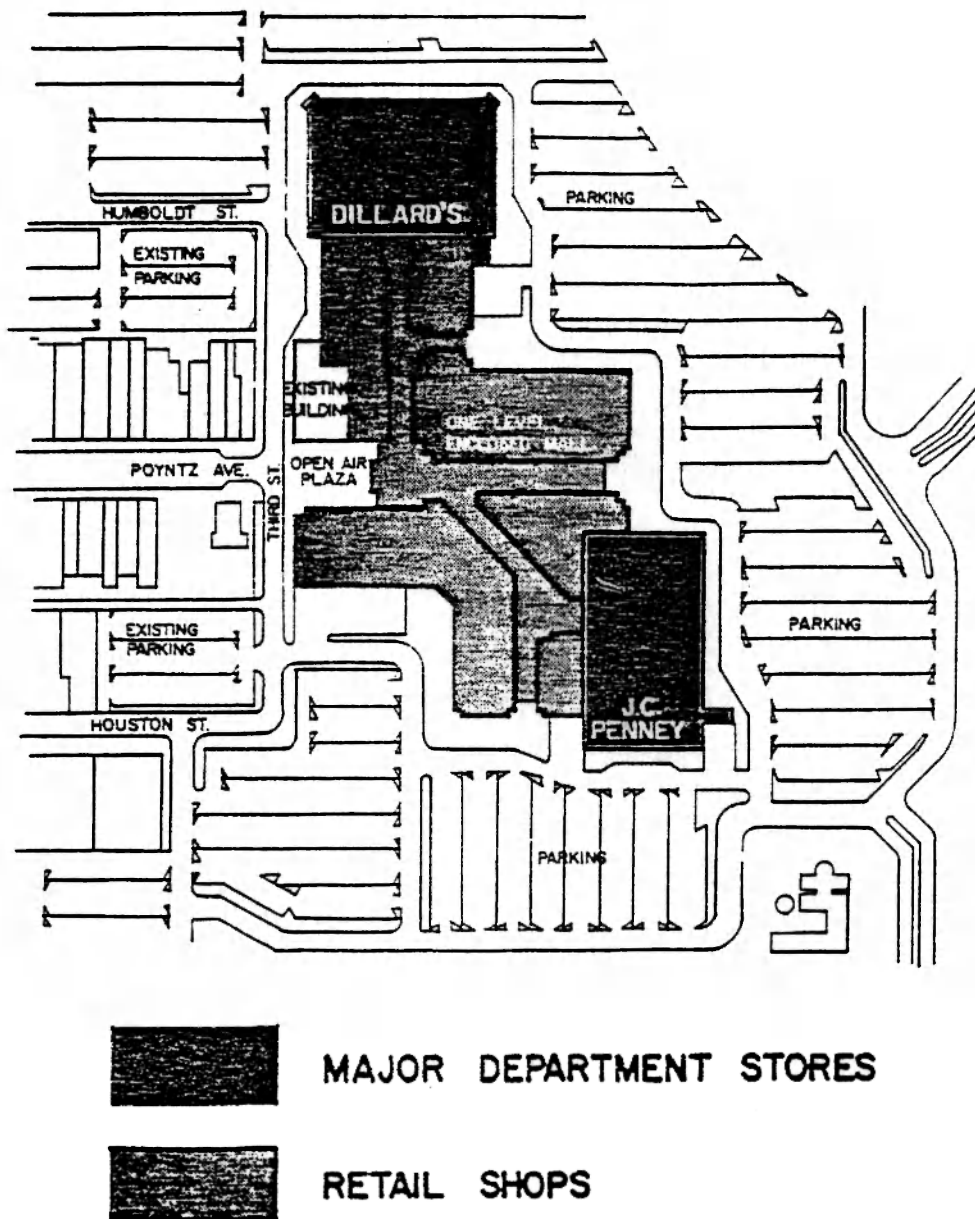


FIGURE 2.4 MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER
 (Source: Central Business District Redevelopment Plan, 1984)

150,000 square feet is occupied by the two major department stores--J.C.Penney and Dillards (Figure 2.4). When the mall was open in 1987, it included, besides the two anchor stores, eighty five retail spaces and 1,700 parking spaces.

Development of Manhattan Town Center Plaza

Although there was no official program written for designing Manhattan Town Center Plaza, the objectives of its provision were described in many official documents. Regardless of slight variations among these statements, the major aims for the plaza remained consistent. The document provided to the plaza designer by the City Planning Office, depicts the plaza as "more than just a sculptural work of art" (City Planning Commission 1984 p. 1). However, no description of what was implied by "more" was provided in any written statements. The image of the plaza presented to the general public was maintained through recurring assertions in "Poyntz of Interest," a periodic circular distributed by the City Office of Manhattan. For example the June 1984 "Poyntz of Interest", describes the plaza as follows:

The plaza will be the primary entrance into the mall and is intended to become a focal point for the downtown area, providing a place where people can meet and community activities and cultural programs can be held (p. 1).

Similarly, in the April ,1981, issue, one reads that:

The plaza, a major location for community cultural and recreation activities, will provide a positive focal point in the downtown area and will act to link the pedestrian entrance to the mall and the existing downtown (p. 4).

The same issue explains that:

It is important that this space [the plaza] be used to integrate the new mall with existing architecture along Poyntz Avenue. The plaza will provide the center of downtown with a much needed public gathering place, allowing a landscaped environment in which a variety of community activities (dances, sunning, lounging, Arts in the Park programs, displays) would take place (ref. p. 5).

The image and purpose of the plaza presented by the Manhattan Mercury, the daily newspaper, was quite similar to the image presented in "Poyntz of Interest"---the plaza would be a connecting link between the Mall and downtown, a focal point and gathering place for the downtown area, a hub for activities such as fairs, festivals, and other events, and a visual link to downtown. (Manhattan Mercury, June 13th, 1984; July 3rd, 1984; Aug 11th 1985; Sept 29th 1986.)

DESIGNING THE PLAZA

A study of local newspapers revealed significant events concerning the design process of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza. One recurring event was the controversy over the specific plaza design. Athena Tacha--a nationally known

Greek-American artist and sculptor--was hired by the city of Manhattan to design a sculpture and its surrounding area within the plaza. At least at first, Tacha's design ideas were much appreciated by city officials. The Manhattan Mercury wrote on June 13th, 1984 that " Tacha isn't talking about statues, she is talking about a work of art that can be walked on or sat on and will be a major part of the plaza's landscaping." At the time, Karen Daily, a representative of the City Planning Office, also praised Tacha's design ideas, pointing out that Tacha perceived the sculpture to be something people can be a part of, and not only an object to look at (Collegian July 3rd, 1984, p. 1).

The initial design prepared by Tacha was a concentric ring design that stepped down to water in pools at the bottom (figure 2.5). The design allowed the pools to be drained and converted to a public stage for community events (Ibid.). For reasons that were not recorded publicly, this initial design was slightly altered. The second design was little different from the first, other than an increase in height (K. Davis interview April, 1989). In the end, however, Tacha's final design was rejected. Public officials decided that the design was unsuitable because it overpowered the mall entrance

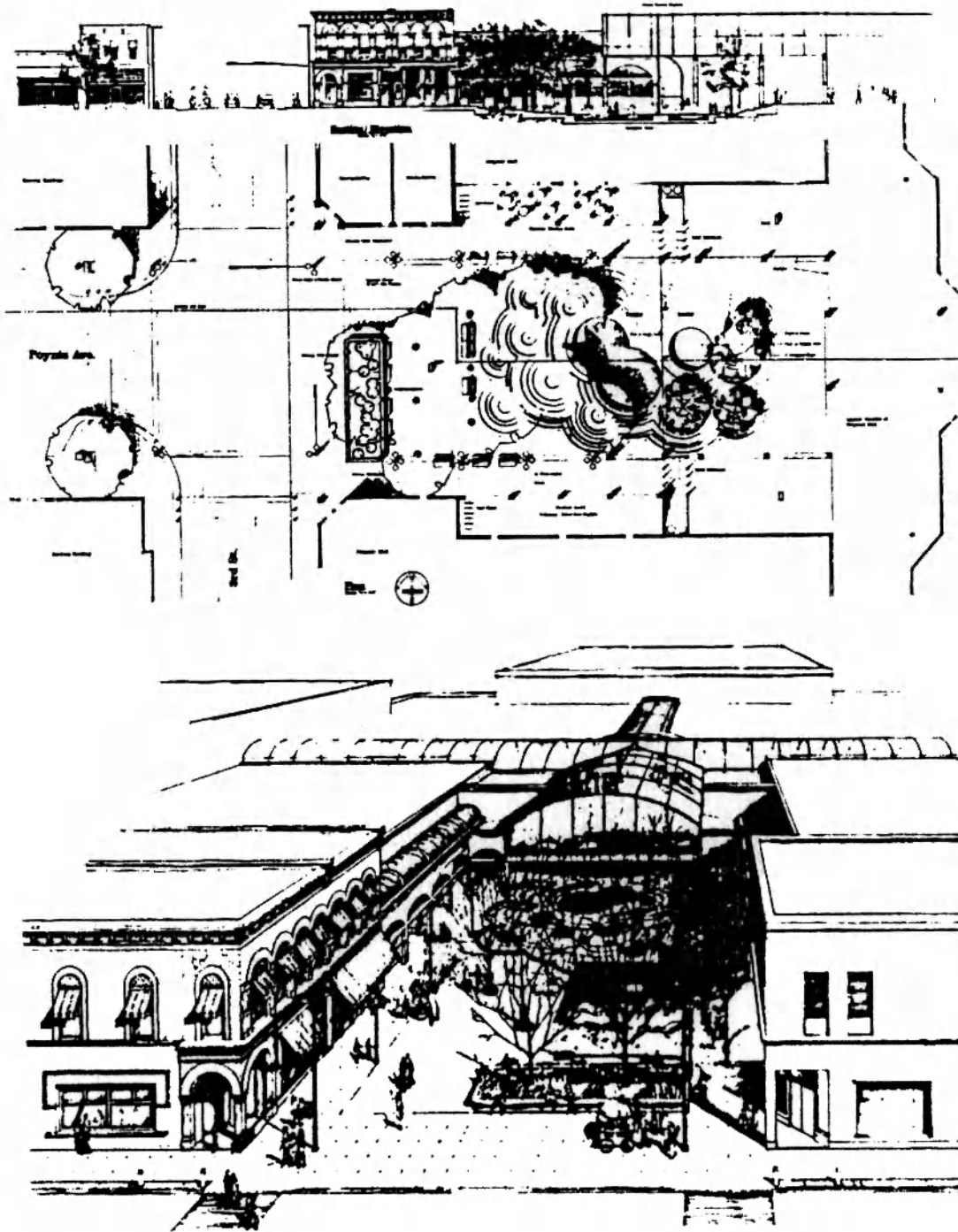


FIGURE 2.5 PLAZA DESIGN PREPARED BY ATHENA TACHA
(Source: Poyntz of Interest, Special edition)

(Manhattan Mercury, Feb, 19th, 1986).

Tacha was asked to make changes in the design, which, she said, limited her sculpture to one corner of the plaza (Manhattan Mercury, Feb. 17th 1986). She could not agree with the new requirements, since they would not enable her to create a sculpture that worked both aesthetically and functionally. When Tacha did not comply with the city's new requirements, she was dismissed (Manhattan Mercury Feb, 19th, 1986). Thus, the public plaza did not include the originally proposed sculpture. In place of the originally conceived sculpture, a small fountain and a grassy area was substituted.

Manhattan Mercury's edition of Oct. 1st 1986, described the plaza's approved design prepared by the Manhattan architectural firm of Brent Bowmen and Associates (p. 1). Special emphasis was given to the architect's idea of selling personalized brick with the name of buyers inscribed. These bricks would be used to pave a large portion of the plaza's sunken area. A green area designed for the center of the plaza was proposed so that the plaza would feel less harsh and uninviting. The architect explains that the steps around the plaza's sunken area could be used as seating when special events were held in

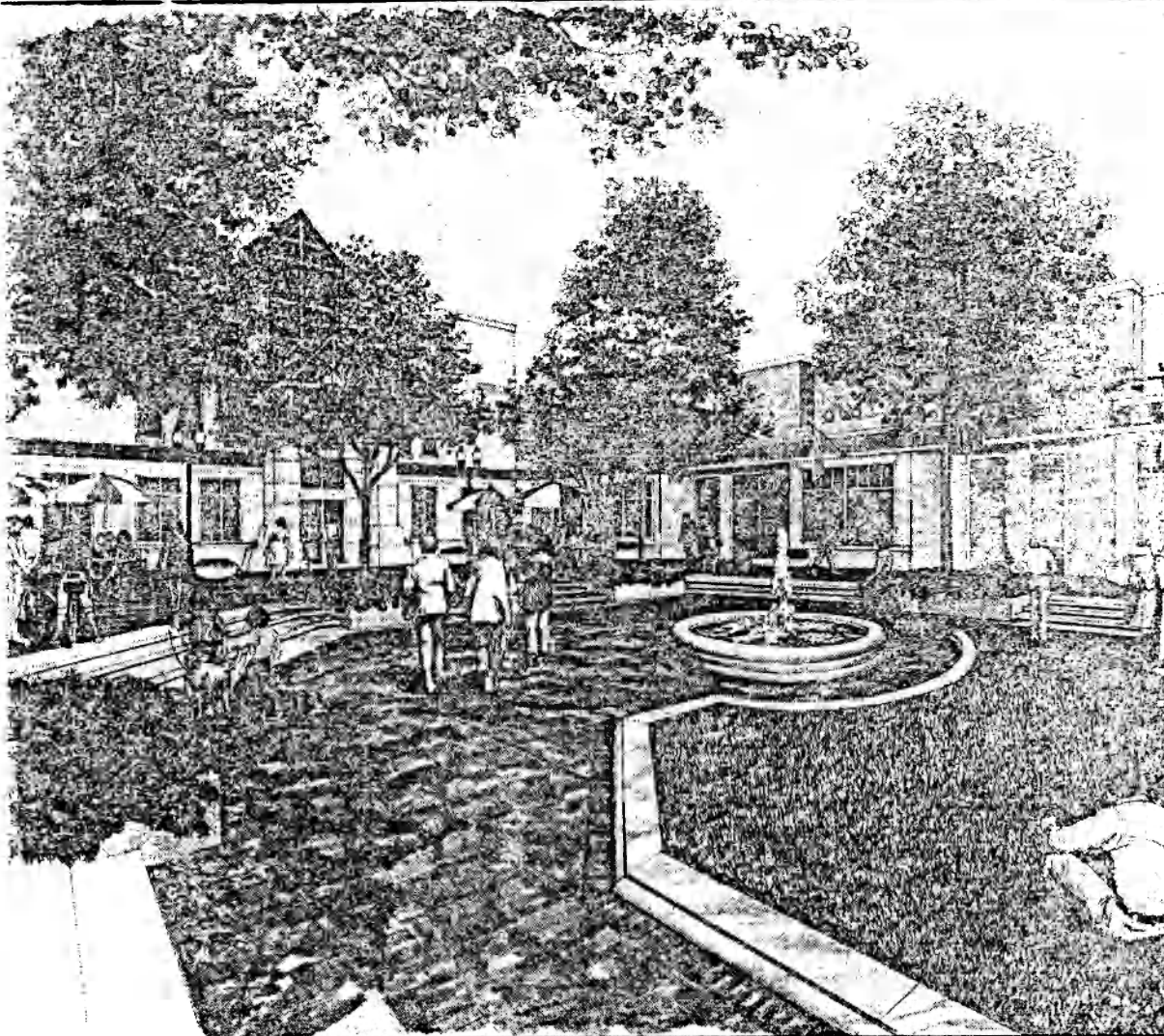
the plaza.

Six days later, the Manhattan Mercury provided a drawing of the plaza (figure 2.6). One notes:

- people strolling in the plaza;
- a person sitting in the grassy area;
- children playing;
- shaded movable street furniture used by small groups of people.
- large shady trees;
- a sense of interaction between plaza and mall.

Overall, when one combines the various written descriptions of the plaza, the plans offered by the plaza designer, and the plaza drawn by the designer (figure 8), one can identify the following key aims for the plaza:

- 1) a visual focal point for the downtown, the heart of which would be a sculptural work;
- 2) a primary entrance to the mall;
- 3) a place designed for different kinds of cultural and community activities, such as fairs and festivals;
- 4) a place for everyday use as a sociable public space;
- 5) an architectural space that would integrate the new mall structure with the old downtown visually;



Artist's rendering of the plaza area for the Manhattan Town Center shopping mall, to be located at Third and Poyntz. A National En-

dowment for the Arts grant to fund artwork for the plaza will be discussed Tuesday evening by the Manhattan City Commission.

FIGURE 2.6 PLAZA VIEW

(Source: Manhattan Mercury, October, 6th, 1986)

6) a connecting link between the mall and the old downtown that would unify the two spatially.

For this thesis, a major question is whether the plaza has accomplished these six key aims and, if so, to what degree. Answers to these questions become clear in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT AND FORM OF THE MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA

Chapter three addresses the factors associated with the location of the plaza and its physical characteristics. The location of the plaza is important, since several researchers have argued that the primary factor determining the potential for sociability in an urban open space is its location in relation to its potential users and nearby activities (Whyte 1980; Jacobs 1960; Rutledge 1976; Francis 1988; Linday 1978). In other words, the plaza's location is important in bringing people to it. On the other hand, physical characteristics of the plaza--especially street furniture--are important because they help hold people in the space. In other words, once people are in the plaza, well-designed elements such as sitting places and fountains inspire them to stay in the plaza for a longer period.

1. LOCATION OF THE PLAZA

In this study, three factors were analyzed in order to assess how the location of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza would facilitate its sociability: (a) the density of people in areas surrounding the plaza; (b) the mixture of activities around the plaza; and (c) the relationship of the adjacent pedestrian streets and street corners to the

plaza. Each of these factors is considered in turn.

a. Density of population

As already mentioned in chapter one, one of the necessary conditions for thriving sociable plazas is having a sufficiently dense concentration of people in the surrounding areas (Jacobs 1960; Whyte 1980). Jacobs (1960) argues that in order to ensure a busy street life and diversity in cities, "a district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there" (p. 200). The argument is further supported by Whyte who contends that high downtown concentrations of people strongly influence the use of open spaces in a positive way (1980, p. 90) in that high densities provide greater numbers of users. The average density figures that Whyte gives for large cities like New York and Chicago are from 100,000 to 200,000 per square mile with pedestrian flow ranging from 2500-3000 per hour.

This last point of Whyte means that for Manhattan Town Center Plaza, adequate densities for plaza sociability may be a problem, since Manhattan has a relatively low concentration of buildings and population. In fact, the total population of Manhattan, is approximately 35,000 and the total population of the market area (Chapter 2 figure 2.4) for the Central Business District is barely over

181,000. The number of passersby, estimated from the behavior maps arising from this research, ranges from 175-500 per hour, which at least at first seems very low in terms of Whyte's figures. In Chapter Ten of his book The Social Life of Small Urban Open Spaces, however, Whyte also points that downtown densities in small towns can be improved by concentrating retail development and using all buildings to the fullest so that there are no vacant or under utilized spaces (p. 92).

In regard to Manhattan Kansas, the results of a land-use survey and archival studies (Housing and Population Data Handbook, 1977) do show that areas surrounding the plaza are comparatively much more dense than any other of the city's districts (Figure 3.1). This higher density in the Central Business District is primarily attributable to the concentration of the retail activities (Table 2.1 and Figure 2.3) and many office buildings in the vicinity (including all the city and county offices). Furthermore, with the inauguration of the Town Center Mall, sixty new jobs were created which were to reach six hundred within a year's time (Kansas State Collegian, October 27th 1987). These new jobs further increased the population density of the downtown.

Still, a critical problem faced by the plaza is that,

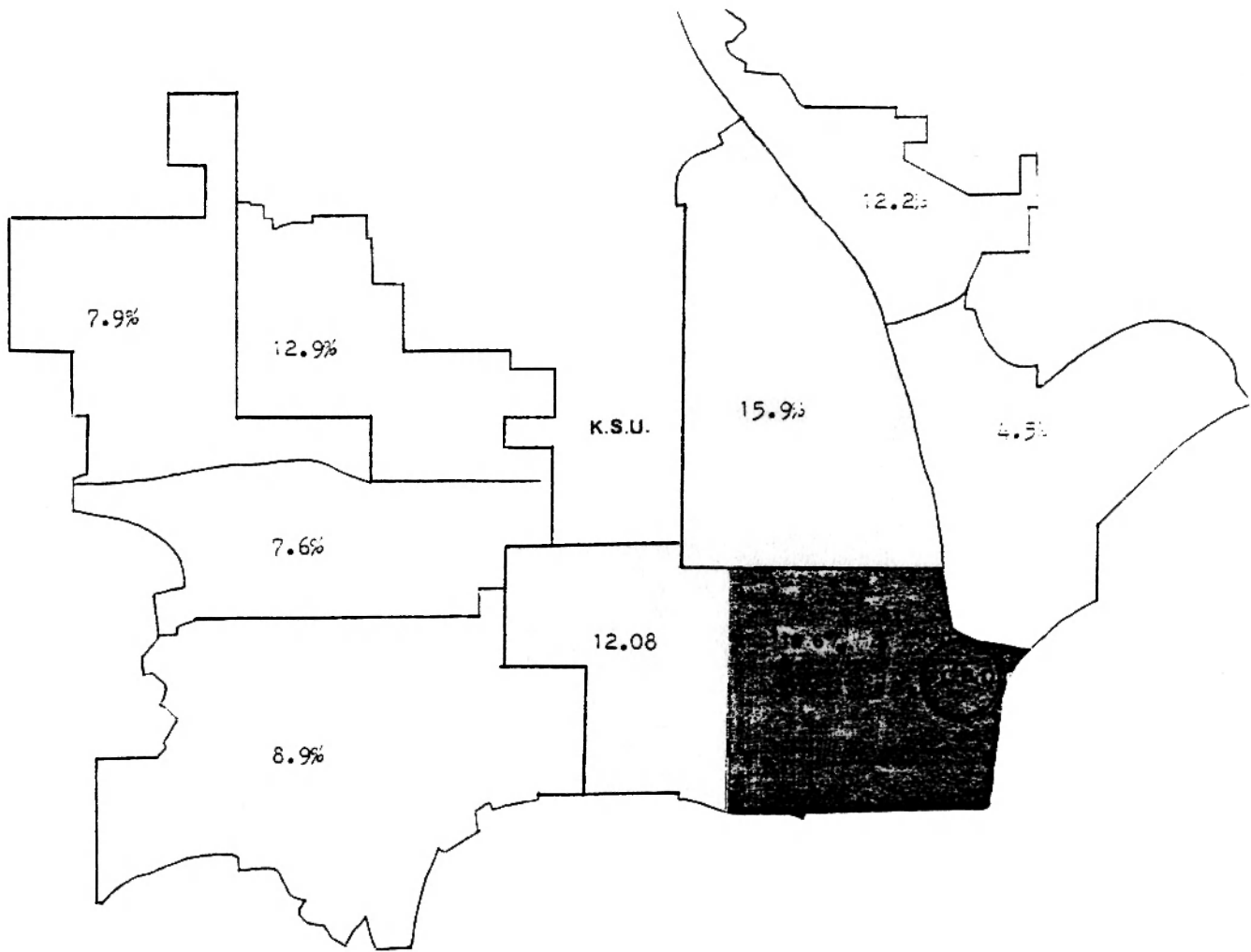


FIGURE 3.1 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION MAP
(Source: Housing and Population Data Hand book, 1977)

in spite of the downtown's comparatively higher density than densities of other districts of the city, the number of people in Manhattan's Central Business District is not by itself sufficiently dense to generate a large enough number of plaza users to make the plaza active and alive. The problem is further compounded by a very low rate of pedestrian flow around and through the plaza. A plausible explanation for this low flow, besides low density in the area, is that Manhattan is an automobile-oriented city, a point which becomes more clear in chapter five, where plaza and mall users are interviewed.

b. Mixture of Activity

A second criterion affecting the sociability of urban plazas is that such spaces should not only be inviting to a variety of people but, in order to maintain the inflow of people, the surroundings of the plaza should provide a mixture of uses and activities (Jacobs, 1960, p. 98; Francis, 1987, p. 29, 1988, p. 57). Jacobs contends that small urban spaces such as parks and plazas are creatures of their surroundings and these surroundings generate mutual support from diverse uses (Jacobs, 1960, p. 98).

To illustrate the importance of a mixture of activity in context, Jacobs uses the example of Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. She discovered that different types of

users are present in the square at different times of the day. Jacobs observed that this variety of people is due to the diverse kinds of buildings and activities around the square. Jacobs argues that a key to urban diversity is a mixture of primary uses, by which she means establishments, such as offices, factories, and educational institutions, which necessarily bring people to them for specific purposes. Further, she asserts that there should be more than one primary function in a certain area. The users must have different schedule of utilizing these facilities to insure a consistent flow and presence of people in the area. (ibid., p. 152).

Jacobs argues that in addition to primary uses, there should also be secondary uses, which she defines as uses which emerge in response to the presence of primary uses and serve the people drawn by primary uses. Examples of such uses include restaurants, bars and shops. (Ibid., p. 152).

