



Pedestrian Malls: A Brief National and Local History

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Introduction

Pedestrian spaces play an important role in creating vibrant, livable cities. Throughout history, these spaces have taken many forms, including the pedestrian mall. As more research has emerged detailing what factors contribute to a mall's success, and as workable outdoor spaces are in higher demand from the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, these historical lessons find new importance. State Street, the heart of downtown Madison, has its own tumultuous history, but remains today an example of a successful pedestrian and transit mall. Examining some of its features in depth and comparing them to the features of other successful malls over time offers a unique perspective as Madison looks to the future of State Street.¹

PART I: Pedestrian Malls

Pedestrian malls have a long and fascinating history. These malls are collections of public blocks that are designated for pedestrian use. To do this, pedestrian malls utilize design elements like public art, fountains, benches, and wayfinding to enhance the pedestrian experience. Pedestrian malls were implemented in the United States primarily as a response to the rise of suburban shopping malls which drew commerce away from the city center. There are two common types of pedestrian mall, pedestrian-only and transit-combination. In the former, right of way is reserved exclusively for pedestrian and other non-vehicular uses. In the latter, buses and other service vehicles may also use the right of way. It is this, the transit-combination model, that forms Madison's iconic State Street.

Pedestrian malls were first popularized in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s but fell out of favor in many downtowns throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Recently, planning literature has offered a more comprehensive analysis of why these malls failed and insight into new efforts to create pedestrian zones. This report provides a brief history of pedestrian malls in the United States and overviews emerging literature related to successful pedestrian mall design, before providing an overview of the history of State Street.

¹ A timeline of important dates related to American pedestrian malls can be found in appendix A.

BACKGROUND

Early Pedestrian Zones

Pedestrian zones, precursors to pedestrian malls, have a long history dating back to medieval times. Historically, pedestrian spaces provided important centers for trade, commerce, and socializing. In the post-war period, pedestrian zones became more comprehensively incorporated into the design of European cities, contributing to a growing pedestrian network throughout Europe. These spaces continue to be important in the modern age reflecting contemporary attitudes toward pollution and the environment, quality of life, and traffic congestion.

Most literature attributes the earliest modern pedestrian zone to Kassel, Germany. The zone was developed following World War II, during which bombings destroyed 80% of the city. The scale of destruction was devastating but presented a unique opportunity to rebuild with a focus on modern needs. As a result, the Treppenstraße opened in 1953 connecting the city center to the rail station, giving pedestrians priority as they traveled between them. Then, in 1962, Strøget – Copenhagen's main street – opened as the first comprehensive pedestrian mall in the modern world. Like many European cities, Copenhagen's city center comprised narrow and winding roads leftover from medieval times. Medieval street patterns were not suitable for developing vehicular traffic, resulting in congestion and dangerous pedestrian conditions.ⁱ In an effort to restore comfortable pedestrian access in the city center, the street was pedestrianized. Despite initial skepticism, the transformation was considered a great success and marked the beginning of a greater transformation that continues into the present day. Currently, Copenhagen has over 96,000 square meters of car-free space. With regard to Strøget, a report by the European Commission states, "While pedestrian traffic levels have remained largely unchanged over the past decades, activities connected with shopping and staying are almost four times greater than in 1968."ⁱⁱ

Coming to America (1945-Present)

Drawing on the example of their European counterparts, American cities began experimenting with pedestrian malls in the 1960s and 1970s. Although these malls were modeled after those of Europe, they were implemented within a very different context. Unlike European malls, which sought to ease congestion, reduce pollution, and create space for pedestrian activity, American pedestrian malls were introduced as a means to address the ongoing urban crisis of the time and were typically oriented toward economic development.

Around the United States, patterns of mass suburbanization began to emerge following World War II. Between 1947 and 1953, while the general population increased by only 11 percent, the suburban population increased by 43 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ This process can be attributed to a range of push and pull factors including increased space in suburban areas, perceptions of overcrowding in the city, and over pollution that contributed to a massive population shift from urban centers to suburban areas.

