The vibrant 15-minute geographies of suburban Morristown, NJ

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Abstract The notion of 15-minute geographies, neighbourhoods and cities has caught considerable attention among noted urbanists and the media, sparked by the actions taken in Paris to create vibrant 15-minute neighbourhoods. Their defining characteristics were, however, often unclear or questionable: how many of their residents' needs and wants needed to be satisfied within them? Did they need to significantly diminish car use? Did the use of drive sheds mean an inauthentic 15-minute geography? Could they only be defined by walk or bike trips? These issues are addressed in this paper as we take up the particular assertion that suburbs cannot have 15-minute geographies because auto use would be necessary for residents to access the services and venues that can meet their needs and wants. In doing so, we argue that these geographies have two types of areas that must be analysed: a core walk trip-defined area, and a drive shed-defined associated access area.

Keywords: *15-minute geographies, city, urban regeneration, Morristown, New Jersey*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the last of three written by us in response to one by Carlo Ratti and Richard Florida, who argued that 15-minute neighbourhoods and cities (15MNCs) do not 'work so well for a suburban nation, like the United States [and] are only viable in highly urban areas'.[1] Their basic argument is the claim that 15-minute geographies are only viable

in very dense activity asset-rich areas — lots of high-quality shops, museums, restaurants, parks, etc. — such as those found in our most admired city centres and urban neighbourhoods. Suburban locations, they claim, can only access such assets, should they exist, via auto usage. Consequently 15-minute neighbourhoods are impossible in them.

The fact that Paris has made the creation of 15-minute neighbourhoods official policy, and that this coincided with the strong expansion of bike lanes and improvements to its walkability, influenced some urban analysists to believe such enhancements are integral to the concept. The Paris improvements have also been applauded because they are seen as a way to reduce the use and presence of automobiles in our large cities. Reading through the literature, however, it seemed that the Ratti–Florida article reflected a broad trend in which a 15-minute travel time, being able to satisfy many/all needs and wants, and the reduction or eradication of car use were strongly associated with these geographies, although whether they were defining or desirable characteristics was often not clear. And that distinction is analytically important. Is car absence a required characteristic of all 15 MNCs, or just of a preferred one?

The first of our 15MNC related publications addressed that lack of clarity and showed how a fairly normal NYC neighbourhood, Kew Gardens, has emerged organically as a strong walkable 15MNC without any world-class assets in its midst.[2] It also argued that 15-minute geographies should be viewed as being composed of: 1) a basic core area; and 2) many larger associated access areas. The core area is defined by a 15-minute walk shed from some central point, with supportive services that meet many human needs and desires, but certainly not all. Access areas are places core area residents can go to within a 15-minute trip *by any travel mode*. The core area thus serves as a base for residents to access additional venues and places located well beyond its borders that additionally can meet its residents' needs and wants. Auto use reduction is not a defining feature, although it may be a desired one. More generally, the failure to distinguish between the defining and desirable features of 15MNCs has hindered their proper analysis.

Following the analysis of Andres Duany and Robert Steuteville, who showed the wide range of 15-minute geographies that can be conceptualised by using different travel modes rather than one specific transport mode, eg walking or biking, to define access areas, our analysis carried over the 15-minute travel time constraint because of its implicitly strong association with providing the opportunity for enjoying a higher quality of life.[3] A better quality of life is perhaps the most fundamental factor for defining 15-minute geographies. It underlies the attention paid to walking and biking, and the implicit interest in reducing auto use. Additionally, 15 minutes is also about half of the average time of commuter trips in the US, is used by many shopping centres to define their trade areas, and usually, even if defined by walking, will be large enough to cover both residential and commercial uses. In doing so, we leave open how much 15-minute geographies can stimulate or sustain a significant reduction in auto use within them, but recognise that they can differ in this regard, and it may be one criterion for assessing their value; however, it cannot be effectively used to define them. Of course, that implies 15-minute geographies generally will vary in many of their characteristics and desirability.

The second paper looked at Laramie, WY, an isolated small rural university city of about 32,000 population, which

is the complete antithesis of the places where Ratti and Florida argue 15MNCs are most viable: 'Paris, Copenhagen and Barcelona in small repeating parts – or even in certain places in the US like Manhattan and Brooklyn, or big slices of Boston and Cambridge in Massachusetts'.[4] Its analysis showed that in this very car-oriented and dependent city there is a vital 15-minute neighbourhood centred around its downtown that is walkable and very bike-friendly — walk score 79, bike score 100.[5] Moreover, it showed that the whole city fit within a 15-minute drive shed also centred on the downtown, which served as the access area for many of the core downtown neighbourhood residents. Importantly, the analysis showed that a very high number of Laramie residents also worked in the city, so their average commuting time is only about 12 minutes, substantially below the national average of about 27 minutes. Consequently, although the car is overwhelmingly used to get to and from work, the negative environmental impacts are far lower than might be expected.