In relation Manhattan's downtown, no comprehensive, current data on land use was available from city planning offices to analyze the mixture of activity in the Central Business District of Manhattan. Therefore, a land use survey was conducted of a twenty-three block area (Figure 3.2). This twenty-three block area was chosen because it

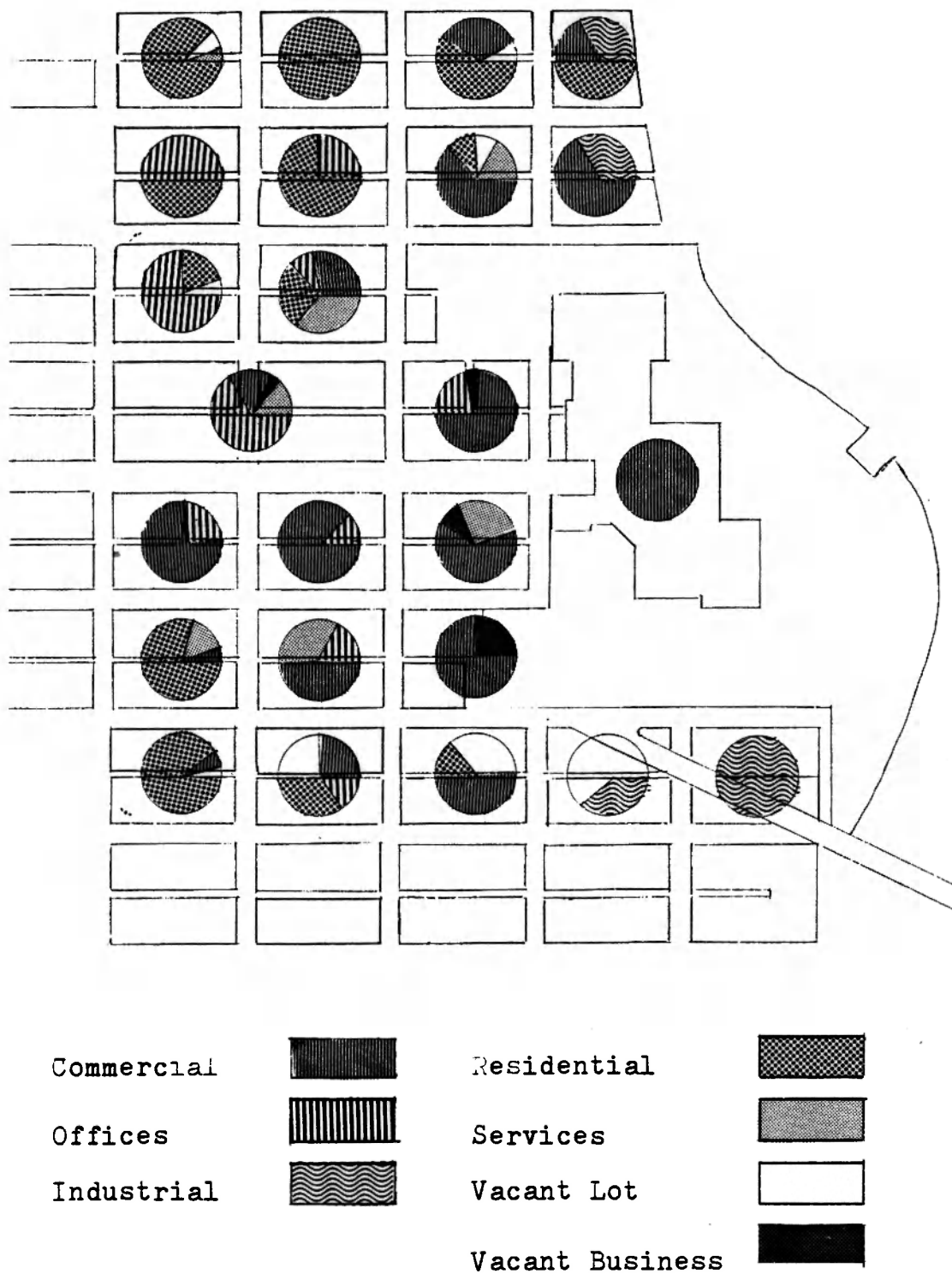


FIGURE 3.2 MANHATTAN DOWNTOWN LAND-USE PLAN

has been designated by the Manhattan's planning commission as Manhattan's official Central Business District, of which the Manhattan town center Plaza is an integral part.

As figure 3.2 demonstrates, the results of the land-use survey indicates that retail activity is the predominant land use in the core of the Central Business District. The second most important activity is the high concentration of office buildings. Residential areas can also be found on the periphery of the downtown, and these include single family detached houses and approximately twenty percent multi-family housing units, with the exception of a multi-storey housing complex for the elderly. Although these three functions of shops, office and housing can be identified as major primary uses for the area, the residential activity, is less important because of its distance--at least 300 yards---from the plaza. Virtually no secondary uses were identified in the area, other than several food and beverage shops.

At the same time, the Town Center Mall has not been successful in providing users for the plaza, even though the mall surrounds the plaza on three sides--north, south, and east. As was shown in chapter two, this situation is contrary to expectations promoted by mall developers and city personal prior to mall construction. The primary

reason for this failure is the mall's self containment and isolation from the older downtown. In other words, most mall users appear not to feel any desire to come out to the plaza unless they have parked along Poyntz Avenue or in one of the parking lots on the mall's western side (Figure 3.3), or unless they need to use a commercial establishment in the old downtown--e.g. the Burger King restaurant on Poyntz Avenue.

Another important reason why the plaza entrance is used less than other mall approaches is the less convenient parking on the west side of the mall. There appear to be three main considerations that make this parking situation unhelpful in terms of bringing users to the plaza: (i) the total parking space on the west side is proportionately less than the parking space on the other three sides of the mall that surround the plaza (Figure 3.4); (ii) the main entrance of the mall is not visible from parking lots on the southwestern and northwestern sides of the plaza; this visibility factor is important, since people mostly prefer to park where they have a visual contact with the entrance of destination; and (iii) no major store has its entrance on the plaza, therefore no shoppers enter any shops directly from the plaza. Together, these three conditions lead to the situation that the western entrance of the mall, abutting the plaza, is seldom used.

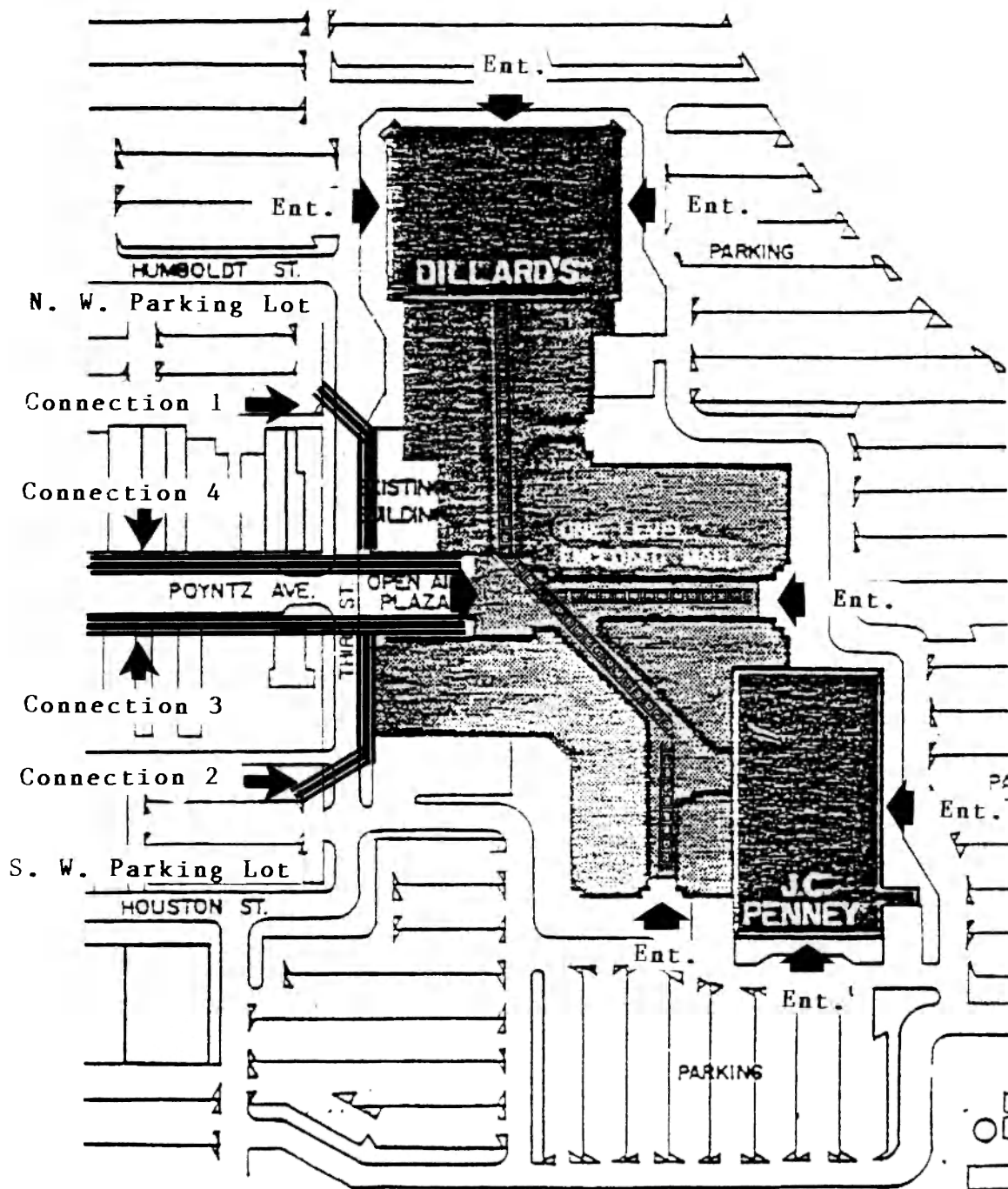


FIGURE 3.3 PEDESTRIAN FLOW

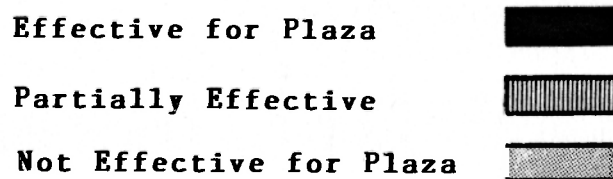
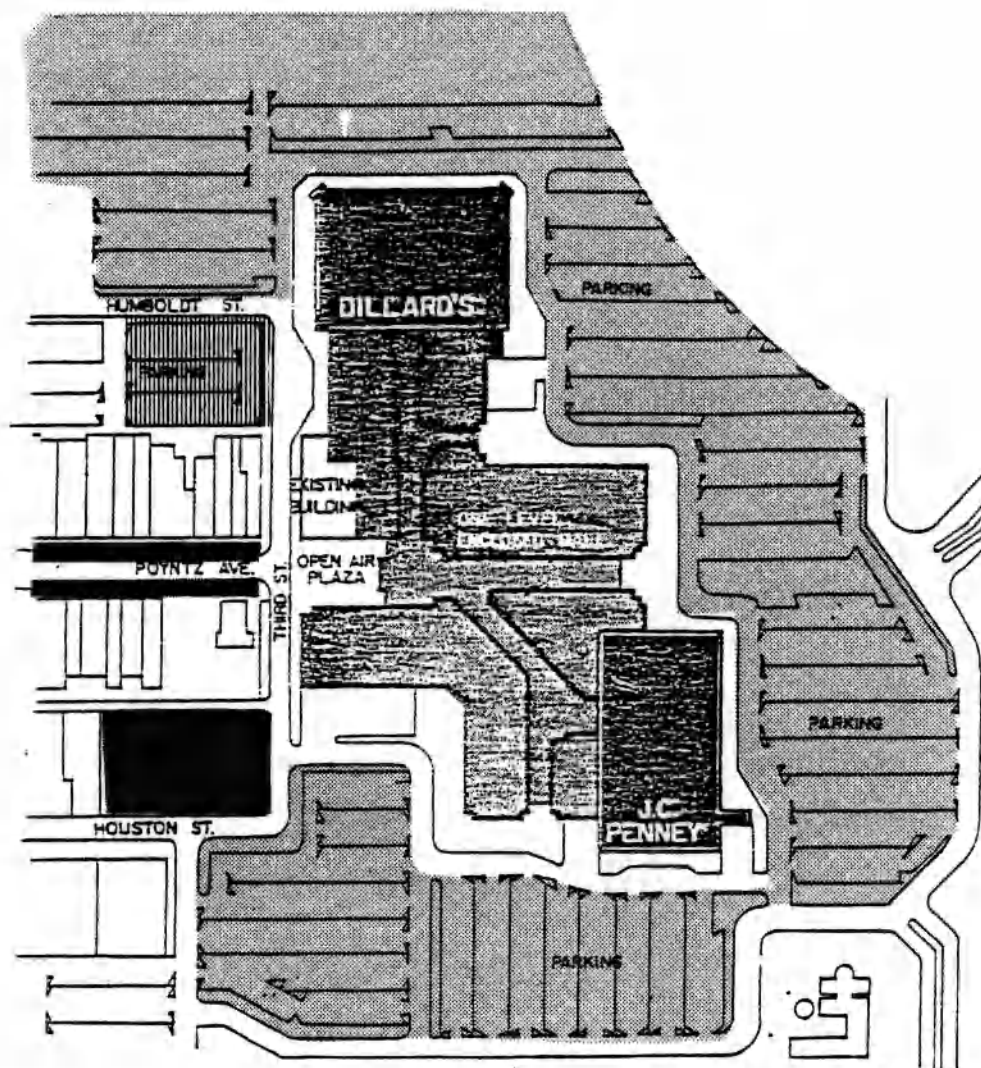
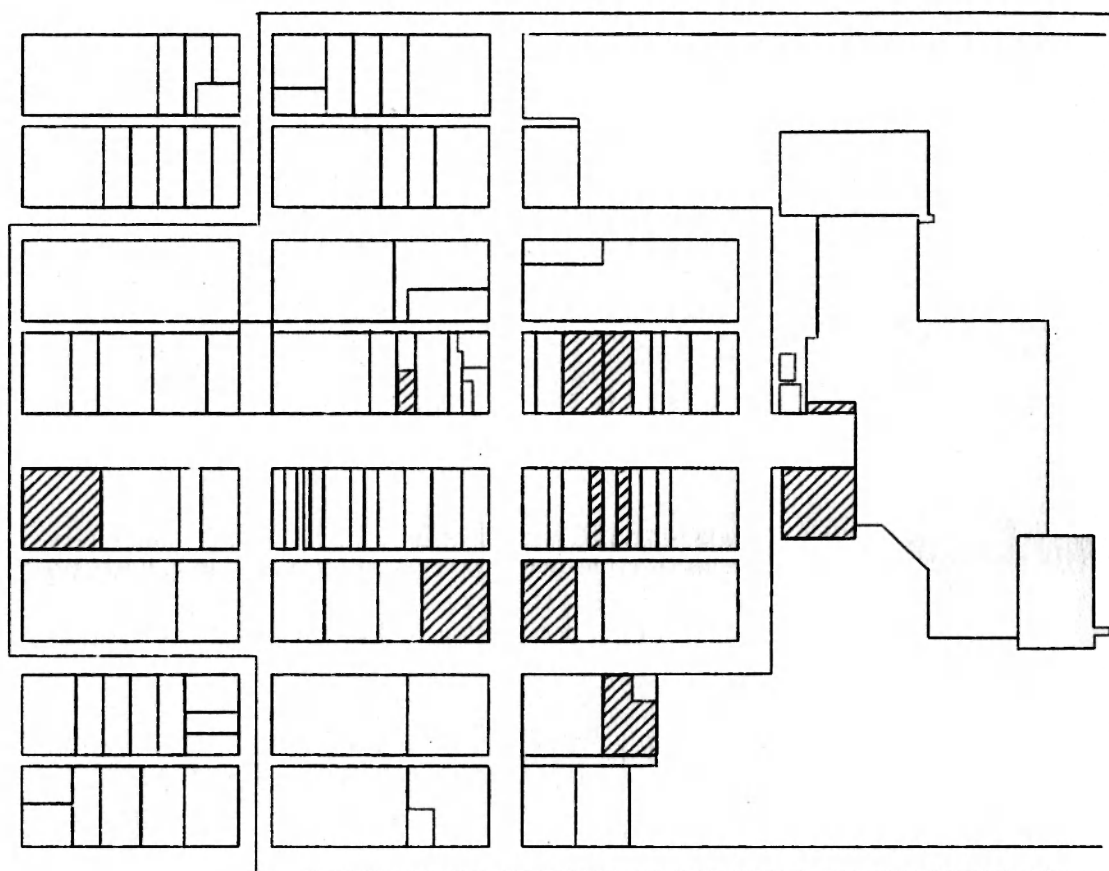


FIGURE 3.4 PARKING ANALYSIS

Another difficulty that helps explain the limited use of the plaza is indicated by the author's land-use survey of the Central Business District. This survey suggests that there is an increase in empty store fronts (Figure 3.5). The vacancy of the retail stores in the core of the older downtown is partially attributable to the inauguration of the new mall, which has taken away business from several of the older retail establishments. This problem of vacant-store fronts adds to the lack of plaza use by mall shoppers. The problem is further compounded by the fact that stores at the plaza's northern and southern sides are vacant, or alternatively they house activities, such as a travel agency, which do not appeal to a large number of recreational shoppers. The vacancy of the stores on the plaza periphery may be attributable to their less attractive location and mall management policies that emphasize the economic health of retail space along the core of the mall.

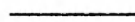
c. The Plaza's Relationship with Street and Street Corners

A third factor integrally related to plaza location is the plaza's relationship with the street and street corners. This point is especially emphasized by Whyte (1980), who argues that there is a direct relationship between the number of people using a plaza and the



RETAIL CORE OF DOWNTOWN

VACANT STORES



(Jan 1989)

FIGURE 3.5 MANHATTAN DOWNTOWN: VACANT RETAIL STORES

pedestrian flow on adjacent streets. He contends that plazas should be located near heavily used streets or street corners. To maintain a constant flow of people, streets near the plaza should be a link between major activities such as offices, shopping areas and restaurants. Whyte also argues that plazas be located near "choke points" such as subway stations and bus stops, since large numbers of people are often concentrated at these places (p.12 & 54). Finally, Whyte argues that street corners have a special significance, since, if they are busy, they contribute considerable pedestrian traffic that may use the plaza (1980, p. 54).

For the purposes of this study, the Manhattan Town Center is considered as a pedestrian street on the plaza's eastern side (Figure 3.3) as well as a retailing anchor. It was observed that the northern and southern edges of the plaza (connection 1 and 2 in figure 3.3) are used as pedestrian streets linking the old downtown and mall. These edges also link southwestern parking lots and northwestern parking lots to the mall (connection 3 and 4 in figure 3.3) and thereby provide pedestrian flow for the plaza.

On the basis of the author's behavior mapping which is fully described in chapter four, it can be concluded that

the connections 2 and 3 are used more than connections 1 and 4. The primary explanation appears to be that a large number of people who park in the northwestern parking lot (connection 3) prefer to approach the mall through the west entrance of Dillard's departmental store. A second reason for this greater flow may be that people who approach the mall from Poyntz Avenue seem to prefer parking in any available space on the south side of the street, since it is convenient for right-hand traffic flow, (as the results of interviews, discussed in chapter five, indicate).

A third reason for the strong flow of connection 3 relates to the back-and-forth pedestrian movement observed between the Burger King restaurant and the mall. The sidewalk on the west side of plaza was designed for pedestrian traffic and as a shoppers' drop-off point. Based on the data from behavioral maps, however, the sidewalk does not appear to serve either purpose. Finally, there are strong visual barriers between the mall and plaza. These barriers are created by the fountain and the trees inside the western entrance of the mall and by the mall's massive western facade walls. These architectural elements hinder the flow of users to the plaza from the main concourse of the mall, which holds a large concentration of shoppers.

A large number of the plaza users are people who are either approaching or leaving the mall through the northern and southern pedestrian passages on the plaza. Although many pedestrians use the two street corners at the southwest and northwest side of plaza, the behavior maps indicate that these corners fail to hold a substantial number of people. Two explanations are possible. First, the traffic lights at the intersection of Poyntz Avenue and third street are set for efficient intervals so that people don't wait more than one minute to cross the street. Second, there are no attractions to retain people for a while on the street corners--for example, vendors, or a bus stop (Whyte, 1980 p. 54).

2. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAZA ITSELF

If the location of the plaza is a crucial first factor which influences a plaza's sociability, physical characteristics of the plaza itself are also important, since they help to retain the users who come into the plaza. Two major components can be evaluated in regard to a plaza's physical elements: (a) the transition between street and plaza, since a smooth, readily traversable transition facilitates easy access of people from adjacent streets; and (b) sittable spaces, which provide users a place to watch linger, and comfortably converse. The criteria to assess these factors are again drawn from

Whyte's book, especially chapters 2 and 5, which discuss plaza sitting and street-plaza transition (1980).

a. The Transition between Street and Plaza

Whyte contends that the "transition [between the street and plaza] should be such that it's hard to tell where one ends and the other begins"(p. 57). He argues that the relationship between the street and plaza should stimulate "impulse use," by which he means the quality of a space to draw people into it without any hesitation or conscious consideration. In other words, people are in the plaza space before they know it. Whyte suggests two factors which facilitate a plaza's impulse use: first, sightliness or visibility, into the plaza; and second, the use of beckoning devices such as steps, trees and entrance markings to draw people in.

Whyte contends that the sight lines of a plaza are important because people will not enter a space that they cannot see into well (p. 58). Whyte believes that a completely sunken plaza or plaza above passersby's eye level will not stimulate impulse use. However, he strongly recommends slight level changes to accommodate a few comfortable steps which work as a beckoning device to enhance plaza use and its image. Similarly, beckoning devices like trees and entrance markings, if designed

carefully, can stimulate impulse use of a plaza, since they physically and visually draw people in.

In the case of Manhattan Town Center Plaza, evaluating the transition between street and plaza involves only two sides of the plaza: the link between the mall and plaza on the east, and the sidewalk on the west side of the plaza (Figure 3.3). These are the only major approaches into the plaza. The northern and southern sides of the plaza are not approaches because there are stores on their edges, making the two sides only secondary entrances to the plaza.

As already discussed, the main concourse of the mall is considered here as a major pedestrian street; unfortunately, this potential source of plaza users does not appear to enhance plaza use due to physical barriers and lack of visual connections. Both the large double doors of the mall entrance and the fountain inside the mall's main entrance work as obstacles to a smooth pedestrian movement between mall and plaza. In addition, the visibility of the plaza from the mall is weak and the beckoning devices used--three steps leading to the plaza's lower level, the planters and fountain--do not effectively invite people who come out of the mall, a point that will become more clear in chapter 4.

On the other hand, the transition between the plaza's western sidewalk and the plaza is smooth and creates a sense of invitation, since there is maximum visibility of the plaza. The beckoning devices on this side--the three low steps and the planters--meet Whyte's criteria. The only drawback here is that there is negligible pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk to respond to these devices, a point clarified further in chapter 4.

In summary, neither of the two major entrances to the plaza strongly enhance plaza use, since there is a strong visibility problem and spatial barriers on the east side. The plaza's western sidewalk is much better designed in terms of sight lines and beckoning devices but the low number of pedestrian users makes it less effective in drawing plaza users.

b. Sittable Spaces

In Whyte's argument, sitting is crucial, since he demonstrates it is a primary element for keeping people in a plaza. Simply put, people sit where there are places to sit (p. 28). Whyte contends that the "sittable" area in a plaza should be at least one third of its total area. He also insists that seating should be physically and sociably comfortable. Whyte's criteria for physically comfortable seating incorporate height (which he believes should range

between twelve to thirty-six inches) and width (which he argues should be a minimum of fourteen inches for seats with backs and a maximum of thirty inches if the seats are to be used from both sides). Whyte describes sociably comfortable seating space as that space which provides a fair amount of choice to people--"sitting up front, in back, to the side, in the sun, in the shade, in groups, off alone" (p. 28).

In the Manhattan Town Center Plaza, no spaces are specifically designed for the purpose of sitting--a fact entirely opposite to whyte's argument. However, the plaza designer insists that the steps leading to the lower portion of the plaza were to be used as sitting spaces Manhattan Mercury, 1st, October, 1986, p. 1; Brent Bowmen interview, June, 1989). He also said that the reason of not providing more fixed sittable spaces was that they planned to provide a movable seating arrangements on the periphery of the plaza.

In the absence of proper seating, the steps and the planters (which are also used for sitting) were evaluated. These steps and planters involve two types of sitting spaces: first, spaces that fulfill Whyte's criteria of being physically comfortable, and second, spaces which do not fulfil this criteria, but are used for sitting, due to

lack of proper seating spaces. A large percentage of the edges of planters (marked 1 in figure 3.6) meet Whyte's criteria; however, most of these edges are unused, since they face toward either a dead wall or an empty shop space. The second type of sitting space (marked 2 in figure 3.6) mostly consists of the steps leading to the sunken area of the plaza and some planter edges; these sitting places do not meet Whyte's criteria but were observed to be used heavily, by children and adults up to approximate age of sixty, during special events in the plaza. A great hesitation to use the second type of seating spaces was observed among persons over the ages of sixty, since these people could not sit on the seating easily or comfortably because of physical frailty.

Evaluation of sittable space in the plaza using Whyte's criteria of 'sociable seating', determined that most of the seating (including both type one and two spaces) did not satisfy most criteria, other than at special events when the plaza was filled with people. One notes that in evaluating the adequacy of the total amount of sittable space, the plaza does not meet the criteria of one-third of total area of plaza as seating space, since the physically uncomfortable seating is not countable.

