

Looking after the shop

Town centre management



Pedestrianisation

12.1 INTRODUCTION

12.1.1 Town Centre Management (TCM) co-ordinates public and private sector services and interests and, in conjunction with environmental improvements, can increase town centre vitality and viability. It can be used either as a preventative technique to ensure the continued success of the town centre, or as a means of reversing decline. TCM is pro-active and aims to provide all town centre users with an environment which is clean, safe, attractive and accessible. It also facilitates liaison between local authority departments and other service providers and, through improved communications, helps increase the effectiveness of service provision.

According to the Association of Town Centre Managers, the goals of TCM are:

- to achieve a competitive edge
- to improve the management of the public realm
- to satisfy the aspirations of all town centre users

12.1.2 These goals are achieved through the creation of public/private sector partnerships to co-ordinate cleansing and maintenance, promotion and environmental improvements. Typically, TCM budgets consists of equal contributions from the public and private sectors.

12.1.3 TCM has evolved in response to the economic and physical decline of the town centre

in the face of competition from out-of-town retail developments. It counters retail threats by reviving the appeal of the High Street and can return the town centre to its traditional role as the economic and social heart of the community. The advantages of the town centre - accessibility by foot and public transport, multi-purpose trips, diversity, and an evening economy - are emphasised by TCM.

12.1.4 TCM is usually achieved by the appointment of a town centre manager who acts as a co-ordinator of public services, organises events and entertainments, and promotes the town centre. The appointment of a town centre manager can help TCM by providing a single contact person for all those with interests and concerns in the town centre. However, TCM can take place without a town centre manager. Small towns, or those with limited resources, can develop TCM through a forum of town centre organisations to ensure that services and activities are co-ordinated and promoted. Private sector partners in a TCM initiative may include multiple retailers and restaurant chains, the Chamber of Commerce, local authorities, the Police, banks and building societies, and residents' associations.



Town Centre Events - Nottingham "Pier"

12.1.5 TCM schemes may include:

- improving liaison and communication between parties with an interest in the town centre;
- monitoring the town centre's appearance, cleanliness and maintenance;
- improving security

- providing and co-ordinating information services such as signposting, newsletters and publicity;
- instigating promotional activities;
- the management of projects such as pedestrianisation;
- the generation of resources;
- the representation of town centre users at planning and development meetings
- the promotion of customer care; and
- ongoing investment. TCM is a constant improvement, not a one-off

Although most towns are faced with the same problems and concerns, each town will have a different solution tailored to suit its situation and budget.

12.2 THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW

12.2.1 The Revised PPG6 is very supportive of TCM initiatives. It sets out that effective management and promotion of the town centre are likely to enhance its vitality and viability. It also advocates the production of town centre strategies which set the context for the management of the centre.

12.2.2 PPG6 also stresses the importance of public and private sectors involved in retailing working together so that policies are realistic and capable of implementation.

12.3 BACKGROUND

12.3.1 The success of new shopping centre developments instigated an interest in TCM. TCM applies the management strategies which have been effective in privately-owned centres to the town centre as a whole. Shopping centres benefit from unified ownership and management which make co-ordinated cleansing, maintenance, security and promotion simple to achieve.

12.3.2 Although TCM has evolved from shopping centre management, the role and responsibilities of a town centre manager are broader than those of his or her counterpart in a privately-owned centre. Town centres fulfil a more complex role than

shopping centres, so TCM considers all town centre users, and addresses social, as well as environmental and economic, concerns. Some of the earliest town centre management initiatives were undertaken in the U.S. as part of the Main Street programme. TCM reached the UK in the 1980s and currently (1997) about 180 centres or towns have a Town Centre Manager - a doubling of representation over the last 2 years.

12.4 FUNCTION

12.4.1 While the role of town centre manager will vary depending on local concerns and resources, the position has been outlined by categorising town centre managers into two types: "Doers" and "Enablers". The role of the former is to co-ordinate specific operations like cleansing, maintenance and crime reduction through the management of a large budget. The latter's role is to create the circumstances which let others function within a co-ordinated management structure. "Enablers" have smaller budgets as they must persuade others to invest in the town centre.



CCTV on an historic building

12.4.2 Initially, TCM tends to address everyday problems such as street cleansing, the removal of graffiti, and matters of immediate public nuisance. As the means of addressing minor problems are established, the role of TCM often becomes one of strategic management. Larger issues such as organising events and co-ordinating pedestrianisation may fall within the remit.



Promotional events as part of TCM

12.4.3 In towns and cities frequently visited by tourists, TCM can provide a vehicle for handling the needs of all town centre users. Examples include the provision and co-ordination of coach parking, pedestrian signs, information in foreign languages, and marketing and promotion. The town centre manager can ensure that tourists' requirements do not overwhelm residents' needs for a locally-focused High Street. Visitor management is addressed more fully in the EHTF's guide "Getting it Right: A Guide to Visitor Management".