In this paper we want to directly take on the Ratti–Florida argument about only car-dependent 15MNCs being viable in US suburbs.

WHY MORRISTOWN, NJ?

The Ratti–Florida argument is based on a very out-of-date view of what a large number of our suburban downtowns are like these days, and Morristown's is one of the new kind that we have extensively researched and know well from many visits over the past 30 years. It is an excellent example of what our strong suburban downtowns will increasingly look like in the future. It's an urbanized suburban downtown whose major strength is its central social functions. For example, even back in 2010, our research on its downtown found a very strong entertainment niche (see Figure 1).

For many years prior to 2000, however, town leaders, downtown stakeholders and urban experts believed downtown Morristown should have been far stronger because of its strong assets. It was a county seat and had many of the businesses that function can stimulate. It was an unusually strong major employment centre, in the midst of a growing area for office development. Its trade area was filled with affluent households. It had a major interstate highway and a direct NJT rail connection to Newark and Manhattan. It had a large hospital, hotels and an important national historic site. Yet it could not attract the trophy retailers that were going into Westfield, Ridgewood and Englewood — other urbanised suburban downtowns — because of the closeness of Short Hills and other strong retail centres that surrounded the town. Also, deals with major developers seemed to be hard to complete. It also had an image problem.

In 2010, local political leaders wanted a strategy that would bring them the trophy retailers they thought the town ought to have, and our company was hired to create

Clearview Cinema Headquarters	
10	Screens
36,041	National attendance per screen (NATO data)
360,411	Estimate Morristown Attendance
987	Est avg attendance/day
Community Theatre	
230	Performances
200,000	Attendance
870	Avg attendance /performance
Restaurants	
77	Number of restaurants
21	Number listed in Zagat's
11	Number listed with ratings
23	Avg food rating
20	Avg décor rating
21	Avg service rating
9	Cafes/ coffee bars

Sources: Morrstown Partnership's 2010 Master Business Directory, Zagat Survey, National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), Community Theatre

Figure 1: Components of downtown Morristown's entertainment niche in 2010

it.[6] What we discovered instead made us want to ask them: things are really going great, so what are you complaining about? Storefront vacancies were under 5 per cent. Property values were robust. The biggest problem was the lack of the large storefronts needed to attract strong value retailers, not vacancies, economic decline or physical decay. Yes, there were very few major retailers like 20th Century, but many of the small independents were outstanding. For example, a chocolate maker on a side street, no less, was doing gangbuster business, and was already a master of omnichannel marketing. A women's lingerie shop, also on a side street, had been there for decades, and had a constant strong flow of affluent shoppers. There was a well-regarded jewellery store and several more shops of similar uniqueness and quality. The pedestrian traffic along South Street was always solid for a suburban downtown.

What really set downtown Morristown apart, even at that time, were:

- The 1,578 housing units that had been recently completed or where approved by 2010 and the estimated US$82m in 2008 expenditure dollars their residents would bring in. Most of these units were in or near the downtown and many were within 0.5 miles of the NJT station, and within easy walks of the Morristown Green. This meant that there was a large cluster of solidly middle-class residents within easy walking distance of the downtown core;
- The exceptionally large restaurant niche of 77 establishments that were averaging about US$1m/yr in sales. Restaurants are keystones of today's urbanised suburban downtowns and have done relatively well during the pandemic;
- The strong pamper niche of hair salons, spas and gyms that was attracting lots of affluent patrons;
- A performing arts centre that had attendance of about 200,000/yr;
- A 10-screen movie theatre with estimated attendance of about 360,000 per year;
- The Morristown Green at the centre of the downtown, which serves as the venue for a robust programme of events;
- The town also had a significant amount of tourist traffic, both business and leisure, that benefited downtown merchants.

There are not many neighbourhoods in NYC that have such a strong array of attractions.

The net result is that downtown Morristown is thriving even without the trophy retailers. Consequently, it has been injured to a far less degree than downtowns like Westfield and Englewood that unfortunately were so dependent on them as the retail industry was thrown deeply into a process of creative destruction over the past decade.