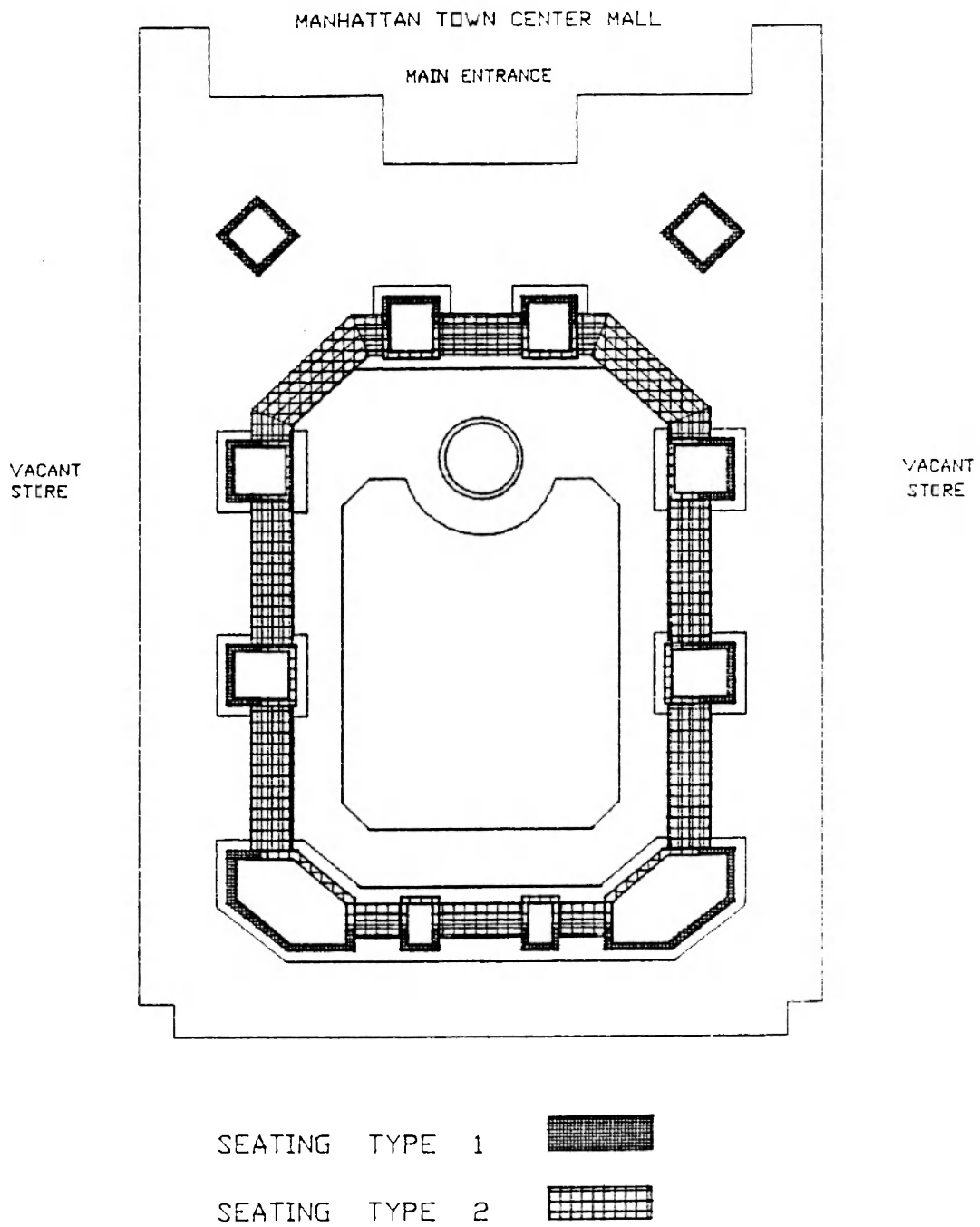


FIGURE 3.6 SEATING ANALYSIS

CHAPTER FOUR

ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOR IN THE PLAZA

As previously mentioned, four major factors are evaluated to determine the potential of sociability in Manhattan Town Center Plaza: (1) historical and socio-economic context; (2) physical context and form; (3) evaluation of environmental behavior; and (4) evaluation of the attitudes of people. This chapter deals primarily with the third major aspect--evaluation of environmental behavior. Rapaport (1982) suggests that people react to an environment according to the meaning they associate with it and according to the environmental cues the environment presents. Thus, the primary objective of evaluating environmental behavior was to identify the meanings and environmental cues that people associate with the plaza. When it was first completed, Manhattan Town Center Plaza was an altogether new setting in the town environment, with no previously assumed meanings or cues attached to it.

As previously described, observing behavior in a physical setting is one of the most effective methods to determine: (a) the various ways people use an environment; (b) the opportunities and constraints the environment presents; and (c) the relationships between different

activities taking place in the environment (Zeisel, 1981, p. 111). The observational information was recorded in the form of detailed notations and behavioral mapping on pre-printed site plans prepared by the author (see chapter 1, figure 1.2) Photographic records were used to supplement the information obtained through behavioral mapping and notations. The plaza was studied in terms of three stages during the first year of its life cycle: (1) pre-opening stage; (2) opening stage; and (3) post-opening stage. Here, each of these stages are presented in turn.

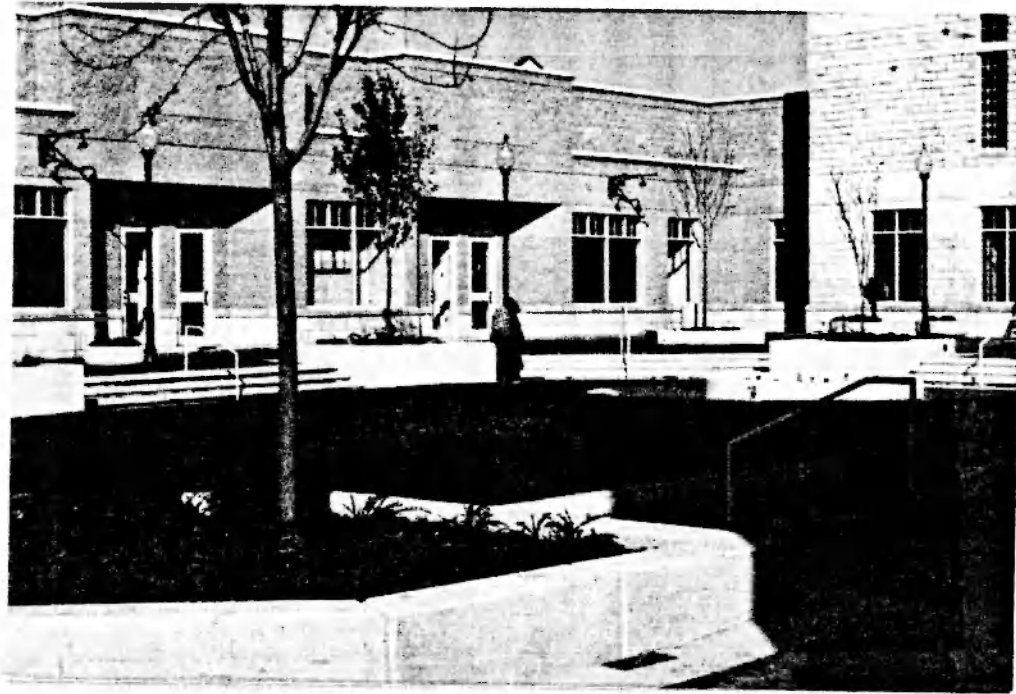
1. PRE-OPENING STAGE

The first stage--a pre-opening stage--was defined as beginning one week before the formal inauguration of the mall on Monday, October 26th, 1987. This pre-opening stage covered the period of Tuesday, October, 20th, to Sunday, October, 25th, 1987. At this time, the plaza was ready for occupancy except for water in the fountain. The main research objective for this stage was to study any kind of activity taking place inside the plaza before the actual inauguration of the mall. Observations during this stage were crucial because they assessed the capabilities of the plaza to invite activity without the influence of the mall.

The basic behavioral pattern observed during this stage

was people who used the plaza's western sidewalk or people coming from downtown, who would occasionally step into the lower central level of the plaza to look at the names on the bricks used in paving this level (figure 4.1 & 4.2). Although the number of persons involved in this activity at any one time was not more than five, there were everyday between 10am to 2pm, at least six to ten persons present at least two minutes in the plaza. Many of these people stayed longer to look at the paving bricks that had been inscribed with the names of donors who had contributed funds (at least \$20) for the plaza's construction.

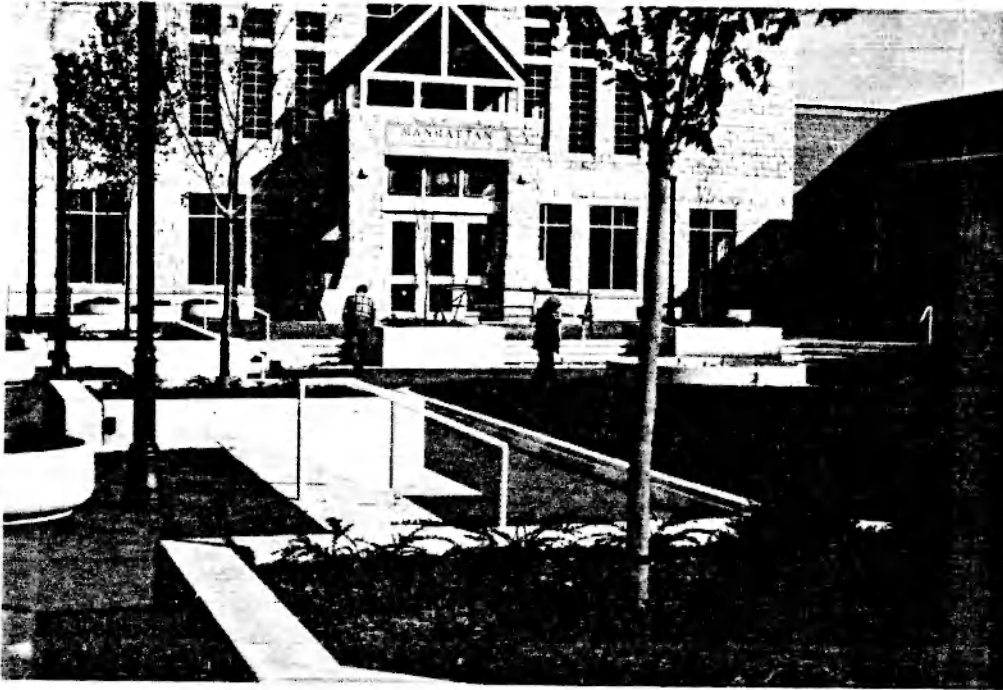
Figure 4.1 and 4.2 depict two typical scenes in the pre-opening stage. Figure 4.1 shows the major activity observed at this stage: a middle-aged couple looking at the bricks. Figure 4.2 shows the largest group seen during this stage--four adults and a child--who were in the plaza to look at the bricks. Another activity observed during this period was that of inquisitive persons who would walk across the plaza to peer through the windows of the unopened mall (figure 4.3). Figure 4.4 illustrates activity on the last day of the pre-opening stage--that is, one day before the official inauguration of the mall. At this time, the plaza fountain was started, and many people walking through the eastern downtown stopped for a moment



4.1. Pre-opening stage: Plaza users looking at inscribed bricks



4.2. Pre-opening stage: Largest group of users



4.3. Pre-opening stage: Users looking inside the mallivity



4.4. Pre-opening stage: October, 25th 1987

to look. No one was seen sitting in the plaza during the pre-opening stage.

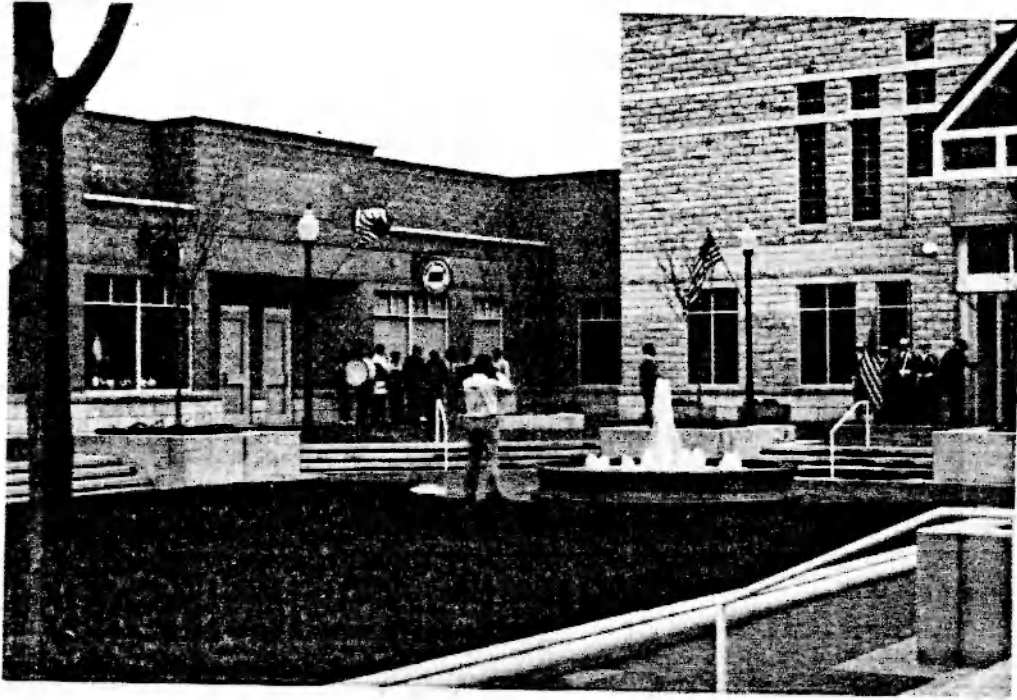
2. OPENING STAGE

The opening stage began on the inaugural day of the Mall (October 26th, 1987) and continued for three weeks until Monday, November, 14th. In this second stage, behavioral mapping, notations and photography were used as recording devices. The study of this stage was significant because it provided a picture of plaza activity during a period when the space was novel. Mall attendance and number of people in the plaza were expected to be larger than at later times, when the mall had become a more taken-for-granted part of Manhattanites' lives and routines.

The Plaza on The Day of the Manhattan Town Center

Inauguration

On the morning of the inauguration day, no significant activity was observed in the plaza other than the reception band playing on the north side of the mall entrance. All people observed seemed to be in a hurry to enter and explore the mall. The photograph in figure 4.5 illustrates a view of the plaza on the inauguration day before noon when --other than band members and a few people entering-- no one stayed or sat in the plaza. Around noon, however, a



4.5. Opening Stage: Inauguration day Morning



4.6. Opening Stage: Inauguration day Evening

number of people stopped by the plaza on their way from the mall. As did people in the pre-opening stage, they focused their attention on two major elements--the water fountain and the inscribed bricks, as can be seen in the photograph of figure 4.6. A few individuals were busy taking photographs of various elements of the plaza and of the mall facade. Except for a mother who was waiting for her children playing in the plaza (photograph in figure 4.7), no one actually sat down.

Analysis Based on Behavioral Mapping

The behavioral maps were recorded beginning Oct 27th, 1987, one day after the formal inauguration of the mall. This mapping procedure continued for three weeks. As discussed earlier, the mapping was done on two days of the week: Tuesday and Saturday. During each of these days, three specific times were allocated for the behavioral mapping procedure: (a) a morning period which documented use during the first hour after the opening time of mall; (b) a lunch period which included the formal lunch hour at offices (from 12pm to 1pm); and (c) an evening time covered the period from 5pm to 6pm, when after-work-shoppers were expected. As defined here, the term **users** refers to those persons who spent at least two minutes in the plaza, whether sitting, standing, or strolling; in contrast, the

term passersby refers to those persons who traversed the plaza either to enter or leave the mall but did not linger in the plaza.

TABLE 4.1

DATA SUMMARY: OPENING STAGE

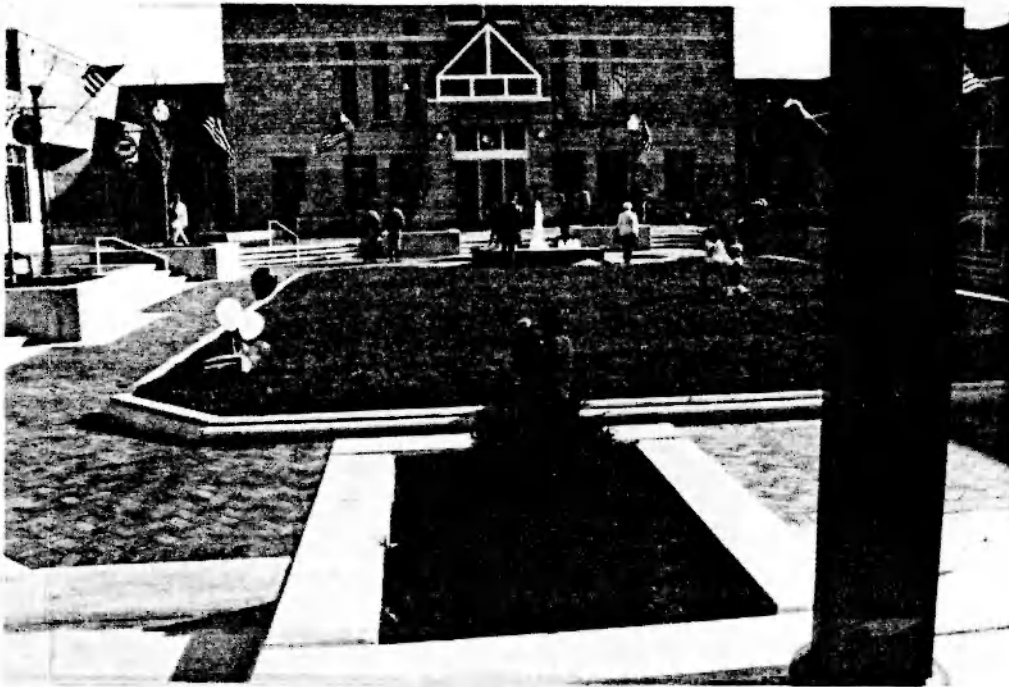
| | AVERAGE # OF USERS | AVERAGE# OF PASSERSBY | RATIO OF USERS TO PASSERSBY |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| MORNING TIME | 4.2 | 21 | 1:5 |
| LUNCH TIME | 15.0 | 65.2 | 1:4.5 |
| EVENING TIME | 5.2 | 36.8 | 1:7 |

Table 4.1 presents a summary of data obtained from behavioral maps recorded in the opening stage. This table shows that the average number of users at lunch time (15 people), was higher than the number of users during the evening (6) and during the morning (5) periods. Similarly, the number of passersby also was greatest at lunch time (74) as compared to nineteen persons in the morning and forty seven in the evening. Although the number of users and passersby varied among the three periods or observation, the ratio of users to passersby remained almost the same for morning time and lunch time (1:5 verses 1:4.5), but was higher for the evening (1:7). The increase

in the numbers of users and passersby at lunch time, as compared to the number at morning and evening, could be due to the influx of workers from nearby office buildings, for whom lunch time is the best to shop or eat in the mall.

The maps of figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 show aggregate plaza use over the three-week period for each of the three observational periods. Figure 4.8 illustrates a cumulative usage map for the opening stage morning period. Figure 4.9 shows opening stage lunch time cumulative usage and figure 4.10 represents evening time cumulative usage. In each map, users are indicated by small yellow circles and the passersby by green flow lines, the thickness of represents the number of users. On studying these three maps one notices several significant points in regard to plaza usage.

Two basic patterns that these three maps illustrate is: (1) that people seemed to use the north side of the grassy area more than the southern side; and (2) that the pedestrian approach on the plaza's southern side is used more than the pedestrian street on northern side. One also notices this pattern in the photograph of figure 4.11, where the usage is greater on the southern approach (on the left) than on the northern approach (on the right). There



4.7. Opening Stage: Typical Activity

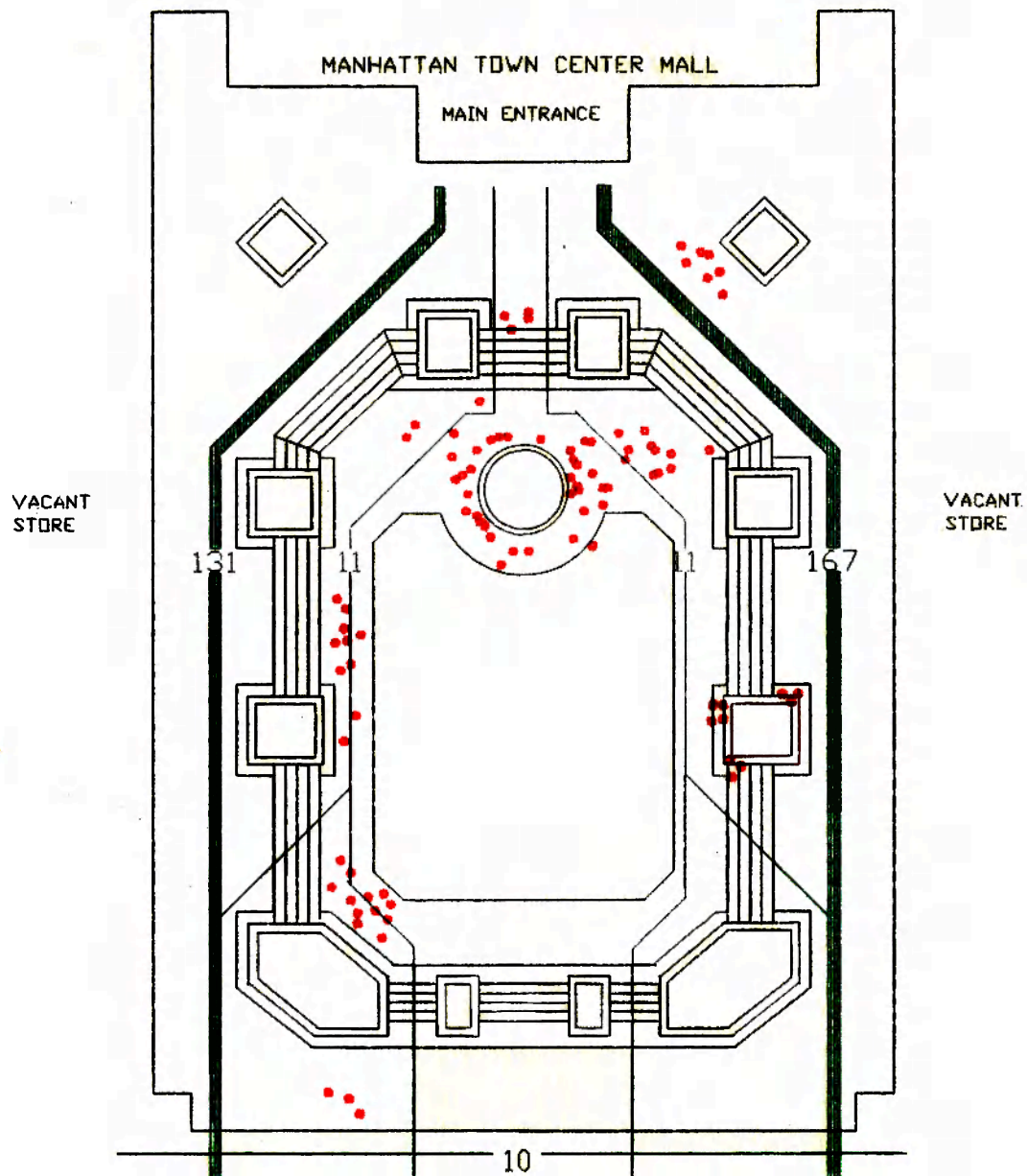


4.11. Opening Stage: Pedestrian Traffic

could be two possible reasons for the greater use of the northern side of the sunken area. First, at least during the morning and afternoon, there are better sun lighting conditions on the northern than on the southern side. Second, people may have felt more comfortable away from the main stream of movement on the south side of the plaza.

As already described in Chapter 3, the reason of greater use on the southern side appears to be that a large number of people who park in the northwestern parking lot prefer to approach the mall through the west entrance of Dillard's department store (see chapter 3, fig 3.3). A second reason for the contrasting flows on the two sides of the plaza may be that people who approach the mall from Poyntz Avenue prefer to park in any available space on the south side of the street, since it is convenient for right-hand traffic flow, (as the results of interviews, discussed in chapter five, indicate). A third reason for the strong flow on southern pathway relates to the back-and-forth pedestrian movement observed between Burger King and the mall.

