Shopping malls were designed to be communal spaces that mimicked town squares, where one could shop, socialize, and feel connected. The architect intended for them to be dense, to promote walkability, and have mixed-uses to attract a diverse range of people. What ended up being built was far from what was initially envisioned. Today the mall can be seen as a large enclosed structure, lined with shops, and surrounded by parking lots.

This unsuccessful model was replicated across the United States after World War II and is now damaging many cities. By bringing Victor Gruen’s vision of a shopping mall back to a pedestrian-friendly, open concept, the space and the city would be revitalized. The parking lot creates a barrier, and by pulling city hall down to the ground level, the space would be opened up. The shopping mall needs to be deconstructed and repurposed as an open area that encourages interaction and encourages walkability as well as becoming a destination used by everyone.

Why are shopping malls declining? How can they become more inviting? How can architecture can solve the problem of a dying shopping mall and turn these spaces into a destination used by everyone.

UNSTITCH SAVING AN URBAN FABRIC
ARCH 772 DESIGN THESIS | CARRI KA HILEN | CINDY URNESS | ILLUSTRATOR, REVIT, ENSCAPE, HAND DRAWING