

Some things don't work

That's just one lesson London can learn from other places' experiences with new-style suburbs.

RANDY RICHMOND



A TALE OF TWO SUBURBS



MARKHAM

Coffee shop manager Norbert Fitoussi leans over the counter and reveals a few secrets not in the brochures.

Most of the people who come for a coffee aren't from the neighbourhood.

And, gasp, most don't walk.

"I wish we had a drive-through."

There's more: many other stores in this plaza have left.

"If I went, the rest would close."

Fitoussi's nice-looking coffee shop sits in a nice-looking building that's supposed to

be the commercial centrepiece of one of Ontario's trendiest trend-setting subdivisions, Cornell, a suburb of Markham.

One of the developers associated with Cornell, London's Bernie Zaifman, is blunt about the commercial centre.

"It died. It looks terrible because it is empty."

The experience of the commercial centrepiece serves as a warning to any developer, planner or expert wanting to build a new urbanist community in London.

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And there are some large differences between places that embrace new urbanism and places that embrace an altered version called new suburbanism.

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