A typical picture of plaza activity for each of the three observational times is depicted in the maps of figures 4.12, 4.13, and 4.14, respectively. To produce



USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 150 passersby)
 53 F

SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.8 OPENING-STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: MORNING
 (October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)

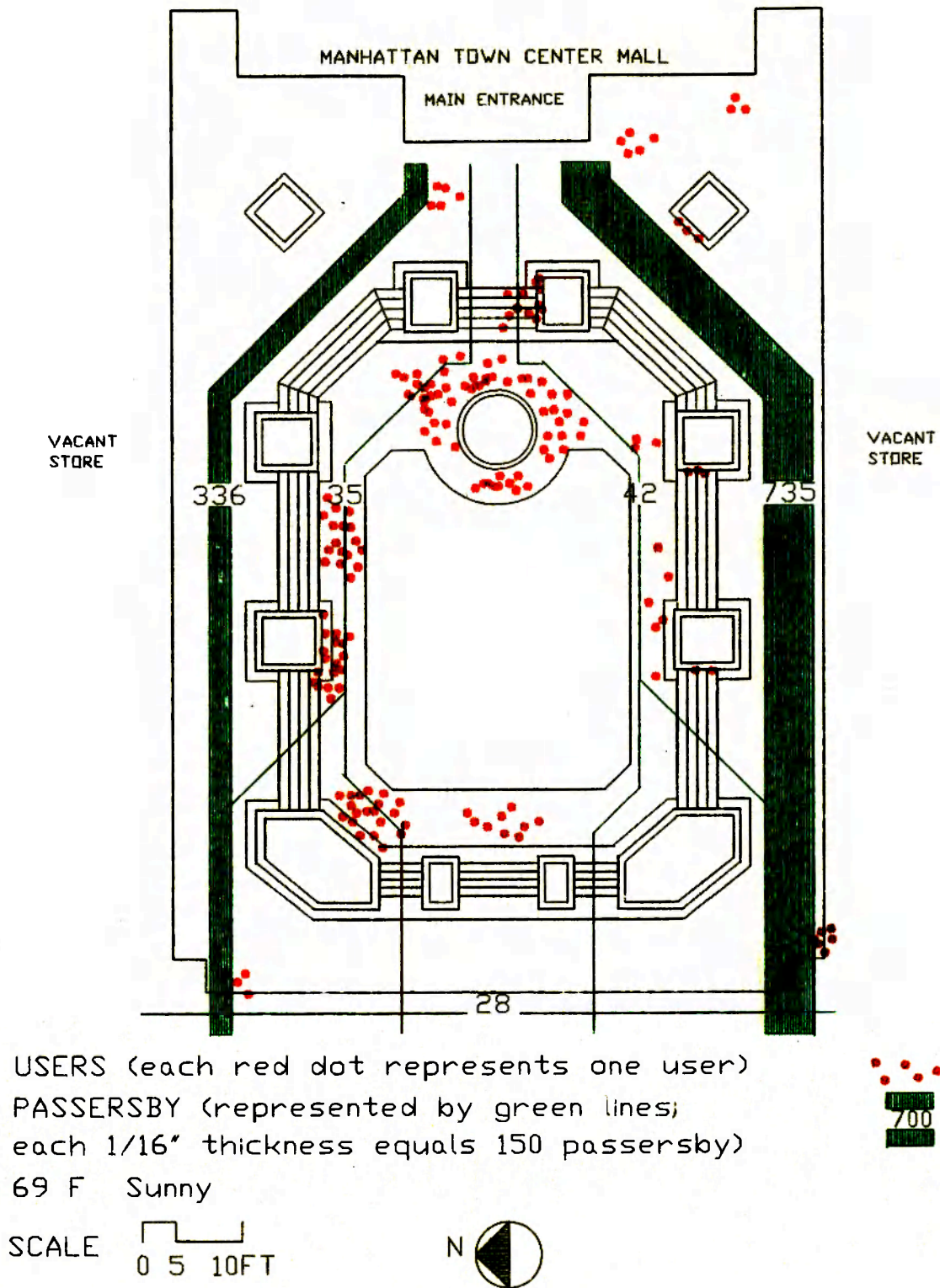
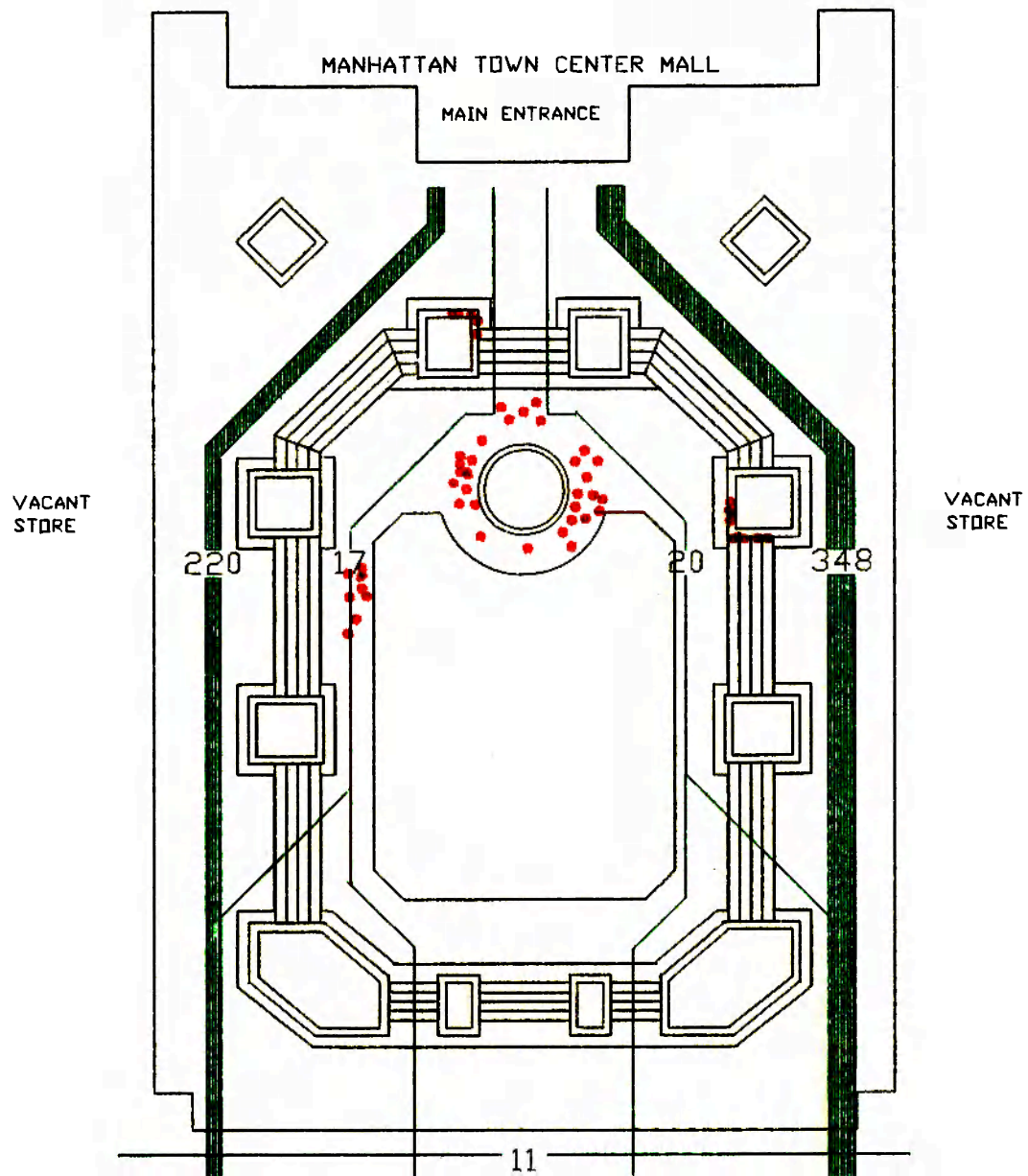


FIGURE 4.9 OPENING-STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: LUNCH
(October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)



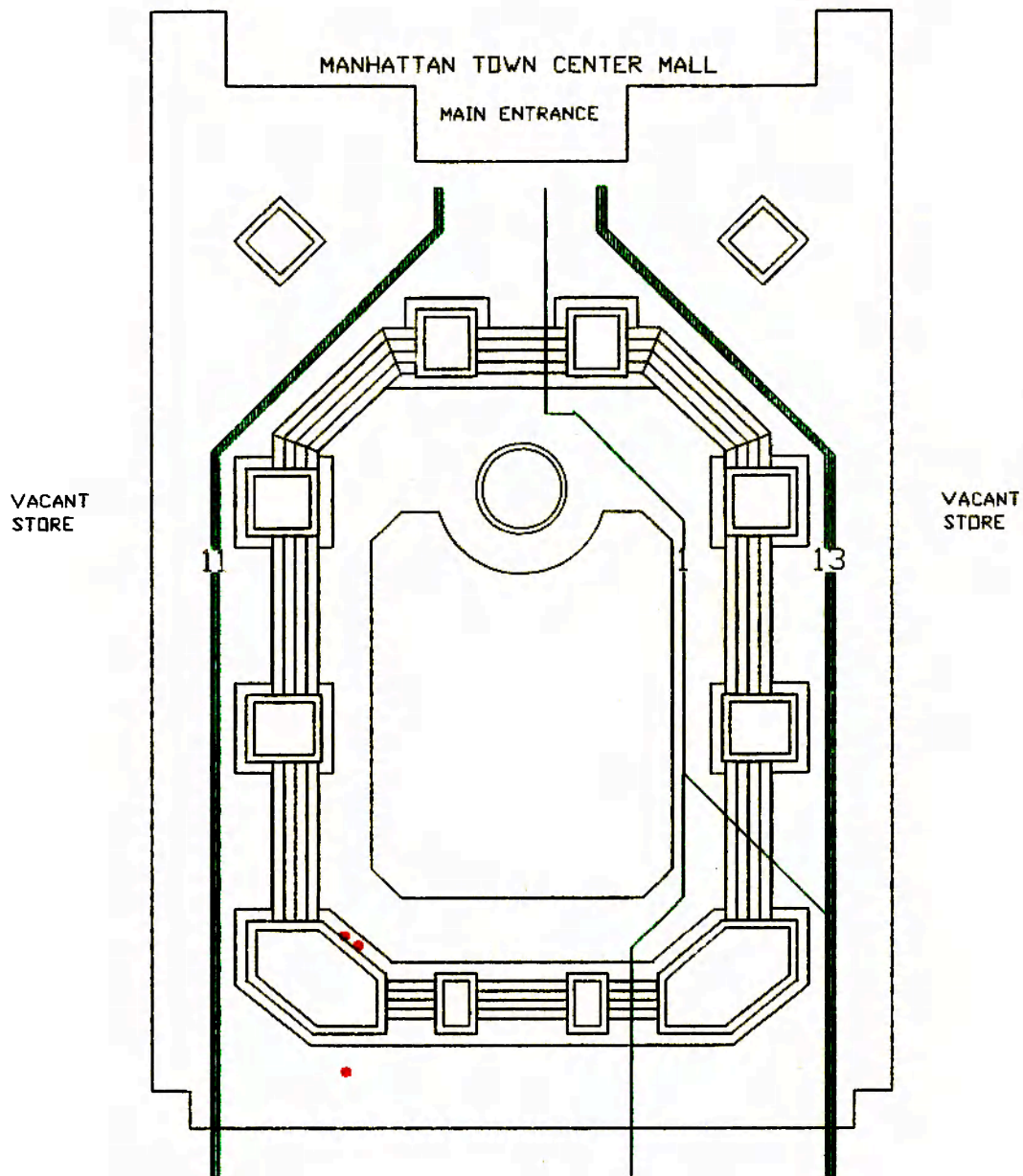
USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 150 passersby)
 54 F



SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.10 OPENING-STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: EVENING
 (October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)



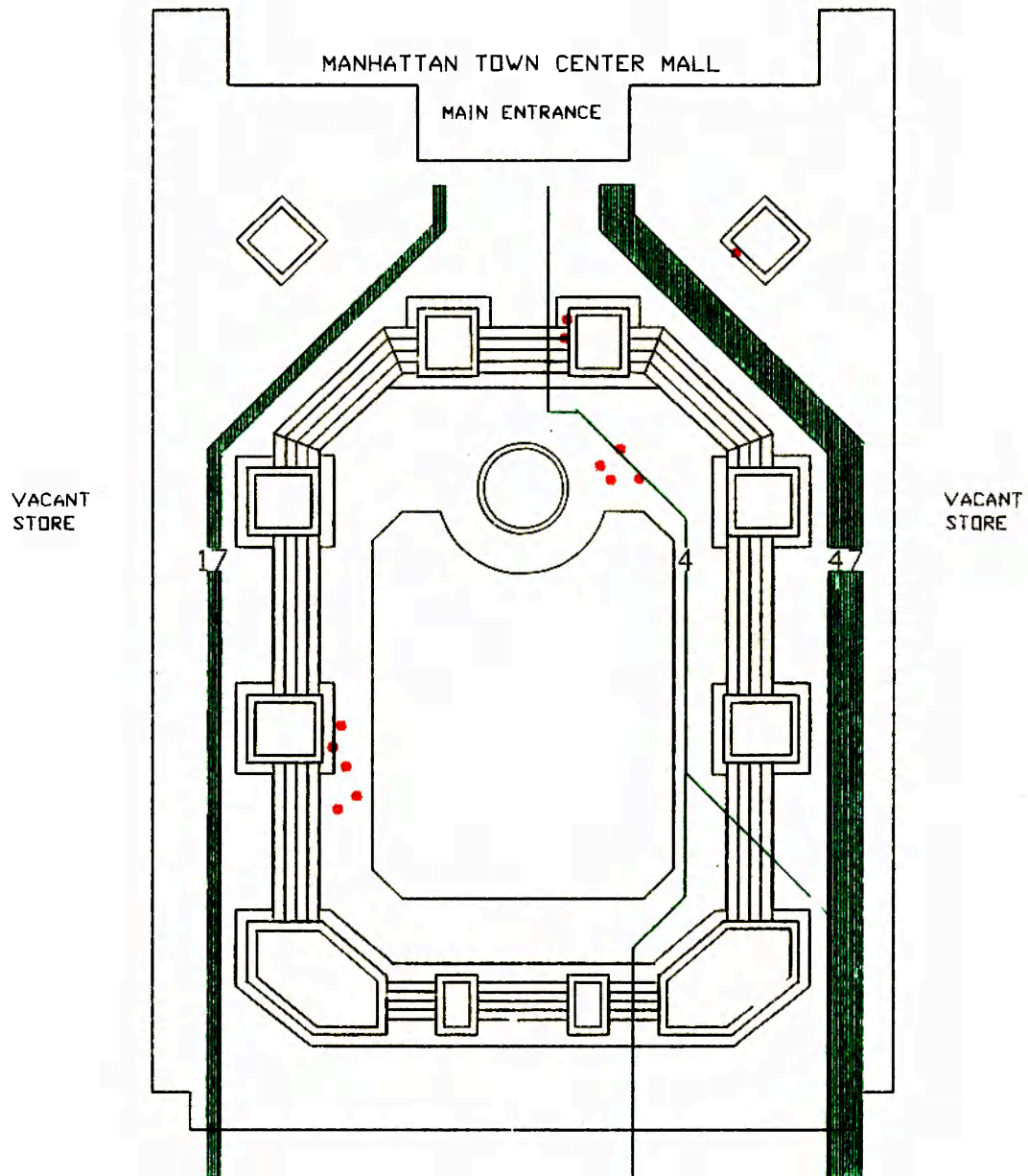
USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 150 passersby)
 53 F



SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.12 OPENING-STAGE TYPICAL MAP: MORNING
 (October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)



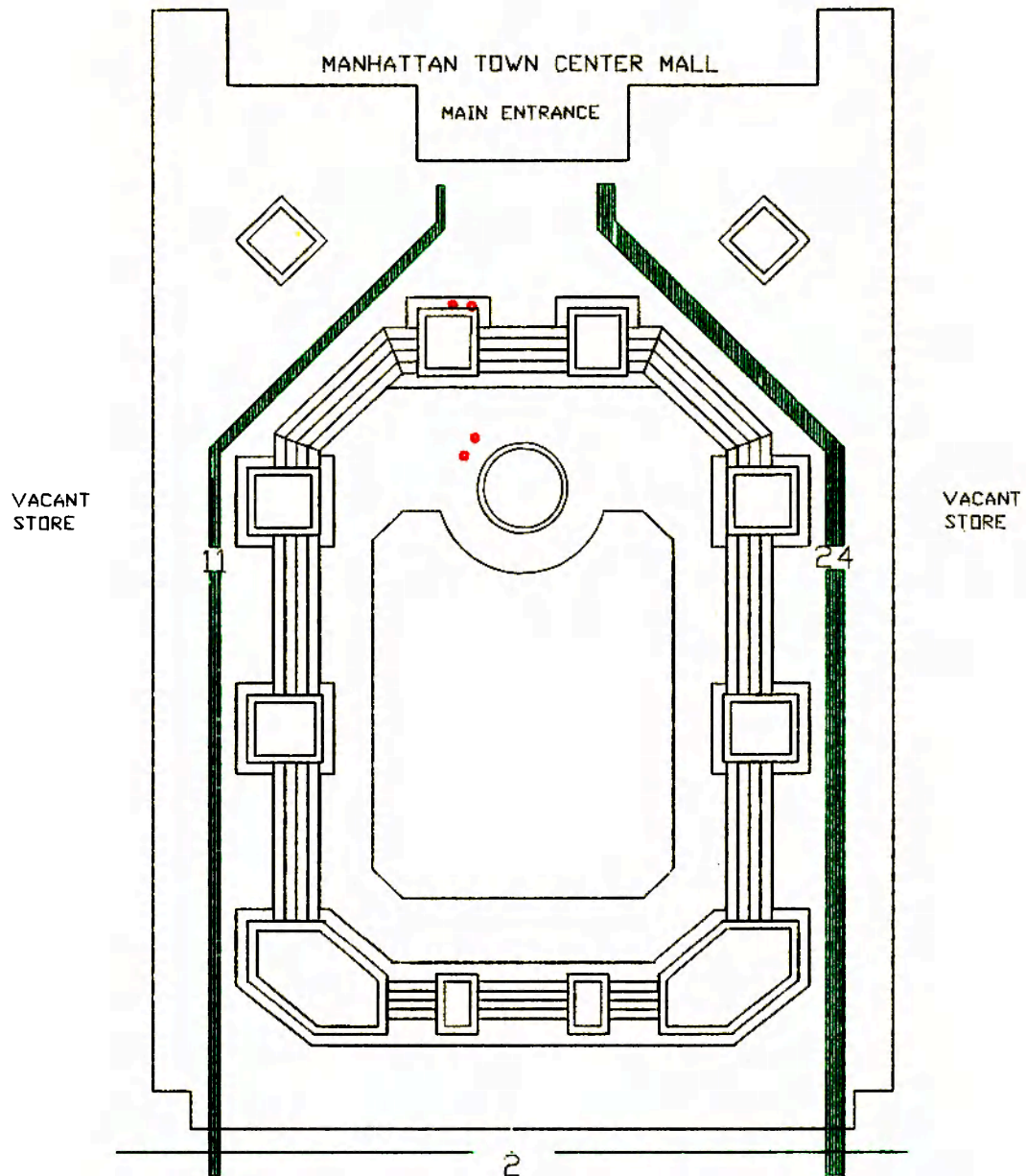
USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 15 passersby)
 57 F



SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.13 OPENING-STAGE TYPICAL MAP: LUNCH
 (October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)



USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 15 passersby)
 54 F

SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.14 OPENING-STAGE TYPICAL MAP: EVENING
 (October, 27th, 1987 to November, 14th, 1987)

these maps, the author followed the following steps:

- (1) A count was made of the total number of passersby and users; This count was based on the cumulative maps of figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10.
- (2) An average for each of the three observation periods was calculated by dividing these counts by the total number of observation periods, which was eighteen (a sum of three five-minute observational periods per hour for the three periods of morning, lunch, and evening during the entire opening stage).
- (3) Taking the results from step 2, the author selected a specific behavioral map of which the numbers of users and passersby was closest to the average calculated in step 2.

If one studies the maps of figure 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15 showing the plaza's typical activity for each of three observation periods, one sees patterns that are similar to the ones in the cumulative maps in figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10. One important pattern is that, in spite of the novelty of the mall and the plaza there is insufficient activity for a sociable place.

TABLE 4.2

OPENING STAGE

COMPARISON BETWEEN WEEKDAY AND WEEKEND PLAZA USE

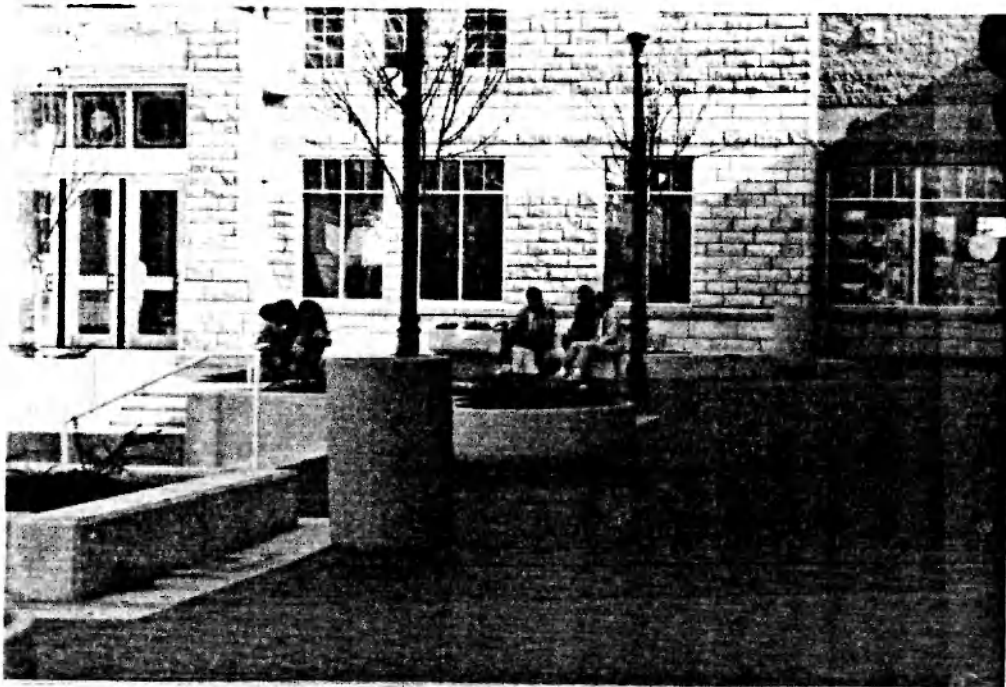
| | | PLAZA USERS | PASSERSBY |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| TUESDAY Avg./ 5 minutes | MORNING | 3.8 | 13.0 |
| | LUNCH | 13.0 | 57.7 |
| | EVENING | 4.0 | 27.2 |
| SATURDAY Avg./ 5 minutes | MORNING | 4.6 | 30.0 |
| | LUNCH | 17.0 | 72.6 |
| | EVENING | 6.4 | 46.4 |

One other pattern that was considered for the opening stage was a comparison of the plaza's weekday verses weekend use, drawing Tuesday verses Saturday as specific time of comparison. Results of this comparison are shown in table 4.2, which compares the average number of users and passersby for the three observational periods on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

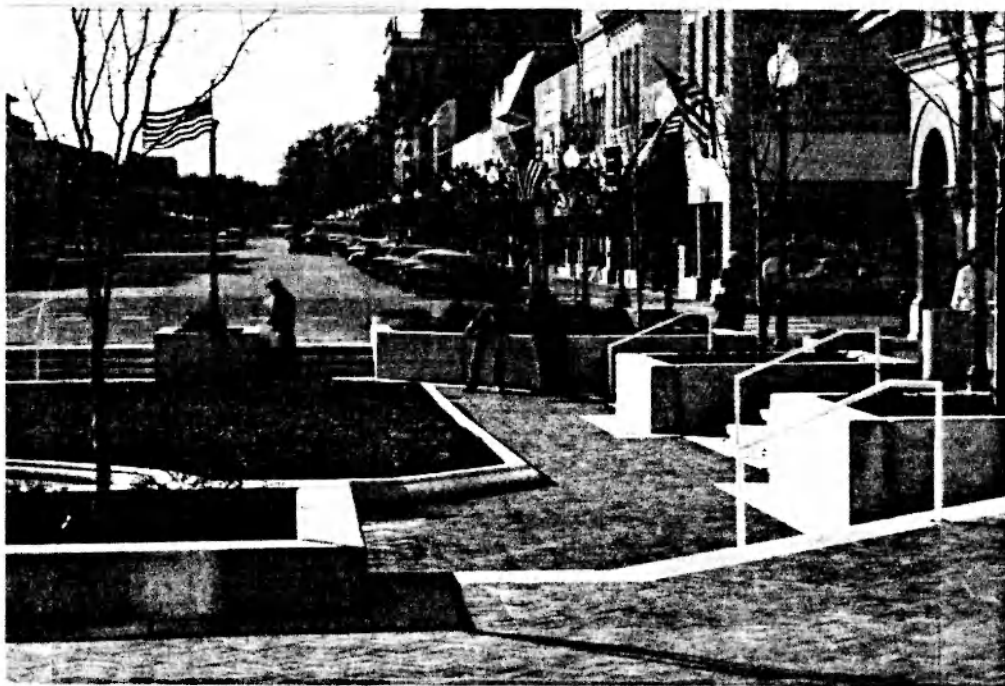
One notes in the table 4.2 that, on Saturdays, at lunch time, the number of passersby was 20% greater than on Tuesdays. More strikingly, the number of passersby at mornings and evenings on Saturdays was almost double the number on Tuesdays (an increase of 51% in the morning and

41% in the evening). In regard to users, the pattern was considerably different from the passersby in the morning (51% versus 16%) and evening (41% versus 37%) times, but there was not much variation in the lunch time use (20% versus 24%). Little difference was found in the number of morning time users (a 16% increase on Saturdays). However, the number of users at lunch time on Saturdays increased by 24% from the number on Tuesdays. At evening time on Saturdays, there was a 37% increase in users.

Overall, in summarizing the plaza's activity patterns in the opening stage, one sees that the largest number of persons were the passersby who were either entering or leaving the mall. However, a small percentage of the passersby occasionally stopped in the plaza and spent some time, engaged primarily in three types of activities: (a) looking at the pavement bricks for names; (b) observing the fountain; or (c) sitting. Some of the seated persons seemed to be waiting for others who were still inside the mall. Many were mothers watching their children playing around the fountain (figure 4.15). The activity in the plaza would increase during lunch time as compared to the morning and evening times, and the activity on Saturdays would be more than the activity on Tuesdays.