During this period in the mid-twentieth century, “white flight” contributed significantly to the rise of the American suburb. White flight refers to the large-scale relocation of white residents from urban areas into often more racially homogenous suburban areas. Simultaneously, real estate practices through a process known as redlining, legally excluded many minority groups from owning or purchasing property in suburban areas and prevented African Americans and other minority groups from obtaining a federally guaranteed mortgage.^{iv}

Suburbanization was propelled further by the interstate highway project. This project, launched by President Dwight D. Eisenhower following World War II, allowed federal highways to be expanded outside of urban areas. Other federal incentives were put in place to underwrite mortgages for suburban single-family homes, further encouraging white middle class movement from urban to suburban areas. This mass movement brought dramatic changes in infrastructure, real estate development, fiscal policy, and economy. As residents moved from the city, many industries followed. Job markets increasingly sought cheaper, more accessible facilities in the suburbs, and a shrinking tax base left schools, services, and urban retailers to struggle.

Suburban Shift (1950-1975)

In suburban America, the 1950s brought a time of overall economic prosperity, with economic growth of 37% over the decade. By the end of the 1950s, the median American household had 30% more purchasing power than it did at the start the decade.^v With this, post-war suburban communities for the first time led a lifestyle dependent on the car. As traffic congestion and parking made downtown commercial expansion costly, ample space in the suburbs and increased purchasing power presented an attractive opportunity for suburban commercial development. Commercial strips were first built along newly constructed highways that were easily accessible by car. By the mid-1950s, regional shopping centers began to emerge. These shopping centers were located along highway intersections or key thoroughfares and provided abundant parking and access for visitors.^{vi}

The first of these was the Southdale Center located in Edina, Minnesota. Designed by Austrian-born architect Victor Gruen in 1956, the Southdale Center placed competing department stores on either end of the mall to both attract visitors and generate traffic to smaller stores as guests traveled back and forth between the larger ones. This design, featuring an enclosed, climate-controlled mall with competing department stores, multiple shopping levels, and ample parking, revolutionized the suburban shopping experience. While transportation to the mall typically required a car, once at the mall shoppers encountered an enclosed pedestrian experience similar to the pedestrian spaces of Europe.^{vii} Gruen intended the mall to be more than a center for shopping. Instead, the project was meant to reintroduce "third space" to the suburbs – space separate from the home or work, designated as communal social space. By 1960, four years after Southdale Center's opening in Edina, there were 4,500 large shopping complexes throughout the United States. By 1975, malls and shopping centers accounted for 33 percent of all retail sales in the United States.^{viii}



Southdale Shopping Center design by Victor Gruen, 1956

Rise and Fall of Competing Mall Designs

In many ways, American pedestrian malls were a response to the success of suburban shopping centers. At the time cities began experimenting with pedestrian malls in the 1960s and 1970s, urban decline and competition in the suburbs had devastated downtowns, and shop owners facing declining patronage needed some way to attract shoppers back to the city. In response, Victor Gruen, the same architect responsible for the first shopping mall in Edina, had an idea to create an outdoor pedestrian mall closed to vehicle traffic and reflective of the experience of a suburban mall. The first city to implement this design was Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1959. Initially a success, other cities quickly followed suit. Between the late 1950s and early 1980s, over 200 American cities implemented some form of pedestrian mall.^{ix}

Tax law amendments, zoning ordinances, legislation, and funding opportunities further contributed to the rise of American pedestrian malls during this period. Bonus zoning provided additional development rights in exchange for incorporating pedestrian improvements, and merchants willingly paid additional taxes to maintain the mall. Federal urban renewal funds were also made available for the revitalization of downtowns and used for this purpose.^x

Decline of Pedestrian Malls (1980-1990)

By the 1980s, it was clear that pedestrian malls most often did not achieve their initial aim of attracting patrons back to downtown centers. In some cases, pedestrian malls led to further declines in the downtown as rents were often lower, and vacancies higher than in surrounding areas. A lack of pedestrian traffic and a high number of vacancies contributed to perceptions that pedestrian malls were centers of crime and dangerous to visit after dark. As a result, very few pedestrian malls were constructed between the 1980s and 1990s, and many were reopened as traffic thoroughfares. In many places, this reopening to traffic resulted in immediate sales increases for businesses along the former mall as well as increased property values and fewer vacancies.^{xi} Most scholars attribute this failure to the drastically different contexts surrounding European and American pedestrian mall implementation. In Europe, cities experienced overcrowding, congestion, and dangerous pedestrian conditions. In the United States, however, downtowns were

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experiencing a period of low population density and suburbanization oriented around the automobile. In this context, the pedestrian mall could not provide sufficient incentive to bring suburbanites back into downtown.

