

Washington on Rail 3

“The Washington region could be the probable model for the direction the country’s other metro areas are heading over the next generation.”

- *Chris Leinberger*





Chris Leinberger is a Visiting Fellow
at the Brookings Institution.

He likes cities. And he likes to walk.

As evident in the title of his
latest paper ...

Footloose and Fancy Free: A Field Survey of Walkable Urban Places in the Top 30 U.S. Metropolitan Areas

Walkable Urbanism, Cities

Christopher B. Leinberger, Visiting Fellow, Metropolitan Policy Program

The Brookings Institution

Full text [here](#).

There are, says Leinberger, essentially two kinds of built environments:
Drivable Suburban and *Walkable Urban*

Drivable Suburban is

very low density*, modular in nature, uses significantly more land relative to population growth and can generally only be accessed by car or truck. It is conventional suburban development.

Walkable Urban is:

- at least five times as **dense*** as drivable suburban,
- **mixed-use** (residential, office, retail, cultural, etc.),
- **compact** (between 100 and 500 acres in size),
- **accessible** by multiple transportation means
- **walkable** for nearly every destination once in the place.

* Floor Area Ratios:

Drivable Suburban 0.05 to 0.30

Walkable Urban: 0.8 to 40.0

Images by Price Tags.

Washington, DC:

The National Model of **Walkable Urban Growth**

The Washington, DC, metropolitan area has the most regional-serving walkable urban places *per capita* in the country - one for every 264,000 people.

Two major reasons for the high number of Walkable Urban places here: (1) the success of the Metro rail system and (2) the aggressive use of “overlay zoning districts” that allow and promote walkable urbanism around Metro stations.

Other reasons: the region’s strong economic growth and the high educational level of the population





Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

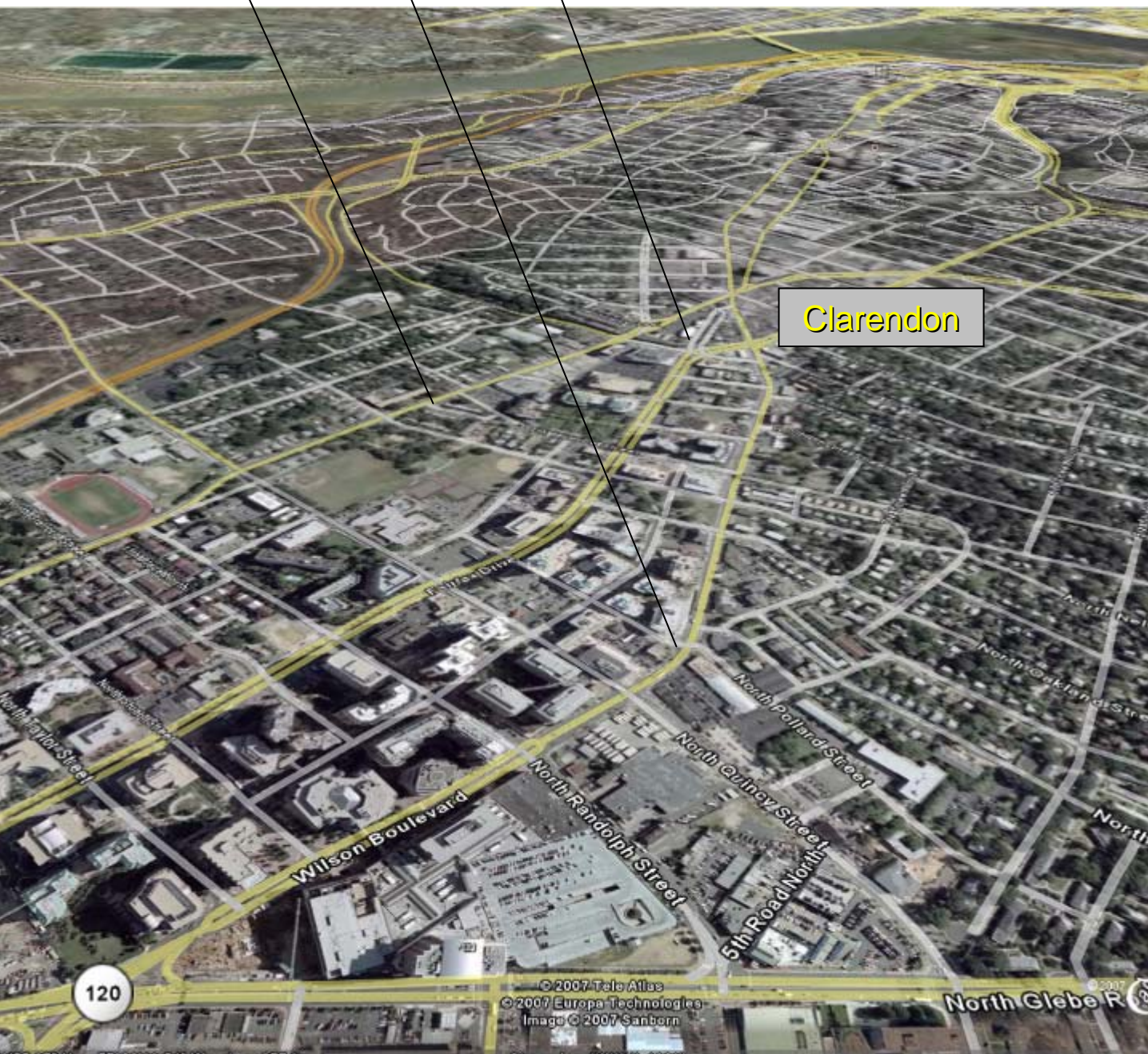
Strung along the Metro Orange Line is a nationally-known example of smart growth, where Drivable Suburban is quickly evolving into Walkable Urban. This is what happens when there's a commitment to mixed-use, high-density urbanism at station areas along a metro rail line.