4.15. Opening Stage: Typical Activity

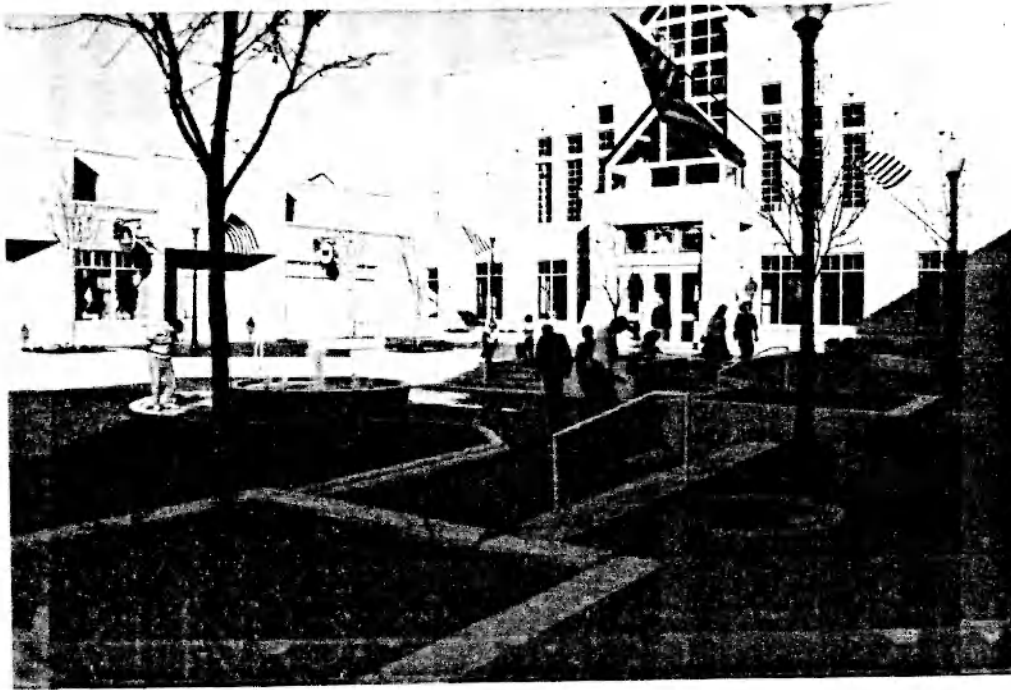


4.16. Opening Stage: Users looking at bricks

During the opening stage, a majority of the users were in pairs; groups larger than three or four persons were rarely seen in the plaza. A variety of age groups used the plaza at this stage. The elderly and older adults were engaged mostly in looking at the engraved bricks, as can be seen in the photographs of figures 4.16 and 4.17. Children, on the other hand, were seen playing with the fountain and the water in it. The photograph of figure 4.18 depicts a group of children strolling around the fountain. Teenagers would just stroll around for a minute or two, and then leave the plaza.

POST-OPENING STAGE

The third stage of observation--the post-opening stage--was conducted almost one year after the opening stage and lasted from Oct 1, 1988 to Oct 18, 1988. A significant difference in plaza use, as compared to the first two stages, was observed at this stage. One of the dominant activities seen in the first two stages--examining the pavement bricks in the lower level of the plaza--completely vanished at this stage. However, parents with children were still seen near the fountain, but not as often as in the second stage. Most importantly, the number of passerby through plaza decreased greatly as compared to the second stage (table 4.4).



4.17. Opening Stage: Users looking at bricks



4.18. Opening Stage: Children Around Plaza's fountain

Behavior Maps for the Post Opening Stage

The data-collection devices and methods used in this third stage were identical to those in the second stage (i.e. behavioral mapping, direct observation and photography). The duration of this stage also was three weeks from Oct 1, 1988 to Oct 18, 1988.

TABLE 4.3

POST-OPENING STAGE: DATA SUMMARY

| | AVERAGE # OF USERS /5 MIN. | AVERAGE# OF PASSERSBY /5 MIN. | RATIO OF USERS & PASSERSBY |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| MORNING TIME | 0.3 | 8.6 | 1:6 |
| LUNCH TIME | 1.2 | 21.5 | 1:5 |
| EVENING TIME | 0.8 | 10.7 | 1:9 |

Table 4.3 summarizes cumulative counts of the plaza during the post-opening stage. One notes that the number of both users and passersby had decreased greatly at this stage. The number of users was almost negligible at any time of data recording. As in the first two stages, the number of passersby at lunch time was still higher than the evening and morning time. The average number of passersby at lunch time, per five minutes, was 21.5, which is much higher than the number of passersby at morning time (which was 8.6 persons per five minutes) and the number of passersby at evening time (which was about 10.7 persons per

five minutes). The variation in the number of lunch time passersby and users probably can be attributed to the same reason suggested in the opening stage--that the downtown workers like to shop and eat in the mall around lunch time.

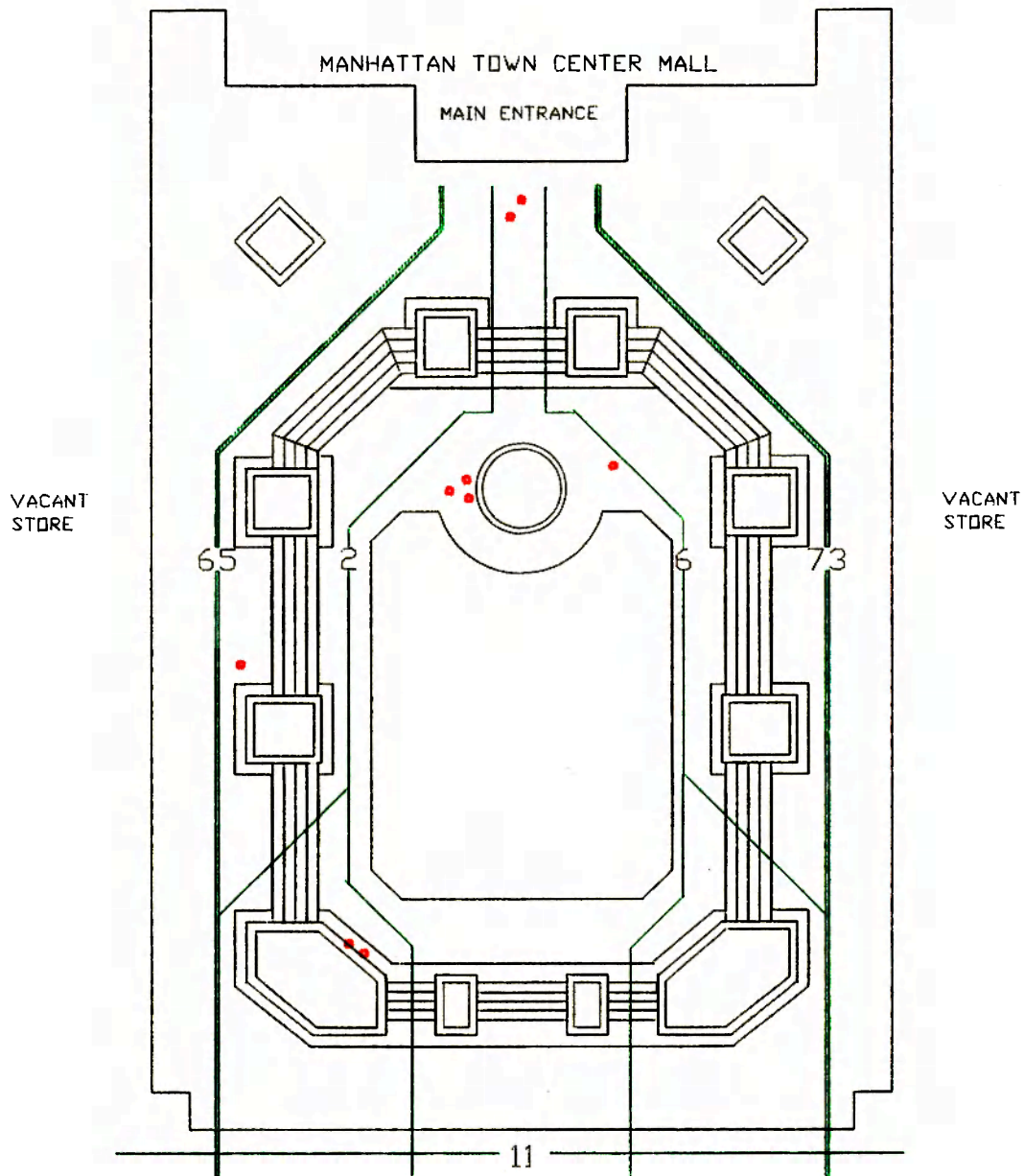
TABLE 4.4

**COMPARISON OF OPENING AND
POST-OPENING STAGE**

| | USERS DECREASED BY | PASSERSBY DECREASED BY |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| MORNING TIME | 91% | 58% |
| LUNCH TIME | 92% | 67% |
| EVENING TIME | 82% | 71% |

Table 4.4 illustrates the percentage decrease in total number of users and passersby in the post-opening stage in comparison to the opening stage. One notices that the decrease in evening-time users is comparatively less (82%) than the decrease in morning and lunch time users (91% and 92%). In contrast, there is less decrease in the morning-time passersby (58%) than the lunch-time and evening-time passersby (67% and 71%).

Cumulative usage maps for the three observational periods in the post-opening stage are depicted in Figures 4.19, 4.20, and 4.21. The method of depiction used in these maps is the same as the cumulative maps presented for



USERS (each red dot represents one user)
 PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
 each 1/16" thickness equals 150 passersby)
 59 F



SCALE 0 5 10FT



FIGURE 4.19 POST-OPENING STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: MORNING
 (October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

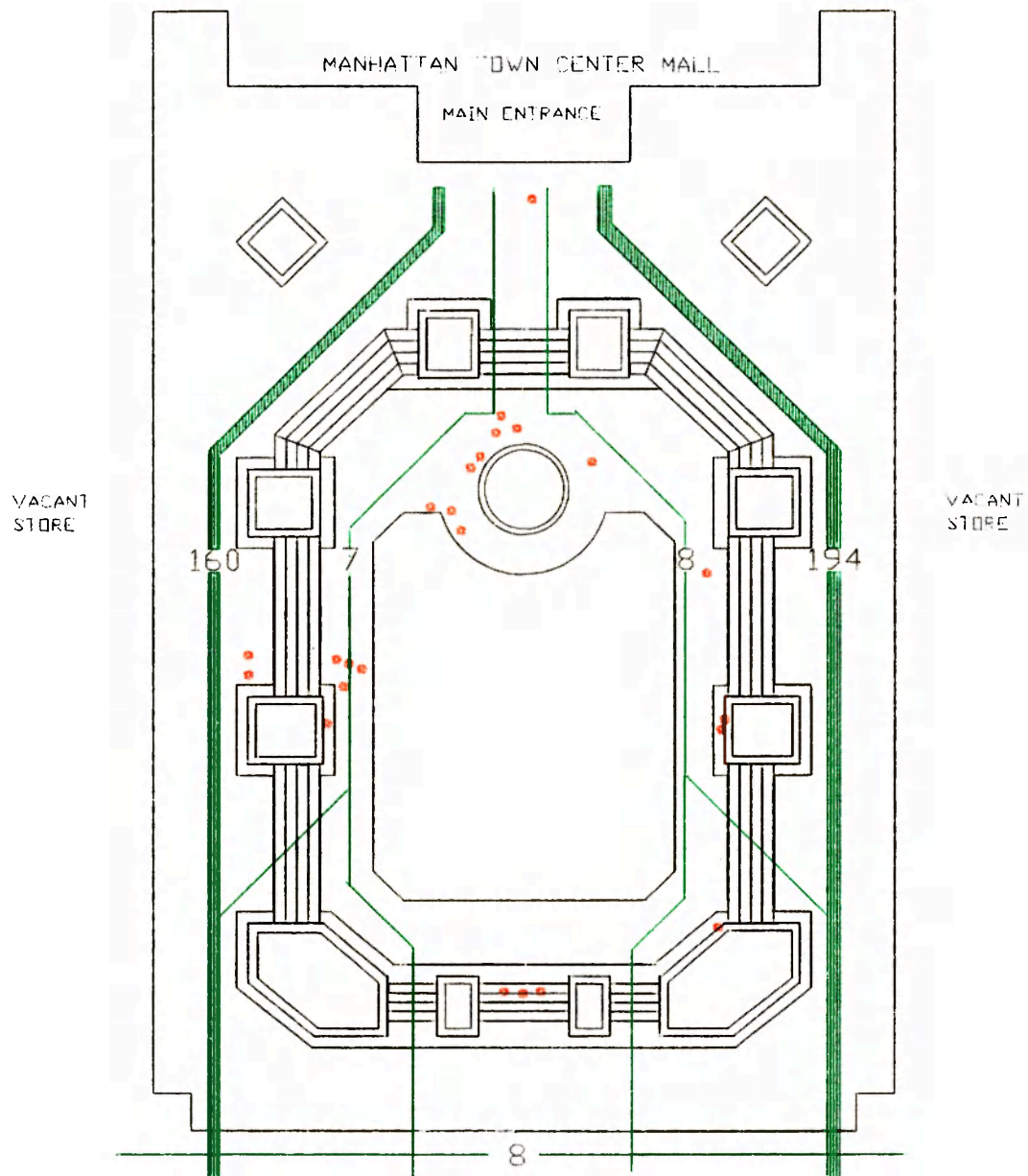


FIGURE 4.20 POST-OPENING STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: LUNCH
(October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

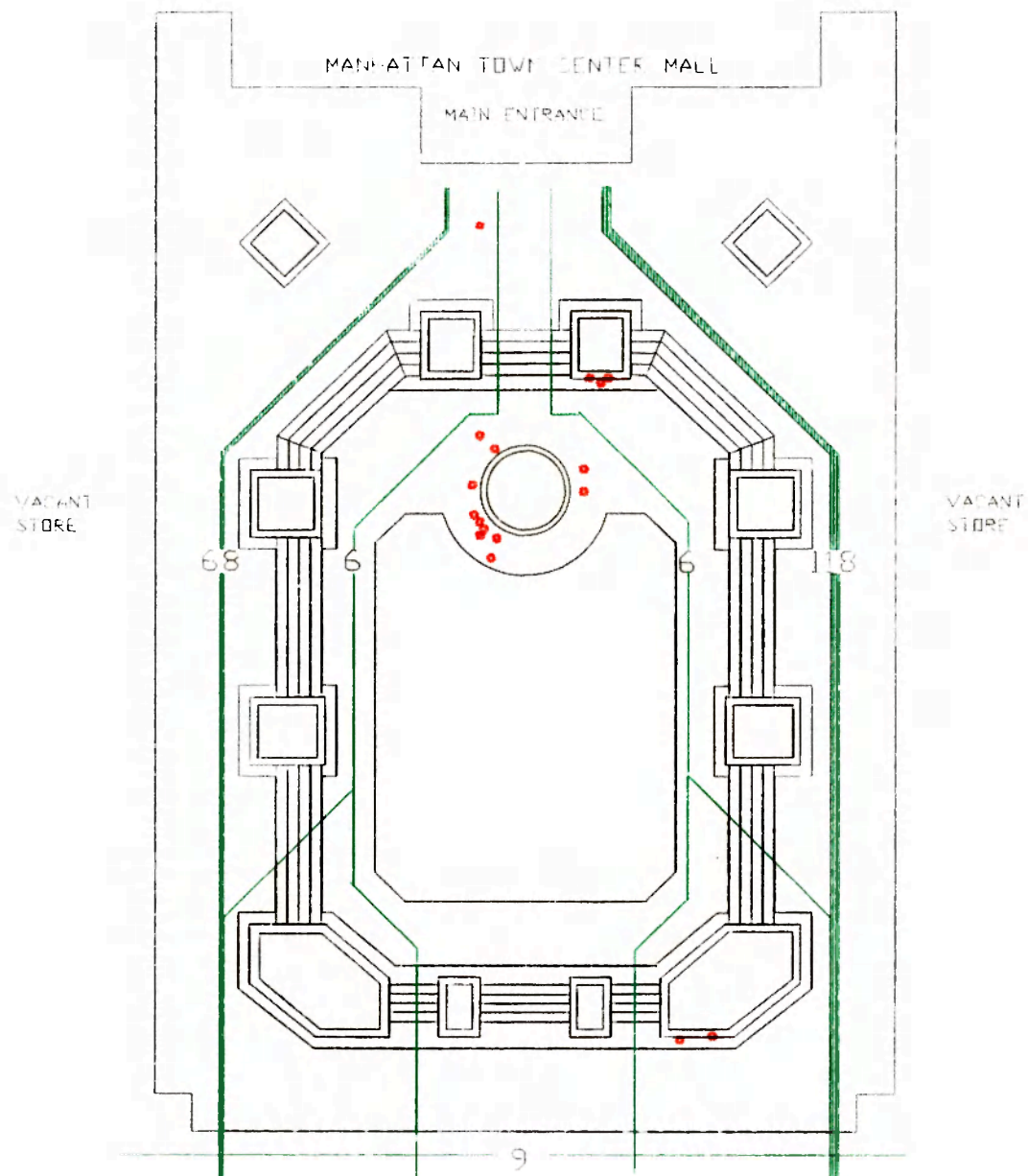
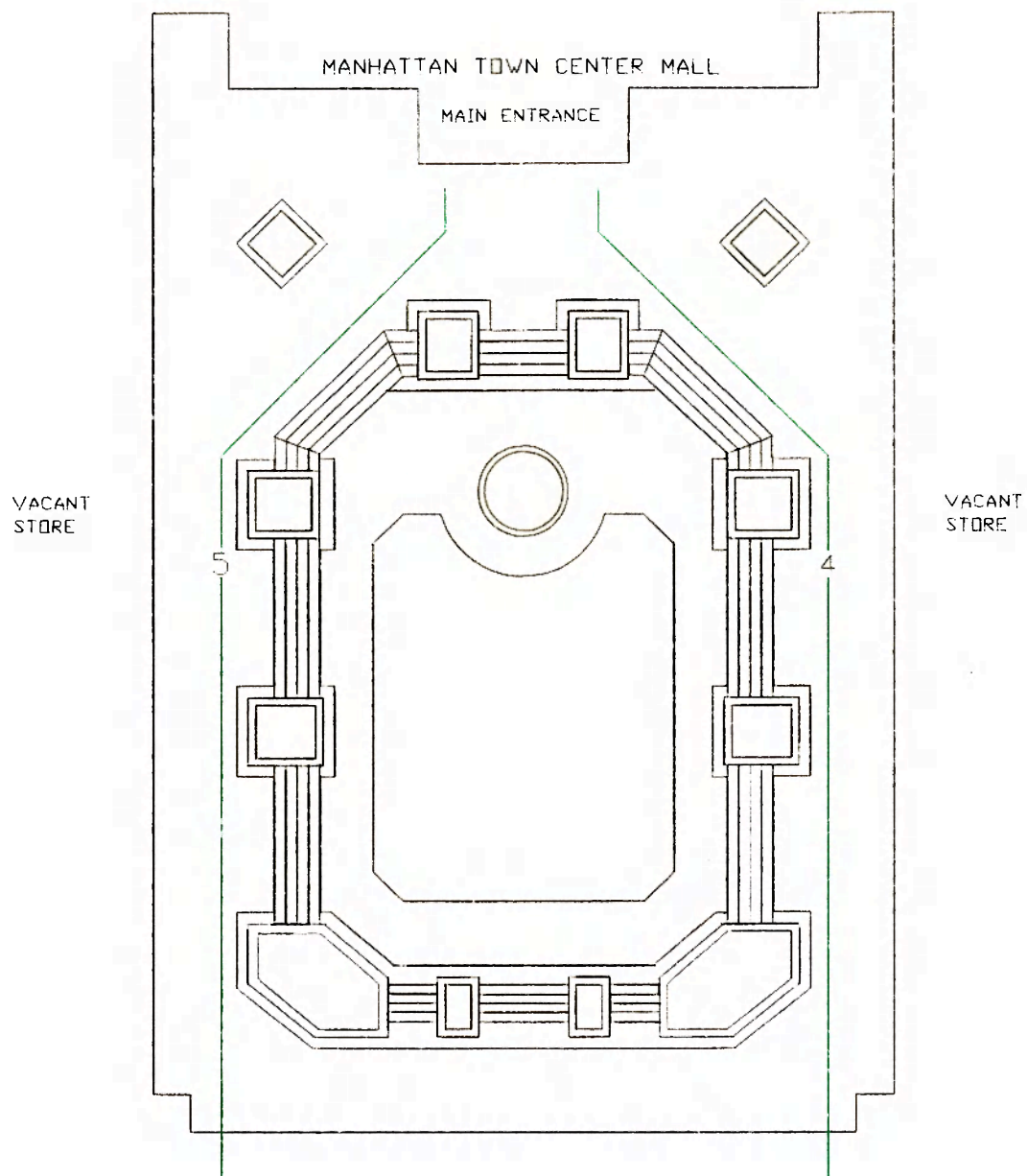


FIGURE 4.21 POST-OPENING STAGE CUMULATIVE MAP: EVENING
(October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

the opening stage. No significant patterns were noticed at this stage except that the greater use of the pedestrian path on the south of the plaza continued. A typical day's activity for the three observational periods of the post-opening stage is illustrated in figures 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24. The method used for production of these maps was the same as that used to produce the typical maps for the opening stage.

There was no change found in group sizes observed between stages two and three--i.e., there were rarely groups larger than three, some pairs were occasionally seen, and almost no singles were ever seen. Among age groups, a majority of users in this stage were children playing around the fountain. Persons accompanying the children were the only adult users seen spending time in the plaza. Elderly people would very often step down into the plaza but would not sit or spend time there. Teenagers were observed only among the passersby going through the lower level of plaza. This age group almost never stayed in the plaza.



NE USERS

PASSERSBY (represented by green lines;
each 1/16" thickness equals 15 passersby)

59 F

SCALE 0 5 10FT



70

FIGURE 4.22 POST-OPENING STAGE TYPICAL MAP: MORNING
(October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

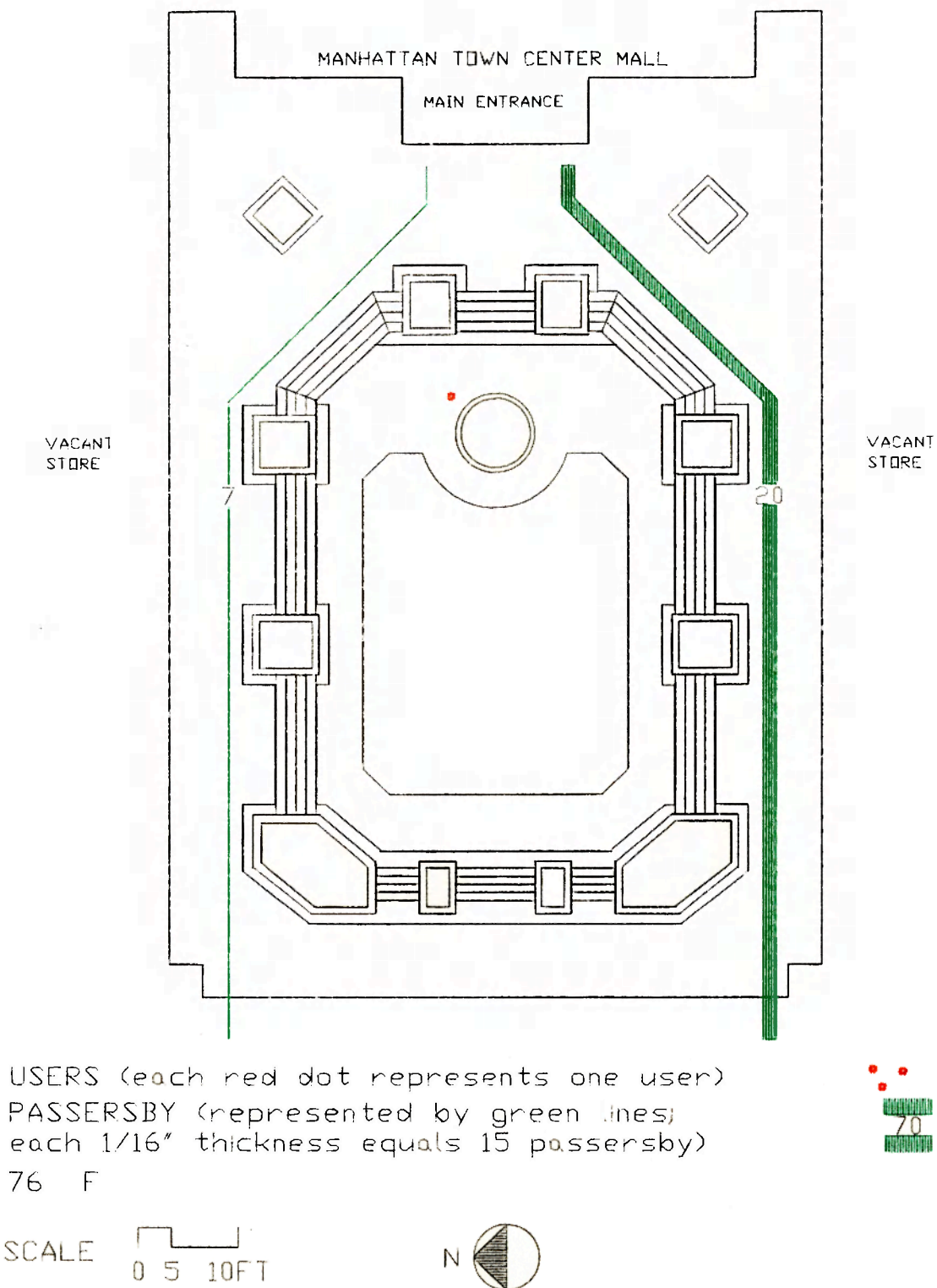


FIGURE 4.23 POST-OPENING STAGE TYPICAL MAP: LUNCH
(October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

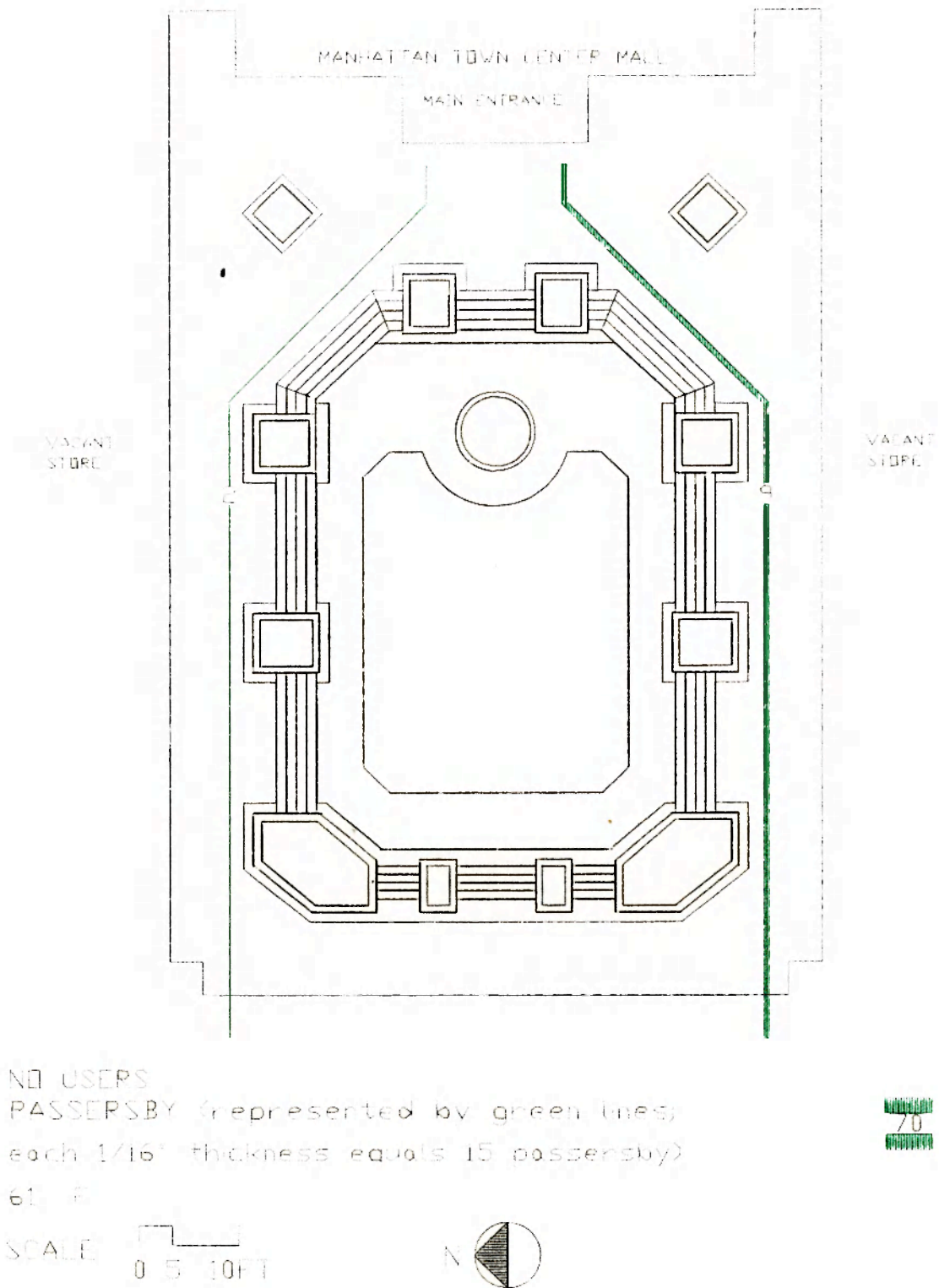


FIGURE 4.24 POST-OPENING STAGE TYPICAL MAP: EVENING
(October, 1st, 1988 to October, 18th, 1988)

TABLE 4.5

POST-OPENING STAGE:

COMPARISON BETWEEN WEEKDAY AND WEEK END PLAZA USE

| | | PLAZA USERS | PASSERSBY |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| TUESDAY Avg./ 5 minutes | MORNING | 0.2 | 8.4 |
| | LUNCH | 1.3 | 19.5 |
| | EVENING | 1.0 | 10.7 |
| SATURDAY Avg./ 5 minutes | MORNING | 0.5 | 8.8 |
| | LUNCH | 1.2 | 23.4 |
| | EVENING | 0.7 | 13.6 |

Negligible differences were found in number of users in regard to weekdays verses weekends during the post opening stage. In regard to the passersby, few differences were found during any of the recording periods in this stage. The difference in morning-time use for Tuesdays versus Saturdays was 4%; lunch-time, 16%; and evening-time, 21%.