To date, there is no definitive list of surviving pedestrian malls in the United States. This is largely in part to differences in how pedestrian malls are recorded and observed. Some, for example, categorize pedestrian boardwalks separately from pedestrian malls in the city center. Others differentiate pedestrian-only malls from pedestrian-transit. While most numbers as they relate to pedestrian malls in the United States are estimates, scholars typically agree that somewhere between twelve and twenty pedestrian malls exist in the United States today.

Decline of Suburban Shopping Malls (2000-2020)

In the early 2000s, suburban shopping malls began a decline that continues today. Despite thousands of new malls constructed throughout the latter portion of the 20th century, the primary design remained mostly unchanged from the 1950s. Most important to this design is the role of large department stores which bookend the mall. These large stores, referred to as anchor stores, are meant to attract shoppers to the center and provide foot traffic for smaller retailers within the mall. As consumer habits changed throughout the 2000s, consumer preferences shifted away from large-scale department stores and toward e-commerce, leaving many department stores struggling to compete. When department stores close, they leave large-footprint vacancies as seen in malls throughout the United States. With such a large footprint, department store vacancies are difficult to fill, and without the necessary anchor smaller stores struggle as well. In 2017, the Credit Suisse report estimated that one in four American shopping malls will close by 2022.^{xii}

Modern Pedestrian Spaces (2010-Present)

Many cities have continued building new pedestrian spaces, including some modern initiatives that have closed streets to traffic. Some efforts have drawn skepticism given the failure of many pedestrian malls from the 1960s and 1970s. Regarding the Times Square plan to close parts of Times Square to vehicular traffic, The New York Times

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wrote, "The pedestrian mall, the urban planner's failed attempt to revitalize main streets during the 1960s and 70s, is back!" However, important distinctions should be made between these new projects and the pedestrian malls of the past. Like the Times Square project, many modern pedestrian efforts focus on areas with high levels of existing pedestrian traffic. Rather than attracting visitors from surrounding areas, these projects incorporate pedestrian-oriented design features for existing pedestrian populations.

Other cities have sought to pedestrianize spaces while at the same time leaving them open to vehicular traffic. For example, Portland, Oregon, has adopted special zoning that regulates setbacks, density, parking, signage, and landscaping for the pedestrian experience.^{xiii} Many cities have also turned to the main street approach, where pedestrian-scale retail is oriented on both sides of the street, leaving the streetscape open to many forms of vehicular and pedestrian traffic alike. Successful conversions of pedestrian malls into main streets include Fayetteville Street in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Michigan Street in South Bend, Indiana. In these cases, reopening the street to vehicular traffic maintained elements of comfortable, pedestrian-oriented design even though they were not car-free.

Features of Successful Pedestrian Malls

Although most pedestrian malls in the United States have either been removed or reopened to vehicular traffic, a handful have achieved great success in creating vibrant downtown pedestrian spaces that persist today. Examples include Church Street Marketplace in Burlington, Vermont, Pearl Street Mall in Boulder, Colorado, and Downtown Mall in Charlottesville, Virginia. Recent literature has tried to explain why some pedestrian malls, like those mentioned above, have remained successful while others have failed. According to these findings, it appears both demographic context and design features are important in determining the successes and failures of pedestrian malls in the United States.

Demographics:

Multiple studies have observed that of the surviving pedestrian malls, many are located in college towns. In fact, Dave Amos, assistant professor of planning at California

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Polytechnic, found that of the original wave of pedestrian malls from the 1960s and 1970s, those within one mile of a college campus were more likely to survive than those not near a college campus. This indicates that the college demographic may contribute to the success of a pedestrian mall.^{xiv} The same research observes that pedestrian malls located in warm climates like Florida or California are more likely to have remained open than the average. The research also finds that pedestrian malls in large cities fared better than those in small towns, particularly in cities that experienced population growth over the mall's lifespan. This contradicts prior research that has suggested that most successful pedestrian malls were located in small to medium-sized cities. Similarly, areas that experienced population decline were more likely to result in an unsuccessful pedestrian mall. These findings suggest that considerable pedestrian traffic may be an important component of long-lasting pedestrian malls. Amos suggests that this is one reason pedestrian malls were unsuccessful in their initial attempt to revive struggling downtowns. Rather than creating additional foot traffic, pedestrian malls are best implemented in places that already experience a high level of pedestrian traffic.