This growing strength of a suburban downtown's central social functions is appearing in more and more of them. On a smaller scale in NJ, Cranford's and Red Bank's are showing similar strengths, and Englewood's is helping it survive the loss of many national chains, while Westfield looks like it soon may pivot to strengthening them. That trend is being reinforced by the demands and tastes of the nesting millennials who are moving to the suburbs from our major cities.

While suburban downtown neighbourhoods like Morristown's cannot meet residential and district user needs at the same high levels as our large downtowns, they often can meet them at a level far above mere adequacy. They are walkable, attractive, active and convenient downtowns with lots of things to do. They are very much like strong big city neighbourhoods such as Williamsburg in Brooklyn.

Finally, when analysing 15MNCs in suburban and rural towns, it is impossible to avoid the elephant in the room that Ratti and Florida raised of auto dependency. Even if one is committed to halting as much auto traffic as possible, it is hard to ignore the fact that achieving that is far more likely in dense transit rich urban environments, and it is full achievement in the suburbs would likely lead to their demise or abandonment. Consequently, efforts to substantially reduce auto use in suburban and rural areas are unlikely to gain much traction. Additionally, a 15-minute drive shed often contains many facilities essential for a high quality of life such as workplaces, hospitals, universities, large parks and other leisure facilities, and since the shed covers about 314 square miles it is hard to divine how they can be easily accessed other than by auto. On the other hand, being able to reach lots of desired destinations within or from a suburb in a 15-minute travel time does seem like something residents are likely to greatly appreciate, want or need. Importantly, Morristown shows that a lot of residents' needs and desires can be met within a walk-defined suburban downtown 15MNC. Given that auto use is such an integral part of suburban and rural towns, it seems very inappropriate to imply that their having auto use-defined and dependent associated access areas is a diminution of either the 15MNC concept or of these communities and their lifestyles. The important thing is that locals can have very meaningful access to venues capable of meeting their needs and wants within an easy 15-minute trip, not that they do not use autos, something that may be near impossible for them to do.

One of the nice things about using the 15-minute neighbourhood concept centred on a downtown is that it brings into the analysis many of the close residential areas that are so influential on its operations, yet often not given the attention they deserve since they are beyond the district's official boundaries.

MORRISTOWN'S 15-MINUTE GEOGRAPHIES

The downtown-centred 15-minute walk shed occupies about half of the town's area (see map in Figure 2). The area of the town is dwarfed by its 15-minute drive shed. The walk shed had an estimated population of approximately 13,000 in 2021, about 63 per cent of the town and 7 per cent of the 15-minute drive shed (see Figure 4).

Work is the reason residents most consistently leave their neighbourhoods, and 15-minute geographies are thought to be strongest when lots of people working in them live there.

The inflow/outflow tables (see Figure 3) show that in both the 15-minute neighbourhood and the town, most residents work elsewhere, and most workers live elsewhere. This is similar to our prior findings about the Kew Gardens neighbourhood in NYC. The need to work in urban, suburban and rural areas pushes car use. But in rural and suburban areas, it is also more frequently needed to reach other types of destinations, like going to the grocery, drugstore, movie or church. The 216,564 people employed in Morristown's 15-minute drive shed (see Figure 5) indicates that lots of employment opportunities probably exist within it that are a relatively easy commute for residents of the downtown 15-minute neighbourhood, and the whole town. That said Morristown has a very high number of people employed in it for a town of its size.

The data in the above table about demographics indicates that housing in the downtown walk shed grew by 132 per cent between 2000 and 2021, faster than

