

General News

## More public gardens, shopping and leisure centres called for in Malaga

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*The Junta de Andalucía has decided that ten per cent more shopping centres could be built in the province*

*Malaga has the highest density in Andalucía, with a ratio of 470 square metres for every 1,000 inhabitants*

It happened back in 1975. The dictatorship was in its dying days, and the winds of change were beginning to blow over the peninsula. But anything foreign, although no longer suspect, was considered somewhat exotic, even a new way of shopping. It was the opening of the Pryca los Patios shopping complex in Malaga city, and this was certainly something new for the province, a hypermarket with shopping galleries attached, and the first of its kind in the province. It was followed shortly afterwards by the Corte Inglés (1979) and the Continente Alameda (1987). These were the first of a new generation of shops in the region, and they were to change the shopping habits of millions of people. Malaga soon attracted most of the large chains, a sector that now employs 6,600 people. And the sector is still growing. More and more people are shopping in shopping centres these days, and the tendency is growing particularly fast in the gardening and do-it-yourself sector. Quite naturally, more and more multinational companies are meeting this demand.

According to the Junta de Andalucía's Commercial Strategy Plan, there is a ten per cent deficit in shopping centres in the province of Malaga. Their study into the sector shows that the areas most lacking are vehicle products (-41 per cent), leisure and culture (-17 per cent), gardening (-16 per cent) and toys (-11 per cent). On the contrary, there would seem to be one per cent too many estate agencies in the province, which is not defined by the Junta as being an excess number. "This sector has not reached saturation point, because for that to happen, the Junta establishes supply at 15 per cent above demand," says Iván Ozomek, director of projects for Geoconyca, a Malaga consulting company specialising in the planning of large shopping centres.

### Malaga ranks first

The last report by the Jones Lang LaSalle property consultants situates Malaga at the top of the Andalusian league in the overall amount of shopping space available for rent. With 700,982 square metres of shopping centre space and a density of 470 for each inhabitant, this works out at double the Andalusian average (266), a third of the offer in the entire autonomous community.

Figures from the Caixa bank tell us that there were 22 shopping centres in the province of Malaga up to the end of 2006, and that Malaga is the sixth city in Spain in the number of shopping centres it has, and the second in Andalucía, after Seville. As far as surface area is concerned, however, Malaga province occupies fourth position in the country, after Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia.

The shopping centre bonanza started at the end of the nineteen nineties, when the province had only a dozen or so shopping centres. This number has doubled over the past six years, with 12 new shopping centres opened in the province since 2000. But the rhythm of inaugurations really accelerated with the end of the moratorium on big shopping spaces in June, 2003, and this carte blanche led to many more being built all over the province.

Figures released by the Federation of Malaga Traders (Fecoma) show that since the lifting of the moratorium, the province has received more than 60 per cent of petitions to build new shopping centres in the entire autonomous community. The organisation warns us that this level of concentration will result in an increase of 258,000 square metres of shopping area over the next few years, which is double the current space.

As far as the president of the federation, Enrique Gil, is concerned, this is far too much shopping centre space, and will seriously damage the future of smaller traders in the province. "The opening of a new shopping centre leads to the disappearance of half the small shops in the area, of which only 20 per cent manage to re-open sometime later," he says.

## Small shops

In order to prevent such an outcome, Gil demands that another moratorium be announced, and more wide-ranging than that of the beginning of the decade. He was supported by the Socialist group in the regional parliament last September. More care should also be taken with respect to the granting of licences by the Junta de Andalucía for such centres, he adds. In fact, a recent Andalusian Shopping centre Strategic Plan 2007-2010 was approved, which obliges promoters to present market studies showing the need for shopping centres in the areas concerned. "Up to now, they have been creating the offer before knowing the demand," he says.

But while Fecoma talks about saturation in the industry, others in the sector assure us that there is still a great need for more shopping centres in the province of Malaga, and point to the same plan to support their argument. The reason Malaga has become the focus of such large-scale commercial activity, we are told by Ozomek, the Geoconyka representative, is the high rate of return and the massive presence of tourists in the region. "They demand more than sun and beach," he says. "They want good places to shop and enjoy themselves too." If we take into account the definition of a large shopping centre in the Interior Commercial Law, the province has 58 shopping centres. Fourth generation

Shopping centres used to be places where one shopped, but that was three generations ago. As the experts tell us, the first generation was in the Pryca Los Patios style in Malaga, which used to be a large shopping area with a cafeteria attached. Then we had the introduction of leisure facilities and restaurants, and this was followed later by the enormous shopping and leisure complexes like the Malaga Nostrum.

The fourth generation, we are told by Iván Ozomek, project director of the Geoconyka consulting company, "will be theme centres with leisure facilities, hotels and office buildings integrated into an overall architectural design, and they will be located in medium-sized towns and in rural areas."

## Planned projects

**Bahía Málaga:** Besides the long-awaited Ikea store, the huge Guadalmar shopping complex will have a shopping area of 14,000 square metres with some of the biggest names in retailing, such as Boulanger and the Basque company Eroski.

**Plaza Mayor Shopping:** The amplification of the Plaza Mayor will mean an area of more than 18,000 square metres with 58 shops and 900 parking spaces.

**Las Marinas de la Farola:** This project involves the transformation into a leisure area of the Paseo de la Farola quayside. Work will begin in June, and is scheduled to finish in the middle of 2009. It will include 60 premises devoted to leisure, clothes and restaurants.

**Jardiland:** The French gardening and do-it-yourself chain will occupy 5,400 square metres in the Plaza Mayor area.

**Car products:** The Cúbica Car City chain is moving into the San Julián area with a shopping area covering 30,000 square metres. In Vélez Málaga, the Motor Genius (El Ingenio del Motor) will be the biggest car store in Spain, covering more than 60,000 square metres.

**Enlargements:** The Vialia shopping centre, which will have a Media Markt, will be enlarged, along with the El Ingenio shopping centre and the Decathlon store.

**New shopping centres:** In Torremolinos, Alhaurín de la Torre, Estepona and the Andalusian Technological Park.

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