A further study published in 2020 by the Journal of Urbanism entitled *The rise and fall of the American pedestrian Mall* offers additional insights into the demographic conditions that may contribute to pedestrian mall success. In this study, authors Matuke et. al analyze data from 125 US pedestrian malls to determine the significance of a range of geographic and demographic factors in influencing a pedestrian mall's lifespan. Based on their research, the authors conclude, "... cities' population density, the median age of the residents, the percent of the population that is white², the length of the mall, presence of beach, whether or not the city is a tourism destination, and the annual percentage of sunny days are all significant in explaining a pedestrian mall's longevity" (Matuke 2020 pg. 10). In support of the conclusion reached by Amos, the study also finds that population size appears insignificant in determining the overall longevity of a pedestrian mall.

²The authors are unable to conclude whether this indicator is a result of lifestyle or a consequence of the first generation of pedestrian malls being located in more racially homogenous communities.

Design Elements:

In addition to examining the demographic features associated with successful pedestrian malls, Matuke et al. examines cases where pedestrian malls achieved success despite seemingly unlikely geographic or demographic factors. According to the study, successful pedestrian malls typically had the following design elements:

- a strong sense of containment created through street width and building height;
- high levels of ground floor façade transparency (windows);
- sufficient protection from the elements;
- adequate seating and vegetation for both comfort and visual interest;
- proper lighting to increase perceptions of safety;
- unique and level paving material to both visually separate the space and ensure usability for all users.

Mall Length:

Further research supports the conclusion that length appears to be a significant indicator in determining a pedestrian mall's success. An analysis by Cole E. Judge for the Downtown Fresno Partnership has identified that except for Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, most successful pedestrian-only malls range in length from 1-4 blocks.

Strategic Traffic Generation:

Further research by Pojani in 2010, as well as Bates in 2013, finds that successful pedestrian malls had programs and funding dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of the mall. Pojani also highlights the importance of low-cost parking close to a pedestrian mall as well as a business mix that provides a unique shopping experience for visitors. In her report, she states, "A few successful malls consist of convenience-related businesses, but only if they are located in downtowns where there is enough concentration of workers and/or residents. Successful downtown pedestrian malls that rely on residents outside of the immediate vicinity (which is the case of most malls in the US) have typically employed strategies such as the provision of an exclusive shopping environment which makes it worth the trip; the installation of "anchor" uses (i.e., department stores) that generate foot traffic, which in turn supports malls' smaller

businesses; the inclusion of entertainment type businesses, which keep the mall lively past regular business hours; the promotion of public events such as parades, street fairs, farmers' markets, concerts; and the encouragement of street performers and street vending" (Poiani 2010 pg 7).

PART II: State Street Mall

State Street is a mile-long pedestrian and transit mall in the heart of downtown Madison. It is an important landmark in the cultural mind of many students, residents, and visitors. The mall is bound to the East by the Wisconsin State Capitol and to the West by the University of Wisconsin – Madison. An important transit thoroughfare since its inception, State Street was pedestrianized in the 1970s and closed to most vehicular traffic. Part II of this report examines the history of this iconic street, its transformation into a pedestrian mall, the various elements considered in its construction, and possible directions for its future. The latter half of this report is informed by interviews with stakeholders possessing intimate knowledge of State Street and its history. Namely, George Austin, Mayor David Cieslewicz, Mayor Paul Soglin, Sue Springman, Mary Lang Sollinger, and Alder Michael Verveer.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since its beginning, State Street has been an important thoroughfare in downtown Madison connecting the Capitol and the University. Initially, State Street was a main route for omnibuses, large horse-drawn coaches that carried passengers along a fixed route. These were later replaced by animal-powered streetcars before the first horse-powered car system was introduced by the Madison Street Railroad Company in 1884. In 1887 the company began electrifying the rails, fully electrifying by September of 1892. Streetcar service providers struggled by the 1920s, however, owing to the rise in suburbanization, the popularity of the automobile, and decentralization away from the urban core. Streetcars in Madison finally halted service in 1935 and were shortly replaced by buses and cars.^{xv} During this period State Street was characterized as a traditional main street with retail oriented on both sides of the road, and a streetscape open to many forms of

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vehicular traffic. With this pattern, retail activates ground floor storefronts while office and residential units occupy upper levels.

State Street Stalls (1970s)

By the 1970s, State Street had begun to struggle. Madison, like other urban areas at the time, faced the pressures of suburbanization while increased car dependency congested downtown traffic. Congestion was of particular concern in Madison, where the isthmus's constricted geography forced most traffic through a narrow neck. These pressures made alternative shopping experiences all the more attractive. Like in other parts of the country, the rise of suburban malls had consequences for Madison's downtown retailers. Madison's first mall, the Hilldale Shopping Center, was opened in October of 1962 to be followed by West Towne Mall in 1970 and East Towne Mall in 1971.