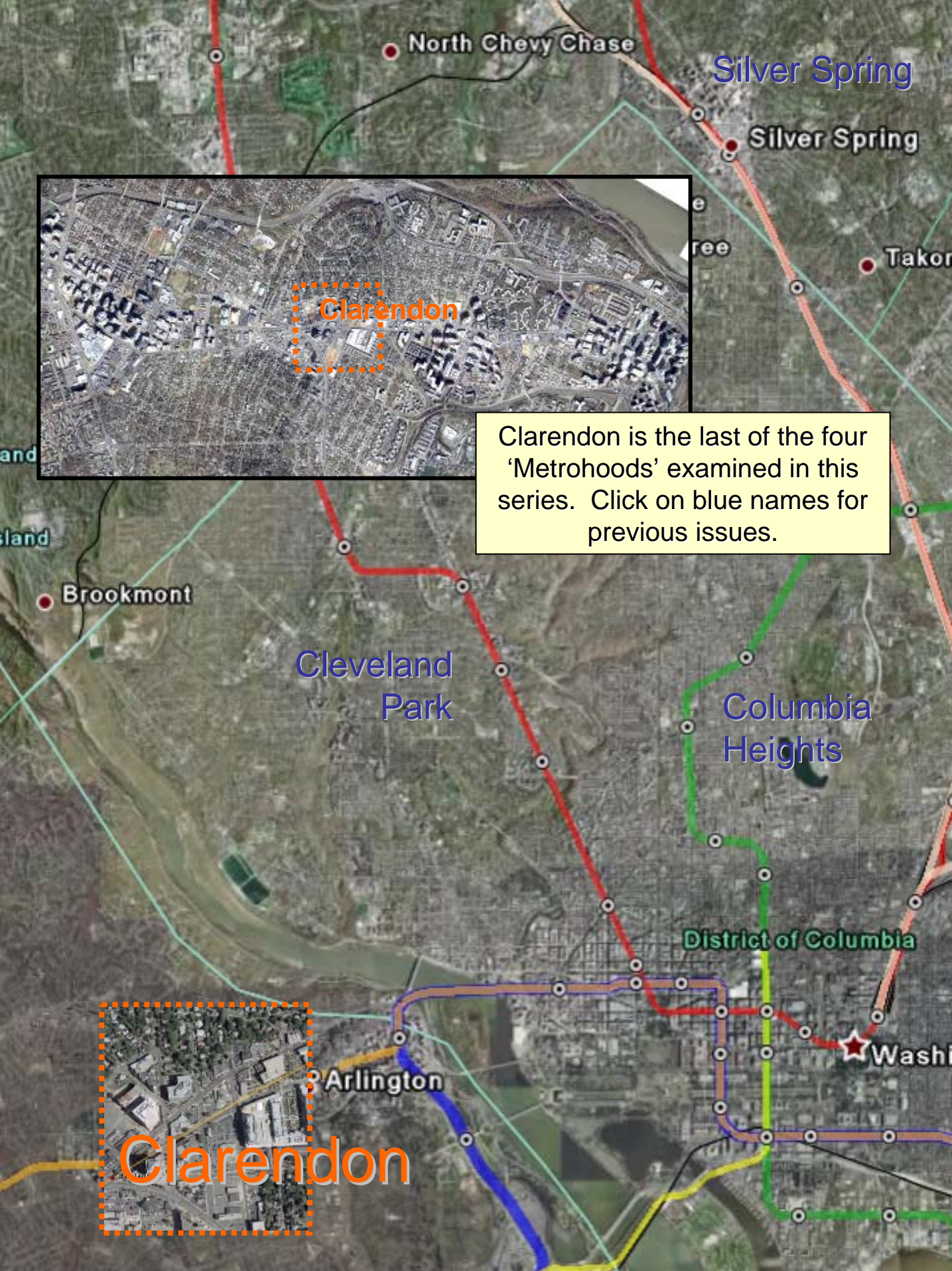
Arlington County has added roughly 40,000 residents, 20 million square feet of office and one million square feet of retail — ***with only a negligible increase in automobile traffic***, thanks to bus and Metrorail use.