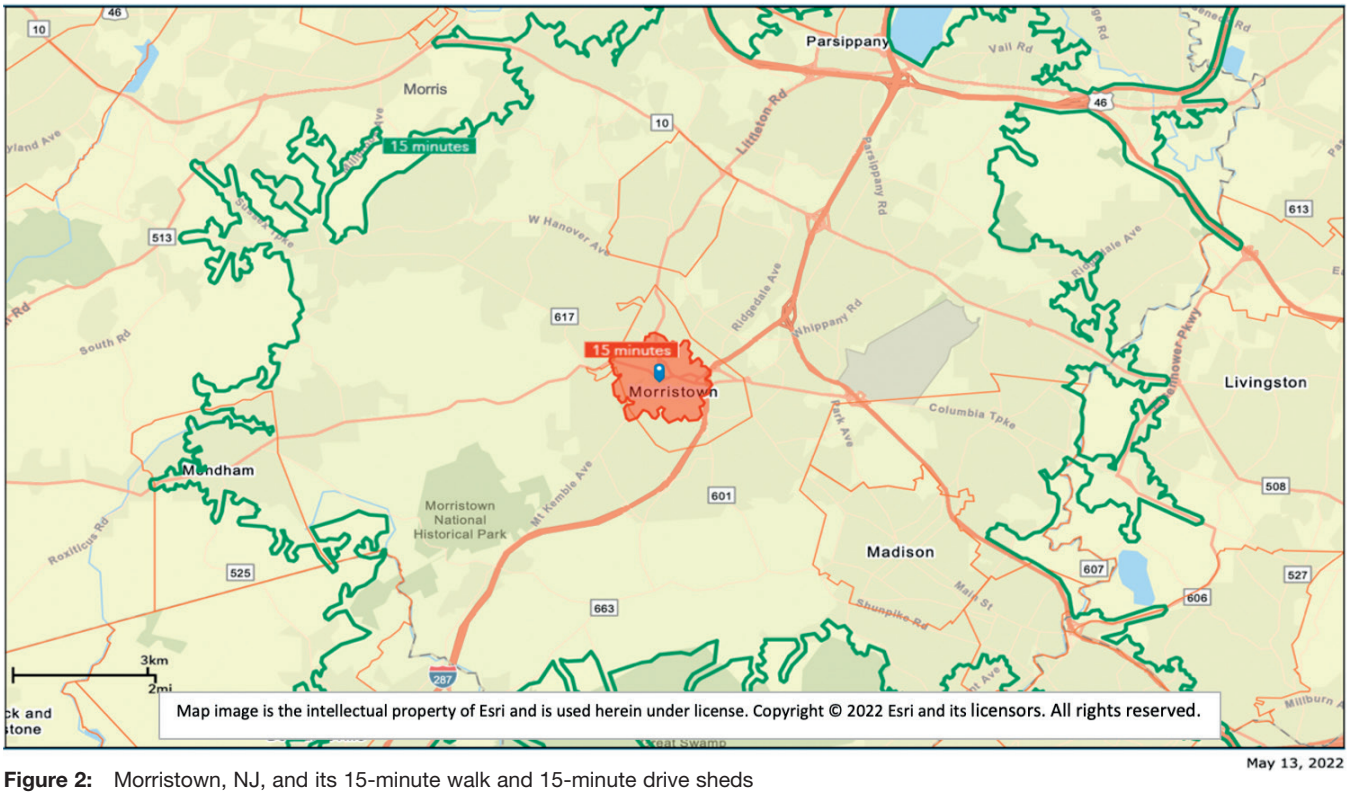

Figure 2: Morristown, NJ, and its 15-minute walk and 15-minute drive sheds

Inflow/Outflow Report 2019
Morristown, NJ

Selection Area Labour Market Size (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	27,327	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area	9,769	35.7%
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	17,558	-

In-Area Labour Force Efficiency (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Living in the Selection Area	9,769	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Selec	1,397	14.3%
Living in the Selection Area but E	8,372	85.7%

In-Area Employment Efficiency (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	27,327	100.0%
Employed and Living in the Selec	1,397	5.1%
Employed in the Selection Area b	25,930	94.9%

Source: Cenus Bureau On the Map database

Morristown Inflow/Outflow Report 2019:
15 Minute Walk Shed Centered on Grand Ave at 40 W Park Place

Selection Area Labour Market Size (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	13,216	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area	6,731	50.9%
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	6,485	-

In-Area Labour Force Efficiency (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Living in the Selection Area	6,731	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Selec	548	8.1%
Living in the Selection Area but E	6,183	91.9%

In-Area Employment Efficiency (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	13,216	100.0%
Employed and Living in the Selec	548	4.1%
Employed in the Selection Area b	12,668	95.9%

Source: Cenus Bureau On the Map database

Figure 3: Labour market inflows and outflows for Morristown, NJ and its 15-minute walk shed in 2019

in the town or the 15-minute drive shed. Household incomes in all the geographies are relatively high, but those in the town are the lowest, with the walk shed being in the middle at around US$131.000/yr (see Figure 4).