12.4.4 A TCM action plan usually includes means of addressing and improving :

- Traffic: eg congestion; conflicts with pedestrians; sign posting; parking and public transport.
- The environment: eg pedestrianisation; landscaping; street furniture; maintenance; security; vandalism; shop fronts; information boards; and maintaining retail variety.
- Promotion: e.g. entertainments and events; advertising; attracting investment; tourist trails; shopping, parking and hotel guides; and press coverage.

12.4.5 An important element of TCM is measuring its achievement to provide evidence of success and promote confidence in the scheme. Monitoring enables the strategy to evolve; changing as problems are solved and as new issues arise. Ensuring the scheme has a specific role and definite, achievable goals will establish TCM as a high profile approach to improving the town centre. Quantitative

measures such as retail turnover and pedestrian flow need to be complemented by qualitative research into the opinions and behaviours of both residents and visitors.

12.5 RETAILER/INVESTOR/DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

12.5.1 Successful TCM creates a prosperous town centre, and may influence retailers and developers to regard town centre investment more favourably. Where TCM achieves its goals, retailers' profits and the demand for retail space will increase. This, in turn, will raise rents, increase the value of investments, and stimulate new investment. Other benefits include increased pedestrian flow, increased trading potential, and support for maintaining and improving properties.

12.5.2 The town centre manager may actively pursue new investment and encourage specific retailers to locate in the town centre. This role is pro-active and may be critical to the economic health and town centre. The town centre manager also acts as a point of contact for the business community, and as a source of consultation and information on issues relating to promotion and trade. Town centre improvements, such as landscaping, litter removal, promotional events, and the publication of shopping and parking guides, will help the position of retailers. TCM may also be able to address retailing issues such as trading pressures, extended opening hours, customer services, and disabled access.



Street vendor



Street entertainers

12.6 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

12.6.1 In the recent past, interest has developed in the possibility of importing the Business Improvement District (BID) concept, pioneered in the United States, to English towns. These successful initiatives include the establishment of a Business Improvement District management company which is supported by a levy imposed upon all businesses (not just retailers) in the defined area and collected by the local authority. This mandatory levy, not unlike a service charge levied in managed shopping schemes, is only applied following a ballot of all businesses. The funds collected are expended solely on improvement initiatives including promotion, events, parking and improvements to public areas. The idea had found favour with a range of organisations in the UK and a version of it, known as Town Improvement Zones, is being promoted by the Association of Town Centre Management. The key benefit is that it provides a guaranteed financial base for centre improvement initiatives and engages all businesses in the process rather than just those engaged in current voluntary initiatives. A BID type operation in Britain would require primary legislation. Although the House of Commons Environment Committee has recommended (March 1997) that the Government gives 'prompt consideration to the outcome of research into town improvement zones and be ready to come forward with proposals at an early opportunity' there is no firm commitment to the introduction of primary legislation by either main party at the time of going to print.

GUIDANCE

Although TCM varies according to local needs, the ATCM provides a basic outline to be followed by towns wishing to introduce TCM. The various stages involved in setting up a scheme are:

- undertaking initial research, possibly SWOT analysis
- identifying key problems and priorities
- establishing consensus among a range of organisations
- identifying those who will form a basis for a partnership and establish a steering group to direct the scheme
- determining a budget and methods of funding (possibilities include a steering group to direct the scheme or a partnership, annual subscriptions or one-time donations)
- establishing working groups to develop and implement an action plan
- ensuring the needs of residents are not comprised by commercial interests
- ensuring preliminary projects have an immediate and visual impact
- ensuring the town centre manager has a high profile and is the first point of contact for all town centre issues
- establishing a good relationship with the local media
- ensuring accountability
- monitoring progress
- seeking, and providing sponsorship
- ongoing attention. TCM is not a one-off project.



The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells

CASE STUDY : CHESTER



Pedestrian signing in Chester

1 TCM in Chester was established in 1994 as a public/private/voluntary sector partnership between the City and County Councils, local trade associations, the police and several leading retailers. The aim is to:

- Co-ordinate, direct and control the wide range of existing operations aimed at making the City Centre clean, safe and attractive for all, whilst maximising promotional opportunities to ensure continuing prosperity for the benefit of Chester.

2 The partnership has produced a business plan containing seven objectives integral to the continued vitality of the City Centre. The objectives are: communication, image, event promotion, income generation, street environment, safety and security, and access.

From these objectives come key tasks:

- Publish an A-Z of City services
- Conduct local surveys throughout the business community
- Record performance and levels of success
- Review existing events and consider new events; enhance national/international status
- Advocate the benefits and opportunities of partnerships; produce a 'guide' to partnership opportunities
- Be involved in all reviews of entertainment, trading, signs, floral displays, festive lighting

- Review the effectiveness of the CCTV programme, make recommendations for improvement
- Review and monitor street trading, take action for breach of trading restrictions
- Review pedestrian access, mobility and support provision
- Ensure all projects and events take account of those with special needs.

Further Reading:

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6. *Chester Action Programme*. July 1993. A City of Achievement with a Plan for Success: Strategies and Actions. Chester Action Programme Partnership, Chester.
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Street Art - Strasbourg



DONALDSONS



SIMONS