There is no overarching grid. The corridor was shaped in pre-revolutionary times, at a time when post roads and county highways carved their way through the countryside.

From these came the boulevards and drives that carry local traffic - **Washington, Wilson and Fairfax/Clarendon** – similar in style to West L.A. (See **PT 89**)

They all cross at Clarendon.





North Chevy Chase

Silver Spring

Silver Spring

Takoma

Clarendon

Clarendon is the last of the four 'Metrohoods' examined in this series. Click on blue names for previous issues.

Brookmont

Cleveland Park

Columbia Heights

District of Columbia

Arlington

Washington

Clarendon

Clarendon, Virginia



Clarendon, like Silver Spring, was a streetcar suburb and retail centre, recoded after the War to serve the car. Decline in the 1970s and Asian in-migration coincided with the opening of the Metro station.

For 30 years the planning intent has been to make Clarendon more transit-oriented and walkable.

Typical of the change is **The Market Common** – a 10-acre lifestyle centre – more than just an outdoor mall.





In addition to the 240,000+ square feet of retail, the completed project includes 300 apartments, 87 townhomes and 100,000 square feet of office space. This is serious mixed-use.



It begins the shift of the prosperous and ethnically diverse inner suburbs away from car dependence.



Though incorporating 1,200 underground parking spaces, it also counts on Metro.



The Market Commons is just a fifth of a mile – a very easy walk - from the Metro station, along a boulevard respectful of pedestrians.





The lessons of the successful streetcar suburbs in the District are being applied effectively to the public realm of Clarendon.