Walk shed residents also tend to be slightly better educated than those in the

CHARACTERISTICS	A) !5 Min Walk Shed Number	B) Morristown Number	A as Percent of B	C) 15 Min Drive Shed	A as Percent of C	B as Percent of C
Population	12,875	20,377	63%	197,164	7%	10.3%
Daytime Population	14,719	25,134	59%	252,873	6%	9.9%
Workers	10,034	17,178	58%	154,956	6%	11.1%
Residents	4,685	7,956	59%	97,917	5%	8.1%
Household Summary						
2021 Households	5,487	8,262	66%	74,441	7%	11.1%
Avg Household Size	2.2	2.4	91%	2.6	85%	93.5%
Housing Units 2021	6,115	9,193	67%	77,541	8%	11.9%
Owner Occupied	29.5%	29.3%	101%	63.4%	47%	46.2%
Renter Occupied	59.2%	61.7%	96%	30.9%	192%	199.7%
Vacant	11.4%	9.0%	127%	5.7%	200%	157.9%
Housing Units 2000	4,619	7,613	61%	69,097	7%	11.0%
Housing Units 2010	5,239	8,172	64%	73,969	7%	11.0%
2000-2021 Increase	132%	121%	110%	112.2%	118%	107.6%
Live Workers*						
Live in area, in labor force	6,731	9,769	69%			
Live and work in area	6.1%	14.3%	43%			
Work Livers						
Employed in area	13,216	27,327	48%			
Work and live in area	4.1%	5.1%	80%			
Median Home Value	$510,283	$475,468	107%	$598,903	85%	79.4%
Average Home Value	$6,569,296	$536,277	1225%	$681,174	96.4%	78.7%
Median Household Income	$98,366	$94,302	104%	$126,793	78%	74.4%
Average Household Income	$131,695	$129,162	102%	$180,795	73%	71.4%
% HHs %100k+	49.4%	47.7%	104%	60.9%	1%	0.8%
Race - White Alone	63.1%	62.5%	101%	79.2%	80%	78.9%
Median Age	37.4	37.9	99%	42.6	88%	89.0%
Bachelor's Degree	36.7%	34.7%	106%	35.8%	103%	96.9%
Grad/Prof Degree	26.0%	24.7%	105%	30.4%	86%	81.3%
Total BA+	62.7%	59.4%	106%	66.2%	95%	89.7%

Source: ESRI Market profile 2021 for each geography; * USCB's On the Map employment data

Figure 4: Housing and selected demographics in Morristown NJ and its 15-minute downtown-based walk shed and its 15-minute-based drive shed in 2021

town and drive shed, and meaningfully younger than the drive shed residents, with mean ages of 37.4 and 42.6 respectively.

This 15-minute walk-defined MNC is centred on a Starbucks in the heart of the downtown. From there:

- The Morristown Green is across the street;
- It is 0.3 miles, a 7-minute walk from the 10-screen AMC theatre;
- It is 0.2 miles, a 4-minute walk from Mayo PAC;
- There are 121 food and drink establishment with a 15-minute walk (see Figure 5);
- There are 255 retail establishments with a 15-minute walk, of which 84 offer general merchandise, apparel and accessories (GAFO);
- There are 172 finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) industries establishments in the walk shed;
- There are 641 other service operations in the walk shed including those in the health, legal, entertainment, education and hotel sectors.

These are far from paltry offerings, even looking at the GAFO shops that are so often problematical in all types of neighbourhoods and most downtowns. The central social functions are particularly strong.

Walkscore gives downtown Morristown a score of 93 for walkability. The downtown, however, is really composed of four large nodes (see Figure 6). Office workers, who account for most of the walk shed's daytime population, usually