In addition to the rise of shopping centers, which drew shoppers away from downtown, Vietnam-era protests centered around campus also led some to avoid the downtown area. Most notably was the Dow Riot on October 18, 1967, which sent 70 people to the hospital. Three years later, in August of 1970, four men executed a bombing of Sterling Hall in protest of the University's research connections to the Vietnam war. These protests were not isolated but took place in a larger context of student-led demonstrations against the war in Vietnam spanning five years. These factors of suburbanization, the rise of the suburban shopping mall, and civil unrest contributed to a declining downtown and struggling State Street.

CREATION OF STATE STREET MALL

Concerned for the long-term vitality of downtown, City Planner John Urich, in conjunction with then Alderman Paul Soglin, conceived the mall as a way to reinvent downtown. With this vision, the Common Council passed a 1971 resolution closing the 700-800 blocks of State Street to all non-pedestrian traffic as a trial test for larger-scale closure. The experiment continued for two years, demonstrating the potential for State Street to become an enjoyable pedestrian space.

In 1973, newly elected Mayor Paul Soglin pushed the vision forward and appointed a State Street Mall Committee. Knowing a downtown mall was unlikely to compete directly with the surrounding malls at East Towne, West Towne, and Hilldale, the committee

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wanted to offer a unique experience dealing with boutiques, specialty, and locally owned stores. Initially, existing merchants along State Street opposed the idea of transforming the street into a pedestrian mall, fearing that the elimination of parking in front of their storefront, removal of cars from the street, and a prolonged construction period would be detrimental to existing businesses. Once the mall's inevitability became clear, however, existing merchants became deeply involved in the planning process.

Construction began in 1974, three years after the first experiments with the State Street Mall, and concluded eight years later in 1982. In addition to establishing the mall, much needed infrastructural improvements were made to the street including sidewalk and roadway enhancements. Although efforts were taken to preserve access for existing businesses, prolonged construction was disruptive to merchants and some did not survive the process.



CONSIDERATIONS IN MALL CREATION

Stakeholder Input

Public input was central to the mall project, and no design work was done while public engagement was underway. To include a wide range of stakeholders, the committee conducted a charetting process designed to engage businesses and property owners, shoppers, students, and residents, in addition to shoppers who once frequented State Street as their primary shopping destination but had since transitioned their primary shopping elsewhere. Once the charetting process concluded, the committee hired M. Paul Friedberg to design the mall. Upon being awarded the contract, Friedberg collected the written documentation from the charetting process and reengaged stakeholders

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before moving forward with a design. While this process was underway, the committee conducted streetscape experiments like barricading streets and changing traffic patterns to test the effects and prepare the mall.

Transit

Initially, the committee had decided that the 700-800 blocks of State Street would be entirely pedestrian, barring bicycles and other forms of traffic. The remainder of the mall was to remain a transit mall. This transit designation is important for three primary reasons. First, leaving the street open to public transit uses solidified its status as a fixed transit guideway. With this designation, the City was eligible to receive federal funding for the mall's construction and upkeep. This funding is awarded to the City on an annual basis and continues today. Currently, Madison receives roughly \$900,000 per year in fixed guideway funding from the Federal Transit Administration's State of Good Repair grant.³ Another reason the street was left as a transit guideway was concern for how a full closure might affect the transit system. As there are no streets that fully parallel State Street, some feared that increasing the distance between stops would hinder accessibility and negatively impact bus usage. Finally, the street would also need to remain open in some capacity to facilitate deliveries to businesses. Given the unique geography of the isthmus, rear access to State Street businesses is minimal, meaning that deliveries must occur to the property's front or side entrance.

The appropriate status of buses on State Street remains hotly debated. While some feel the presence of buses negatively impacts State Street's character and ambiance, others see it as an essential asset to bring customers downtown. Recently, the City of Madison has worked to implement a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. On January 5, 2021, the City of Madison Common Council approved a Locally Preferred Route running along East Washington Ave, Capitol Square, State Street, and through the

³The formula for determining the annual grant is complicated but includes the following: the actual length of fixed guideway; the amount of service operated over the guideway; and the length of guideways in other systems within the City and the amount of service. The grant program is instituted by [49 U.S. Code § 5337](#).

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University of Wisconsin–Madison Campus. With this decision, it seems buses will remain a feature of the State Street experience for the foreseeable future. In an effort to both mitigate concerns regarding the presence of the larger buses on the street, and to prevent congestion by existing metro routes, the council plans to relocate several existing bus routes off of State Street in preparation for BRT.