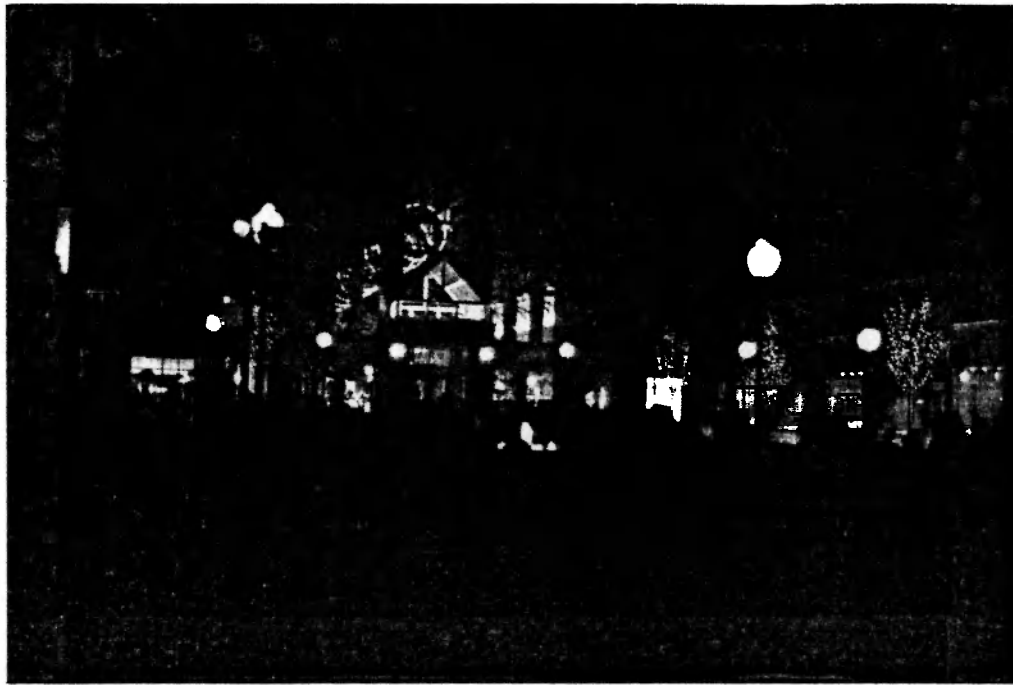
SCHEDULED EVENTS IN THE PLAZA

Only two major special events were scheduled in Manhattan Town Center Plaza in the one year's period after the opening the Town Center Mall. Instead, most special events sponsored by Manhattan Town Center were held inside the mall. The first event in the plaza itself was a band performance by school children. The performance took place

in the lower area of the plaza on the eastern side of the fountain. A large number of spectators (about 200-300 persons) was scattered over a large area of the plaza, but very few people were observed sitting while watching the show.

The photograph of figure 4.25 illustrates a scene of this event from the western side of the plaza. One notices that all spectators are gathered on the eastern side of the plaza, while most of the southern half of the plaza is empty. A similar situation can be seen in the map of figure 4.26 which shows the location of people sitting and standing during the first event in the plaza. A plausible reason for this finding was the location of the activity at an odd angle to the sittable spaces on north and south--the steps and the planter edges. The West edge was too far away from the school band to be used by a large number of people. Instead, most of the spectators stood close to the performance area in order to have a better view and to hear the music.

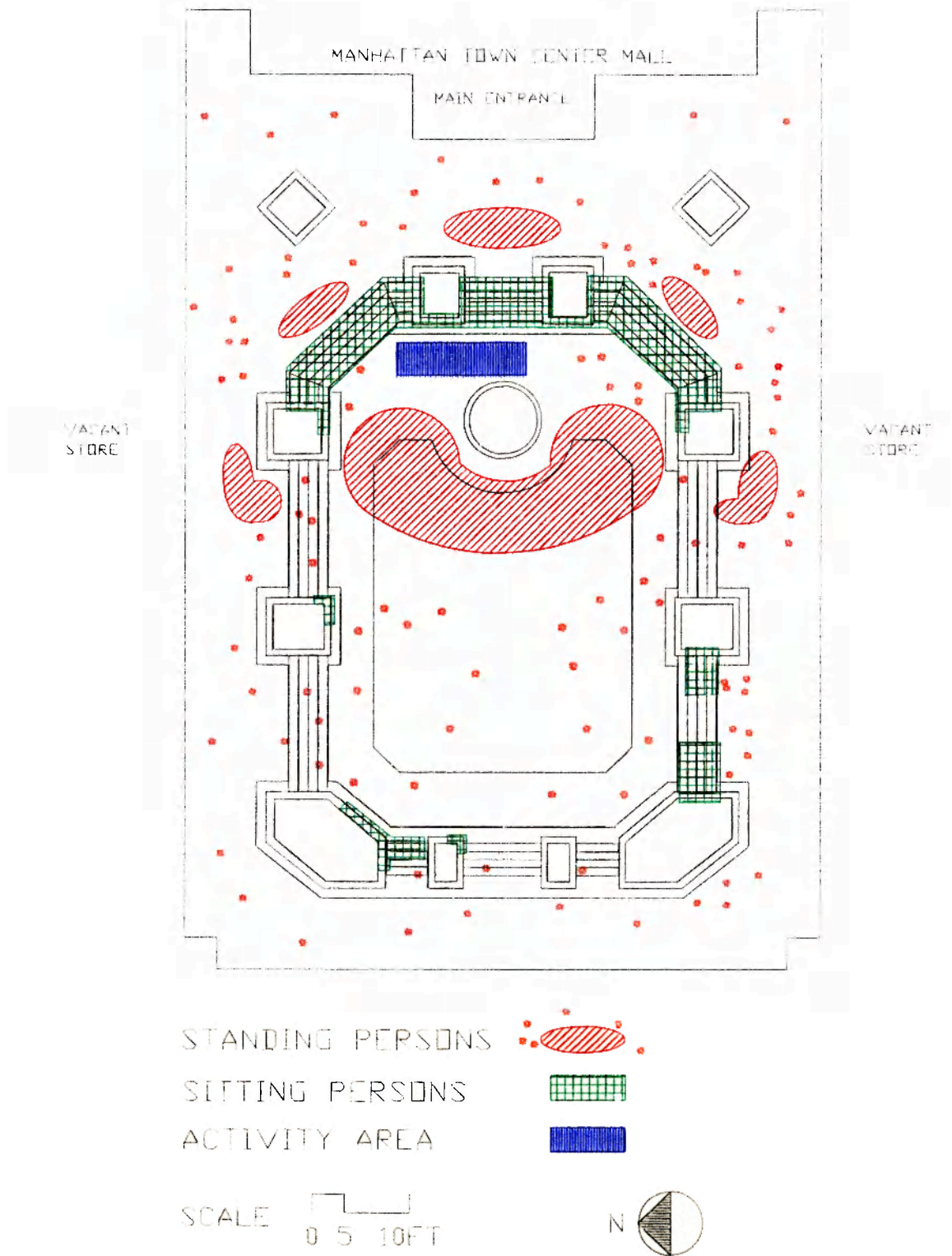
The second event in the plaza was organized by the Manhattan Heart Foundation. Unlike the band performance, the main activity--the release of hundreds of balloons--was planned to take place in the center of the plaza on the



4.25. Scheduled Events: Band Performance by School Students band



4.27. Scheduled Events: a balloon releasing event



**FIGURE 4.26 PLAZA USE DURING A BAND PERFORMANCE
BY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

grassy area. The number of spectators was almost the same as in the first event. On this second occasion, most of the spectators were sitting on the steps surrounding the green patch and the fountain, and on the edges of planters, as can be seen in the photograph of figure 4.27 and the map of figure 4.28. Clearly, locating the activity in a way to encourage the use of sittable spaces in this plaza can be effective, as the Heart Foundation event demonstrates.

An important activity pattern observed at both these functions was that within a few minutes of the conclusion of each event, the plaza was completely empty as if nothing had ever happened there. No one apparently lingered to enjoy the plaza space itself. Figure 4.29 depicts the plaza about fifteen minutes after the Heart Foundation event finished. One can see a few persons tidying up the area. Again, one sees that the plaza is not able to generate or hold activity by itself.

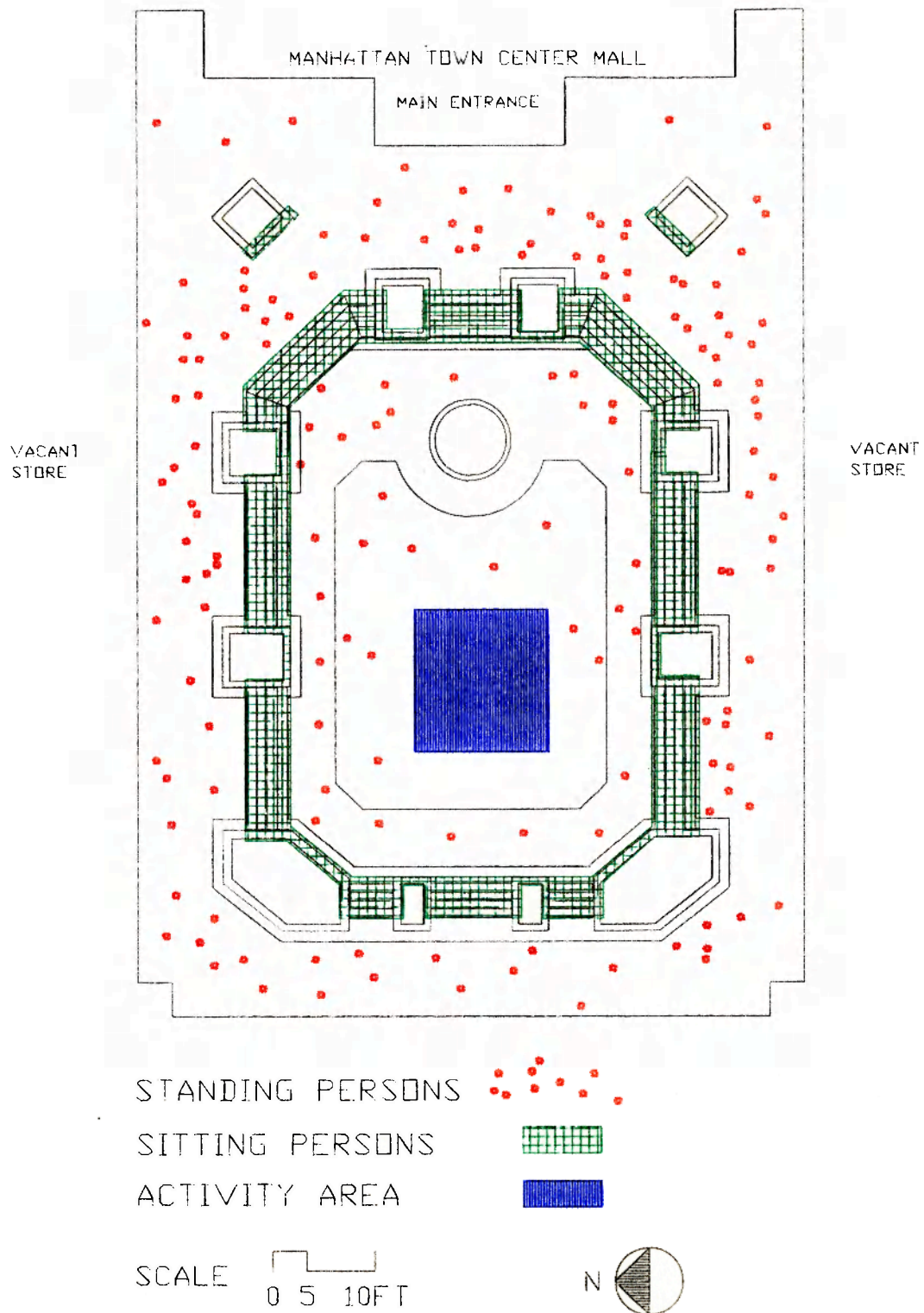
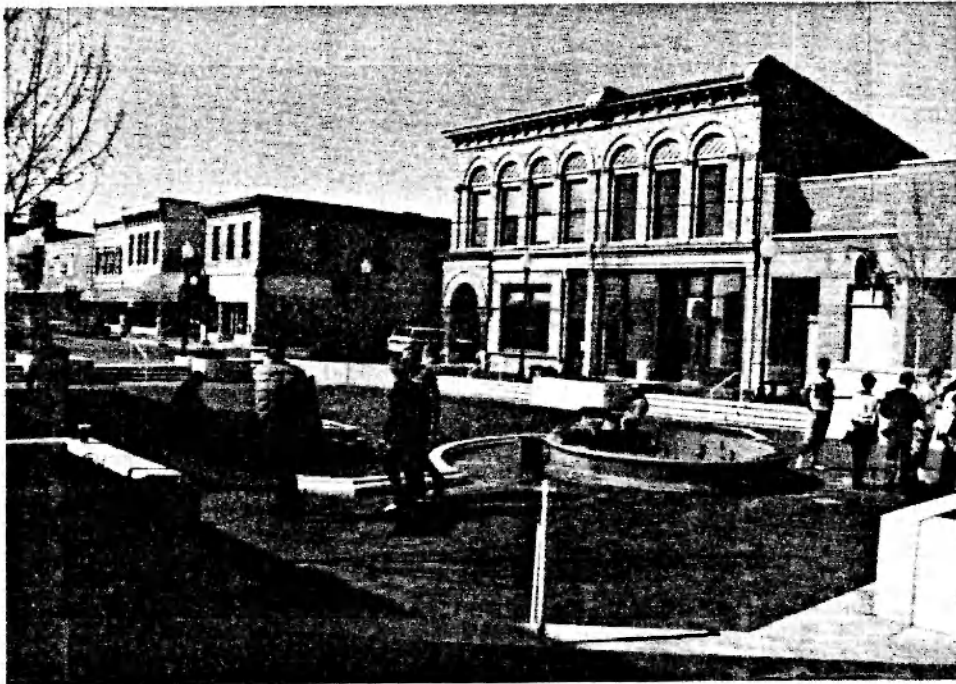


FIGURE 4.28 PLAZA USE DURING A BALLOON RELEASING EVENT ORGANIZED BY HEART FOUNDATION



4.29. Scheduled Events: After Event Activity in Plaza

CHAPTER FIVE

ATTITUDES OF PLAZA USERS, PLAZA ARCHITECT, AND POLICY-MAKERS

This chapter discusses the opinions of both plaza users and designers and policy-makers involved with the plaza. These later individuals include the plaza architect, a city planner, and the Manhattan Town Center's chief manager. As explained in chapter 1, the methodological device for gathering this information from mall users was structured interviews. In contrast, for speaking to the architect, city planner, and the mall manager an unstructured interview was used, the order of which was based on a predetermined interview guide (see appendix B).

As previously mentioned in chapter 1, the analysis of interviews with plaza users led to the identification of the criteria used by people to evaluate the plaza environment. The outcome of the interviews also provided additional insight into the actual behavior of people seen in the plaza, the plaza architect's intentions, and the physical design of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza.

USERS INTERVIEWS

The user interviews were scheduled to be conducted in the plaza during the third period of behavioral mapping--

i.e. the post-opening stage from October 1st, 1988 to October 18th, 1988. This procedure was altered due to the scarcity of users in the plaza. Instead, the desired number of interviews was then obtained by interviewing people inside the mall beside the fountain in the main concourse.

The original criteria for selecting interviewees was a person who stayed in the plaza for more than five minutes. This criterion also was changed, since very few people stayed in the plaza for that length of time. The new criterion established was, any person using the plaza who expressed an interest in speaking to the author. The total of these individuals was 38, whereas the total of individuals interviewed in the mall was 67. The mall users were interviewed to provide a large sample of opinions on the plaza, but due to a time restriction of one day, imposed by the mall management, a larger number of interviews could not be conducted. Altogether, a total of 105 interviews were conducted.

The interview form used for the persons in the plaza was slightly amended for the mall shoppers, since many questions were structured specifically for the plaza-user interviewees. The two interview schedules are provided in

appendix B. Three questions were asked in regard to: (1) activity and usage pattern; (2) users' parking behaviors; and (3) physical features of the plaza. In addition to these three issues, several questions in regard to the demographic characteristics of the users were included.

TABLE 5.1

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE:
INTERVIEWEES IN PLAZA VERSUS INTERVIEWEES IN MALL**

| | IN PLAZA | | IN MALL | | TOTAL | |
|-------------------|----------|-----|---------|-----|-------|-----|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| MANHATTANITES | 29 | 76 | 20 | 30 | 49 | 47 |
| NON-MANHATTANITES | 9 | 24 | 47 | 70 | 56 | 53 |
| TOTAL | 38 | 100 | 67 | 100 | 105 | 100 |

Table 5.1 presents information on the places of residence for interviewees in the plaza versus those in the mall. This table illustrates that the sample has an almost equally matched number of Manhattanites and Non-Manhattanites--47% versus 53%. Importantly, the table illustrates a major difference in the users interviewed inside the plaza--a large number of these individuals are Manhattanites (76% versus 24%). It may be concluded from these results that a large number of potential plaza users may be from Manhattan. In contrast, the table also presents the fact that only 30% of mall users were from

Manhattan and 70% percent of these interviewees were from out of the city. Most strikingly the table suggests that many fewer out of towners use the plaza, indicating that these individuals stay within the mall and don't venture West into the old downtown.

TABLE 5.2

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE:
PLAZA USERS VERSUS NON-USERS**

| | MANHATTANITES | | NON-MANHATTANITES | | TOTAL | |
|-----------|---------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| USERS | 48 | 98 | 31 | 55 | 79 | 75 |
| NON-USERS | 1 | 2 | 25 | 45 | 26 | 25 |
| TOTAL | 49 | 100 | 56 | 100 | 105 | 100 |

Table 5.2 makes the link between interviewees' place of residence and whether or not they use the plaza. One sees that a large number of non-Manhattanites (45%) had never used or seen the plaza; in fact several times the author had to request that an interviewee with unfamiliar to the plaza go over to take a look at it, so that the interview could be completed. A second theme noticeable in table 5.2 is that nearly all the Manhattanites had either spent some time in the plaza or had at least passed through

it. Again, one realizes the possibilities of the plaza to be used more by Manhattanites than the Non-Manhattanites.

TABLE 5.3

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES FOR INTERVIEWEES WHO HAD USED THE PLAZA

| ACTIVITIES | NUMBERS | PERCENTAGES |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| walking | 56 | 71 |
| sitting | 17 | 22 |
| eating | 5 | 6.8 |
| watching people | 1 | 1.2 |
| reading | 0 | 0 |
| conversing | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 79 | 100 |

Table 5.3 lists activities mentioned by interviewees who have used the plaza. By far, the largest number of users had done nothing more in the plaza than walk through it on the way to some other destination, most often the mall. The second most-mentioned activity was sitting, though this activity is far less frequent than the first (71% versus 22%), a fact contrary to Whyte (1980), who argues that most sociable plazas are comfortable to sit in (p. 28). He also mentions that possibilities of eating in the plazas also makes them more sociable (p. 50). The percentage of eating activity in Manhattan Town Center Plaza is virtually negligible (6.8%). Yet again, only one person mentioned that he used the plaza to watch other people, a fact which is also contrary to Whyte who found

"people watching" to be another commonly observed activity in sociable plazas.

TABLE 5.4

PLACE OF RESIDENCE:
PARKING PREFERENCES

| | MANHATTANITES | | NON-MANHATTANITES | | TOTAL | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----|-------------------|----|-------|----|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| in front of J. C. Penneys | 14 | 29 | 15 | 27 | 29 | 28 |
| in front of the food court | 11 | 23 | 18 | 32 | 29 | 28 |
| no preference | 10 | 20 | 13 | 23 | 23 | 22 |
| on plaza's western side | 11 | 23 | 5 | 9 | 16 | 15 |
| in front of Dillards | 3 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 7 |

In order to determine the influence of different parking areas on the use of the plaza, parking preferences of interviewees were evaluated. Of all people spoken with, 98% drove to the mall. Table 5.4 shows that 22% of the interviewees did not have a special preference over the listed parking lots; for most of these persons, the decision of a parking location was dependent on the particular area of the mall where they planned to shop on that day. One also notices that the parking preferences for

Manhattanites and Non-Manhattanites are the same other than the fact that the Manhattanites are more likely to park on Poyntz Avenue than Non-Manhattanites (23% versus 9%). Even for Manhattanites, however, parking lots in front of J. C. Penneys are the most preferred (29%). Some interviewees from Manhattan explained that they prefer to park in front of J.C. Penneys due to more convenient locations. If, however, they approach by way of Poyntz Avenue they prefer to park on that street.

Table 5.4 indicates that the most preferred parking lots (28% each) are in front of J.C.Penney's and in front of the food court, in other words, the southern and eastern sides of the mall respectively. For non-Manhattanites, however, one of the most preferred parking lots is on the eastern side of the mall, which is closest to the food court (32%). 27% of Non-Manhattanites prefer to park in front of J.C.Penney's. The popularity of these two parking lots may be due to the fact that both the parking lots on the eastern and southern side are closest to the highway.

In order to investigate how people perceived the physical environment of the plaza, three question were asked in regard to how the plaza might be improved. About 60% of the respondents, whether they used the plaza or not,

didn't find any fault with its design or the way it presently functioned. However, a number of suggestions to improve the use of the plaza were made.

TABLE 5.5

**USERS VERSUS NON-USERS:
SUGGESTED CHANGES**

| | USERS | NON-USERS | TOTAL |
|----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| more seats | 52% | 27% | 46% |
| food provision | 35% | 15% | 31% |
| rent shops on | | | |
| plaza | 31% | 8% | 26% |
| more programs | 16% | 0% | 12% |
| more greenery | 16% | 19% | 17% |
| none | 9% | 31% | 20% |

Table 5.5 illustrates physical changes suggested by both users and non-users. One notices that a large number of interviewees have suggested the plaza be provided with additional seating (46%). Provision of food facilities in the plaza was also commonly suggested as a useful change (31%). There was a suggestion by users that the shops on the plaza be opened (31%) and that there be more community

programs and events (16%). Another noticeable issue presented by table 5.5 is that large a number of non-users did not make any suggestion (31%).