CHARACTERISTICS	A) !5 Min Walk Shed Number	B) Morristown Number	A as Percent of B	C) 15 Min Drive Shed	A as Percent of C	B as Percent of C
Total Businesses:	1,360	1,760	77.3%	11,789	11.5%	14.9%
Total Employees:	13,575	25,742	52.7%	216,564	6.3%	11.9%
Total Residential Population:	12,875	20,377	63.2%	197,164	6.5%	10.3%
Employee/Residential Population						
Ratio (per 100 Residents)	105	126	83.3%	110	95.5%	114.5%
by SIC Codes						
Agriculture & Mining	18	22	81.8%	200	9.0%	11.0%
Construction	62	74	83.8%	660	9.4%	11.2%
Manufacturing	17	22	77.3%	333	5.1%	6.6%
Transportation	27	33	81.8%	247	10.9%	13.4%
Communication	14	15	93.3%	106	13.2%	14.2%
Utility	5	6	83.3%	38	13.2%	15.8%
Wholesale Trade	20	24	83.3%	325	6.2%	7.4%
Retail Trade Summary	255	286	89.2%	2,030	12.6%	14.1%
Home Improvement	7	9	77.8%	119	5.9%	7.6%
General Merchandise Stores	3	3	100.0%	44	6.8%	6.8%
Food Stores	30	34	88.2%	186	16.1%	18.3%
Auto Dealers, Gas Stations, Auto	14	16	87.5%	168	8.3%	9.5%
Apparel & Accessory Stores	23	25	92.0%	165	13.9%	15.2%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	8	10	80.0%	160	5.0%	6.3%
Eating & Drinking Places	121	131	92.4%	638	19.0%	20.5%
Miscellaneous Retail	50	58	86.2%	549	9.1%	10.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	172	259	66.4%	1,557	11.0%	16.6%
Banks, Savings & Lending	28	37	75.7%	257	10.9%	14.4%
Securities Brokers	36	62	58.1%	345	10.4%	18.0%
Insurance Carriers & Agents	16	33	48.5%	287	5.6%	11.5%
Real Estate, Holding, Other	93	127	73.2%	667	13.9%	19.0%
Services Summary	641	868	73.8%	5,338	12.0%	16.3%
Hotels & Lodging	1	5	20.0%	65	1.5%	7.7%
Automotive Services	27	33	81.8%	217	12.4%	15.2%
Motion Pictures & Amusements	40	46	87.0%	354	11.3%	13.0%
Health Services	93	199	46.7%	946	9.8%	21.0%
Legal Services	118	147	80.3%	472	25.0%	31.1%
Education Institutions & Libraries	19	23	82.6%	291	6.5%	7.9%
Other Services	342	415	82.4%	2,993	11.4%	13.9%
Government	63	64	98.4%	368	17.1%	17.4%
Unclassified Establishments	67	87	77.0%	588	11.4%	14.8%
Totals	1,360	1,760	77.3%	11,789	11.5%	14.9%
Source : ESRI Business Summary Reports for 2021						

Figure 5: Businesses in Morristown, NJ, and its 15-minute downtown-based walk shed and its 15-minute-based drive shed in 2021

will go to destinations within a ten and preferably a 5-minute walk of their offices. Their range of purchases are more limited than those of the 12,800 local residents.

This is the sort of situation where e-scooters might catch on and lengthen the distances office workers will go at lunch time.

This auto-defined 15MNC is also centred on a Starbucks in the heart of the downtown. From there:

- The hospital is 1.1 miles, a 23-minute walk, a 6-minute drive;
- St Elizabeth University is 3.9 miles, a 12-minute drive;
- Drew University is 4 miles, an 11-minute drive;
- Farleigh Dickinson University is 3.8 miles, a 10-minute drive;
- Short Hills Mall is 10.9 miles, a 16-minute drive;
- Morristown National Historical Park is 1.7 miles, and numerous other parks

