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HEADLINE: DUBLIN STUDY SAID MALL A BAD IDEA

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BODY:

A proposed 1.5 million-square-foot shopping mall in southern Dublin appears to conflict with many recommendations in a development study completed for the suburb just four months ago.

The study, submitted on March 11 to city officials by **Mt. Auburn Associates**, a Boston-area consulting company, repeatedly urges Dublin to shy away from regional malls.

Instead, the suburb should continue to encourage development of corporate office buildings and research centers, the study recommends.

The Richard E. Jacobs Group of Cleveland last month proposed building a huge mall on 123 acres in Dublin, northwest of Rts. 33 and 161 and Avery Road. A rezoning proposal submitted by Jacobs must be approved by the Dublin Planning Commission and City Council before the mall can be built.

The Jacobs proposal threatens the future of another proposed mall 2 1/2 miles away in Columbus. The 980,000-square-foot Columbus mall, being developed by Taubman Co. of Detroit, would be built southeast of I-270 and Tuttle Crossing Boulevard.

Development experts say the area can support only one of the malls.

The **Mt. Auburn** study says Dublin officials rightly courted corporate and research development throughout the 1980s. "The city became one of the premier corporate

addresses in the greater Columbus area," it says. Jobs produced by office and research development have resulted in a "well-paid work force . . . (that) allowed the city to provide its residents with a high level of services and public works."

Dublin should be cautious about encouraging other types of commercial development, especially retail malls, the study warns.

"Industry and extensive retail (shopping malls) are far less compatible in terms of physical quality and character with Dublin's desire to maintain high-quality, residential neighborhoods.

"Retail requires very large amounts of surface parking and trash and loading areas. Retail would generally reduce the overall aesthetic quality of the area,' it says.

Shopping malls also tend to discourage further development of office buildings and research centers, the study says.

The **Mt. Auburn** study does not mention the Jacobs mall, which was announced after the study was completed. But the consultants leave little doubt of their aversion toward such retail complexes.

Shopping malls would result in "minimal fiscal benefits" for Dublin, the study says. It warns that much of the extra tax revenue generated by malls is eaten up by expensive services cities are required to provide for them.

"Retail services should be developed to the extent they are needed to serve . . . the local population," it adds, noting the potential for significantly increased traffic congestion in Dublin.

It concludes: "The development of additional large retail malls in Dublin is neither likely nor desirable."

Several Dublin City Council members yesterday downplayed these conclusions.

"This represents how a group of consultants see the city through their eyes, " said Councilman Peter Zawaly. While the **Mt. Auburn** consultants recommend office and research development, "I don't think they excluded retail development," Zawaly added.

Vice Mayor Denise King, chairwoman of the council's land-use and economic development committee, agreed.

"The overall message of the **Mt. Auburn** study is to encourage commercial development - offices, hotels, shops, just about any business," she said. "It does not say we ought to have just one kind of development."

"Any study should be a fluid document, subject to change," said Councilman A.C. Strip, chairman of the council's finance committee. "It's a guide."

Strip disagreed that malls require large outlays of tax revenue compared to other types of development. Citing single-family housing developments, he said malls don't require schools, and mall owners maintain their own parking lots.

All three council members emphasized that Dublin officials have not approved the mall. They would be irresponsible, however, if they did not at least consider it, Zawaly said.

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