

Where is the center of the city?

## A NEW CITY CENTER

### Based on Proximity and Synergy

Seminar Arch 540 Selected Topics 1 / Winter 2015

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Friday Mornings: 8:30 am – 10:30 am

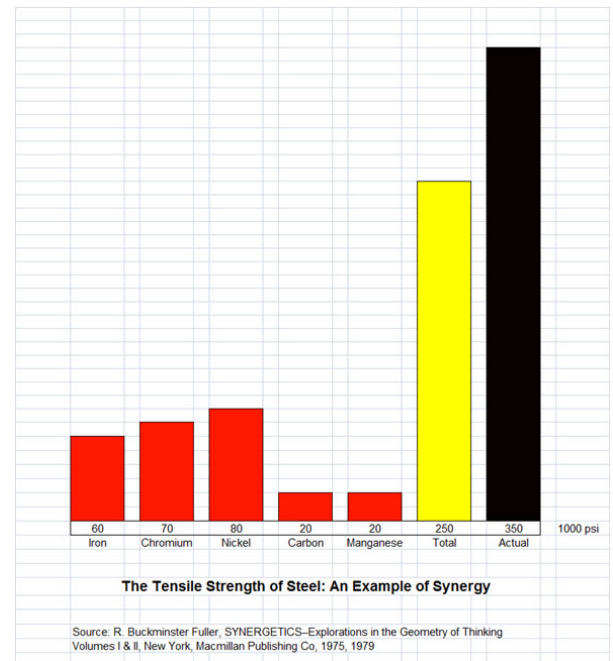
Normally we think the CBD is the city center. Historically, other centers were more prominent. Palaces and government buildings occupied places of importance at civic squares. Pre-industrial skylines were dominated by the church, the mosque or temple. The Agora in Greece was the center of athletic, artistic, spiritual and political life, a concentration of public buildings surrounding open public space. The Forum in Rome was a group of several important government buildings at the center of the city. Ebenezer Howard's Garden City had a city center composed of a town hall, museum, hospital, library, theater, and concert hall all surrounded by a large park circular park.

Such centers are distinguishable from the CBD; they serve a different purpose.

Based on the premise that the **proximity** of social, educational, health, government, and humanitarian institutions can lead to beneficial **synergies** that will help release individual and social capacity, we will:

1. Conduct a survey of historical and existing urban clusters of institutions; draw examples to the same scale, determine their program, and the size of city they served.
2. Decide on goals and program for such a center suitable for the needs of our time. Give this center type a name.
3. Prepare conceptual designs for such a center in a new city district, part of an expanding city in China.
4. Prepare conceptual designs for a new city center as part of a re-urbanization proposal for the City of Laval.

### Two Examples of Synergy and Proximity



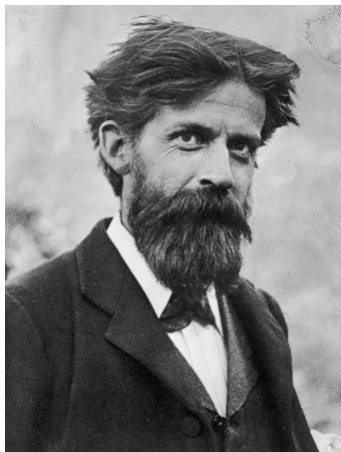
#### 1. The Manufacture of Steel



#### 2. Tokyo seniors facility combined with a kindergarten

*"We found that once the two facilities (Kindergarten and seniors citizens center) were joined together, the children began learning how to care for others by talking and being who her older co-residents. We could see that through this experience the children were growing into warm and compassionate human beings. For the elderly, we realized that through her association with the children, They were becoming more alive and their health was improving. Seeing these aged people, many of whom I thought had forgotten how to laugh or even express their thoughts, holding the children and happily talking with them, brought home how important a touching relationship can be between two caring people"*  
Maeda Takumi, Kotoen Director

Patrick Geddes spoke of the proximity of institutions. Central to his beliefs was the intimate linking of spatial form and social processes.

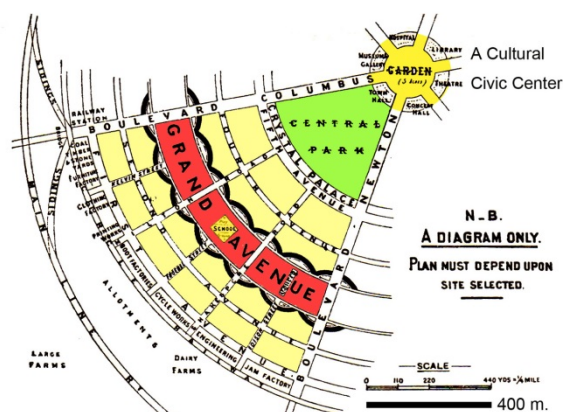
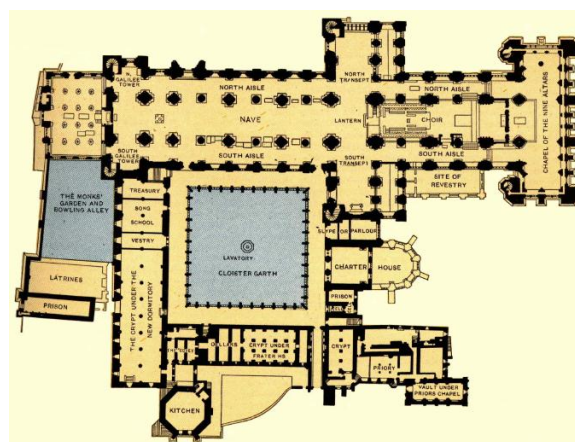


“Civic Buildings should be grouped together ..... ‘It has too often been the case, in the history of cities, that their Cultural Institutes have been postponed until adequate sites for them are no longer obtainable. Modern cities (British and American especially) are thus discovering their needs when too late adequately to supply them at great expense, and then in too scattered locations.’

His point is that it was vital to ensure the proximity of these institutes, so as to prevent their mutual forgetfulness, which in time hardens into exclusiveness, and thus to failure of usefulness all round: and just when duly intelligent and understanding and sympathetic cooperation are most required. This condition of proximity, and for mutual interaction, is fundamentally necessary.<sup>1</sup>



Palace, Church, & Government Offices in a Group



Ward and Center of Garden City



City of Laval: Zone of Opportunity for a New Center

<sup>1</sup> Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes, Social Evolutionist and City Planner*, Routledge, 1990, p.280.