Parking & Maintenance

Another important design component for the initial mall was consideration for parking. Some feared that taking cars off of State would increase congestion on surrounding streets and discourage downtown visitors, anxious about parking. As it relates to congestion, the experiment of closing the 700-800 block showed the opposite to be true. When cars were no longer allowed on that segment of the street, traffic counts on Langdon, an adjacent street, declined. Rather than circle the block looking for parking, visitors defaulted to nearby parking garages. With this knowledge in tow, stakeholders planned to expand nearby parking amenities and conducted a range of treatments to surrounding streets, reworking traffic patterns and key intersections for compatibility with the mall. With regard to parking, however, perceptions of limited parking continue to pose a challenge in attracting visitors.

Once the mall was designed, there remained a lingering question regarding maintenance. For the mall to be successful, it was decided that maintenance would need to be a priority. Rather than place this responsibility on individual shop owners, a special assessment district was established utilizing each property's mass and frontage to figure into maintenance costs. However, this district did not cover costs in its entirety, and the City took up a large portion of the cost. This cooperative upkeep through the special assessment district was integral in maintaining a continual quality of maintenance from the mall's first opening.

Later, in 1999, Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID) was formed encompassing State Street and the Capitol Square. The BID levies an additional tax from businesses located within the district in order to fund projects and improvements, working to support the district as a whole. The BID acts as a liaison between businesses, property owners, the City of Madison, and other downtown stakeholders with the ultimate goal to "increase the vitality and health of the district and promote businesses within it."^{xvi} The

BID provides valuable benefits to State Street business oriented around economic vibrancy and downtown vitality.

STATE STREET RETAIL AND COMPOSITION

State Street is occupied by a wide range of businesses. Some have long tenures on the street, like the University Bookstore, which was first opened in 1894. Others are new and reflect the changing street over the past fifty years. Before the mall was created, State Street was mostly retail including a small number of department stores and small restaurants. As the mall project progressed, the retail landscape also began to change. Retailers grew with new investment and entrepreneurship, and flexible leases from local property owners gave way to increased retail and greater diversity in shopping, clothing, and dining experiences on the street.

Retailers & Ownership

Unlike most indoor malls which have one property owner, State Street properties are owned by a wide range of private individuals. Because properties are privately held, decisions regarding tenants are often made at the individual level. This presents a challenge to anyone wishing to cultivate a particular retail mix. Unlike large developers, small owners are less able to sustain a vacancy when it arises. As a result, vacancies are often filled with the first viable applicant, even if that applicant is not the ideal tenant for the street.

Many retail changes occurred throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Restaurants, for example, often became more lucrative than retailers dealing in clothing and gifts. Properties on State Street, however, are typically small and with a few exceptions, outdoor dining was not allowed in the City of Madison when the mall was constructed. Over time, small amounts of outdoor dining were permitted so long as the business could provide umbrellas to cover outdoor tables. The umbrellas proved difficult to manage, however, and outdoor dining remained limited until the ordinance was repealed. Once more restaurants and cafes began experimenting with outdoor dining, a flaw in the mall's original design was revealed. Stationary street furniture that could not be moved often got in the way of outdoor cafes. Further, compared with the wider sidewalks on the square, the narrower sidewalks along State Street disadvantaged outdoor dining.

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Despite these minor setbacks the street was largely a success and attracted interest from national retailers looking to establish a presence on the mall. Although chain retailers could more easily afford rents along the mall, the street's physical design posed a challenge. Buildings on State Street are individually constructed with 30-foot fronts, and many storefronts are under 1000 square feet. As such, individual storefronts do not have the footprint necessary for large scale retail, and properties are difficult to link together given different elevations and other design requirements for construction and facades on State Street. Of the national retailers that have entered the mall, all have built new space to obtain a footprint large enough for their business model.

Currently, the 500 and 600 blocks of State Street remain focused toward a student population. Retail is oriented toward university apparel, and most food options are fast and affordable. The 300-400 block is similar with coffee shops, affordable food options, and some retail. The 100-200 blocks of State Street, closest to the capitol, function similarly to an entertainment district with uses like the Orpheum theater, the Overture Center for the Arts, a Comedy Club, and many bars that promote art and entertainment-oriented services.