In the interviews, several open-ended questions were asked (see appendix D). These questions related largely to the future of the plaza. Responses revealed that a majority of respondents had positive feelings about the plaza's future, though some people expressed concern that it would become a "crowded and trashy" space after a few years. One person, among the very few who found faults with the plaza, thought it was sterile and therefore was boring. A few criticized the location of the plaza, feeling that it was inconvenient in terms of parking. Many of the users suggested that the plaza's use would have greatly increased if the food court had been located near the plaza.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAZA ARCHITECT

To further investigate the design decisions made prior to plaza construction, an interview was conducted with the plaza designer, Mr. Brent Bowman, who was asked to describe the criteria he used to design the plaza, including special considerations and restraints. Yet again, he was also asked about the design process he used, the intended users,

and the way he perceived the plaza's usage and why. He was also asked to describe how the various parts of the plaza were intended to work and how climatic considerations were taken into account. An outline of the interview schedule is provided in appendix B.

Mr. Bowman identified three criteria he used: (1) a place to accommodate varied community activities; (2) a place to serve as a foreground for the Manhattan Town Center Mall entrance; and (3) a place to draw people out of the mall into the plaza and the older downtown.

While discussing the first criterion, Mr. Bowman indicated that in order to support cultural and recreational activities in the plaza, funds were raised by selling personalized bricks. The intention of selling bricks was to raise funds for organizing events in the plaza every Saturday night, although no such events had yet been scheduled. On being asked about the failure of this Saturday-night program, he explained that the downtown merchants opposed the idea, fearing that such activity would draw their customers into the mall rather than bringing them out to the downtown. However, Mr. Bowman added that he would very much like to initiate such activity in the plaza and had been actively advocating it

to the city commissioners and other concerned departments. This response suggests that the lack of use may be partly attributable to policy decisions and the behavior of government officials.

Mr. Bowman considered the second criterion--providing a foreground for the mall entrance--as a major constraint in designing the plaza. He pointed out that Athena Tacha, the sculptor and landscape designer, had been dismissed from the job on not complying with this restriction. Therefore, Mr. Bowman sought to enhance the Mall entrance through the plaza design, which he said, was a major consideration in the plaza design. The third criterion--to draw people from the mall to the older downtown--was addressed by providing such design elements as the fountain, green space, and steps to sit and enjoy the landscaped outdoor space.

During the interview, Mr. Bowman also provided a perspective on how he thought the plaza space would be used at times other than special events. He said the plaza space, in its present state, was incomplete according to the proposed design. He explained that the space was intended as an outdoor sitting space for a restaurant proposed in one of the empty spaces along the plaza.

Tables and chairs with umbrellas were to be placed along the periphery of the plaza in such a way that they did not block access to the mall. He explained that, since there are no plans for a restaurant at this location in near the future, the idea of providing the outdoor furniture in the plaza had been set aside. However, some tables and chairs were contributed by Mr. Bowman's office, the mall management, and the city office, to determine if such seating would enhance plaza use. When reminded that the furniture had not yet been used, he said that this is due to lack of activity in the plaza and a lack of shade. The problem of shade was to be taken care of by mall management by providing an umbrella for each table.

In the process of describing users and uses anticipated for the plaza, Mr. Bowman stated that all types of age groups were expected to be present. He pointed out, however, that no special measures were taken to accommodate elderly persons. It was expected that they would use the movable furniture on the periphery, while the steps were to be used by younger persons. In answer to the question regarding the climatic consideration in the design, the architect pointed out such design elements as the fountain, trees and green grass, all provided to make the plaza cooler in the summer heat. However, as noted earlier,

little shade is available, a fact which appears to discourage use in hot weather.

In brief, Mr. Bowman believed that the plaza could be a very sociable place if only the original plans of conducting events, providing an adjacent restaurant, and placing outside furniture were realized.

INTERVIEW WITH A MANHATTAN CITY PLANNING OFFICE

REPRESENTATIVE

Ms. Karen Davis, from the Manhattan City Planning Office, was interviewed in order to establish the city officials' point of view regarding the plaza's design and use. The interview schedule is presented in appendix B. Ms. Davis primarily confirmed chronological events, already described in chapter two, which led to Manhattan Town Center's construction. Explaining the present situation Ms. Davis emphasized the difficulty of three separate jurisdictions being involved in sustaining the plaza: (1) the mall management, which is responsible for the upkeep and cleanliness of the plaza; (2) the City Planning Office, which pays for major repairs on the plaza if needed; and (3) the Department of Parks and Recreation, which is responsible for scheduling events in the plaza. She said that this arrangement was a new experience for the

officials concerned, and the plaza presently seems not to be working as expected. Ms. Davis implied that, since personnel from all departments are learning from this experience, it might take some time for the plaza to become an important place in downtown Manhattan.

On the issue of providing additional parking space on the western side of the mall, she added that the city government did not want parking between the mall and the older downtown. In spite of all the empty store fronts, Ms. Davis believed that the mall had enhanced the business in the downtown.

INTERVIEW WITH THE MANAGER OF THE MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER

The mall manager, Mr. Chris Heavey, was interviewed for his perceptions of the influence of the mall on the plaza. The author also inquired about the possibility of occupying the empty stores on the periphery of the plaza. Mr. Heavey represented the mall officials attitude concerning the plaza. The interview schedule for the mall manager is also provided in appendix B.

Mr. Heavey said that, although getting business in the empty stores along the plaza is important, it could not be done readily, since the mall as a whole is going through

what he called a "definition period". He described this period as the time when a pattern of regularity and equilibrium is established for the Manhattan Town Center. He said that there definitely had been a contraction of business in the downtown area since the inauguration of the mall (this was said in May, 1989) and that it would take some time for the mall situation to normalize. Although he hoped to have a drug store and restaurant as an anchor in the plaza area, this decision could not be made until an agreement was made with downtown businessmen. He was aware of the possibility of an outdoor restaurant and said that it would not be easy to get a restaurant operator to occupy the space, since, overall, it was peripheral to most mall shoppers, who were more attracted to the mall's food court.

Mr. Heavy mentioned several times that the Town Center was in its very early stages, and that the mall was "brand new." Since this is so and the mall's core was not fully occupied, renting the outer space along the plaza was of secondary importance. He said it might take another two years before any decision could be made for the empty space around the plaza.

When questioned about special events in the plaza, Mr. Heavy referred to the fact that it was not the Town

Center's responsibility to hold events in the plaza. In fact, events that could draw people out of the mall into the plaza were not in the mall's best interest, since mall management is paid by the mall merchants to keep customers in the mall. Mr Heavey said that despite the lack of benefits for the mall in holding special events, management had tried to organize some activities in the plaza to make a link with the downtown.

He discussed his views regarding the lack of use of the plaza. He said that city officials and the Chamber of Commerce "need an activity that could bring people out of the mall to the downtown and they keep missing the boat". Mr. Heavey said that it would take a joint effort on the part of downtown businesses and the mall management to put life in the plaza.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study involved a multifaceted approach that included historical, socio-economical, formal, and behavioral components, as well as the opinions of the plaza users, the plaza architect, and policy-makers. In this chapter, all these components are integrated and conclusions are drawn to formulate guidelines to improve the design of future urban spaces, especially those of the size of Manhattan Town Center Plaza. The first section of this chapter summarizes and analyzes the preceding four chapters, which identified various factors that influence a plaza's sociability. Based on the findings of these chapters, the second section suggests specific design and policy changes for the Manhattan Town Center Plaza. The last section presents design and policy recommendations for plazas in small cities, such as Manhattan.

Historical and Socio-economical Context

Through archival research, chapter two of the thesis examined the historical and socio-economical background of Manhattan as well as the conception of the Manhattan Town Center and Manhattan Town Center Plaza. This historical analysis was crucial because it identified the events

leading to the decision of providing a public plaza for the mall. Analysis of the historical background of the plaza yielded several other important issues that included: (a) the sacrifice of almost half the old downtown in order to construct the plaza and the mall; and (b) the images and attitudes of city and private officials as well as users in regard to the mall and plaza. This information was also important because it helped to identify six key aims for the plaza. These key aims are:

- 1) a visual focal point for the downtown;
- 2) a primary entrance to the mall;
- 3) a place designed for different kinds of cultural and community activities;
- 4) an everyday sociable public space;
- 5) an architectural space that would visually integrate the new mall structure with the old downtown;
- 6) a connecting link between the mall and the old downtown that would unify the two spatially.

Physical Context and Form

Chapter three focussed on two major factors: (1) the plaza's relative location in regard to land use and potential users population; and (2) the plaza's physical characteristics. The plaza's location was considered to be

important since it influenced the number of plaza users. In addition, the physical characteristics of the plaza were regarded to be critical because a good plaza design helps to draw people and hold them there.

1. Location

In order to assess the location of the plaza, three factors were considered: (1) the density of people in areas surrounding the plaza; (2) the types and mixture of activities around the plaza; and (3) the relationship of the adjacent pedestrian streets and street corners to the plaza. Evaluation of the first factor--density of population--indicates that the areas surrounding the Town Center Plaza are relatively more dense than any other part of the city. However, the density is not sufficient to provide an adequate number of plaza users. The overall low density in the city and its surroundings has resulted in an automobile-oriented city that is not conducive to pedestrianization.

The second factor analyzed to evaluate the location of the plaza was an investigation of the primary and secondary economic uses in the downtown. This analysis revealed that there are three primary uses: (a) retail activity; (b) offices; and (c) residential activity. Very few secondary

uses were found in the area. The retail activity in the mall, which surrounds the plaza on three sides, does not support plaza use, mostly due to the fact that the mall shoppers do not have any incentive to leave the mall and visit the old downtown. Retail activity in the larger downtown has suffered a loss of business, which also does not promote plaza use.

The third factor analyzed to evaluate plaza location was its relationship with pedestrian flows and street corners. This analysis indicated that the pedestrian streets on the plaza's periphery are inadequate sources of plaza users. Although the mall concourse is the heaviest-used pedestrian street in the plaza, the large physical barriers hinder mall shoppers' views of the plaza and provides very few plaza users. In addition, the pedestrian street on the west of the plaza, (due to a complete lack of use) does not contribute any users for the plaza, nor do the street corners at the southwestern and northwestern sides of the plaza. People who use the plaza are mostly pedestrians walking to and from the mall and the northwestern parking lots. The pedestrian flow between the mall and the old downtown is minimal and provides very few plaza uses.

2. The Plaza's Physical Characteristics

Two criteria presented by William Whyte were used to evaluate the physical characteristics of the plaza: (a) The transition between street and plaza; and (3) sittable spaces. A study of the transition between the plaza and the adjacent pedestrian streets indicated that the lack of visibility on the eastern edge of the plaza has weakened its usage. Although the plaza has high visibility on its western edge, movement here involves only vehicular traffic, therefore the sightlines of the western edge do not support plaza use. In addition, visibility on the northern and southern sides is restricted due to the closed stores.

Beckoning devices such as steps, trees, and entrances which ideally should strengthen the transition between the plaza and street, were analyzed to further evaluate the plaza physically. Although the planters, steps, and fountain are strong beckoning devices on the east side of the plaza, their effectiveness is less than what it could be due to lack of visibility from the mall. However, if in some future time, shoppers do come out of the mall, these elements would help to induce "impulse use". On the remaining three sides of the plaza, the steps, planters, and grassy area work as beckoning devices. However, these

elements are also less effective than they might be since, there are not many passersby on these sides.

A second criterion discussed in chapter 3 in regard to physical characteristics of the plaza, is its sittable spaces. There is no formally designed seating, though the steps and surrounding concrete planters in the plaza were intended to be used as seating spaces. These sittable space were further categorized as spaces that fullfil Whyte's criteria of physically comfortable seating and spaces that do not. As the behavior maps illustrated, most spaces that are used for sitting are not physically comfortable. In this sense, the seating space in the plaza does not meet the criterion of being sociably comfortable other than accommodating large groups of people. Another weakness is that the plaza does not have the required amount of seating to meet Whyte's criterion of one third of the total area of the plaza.

Environmental Behavior

Environmental behavior was studied in three stages during the first year of the plaza's life. The information was documented on pre-printed plaza maps on two days of the week--Saturday and Tuesday. On each of these days, behavioral maps were prepared at three times--morning,

midday, and evening. The first stage--the opening stage--started one week before the formal inauguration of the Manhattan Town Center Mall on October 26, 1987. The analysis of this stage revealed that the plaza at that time was able to attract a very small number of users who would occasionally step into the plaza's lower portion to look at the inscribed brick.

The second observation period--the opening stage--recorded three weeks of activity beginning on the mall inauguration day of October 26, 1987. The opening stage demonstrated a period of maximum activity in the plaza when most of the users were first-time visitors of the newly inaugurated mall. The third observation period--the post-opening stage, started almost one year after the opening stage (from October 1st, 1988, to October 18th, 1988). An analyses of the behavior maps prepared at this third stage indicated that in the first year of its life cycle, plaza use as compared to the opening stage's, had decreased some 90%, probably because the novelty of the mall had diminished. During both the second and the third stages, it was noticed that the number of users was larger both at lunch times and Saturdays than at morning and evening or weekdays.

An analysis of scheduled events in the plaza demonstrated that is that the plaza design works better if the activity is located centrally. Specifically, this conclusion was made after observing the two major events of school band and balloon-releasing. In the first event the spectators were concentrated only on one side of the plaza; the other half of the plaza was almost empty. In contrast, in the second event the plaza was used to its full capacity, because the main activity was in the center of the plaza on the grassy area and people surrounded it equally on all sides.

Attitudes of Plaza User and Private and Public Officials.

Chapter 5 discusses the opinion of both plaza users and the plaza architect and policy makers. Diverse opinions of the plaza users led to many clues regarding present plaza usage, these clues included:

- 1) Nearly all the Manhattanites had either used the plaza or had at least seen it. A majority of plaza users lived in Manhattan. In strong contrast, the majority of persons who were interviewed inside the mall had never used or seen the plaza. This factor is crucial, since it strongly suggests that most future plaza users are more likely to be Manhattanites.

2) Most of the users described their activity in the plaza to be nothing more than just passing through it (71%). Only 22% of the persons interviewed in the plaza to spent some time there.

3) 60% of people interviewed did not find any fault with the plaza design or the way it presently functioned. Lack of use of the plaza was not seen by interviewees as a negative point.

4) Three major improvements were suggested by plaza users: better seating; provision food facilities; and more organized programs.

5) In contrast with the non-Manhattanites interviewees, Manhattanites were more likely to use the parking lots on the west of the plaza including Poyntz Avenue.

Besides interviews of plaza and mall users, three officers were interviewed: The plaza architect; a representative of city planning office; and the mall manager. The plaza architect, elaborated on the three criteria he used in designing the plaza: (1) a place to accommodate varied activities by the community; (2) a place

to serve as a foreground for the Mall entrance; and (3) a place to attract people out of the mall into the plaza and into the older downtown. The plaza architect believed that the plaza could be a very sociable place if only the original plans of conducting events, a restaurant off the plaza, and providing proposed furniture out side were realized.

Also a representative of the city planning office, mainly identified the lack of coordination among the three departments responsible for the plaza: (1) the mall management, which provides maintenance of the plaza; (2) the City Planning Office, which pays for the major repairs if needed; and (3) the Department of Parks and Recreation, which is responsible for scheduling plaza events.

The mall manager implied that the mall itself is not fully operative, therefore renting stores along the plaza is a secondary issue. He expressed his interest in making the plaza more sociable by holding events, although he believed, they would have a negative affect on mall business.

In summarizing the views of all the three officials it was determined that they all agreed on the fact that the

plaza, at present, fails to fulfill its purpose, which they believe is primarily due to lack of harmony between various departments involved.

DESIGN AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA

This section discusses recommendations for the Manhattan Town Center Plaza. Design and policy suggestions are made in two areas: (1) changes within the plaza itself and its immediate surroundings; and (2) larger changes involving the greater Manhattan downtown. Six design changes in the existing plaza design are proposed. In addition, four policy suggestions are made and an outline for a complete plaza redesign is also suggested.

1. Changes within the Plaza Itself

Six changes are suggested for the plaza itself, the first of which involves **appropriate seating**. In the preceding analyses of the present seating in the plaza, it was pointed out that the plaza lacked physically, as well as socially, comfortable seating. To increase the amount of appropriate sittable space and to provide more sitting choices, alterations are proposed in the present plaza design as illustrated in Figure 6.4. A detailed discussion of this proposed plaza design will be presented later after

specific recommendations are offered.

The second suggestion to improve the plaza's design is a **central stage**. This suggestion is based on the analysis of the two major organized events held in the plaza. This analysis demonstrated that the present design could be more adaptable to events and functions if the activity could be focussed spatially through a plaza space that has a more powerful sense of physical center. As can be seen in figure 6.4, the central grassy area of the plaza has been redesigned to accommodate a central stage. More will be said about this design change shortly.

In order to make the plaza a focal point for the downtown area, a third suggestion--**provision of a sculpture** on original plaza designer Athena Tacha's criteria--is made. Tacha envisioned the sculpture to be an environmental element that can be climbed or used for sitting. Although the plaza has recently been furnished with a sculpture shown in the photograph of Figure 6.1, the scale of the element is not large enough to gain attention of either the shoppers inside the mall or pedestrians in the old downtown. The sculpture proposed here would be located in the same place as the present structure, but the scale of the new sculpture would be

larger so that it would be more easily noticed from inside the mall and from as far as three blocks west on Poyntz Avenue (Figure 6.4).

A fourth suggestion is to **soften the facade surrounding the plaza** by providing awnings and additional openings. The design elements would not only reduce the visual dullness of the plaza but would also reduce the effects of extreme weather conditions. In addition, these feature would improve the visual contact between users inside and outside the mall.

Another way that a link between mall users and the plaza might be facilitated is by **connecting the empty store spaces on the plaza's southern and northern side with the rest of the space inside of the mall**. Figure 6.3 illustrates a possibility of connecting these stores to the larger mall--i.e. to remove the walls marked red, in order to make a larger retail space. It is suggested that the stores keep their outside entrances, since it might be more convenient for the mall shopper to move into the plaza through these stores. The result would be better visual contact with the plaza.

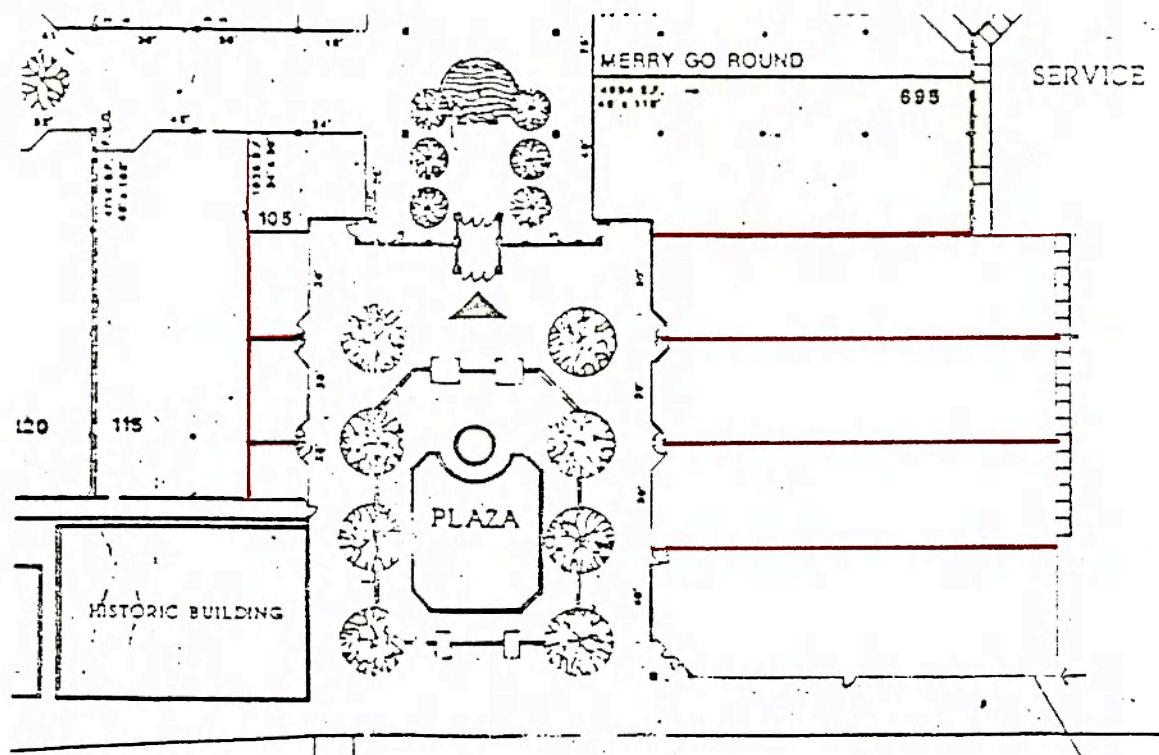
A sixth design suggestion is to change the design of



6.1. Existing Plaza Sculpture



6.2. View to Plaza from Mall Concourse



Remove walls in Red

FIGURE 6.3 CONNECTION OF THE VACANT STORES
TO INTERIOR OF THE MALL

the mall directory located inside the main entrance, which at present is in the shape of a vertical screen and blocks view of the plaza from inside the mall (figure 6.2).

Rather, this directory would work better if lower and more horizontal. This change would be useful in that it would **improve visibility of the plaza from inside the mall.**

Another suggestion to improve the visibility is that the trees planted in the planters inside the mall along the main entrance wall (figure 6.2) be replaced with lower plantings. As mentioned earlier, making larger window spaces in the mall facades would also improve plaza visibility.

In addition to piecemeal changes in the plaza's design, the author also suggests the possibility of a complete redesign of the plaza as shown in figure 6.6. This design is grounded in the earlier behavioral analysis, which indicated that plaza users prefer to linger on the northern side of the plaza and pass through the southern side.

Beside design changes, policy changes could also help to make the plaza a more sociable place. The author suggests the following policy changes:

(1) **Introduction of regular events in the plaza.** Lack of

inherent activity in the plaza makes activity programming and triangulation indispensable. By "activity programming" is meant the regular scheduling of events and functions involving large crowds (Project for public spaces, 1984; p-13). It is suggested that the original city plan of organizing Saturday-night events should be implemented. In addition, it is suggested that small everyday events (on the same pattern as used in various courts inside the mall), should be organized to encourage a tradition of community events in the plaza.

(2) **Provision of food in the plaza.** As Whyte (1980 p. 50) food has a great ability to attract people. The recommendation is made that plaza officials allow fair-weather vendors, a term which implies temporary installations of food carts when the weather is comfortable. It is suggested that these fair-weather vendors should use food carts designed similarly to the kiosks inside the mall.

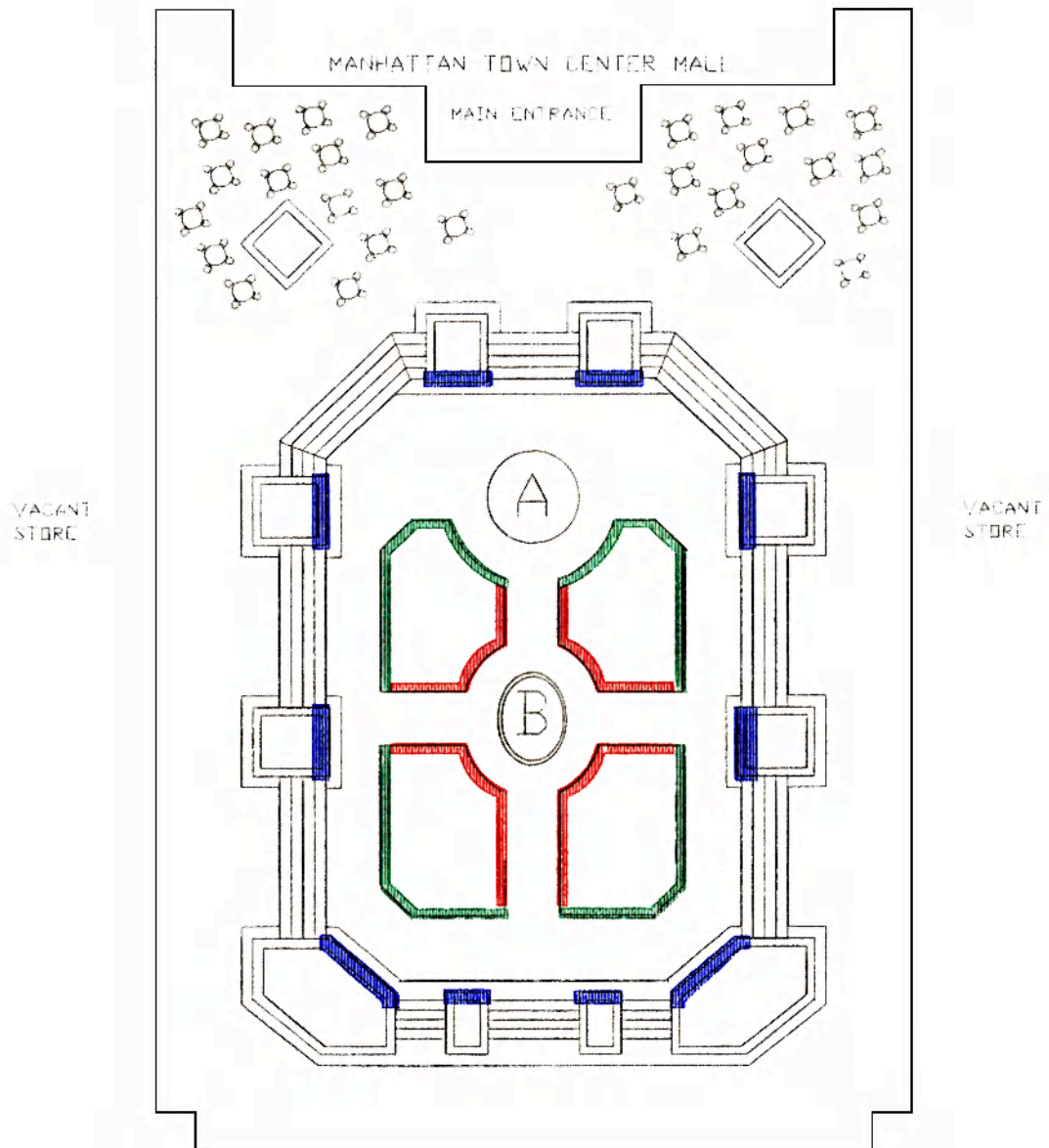
In addition, permanent food installations on the plaza's periphery also are highly recommended. Implementation of the original plan of providing a restaurant in the south-western corner of the plaza could have a definite positive effect on its use. In the case of

the alternative plan of plaza redesign, illustrated in figure 6.5, the restaurant should be in the retail space on the north of the plaza.