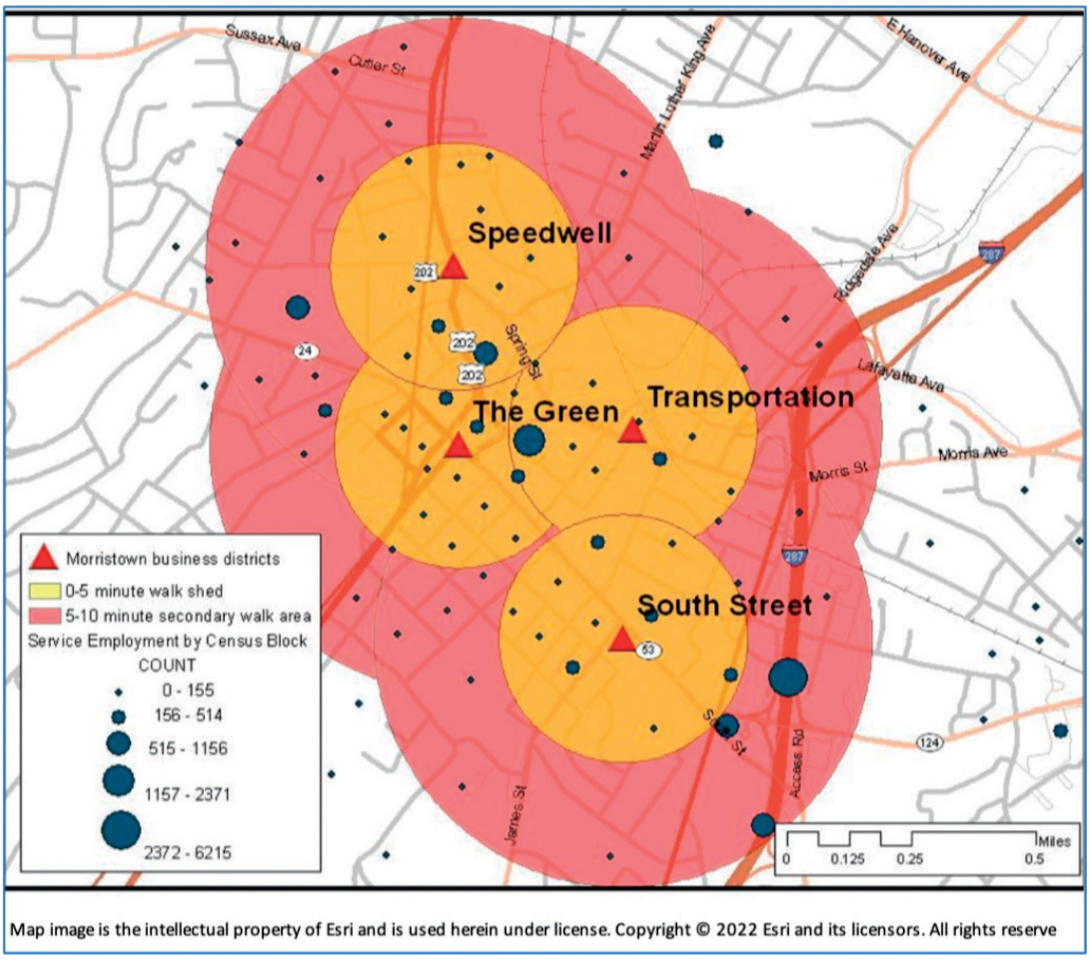

Figure 6: Walk sheds of downtown Morristown's four business cores

are within the drive shed — some are in the town, but not the downtown neighbourhood.

Also within the drive shed there are:

- 638 food and drink establishments (see Figure 5);
- 2,030 retail establishments with 918 being GAFO operations in the drive shed;
- 1,557 FIRE industries establishments;
- 5,338 other service operations including those in the health, legal, entertainment, education and hotel sectors.

YES, SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES CAN HAVE VIBRANT 15-MINUTE GEOGRAPHIES

Contrary to the contention of Ratti and Florida, downtown Morristown shows that a walk-time-defined downtown-centred 15-minute neighbourhood in a suburban community can organically develop and offer its users an impressive array of quality venues that can meet many of their needs and desires. Similar organically developed 15-minute neighbourhoods are likely to be found in the increasing number of suburban communities that have downtowns with a significant number of the following attributes:

- A significant amount of market rate housing, often relatively close to commuter rail stations;
- Strong restaurant niches;
- Strong entertainment and cultural venues;
- Attractive pamper niche operations such as hair salons, spas, gyms;
- Attractive and well programmed public spaces;
- Venues valued by key elements of their daytime populations such as downtown workers, seniors and adults with pre-school children such as senior and childcare centres, and restaurants, coffee shops, tea shops, libraries and public spaces;
- Other places for strong social aggregations such as places of worship and community centres;
- They often have strong retail attractions, including many offering comparison shopping-type merchandise, while the presence of national chains may vary in number.

Some other examples of these urbanised suburban downtowns in the US are Wellesley, MA; Old Pasadena, CA; Downers Grove, IL. Although their strengths vary, their obvious popularity, as shown by their ability to attract shoppers, diners and other visitors, indicates their ability to meet many local user needs and wants. They are obviously providing many people with a quality of life they appreciate and desire. In many ways those needs and wants may be somewhat different from those of urban residents. Moreover, about 65 per cent of Americans do not prefer living in urban areas, so they are obviously willing to forgo the easier access to the kind of large number of venues providing goods, services and activity opportunities to be found in them. Local residents and visitors to the urbanised suburban downtowns may be quite content with their offerings, because in their lifestyle equations the more affordable housing and better schools more than compensates for a less than optimal array of entertainment and retail attractions. Nevertheless, many of their essential needs and wants are being met within their 15-minute geographies.