State Street Demographics

A number of factors are important in understanding the demographic composition of State Street Mall. The first, is a strategic push throughout the 1970s and 1980s to build up the downtown residential and office populations with policies that encouraged mixed-age housing development. Now, downtown is a mix of student housing, condos, office space, and single-family housing that provides a range of incomes and lifestyles for the mall. The balance of students on one end of the mall and professionals at the other, further contributes to a mix of potential users for the State Street Mall. High apartment demand has also led to a number of high-rise housing developments like the Hub, Ovation, Domain, the Galaxy, and the Constellation, adding to the population frequenting downtown businesses. Today, the largest demographic groups downtown, and those that make up most of the market and customer base for downtown businesses, are young professionals and students.

Finally, it is important to note the opening of the Monona Terrace in the late 1990s as an important part of downtown Madison's history. To create a vibrant downtown

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district, city planners sought to attract more visitors to Madison. Citing a need for meeting and convention spaces, they set about creating the Monona Terrace. In addition to increasing tourist flow, this project added to the growing momentum around State Street and the downtown concourse. In this effort to remake downtown as a center for regional commerce, planners also focused on improved wayfinding with investment in signage, and improved approaches into downtown. Programming was also incorporated to attract visitors during evenings and on weekends. City policies worked to enhance programming, closing parts of the street on Saturdays, for example, and rerouting buses during public events. Other design decisions were made to increase the vibrancy of the street. One example is the Overture Center for the Arts. When the Center was constructed, some feared the large building would enact a dead zone on the street. To mitigate this, high transparency ground floor facades now allow pedestrians to see into windows and galleries as they walk the street.

AN EVOLVING MALL

Over the past fifty years the mall has undergone two major reconstructions. The first corrected initial design flaws. Lighting changed to be less susceptible to vandalism, and brick was replaced by limestone, a material much more capable of handling the freeze-thaw cycle in Wisconsin. Policy changes were made as well. Cabs, which were once not allowed on the street, are now allowed at night, and bicyclists are permitted on the entirety of the mall. Some movable tables and chairs have also been added to the 700 and 800 blocks of the mall.

The second redesign introduced the State Street Design Project, running from September of 2000 to November of 2001. This project worked to redesign the 100 through 600 blocks of State Street as well as adjacent cross street. The goals of the project, informed through a public engagement process, were the following:

- make the street environment as flexible as possible;
- make it “timeless” (not overly trendy);
- make it durable and easy to maintain; and
- make it sustainable.

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In addition to the processes listed above, longer-term reconstruction served to improve State Streets' streetscape and make necessary improvements to infrastructure. Improvements began with the 100 and 200 blocks and worked their way down the street. While this process was underway, State Street Tax Incremental District (TID) #32 was established. Tax increment financing (TIF) is an economic development tool often used to support development initiatives within a defined geographic area. When a TID is created, the equalized assessed value (EAV) of parcels in the district is frozen for the TID's duration. During this time, property values within the district increase as development occurs. The excess value is then used to fund improvements within the district. TID #32 was open for 15 years before being closed in 2018.

Lessons from Boulder: Pearl Street Mall

During the redesign process, stakeholders looked to peer cities for informative precedents. In particular, stakeholders looked to Colorado for the Pearl Street Mall in Boulder and 16th Street Mall in Denver. Pearl Street is a four-block pedestrian mall, while 16th Street Mall is a 16-block transit mall. Both are considered successful pedestrian malls. Pearl Street Mall in particular provided important insight for the redesign of State Street. Boulder is a University town with 35,000 students and a total population of 107,353 as of 2018, providing a similar context to Madison. Further, the mall also experiences cold weather in the winter, incurring similar challenges to what might be seen during a Wisconsin winter. Planners in Boulder attribute the success of the mall to factors such as good design, short block lengths, and cross streets that cut through the mall. Other components are important as well. Interactive elements are woven throughout the design of the mall, and when a storefront is not occupied, programming activates the space. Also important is access and visibility to the mall. In the case of Pearl Street, parking is available in nearby City parking garages, curbside meters, or free curbside parking areas. Adjacent to the mall is a large downtown transit station, connecting the mall to the broader region.

The lessons from Colorado, as well as in-depth analysis and public engagement in Madison, led to the State Street design recommendations in place today – including

Pedestrian Malls

public art, flexible sidewalks, and standard curb heights as well as other streetscape enhancements to maximize the pedestrian experience.