(3) **Leasing the empty store spaces around the plaza** should be given special attention. These stores would act as mini anchors to draw people out of mall and into the plaza.

Proposed Alterations to the Existing Plaza Design

Figure 6.4 illustrates suggested changes for the existing plaza design. These changes are based on the design and policy recommendations made in the previous section. The first crucial issue to be considered was provision of adequate and appropriate seating. Four measures are suggested to improve existing seating conditions: (1) Reducing the height of the planter edges that already face in toward the center of the plaza, from thirty six inches to twenty inches (marked in blue in figure 6.4). This change is suggested because, presently, these edges are too uncomfortable to sit on as can be noticed in the photograph of figure 6.5.; (2) increase both the height and width of the ledges surrounding the grassy area (these ledges are marked in green in figure 6.4); (3) provide additional seating by splitting the



See text for description

FIGURE 6.4 PROPOSED CHANGES IN EXISTING PLAZA DESIGN



6.5. High planter ledges to be altered

grassy area into four smaller areas so that the internal edges of these divisions (marked in red) can be used for sitting; and (4) providing moveable tables and chairs with umbrellas along the surrounding walls of the plaza. This type of street furniture has two main advantages: first, it offers a choice between sitting in the sun or in the shade; second, it provides a choice of sitting on ledges or on chairs with a back.

A large sculpture (marked A in figure 6.4) is provided in place of the existing water fountain. This sculpture would work as a landmark for the downtown area and could be seen from at least three to six blocks down Poyntz Avenue as well as from inside the mall. The recommended height of this element is between fifteen to twenty feet. A third recommendation is to provide a central stage for planned community events. A redesign of the grassy area in the center of the plaza is proposed, a primary purpose of which is to provide an area to accommodate a central stage. As mentioned earlier, this redesign of the grassy area also provides additional seating for the plaza.

Recommendation for Completely Redesigning Plaza

Although the changes suggested in the existing plaza design eliminate a number of weaknesses identified in this

study, some of the conclusions drawn by analyzing plaza behavior remain unaccounted for in the piecemeal modifications suggested above. Especially, important is the finding that plaza users prefer to stay on the northern side of the plaza and move through the southern side. In order to incorporate these and some other factor (especially, the relationship of seating to everyday plaza activity and activity of organized events in the plaza), the author suggests an alternative plan which requires a complete plaza redesign. This possibility is shown in figure 6.6.

In this redesign, it is suggested that the seating area be located at the northern side of the plaza (marked in red). It is also suggested that the seating design be overall higher to the northern side of the plaza and lower on the southern side. A major advantage of this format is that the seated users get an opportunity of watching other people, since they are somewhat away from the main activity in the plaza but still a part of it. In addition, presence of sun would make the sitting more appealing.

Because of the present pedestrian flow on the south side, it is suggested that this area be maintained as the primary pedestrian traffic area (marked brown). A third

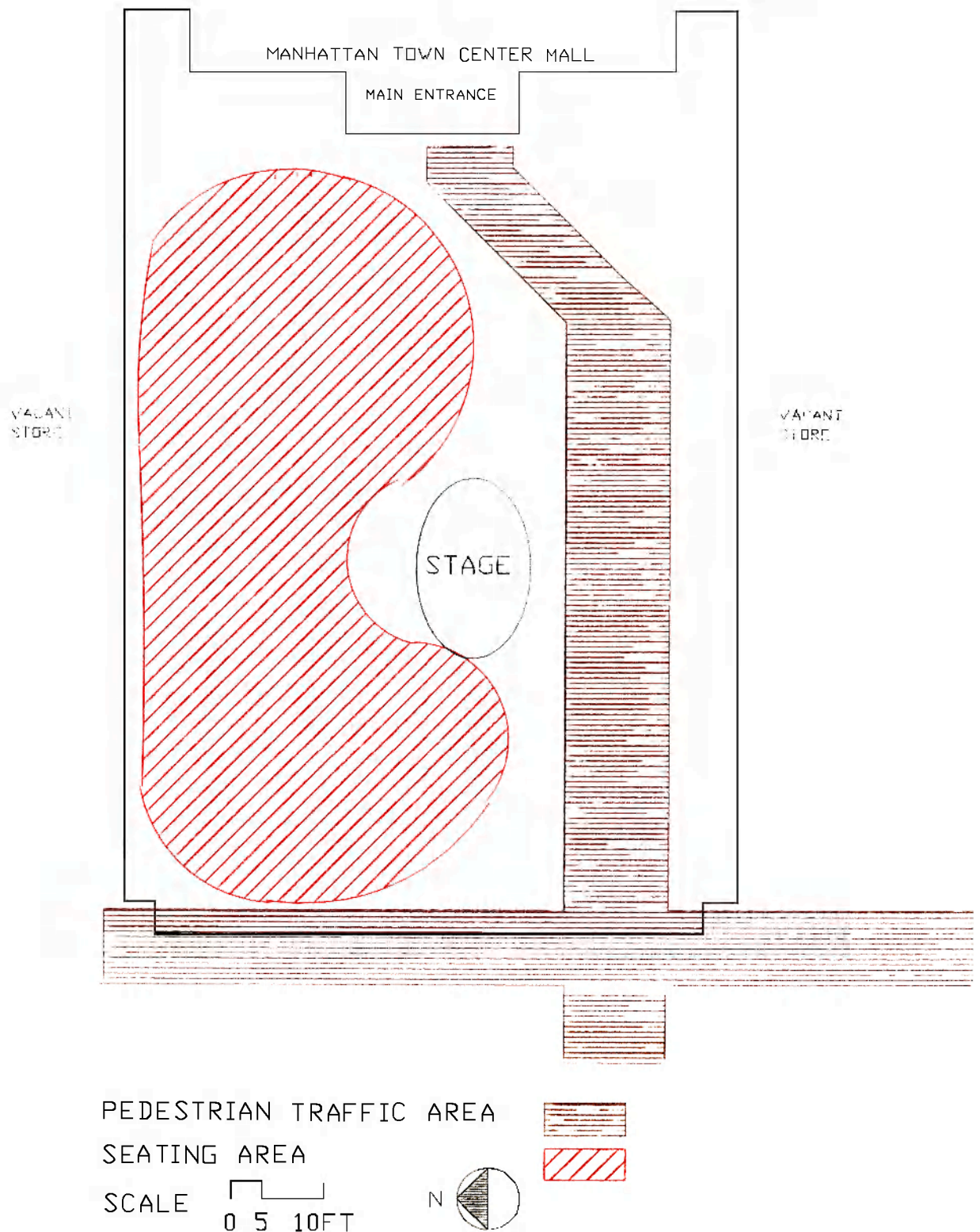


FIGURE 6.6 PROPOSED SCHEME FOR A COMPLETE PLAZA REDESIGN

suggestion made for plaza redesign is to locate the stage at almost the center of the plaza but slightly shifted to the south. This change allows more area for seating but does not disrupt the pedestrian flow completely. A last suggestion made for plaza's new design is to provide a restaurant in the presently empty stores in northeastern side. Besides drawing users because of food this use would also provide an additional link for drawing mall shoppers to the plaza.

Larger-scale Changes to Improve the Plaza

Besides changing the plaza itself, it is also suggested that there might be more major changes made relating to the larger downtown-mall relationship. Two design changes and two policy recommendation are made. First, design recommendation are presented.

(1) **Additional parking in the older downtown**, would draw more mall shoppers through the plaza. In addition, the parking conditions in parking lots on the plaza's southwestern and northwestern sides should be improved to make them more convenient in terms of approach and exit.

2) Further **improvements in the streetscape** of the older downtown should be made in order to encourage pedestrian

low. Subtle changes in the appearance of streets such as awnings, visually attractive store fronts, and more greenery are recommended.

Policy changes in regard to the mall and old downtown would also strengthen the plaza's potential for sociability, and the author suggest the following:

(1) **introduction of a strong retail anchor to the west of the plaza** in order to bring shoppers out of the mall is recommended. The most plausible solution to this problem is strengthening the retail activity in older downtown. However, as mentioned earlier, presently the old downtown is facing a contraction in business and there is a large number of empty store fronts Therefore, it is suggested that a large commercial or employment enterprise might be invited to occupy vacant space along Poyntz Avenue. In addition, a change in the present closing time of the stores in the older downtown, presently at six pm, should be the same as the mall's closing time--nine pm. This change should help make the old downtown a stronger anchor, since then the downtown would be operating in the same busiest shopping hours as the mall, thus facilitating a back-and-forth movement of shoppers.

(2) Long-term policy changes in the downtown master plan are suggested to **increase population density of the area.** Whyte (1980, p. 92) suggest one good solution to deal with low-density problems in smaller cities like Manhattan. He contends that small cities should expand vertically rather than horizontally, and prevent old retail cores from becoming dispersed spatially (Ibid. p. 92). Too often, he argues, cities abandon old buildings, which create broken links in their retail cores. This recommendation would also facilitate historical preservation in the old downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGNING SOCIABLE OPEN SPACES IN SMALL CITIES

According to Whyte, It is more difficult to design lively open spaces for smaller cities than for larger cities (Whyte 1980, Chapter 10). His work, plus findings in the present thesis, suggest that there are three major reasons for why this difficulty is so: (1) small cities have low density; (2) small cities are mostly vehicle-oriented, especially in mid-West, and therefore, they lack pedestrianization; (3) small cities lack a mixture of activities.

These three differences are mainly attributable to the fact that smaller cities have smaller populations, but plenty of space for physical expansion. In short, one basic element missing in small cities is "people" (Ibid. p. 91). Therefore, bringing people to plazas is the most critical issue, which in turn, makes a plaza's location crucial. Recommendations made for plazas in smaller cities, therefore, primarily concern plaza location. No recommendations are made here for the plaza's internal design, since in terms of this issue plaza design in smaller cities more or less includes the same elements as plazas in larger cities, e.g. sittable spaces, food, triangulation, and measures for weather conditions.

Larger surroundings of the plaza--involves the larger urban area in which the plaza is located, be it the downtown of the city or some other district. The recommendations made for this level are very similar to the ones made for Manhattan's downtown above. Specifically,:

(1) locate the plaza where there is maximum density of people. It is also suggested that the retail center in smaller cities, instead of expanding over a larger area, should compress as many activities as possible within the smallest area possible, in order to have a dense, well

defined center. This would bring shoppers who are otherwise spread out over many blocks within a smaller area so as to increase concentration of pedestrians on the streets. This recommendation would not only increase density of population in the area to provide potential plaza users, but would also contribute to a healthy street life.

(2) A second measure to bring people to urban spaces is to have at least three primary uses located in a three-block radius in the plaza's surroundings. The three block radius is suggested to be an effective area for a plaza (Whyte 1980 p. 16). An ideal combination of primary uses would be to bring together retail, offices and residential areas. The plaza should be located between at least three large retail anchors. A back-and-forth pedestrian movement among the anchors could be a good source of plaza users.

CONCLUSIONS

At the start of this chapter the author reviewed six aims that city officials and the plaza architect had in mind for the Manhattan Town Center Plaza. To conclude this thesis, each of these six aims are discussed in turn.

(1) **A visual focal point for the downtown.** The plaza was

intended to be a visual focal point for the downtown by providing a landmark sculpture which would draw the attention of downtown users and mall shoppers. Presently, however, no plaza element is strong enough to fulfill this purpose. To make the plaza a visual focal point and a landmark, therefore, it is recommended that a sculpture of considerable height should be located in the plaza.

(2) **A primary entrance to the mall.** The west entrance of the mall is still officially the primary entrance to the Manhattan Town Center. Analyses of interviews and plaza behaviors however, indicated that lack of parking and lack of understanding and cooperation between Manhattan's downtown business community and the management of the Town Center have virtually made the plaza a dead space. It seems that the Manhattan Town Center is presently operating the "other way round"-- that is, its officially designated main entrance is actually serving as a back entrance, since a large number of mall shopper never approach the mall from the old downtown.

3) **A place designed for different kinds of cultural and community activities.** Analyses of two community events indicate that, with slight modifications, the plaza could be a very suitable place for organized public events.

However at present--once again due to lack of planning and understanding on part of the major jurisdictions involved--the plaza does not fulfill this criterion. As recommended earlier, planned activities could make the plaza an important place for Manhattanites. More scheduled activities should be provided for the plaza as soon as possible.

4) **An everyday sociable public space.** The preceding analysis indicates the plaza has completely failed to fulfill this criterion. The plaza has a lack of users, which, in turn, is a result of a scarcity of pedestrians in the plaza's immediate surroundings.

5) **An architectural space that would visually integrate the new mall structure with the old downtown.** Although analysis of representational elements was not a major focus of this study, one realizes that the scale and texture of the mall's western facade does not match the old-downtown architecture. The fact that the plaza is not a significant architectural element in the mall design does not improve the situation.

6) **A connecting link between the mall and the old downtown that would unify the two spatially.** City officials and the

plaza designer sought to establish this link not only through the physical design of the plaza and the mall but also through a strong pedestrian flow between the mall and the old downtown. Earlier chapters demonstrated, however, that the plaza is unable to create this link between the two areas. Specifically, the physical design of the plaza walls, a large portion of which consists of the mall facade, acts as a barrier between the two spaces, since visibility between the two is minimal. The empty stores along the plaza, further intensify this problem.

The author's one final conclusion in regard to the plaza is that it does not have any significant element to draw mall users to the old downtown or users of the old downtown to the mall. The result is that the western side of the mall at present is operating as a back rather than a front. In addition, there are no major stores or activities on the west side of the plaza which could be a destination for shoppers, as is the case on other sides of the mall. In short, the findings of this thesis demonstrate that, overall, the six original aims for Manhattan Town Center Plaza have not been accomplished or have been accomplished minimally.

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APPENDIX A





MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER

MANHATTAN, KANSAS

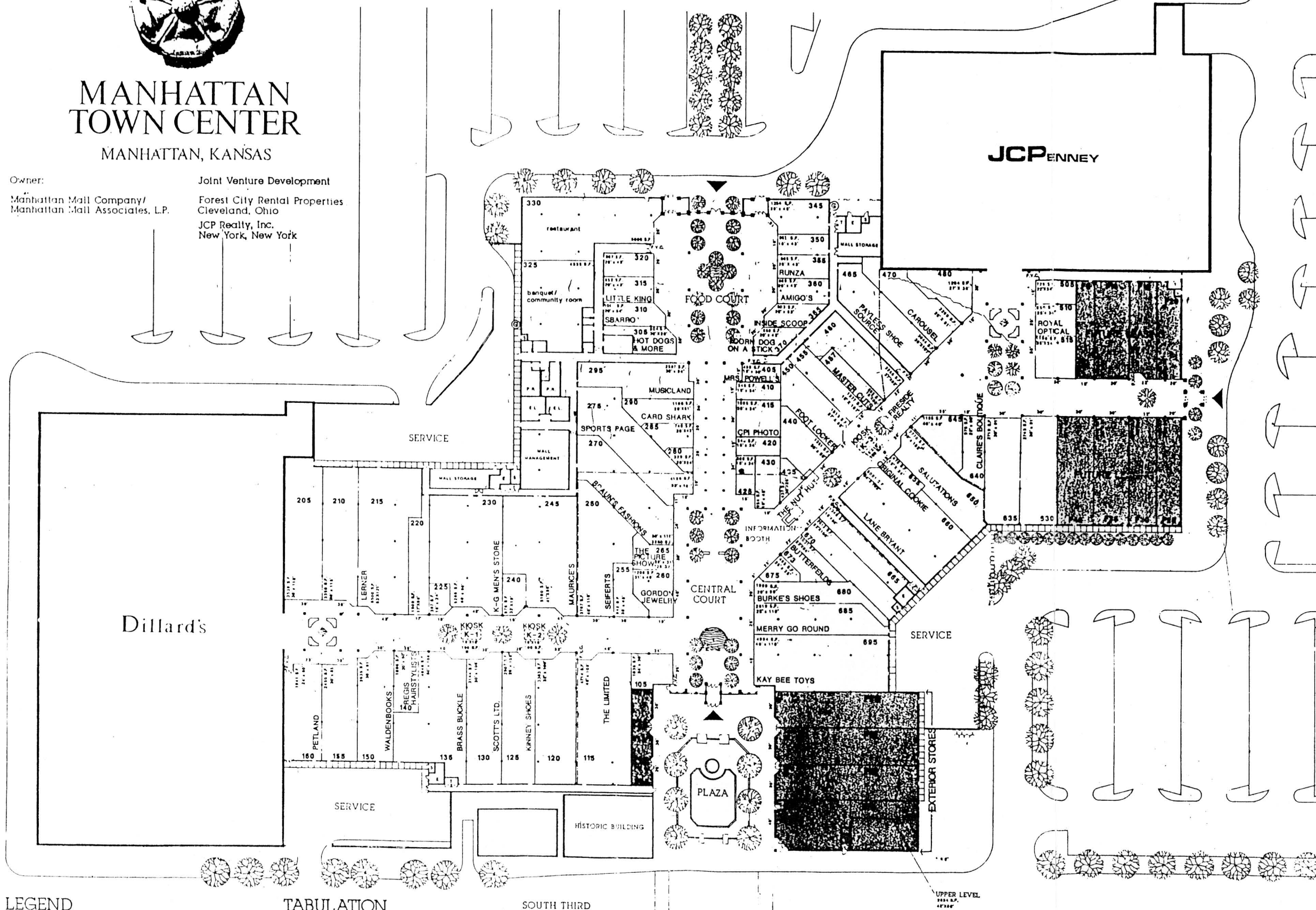
Owner:

Manhattan Mall Company/
Manhattan Mall Associates, L.P.

Joint Venture Development

Forest City Rental Properties
Cleveland, Ohio

JCP Realty, Inc.
New York, New York



LEGEND

| | |
|-----|---------------------------|
| E | ELECTRICAL ROOM |
| S | SPRINKLER ROOM |
| EL | EMPLOYEE LOCKERS |
| J | JANITOR CLOSET |
| G | GAS MANIFOLD |
| PR | PUBLIC RESTROOMS |
| EXP | EXPANSION JOINTS |
| T | TELEPHONE/CABLE T.V. ROOM |
| FL | FUTURE LEASING AREA |

TABULATION

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| GLA RETAIL - MALL | 123,948 S.F. |
| GLA RETAIL - FUTURE MALL | 16,574 S.F. |
| GLA RETAIL - PLAZA / EXTERIOR | 20,096 S.F. |
| RESTAURANT A | 5,000 S.F. |
| FOOD COURT | 8873 S.F. |
| KIOSKS 3 @ 160 S.F. | 480 S.F. |
| COMMUNITY ROOM | 4,335 S.F. |

TOTAL GLA 179,306 S.F.

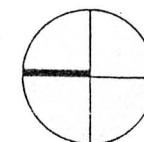
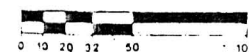
SOUTH THIRD

POYNTZ AVENUE

EXCEPT FOR THE SPACE LEASED TO TENANT AND EXCEPT AS MAY BE EXPRESSLY SET FORTH IN TENANT'S LEASE, THE DESIGNATION AND LOCATION OF THIS PLOT PLAN OF THE STORE, DRIFT, STILES AND OTHER DETAILED INFORMATION RESPECTING THE SHOPPING CENTER, ITS BUILDING AND COMMON AREAS, IS NOT A REPRESENTATION BY LANDLORD THAT SUCH CONDITIONS EXIST OR THAT, IF THEY DO EXIST, THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST THROUGHOUT ALL OR ANY PART OF THE TERM OF TENANT'S LEASE.

RTKL

RTKL Associates Inc.
One East Broadway Boulevard
Suite 303
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301



DATE OF LAST REVISION: 8-21-87

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW FORM

Date: _____ Time: _____

Introduction:

"Excuse me, may I have a minute of your time? I am a graduate student in architecture at Kansas State University doing a research on the Town Center Mall Plaza and I would like your opinion about this particular place, such as what you like or don't like about it. Your participation is totally voluntary and your answers will be anonymous. There is no risk to you, and you may refuse to answer any question that I may ask. The questions should take a few minutes."

(1) Have you ever used the plaza which is on the west of the Mall?

- a. Yes _____
b. no _____ if no go to ques. no 5

(2)* How often do you use the plaza?

- a. every day _____
b. a few days a week _____
c. once a week _____
d. 2-3 times a month _____
e. once a month or less _____
f. others _____

(3)* When you visit the plaza do you just walk through it or stay for a while?

- a. pass through _____
b. stay for a while _____

(if the answer is b)

(4)* which of the following things do you usually do here?

- a. walk _____
b. sit _____
c. read _____
d. talk _____
e. eat _____
f. watch people _____
g. other _____

(5) What do you like most about the plaza?

(6) Is there anything you don't like about the plaza?

INTERVIEW FORM

Date: _____ Time: _____

Introduction:

"Excuse me, may I have a minute of your time I am a graduate student in architecture at Kansas State University doing a research on the Manhattan Town Center Plaza and I would like your opinion about this particular place, Your participation is totally voluntary and your answers will be anonymous. There is no risk to you, and you may refuse to answer any question that I may ask. The questions should take a few minutes."

(1) Have you ever used the plaza which is on the west of the Mall?

- a. Yes _____
b. no _____ if no go to ques. no 5

(2)* How often do you use the plaza?

- a. every day _____
b. a few days a week _____
c. once a week _____
d. 2-3 times a month _____
e. once a month or less _____
f. others _____

(3)* When you visit the plaza do you just walk through it or stay for a while?

- a. pass through _____
b. stay for a while _____

(if the answer is b)

(4)* which of the following things do you usually do here?

- a. walk _____
b. sit _____
c. read _____
d. talk _____
e. eat _____
f. watch people _____
g. other _____

(5) what do you like most about the plaza?

(6) Is there anything you don't like about the plaza?

(7) Is there any thing you would like to see changed in this

a. more seats

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a. less than three blocks

a. in front of J. C. Pennys

sex: Male

Approximate age: _____ Young adult (15-30)

Adult (31-65)

65 or over

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| a. more seats | _____ |
| b. more programs | _____ |
| c. more greenery | _____ |
| d. food provision | _____ |
| e. others | _____ |

| Year | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034 | 2035 | 2036 | 2037 | 2038 | 2039 | 2040 | 2041 | 2042 | 2043 | 2044 | 2045 | 2046 | 2047 | 2048 | 2049 | 2050 | 2051 | 2052 | 2053 | 2054 | 2055 | 2056 | 2057 | 2058 | 2059 | 2060 | 2061 | 2062 | 2063 | 2064 | 2065 | 2066 | 2067 | 2068 | 2069 | 2070 | 2071 | 2072 | 2073 | 2074 | 2075 | 2076 | 2077 | 2078 | 2079 | 2080 | 2081 | 2082 | 2083 | 2084 | 2085 | 2086 | 2087 | 2088 | 2089 | 2090 | 2091 | 2092 | 2093 | 2094 | 2095 | 2096 | 2097 | 2098 | 2099 | 2100 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034 | 2035 | 2036 | 2037 | 2038 | 2039 | 2040 | 2041 | 2042 | 2043 | 2044 | 2045 | 2046 | 2047 | 2048 | 2049 | 2050 | 2051 | 2052 | 2053 | 2054 | 2055 | 2056 | 2057 | 2058 | 2059 | 2060 | 2061 | 2062 | 2063 | 2064 | 2065 | 2066 | 2067 | 2068 | 2069 | 2070 | 2071 | 2072 | 2073 | 2074 | 2075 | 2076 | 2077 | 2078 | 2079 | 2080 | 2081 | 2082 | 2083 | 2084 | 2085 | 2086 | 2087 | 2088 | 2089 | 2090 | 2091 | 2092 | 2093 | 2094 | 2095 | 2096 | 2097 | 2098 | 2099 | 2100 | |

[illegible]

a. less than three blocks
b. 3 to 5 blocks
c. 5 blocks to one mile
d. 1 to 5 miles
e. 6 miles +

a. less than three blocks

b. 3 to 5 blocks

c. 5 blocks to one mile

d. 1 to 5 miles

e. 6 miles +

f. don't work no response

a. in front of J. C. Pennys
b. in front of dillards
c. in front of the food court
d. on the pointz to the west of the mall

sex: _____ Male _____ Approximate age: _____ Young adult (15-30)
 _____ Female _____ Adult (31-65)
 _____ 65 or over

EVALUATING SOCIABILITY IN SMALL URBAN SPACES:
A CASE STUDY OF THE MANHATTAN TOWN CENTER PLAZA.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the first year's development of an urban open space---the Manhattan Town Center Plaza in Manhattan Kansas. The central question which this thesis addresses is whether this plaza is successful in terms of sociability, by which is meant the informal coming together of people in a place. This definition relies largely on the research of William Whyte and his book The Social Life of Small Urban Open Spaces (1980). In most general terms, this study analyzes the Manhattan Town Center Plaza in terms of environmental attributes that are conducive to social interaction in public open spaces. The research also seeks to discern some architectural elements that contribute to sociability of an urban public space.

This thesis evaluates four major factors: (1) the historical and socio-economic background of Manhattan, its downtown, and Manhattan Town Center Plaza; (2) the physical design and context of the Manhattan Town Center Plaza; (3) users' environmental behaviors in the Manhattan Town Center Plaza; and (4) attitudes of plaza users, plaza architect, and policy makers. The argument is that each of these four factors provides a way to assess the potential of Manhattan Town Center Plaza to foster social interaction.