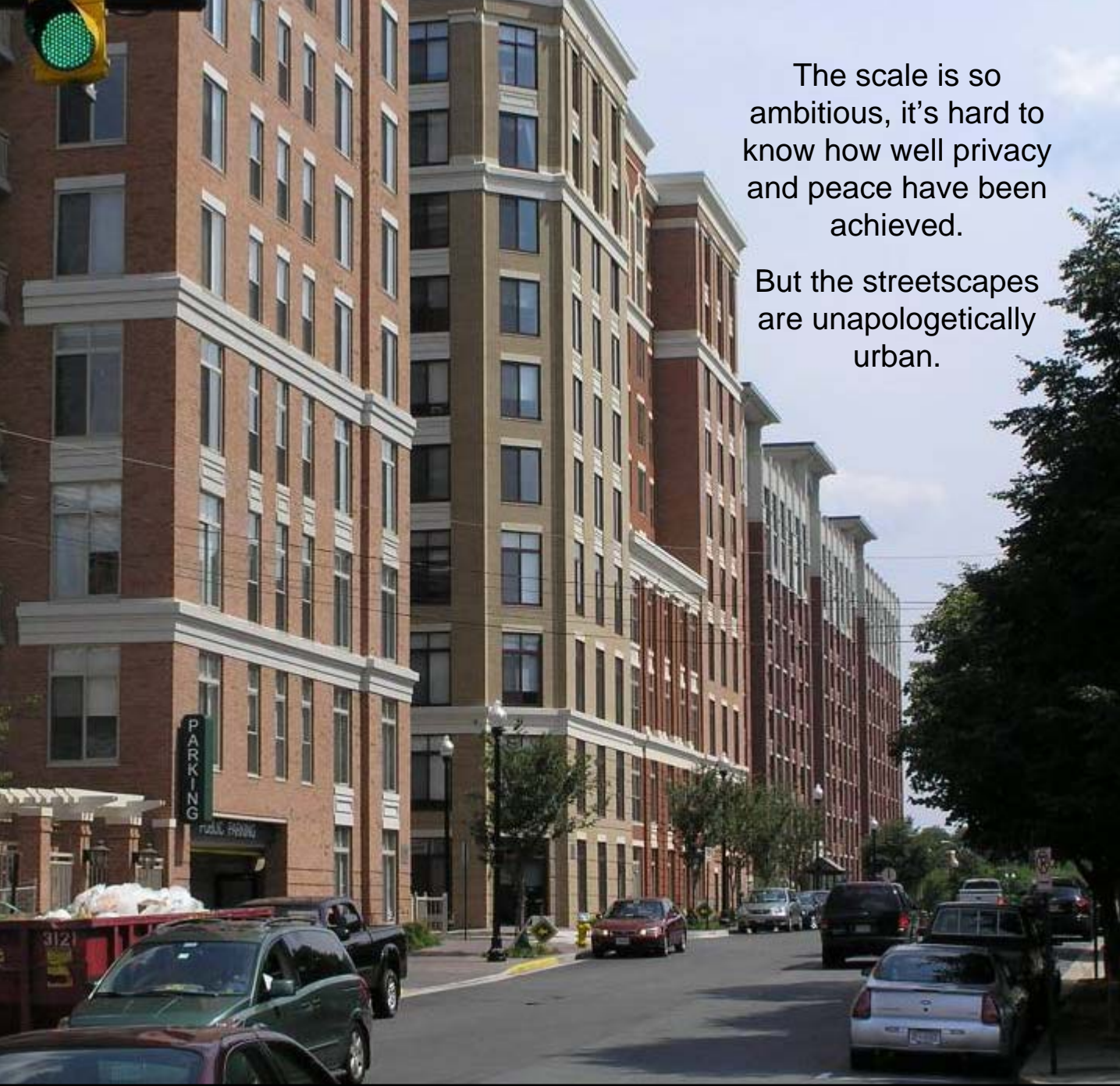
Different kinds of wheels are being used to get around.
Different kinds of people use them.





There is a hierarchy of streets, including lanes. There are attempts at detailed and sensitive urban design, even if the proportions are sometimes not quite right, the walls too severe or the landscape more impermeable than necessary.





The scale is so ambitious, it's hard to know how well privacy and peace have been achieved.

But the streetscapes are unapologetically urban.

It looks as though there are enough people to truly make this work as a ***Walkable Urban*** station-area neighbourhood

Mixed-use residential, office, retail, cultural, etc

Compact between 100 and 500 acres

Accessible with multiple means of transportation

Walkable for nearly every destination.



Birth, death and shopping

Dec 19th 2007

From *The Economist* print edition

The rise and fall of the shopping mall

Getty Images



THE Southdale shopping centre in Minnesota has an atrium, a food court, fountains and acres of parking. Its shops include a Dairy Queen, a Victoria's Secret and a purveyor of comic T-shirts. It may not seem like a landmark, as important to architectural history as the Louvre or New York's Woolworth Building. But it is. "Ohmigod!" chimes a group of teenage girls, on learning that they are standing in the world's first true shopping mall. "That is the coolest thing anybody has said to us *all day*."