The Future of State Street

Today, State Street faces unprecedented challenges. Even before the events of 2020, however, perceptions of high crime and nuisance behavior impacted foot traffic downtown, and a changing retail context posed lingering questions for many State Street businesses. As retail reorients online, it is unclear what lies in store for brick and mortar on the street. Some propose a renewed focus on local and specialty goods, while others prioritize a shift to omnichannel retailing. Others still see a future for the street focused on experiential services and entertainment rather than traditional retailing.

What is clear, however, is that State Street remains an important cultural icon for Madison's many residents and guests. As such, experience and identity will likely remain important for the street. Policies that promote inclusion, placemaking, and wayfinding can continue to differentiate State Street, and programming like Maxwell Days and the Madison Farmers Market can continue to center the street as the heart and soul of downtown Madison. Whatever the future holds, State Street today remains the heart of the city.

CONCLUSION

Pedestrian malls are a complicated subject. While many have failed, a handful have achieved success transforming streetscapes into vibrant pedestrian spaces and economic centers. Recent analyses have identified key demographic and geographic indicators of successful pedestrian malls such as climate, population, and average age. Research has also shown how proper design can, at times, contribute to a successful pedestrian mall. These features include high ground floor transparency, malls of short length, and sufficient protection from the elements. Based on the information compiled for this report, it is not possible to determine whether pedestrian malls on their own lead to retail success or failure. Instead, it appears as though stakeholders must examine each site to determine a pedestrian zone's appropriateness in their area of interest, and the overall goals associated with the project.

Pedestrian Malls

Recent literature suggests that one reason many pedestrian malls failed was their deployment as a tool to attract people back downtown in an era of suburbanization. Caution is urged when applying the legacy of urban renewal era pedestrian malls to modern efforts of pedestrianization. Although pedestrian malls appear unsuccessful as a tool in their own right to attract foot traffic to a given area, in areas with the proper demographic pool and the appropriate design elements, pedestrian zones may still be essential components of vibrant downtown spaces.

Appendix A

Pedestrian Malls

1953 - PRESENT EUROPEAN MALLS

The first modern pedestrian mall opens in Kassel, Germany in 1953, soon to be followed by Strøget, Copenhagen in 1962. Pedestrian zones remain a feature of many modern European cities.

1959 - 1980 RISE OF THE PEDESTRIAN MALL

America's first pedestrian mall opens in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1959. By the early 1980s, over 200 cities will implement some form of pedestrian mall.

1980 - 1990 DECLINE OF THE PEDESTRIAN MALL

Very few pedestrian malls are constructed in the latter 1980s and 1990s, and most existing pedestrian malls are either removed or reopened to vehicular traffic.

1945 - 1975 SUBURBANIZATION

America experiences a population shift from urban centers into suburbs, often accompanied by white flight and disinvestment in the central city

1956 - 2000 SUBURBAN SHOPPING

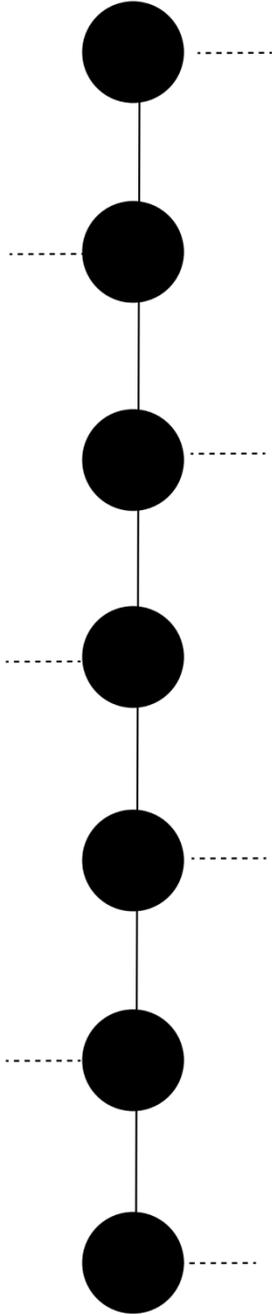
In 1956, Southdale Center opens in Edina, Minnesota becoming the world's first indoor shopping mall. Over the next fifty years, thousands of indoor malls are created across the United States.

1974 - 1982 STATE STREET MALL CONSTRUCTION

In 1974 construction begins on the State Street Mall in Madison, Wisconsin. Construction is completed eight years later in 1982.

2000 - PRESENT DECLINE OF THE INDOOR SHOPPING MALL

Indoor shopping malls struggle to meet changing consumer preferences throughout the 2000s. Up to one in four malls are expected to close by 2022.



Pedestrian Malls

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