

## Pride Key to City's Downtown Goal

**M**ANY young people are approaching voting age without having the experience of going downtown to shop or transact business.

And many older people are beginning to wonder if they will live to see Oklahoma City's downtown urban renewal completed.

Many will, of course, in spite of numerous delays and false starts to plan, finance and construct the Galleria, Myriad Gardens and nearby first-class apartment complexes.

Because efforts are being made in cities across the country to revitalize central business districts, Oklahoma City has many examples — good and bad — to observe.

Some appear to be successful. Kansas City has its Crown Center and Minneapolis its Nicollet Mall. Tulsa's William Center is being expanded by adding three downtown blocks to the original nine. Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago have successful centers.

Others have not done so well.

Atlanta's Omni is one. Built on five acres of downtown land, with 500-room hotel, office space and retail areas, it has been running behind on payments.

Oklahoma City has a large, elaborate concept for downtown redevelopment, but it is not easy to visualize in a drive along Main street. Gaping holes left by blasted out buildings are a distressing sight. Traffic is a problem only at times.

But some day those holes will be filled with beautiful buildings. Stores in them will be well patronized, providing people can get there easily and park conveniently.

In spite of federal theorists' ideas of "auto free zones" in downtown districts, it may be well to remember that it was automobiles that took retail trade away from downtown. If it is to come back, it will do so in automobiles carrying customers.

Completion of the expressway to connect North Broadway with South Shields will be a great asset to

downtown business, but it will not be enough. Additional limited access freeways are essential if customers are to be attracted from suburbs.

Oklahoma City is safer than many other large cities, but it isn't uncommon to hear expressions of fear about going downtown. Whether the apprehension is justified is immaterial. It must be minimized if shops and restaurants are to be well patronized.

The degree to which Myriad Gardens maintains order and discipline will determine the appeal the place will have.

Oklahoma City can accomplish the goal of building a new, vital and lively business, financial and shopping center if residents take pride in its achievement.

A long step forward came when local business men agreed to provide part of the financing. Pride in one's city is a great thing, but when citizens invest money in its future, a new spirit is added.