

Construction, Design & Engineering

Retail is a powerful ingredient in creating successful mixed-use

Defining an all-encompassing recipe for a mixed-use project is about as easy as defining an all-encompassing recipe for bread... countless recipes will give you very different results. Although there may be many forms to the recipe outcome, the staple ingredients of bread—flour and water—remain the same. For mixed-use development, the recipe calls for some combination of retail, residential and/or commercial uses, with the retail portion being a powerful ingredient that can contribute to the success of the mixed-use development. Retail draws people, both locally and regionally, to a mixed-use project and when planned and designed properly, can contribute to a unique rhythm that brings people together and creates a highly sought-after location and timeless, profitable development.

Destination retailers play a significant role in attracting customers to a mixed-use development. Local draw is also fundamental to the project to provide local residents with groceries, pharmaceuticals, services and other necessities. A key to success with a mixed-use development is to effectively incorporate the retail components to provide an environment that is commerce-friendly, community-oriented and encourages the consumer to stay for awhile and return.

Effective interaction of multi-modal transportation with pedestrian circulation establishes the framework of the successful mixed-use project. Placing the right retailers in the right locations encourages active pedestrian flow, and separating the various



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types of retail uses into zones gives the center a desirable rhythm. For example, lifestyle retail and activity areas can be placed in pedestrian-friendly nodes for a more intimate, downtown-like experience. Large format and junior box retailers that are characteristic of destination shopping experiences should be placed with the proper orientation to the more walkable, pedestrian-oriented areas.

Truly long-lived projects have their own sense of uniqueness that retailers will seek out because patrons, too, seek out the location. Adjacent activity areas, such as fountains, ice rinks, and points of interest will encourage consumers to play, stay and shop. A theme will give the center a cohesive feel, and quality materials that adhere to the goals, principles and theme of the development will create a unique environment in which retailers fit into the location, instead of the location adapting to the re-

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tailer. By incorporating elements that drive a sense of place and community, a foundation will be created that the development can always fall back on, regardless of the tenants that occupy the space.

Because of the ever-changing world of retail and the continually evolving character of mixed-use development, it is important to design retail spaces that are flexible and are able to change as the project and the economy evolves. Just as a bread recipe can be altered to obtain different outcomes, there are many recipes for a successful mixed use development. However, the effective use of retail ingredients can move a bland mixed-use development into something really sweet. By combining retailer draw with effective design components, a mixed-use development can become a consumer's "preferred recipe," which ultimately creates a timeless development that can be enjoyed by generations to come.

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