An interesting question, however, is why Ratti and Florida argued that agglomerated areas must be rich in venues that serve local residents to be *deemed* a 15-minute neighbourhood? Why they made these attractions a defining characteristic? It is a question that reveals just how analytically tangled the discussion of 15MNCs has been. Ratti and Florida seem to have confused defining a geographic area by a specific travel time and mode with defining it by the amount and quality of the goods, services and activity opportunities available within it. In other words, they have confused the ability to assess the strength and magnetism of a 15MNC with the ability to define it geographically. Logic would seem to indicate that some 15MNCs will be strong and highly desirable, while others will be weaker and less desirable. In turn, this raises another important question: can strong, attractive 15MNCs be created for people with below-average incomes? Or just for wealthy households?

We have not raised the issue of car use or traffic levels in our analysis of downtown Morristown's 15-minute neighbourhood, although we have provided some data indicating it is a walkable area. The established strength of the goods, services and activity opportunities exists regardless of whether this neighbourhood needs more traffic calming or reduction. That is a separate issue from whether it is a walkable area with a host of venues that can meet local users' needs and wants. While traffic calming/reduction is not a defining factor for this 15-minute neighbourhood, it might well be a relevant question when

discussing how to improve access to the Morristown Green, which is encircled by traffic, or how to improve the ability to move from one of its downtown nodes to the others.

Morristown's 15-minute drive shed serves as an associated access area for the downtown-centred walkable neighbourhood, allowing its residents to have easy access to many other types of venues that can be very important to their quality of life such as workplaces, hospitals, universities, parks and comparison retail centres. It shows that many of the venues critical for residents of the 15-minute walk shed having a rewarding quality of life are accessible within a 15-minute drive.

We believe it firmly demonstrates the benefit of making associated access areas an integral part of all future analyses of 15MNCs.

To deny that an area is a legitimate 15MNC simply because people use their autos to access its places and venues really only projects one's preference for getting our unreasonable level of auto use under much better control, but it fails to establish the intended illegitimacy of either the concept of auto-defined 15-minute associated access areas, or the particular one in Morristown. It also adds to the analytical confusion that has surrounded the 15MNC concept because it makes diminished or absent auto use a defining characteristic of such areas.

One of the major weaknesses of the 15MNC concept, as presented by its chief advocate Carlos Moreno, is that it verges on autarky, ie the improbable notion of a geographically self-sustaining economy. For example, his TED talk has been presented in this manner: 'In this eight-minute TED talk he makes the case for the "15-minute city", where inhabitants have access to all the services they need to live, learn and thrive within their immediate vicinity …'.[7]

If we leave dampened or absent auto use out of the analytical definition of 15MNCs and the identification of particular instances of them, we can then properly use 15-minute trips by any mode as the way to define and identify them.

Then, among many issues, analysts can investigate how those geographies might be made less car-oriented and more pedestrian-friendly. But to define 15MNCs solely by walk or bike times is to invite the creation of neighbourhoods that our research on Kew Gardens and Morristown have shown will have inadequate access to employment, educational, medical and entertainment opportunities. Access to jobs in particular will be hard to provide in large numbers within a 15-minute walk shed.

If attempts to turn France and Italy into autarkies grossly failed, it is even more unlikely that an area of just 1.8 square miles, that of a 15-minute walk shed, will succeed.

LOOKING TO FUTURE ANALYSES

Based on our research and analysis. we suggest that future analysts should start off by treating the 15MNC concept in the following manner:

- Define a core area by a 15-minute walk shed:
  - Assess it based on the venues it offers to meet the needs and wants of local residents and daytime workers. In doing so, the numbers of venues of various types and business data about them will be relevant. So will survey data about resident and worker satisfaction with these venues;
  - Assess it based on environmental factors such as availability of affordable housing, traffic levels, air quality, noise levels, etc.;
- Define the core area's associated access area as defined by a 15-minute drive or

rail trip. If the entire municipality fits within that area, then it is a 15-minute city:

- Do similar assessments for these geographies as was done for the core area

This approach recognises that the 15-minute trip is the critical part of the 15MNC concept. Entailed in that meaning is the possibility for them to vary in size, strength, components, magnetism, needs and desirability.

This approach really differs from traditional urban development analytical frameworks only in that it says venues and opportunities that can be accessed within 15-minute trips are more valued, and their future provision should be structured by that priority.

The high priority of 15-minute trips reflects beliefs that they will lead to a higher quality of life in communities where they are prevalent.

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