

THE NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD RETAILING CENTERS IN TULSA

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The purpose of this study is to define, locate, and count the neighborhood retailing centers in Tulsa.

DEFINITION

One of the several aspects of the retailing pattern of any city is the grouping of a number of small business units in or near the several residential areas. These agglomerations of distributing units, which provide various economic goods and services, are called neighborhood retailing centers in this study. The word "neighborhood" is used, in spite of the fact that many sociologists contend that the true neighborhood does not exist in the city, for does not the city resident send or go to the nearby retailing center for a loaf of bread or a bottle of medicine rather than borrow from his "near dweller"?

A retailing center is defined as any group of five or more business units which supply at least five different kinds of services including (1) food and (2) drugs. The various services are classified into ten types as follows. (1) FOOD: grocery store, bakery, fruit and vegetable store, poultry market, butcher shop, fish market. (2) DRUGS. (3) PERSONAL SERVICES: barber shop, beauty shop, shoe repair, cleaning and pressing, laundry, dress making, tailor. (4) AUTOMOBILE: filling station, supplies, repairs, tire dealer. (5) RESTAURANT: cafe, lunch room, soft drinks. (6) HOUSE SUPPLIES AND SERVICES: hardware store, lumber yard, plumbing, electrical equipment, furnace repairman, cabinet maker. (7) MISCELLANEOUS PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS: variety store, florist, gift shop. (8) ENTERTAINMENT: motion picture theater, billiard or pool hall, bowling alley, bar. (9) PROFESSIONAL: doctor, dentist, lawyer, notary. (10) UNCLASSIFIED: a true "X" category which includes those services which are not found frequently enough to justify a separate classification *and* those services which are usually found in the downtown business-shopping center.

Each retailing center is assumed to have a focus of activity and to have boundaries which can be more or less accurately located. The nearest main intersection is considered to be the focus. The boundaries are more difficult to locate, but can be identified on the basis of three criteria: (a) the use of one block for other than retail purposes, or (b) the small number of services per block, i. e. not more than three, or (c) in any case not over two blocks distant in any direction from the focus. A trading center is usually small enough so that a customer need not park his car more than once. In a few instances, groups of retailing units, which met the minimum definition as far as number and types of stores and services are concerned, were rejected because they were so close to the central business area that the boundaries could not be accurately located. On the other hand, the so-called "string streets," which also presented problems of classification, were included in this study.

Neither grocery stores nor drug stores are found exclusively in these neighborhood retailing centers. In fact, two thirds of the grocery stores and one fourth of the drug stores are located outside of them. The other

drug stores are found in the business-shopping center, but the groceries are decentralized and widely scattered throughout most of the residential areas.

Since the retailing centers are in a more or less constant state of flux, it was necessary to make the study as of some fixed date. January 1, 1939 was selected, partly because that was the date of the publication of the Tulsa city directory.

LOCATION

All possible places where neighborhood retailing centers might be found were first discovered from a spot map based on the list of drug and grocery stores in the city directory. Every place in the city where the nucleus, the drug store and the grocery, existed, was visited. The types of service provided, the number of business units, the boundaries, and the location of the focus, were determined on the first or a subsequent visit, checked in the directory, and recorded on a map.

On the basis of this study several generalizations on the location of neighborhood retailing centers seem warranted. (1) Retail centers are not found in (a) the central business district, (b) the exclusive residential areas, and (c) the outermost settled sections. (2) These centers are frequently found at the intersections of heavy traffic streets which are at half mile intervals. (3) The traffic "bottle necks," especially where the streets of the newer sections join the streets in the old town site at an angle, seem to be favorable for the development of centers.

NUMBER

Forty-two neighborhood retailing centers were located. These centers supplied from 5 to 10 types of services and contained from 6 to 84 business units, distributed as follows:

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|--|
| Number of services | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | |
| centers | 10 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 8 | | | | |
| Number of business units | 45-9 | 40-4 | 35-9 | 30-4 | 25-9 | 20-4 | 15-9 | 10-4 | 5-9 | |
| centers | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 6 | |

The two largest centers which contained 84 and 80 units, respectively, are not included in the above (the second) table. Apparently the typical retail center contained from 10 to 19 business units, for over 40% were that size, and served approximately 4,000 people.

Five of the forty-two centers had generally accepted names, e. g. West Tulsa, Whittier Square, Alhambra Square, Red Fork, and Brookside. Nearly all the rest were identified in terms of main cross streets, such as, 11th and Harvard, 11th and Lewis, 15th and Boston, Pine and Cincinnati.

As might be expected, more questions were raised as an incidental result of this study than have been answered. Some of these questions can be taken up in future studies. For instance, What is the shape of the dependent trade territory? Where is the retail center located typically in this area? What types of services, and how many business units, are there in the various stages of development? Can the location of future centers and the decline of present centers be predicted?