

MIXED-USE: MORE THAN FLAVOUR-OF-THE-MONTH

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Many retail developments currently being planned refer to themselves, in part, or totally, as a lifestyle development. The “lifestyle” description is overused and has lost some of its original meaning.

When first used by Poag & McEwen to describe a specific type of new development, which was limited to a single (e.g. retail) use, a lifestyle centre differentiated itself from other types of common specialty retail centres referred to as fashion centres, power centres, theme or festival centres and outlet centres. The initial International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) definition was:

Lifestyle Center: Most often located near affluent residential neighborhoods, this center type caters to the retail needs and “lifestyle” pursuits of consumers in its trading area. It has an open-air configuration and typically includes at least 50,000 sq. ft. of space occupied by upscale national chain specialty stores. Other elements help make the lifestyle center serve as a multi-purpose, leisure-time destination, including: restaurants and entertainment; design ambience and amenities such as fountains and street furniture that are conducive to casual browsing; and often one or more conventional or fashion specialty department stores as anchors.

Lifestyle is a catchy and fashionable description of a retail development, infusing it with a “cachet” it may or may not have. Clearly, any type of retail development reflects a certain lifestyle from cheap to chic. A lifestyle power-centre trumps all.

The basic concept of the initial lifestyle idea, providing a human-scaled environment and creating a holistic aesthetic among disparate uses, remains valid, but needs to be viewed within a new context.

Mixed Use vs. Multi-Use

Multi-use centres are those containing a distinct retail component with other, complementary uses found on fringe properties. These could include freestanding office, hotel, self-storage and, occasionally, high-density residential developments.

Mixed-use developments differentiate themselves from multi-use projects by integrating different uses within the same structure. For example, a typical mixed-use project could include upscale retailers on the ground floor and office as well as, or in addition to, residential uses on top of the retail podium. They must attract a critical mass of people during the day and night. Residential or office uses could comprise more than one floor, and may either be condominiums or rental properties. Unsightly seas of parking that characterize enclosed malls are replaced by structured parking or heavily landscaped and screened surface parking. In fact, architectural elements may extend to structured parking, thus seamlessly integrating various uses and minimizing the distance between shopping and parking.

Typical recent examples of successful mixed-use developments in a challenging climate include Crocker Park and Legacy Village, near Cleveland, Ohio. Currently, there are about 150 lifestyle/mixed use centres in the United States. RTKL, a Baltimore-based, multi-disciplinary architectural firm, and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) have studied a cross-section of these centres, which can serve as a guide to anyone investigating this development concept in greater detail. They include:

The Avenue at White Marsh, Baltimore, MD	Bay Street, Emeryville, CA
Bethesda Row, Bethesda, MD	Birkdale Village, Huntersville, NC
Bowie Town Center, Bowie MD	Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, MO
Desert Ridge, Phoenix, CA	Easton Town Center, Columbus, OH
Fairfax Corner, Fairfax, VA	Fashion Island, Newport Beach, CA
Fourth Street Shops, Berkeley, CA	The Glen Town Center, Glenview, IL
The Grove, Los Angeles, CA	Highland Park Village, Dallas, TX
Irvine Spectrum Center, Irvine, CA	Kierland Commons, Scottsdale, AZ
Legacy Village, Lyndhurst, OH	The Market Common, Clarendon, Arlington, VA
Market Street at DC Ranch, Scottsdale, AZ	Mockingbird Station, Dallas, TX
Pacific Place, Seattle, WA	Paseo Colorado, Pasadena, CA
Phillips Place, Charlotte, NC	Pike Place Market, Seattle, WA
Redmond Town Center, Redmond, WA	Santa Monica Place, Santa Monica, CA
Santana Row, San Jose, CA	The Shops at Legacy, Plano, TX
Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto, CA	Southlake Town Center, South Lake, TX
Town Center Plaza, Leawood, KS	University Village, Seattle, WA
Westlake Center, Seattle, WA	

Experience to date suggests that a limited amount of office space, say, 50,000 sq. ft. to 70,000 sq. ft. on a 300,000-sq.-ft. to 500,000-sq.-ft. retail base, can be added without increasing the number of parking spaces. Similarly, a hotel of, say, 150 rooms, could be added without a notable impact on parking requirements, due

to the differences in peak demand. For residential uses, of course, dedicated parking separate from the commercial parking is a necessity.

The description of a development as “mixed use” is already being stretched, partially due to the lack of a consistent definition. There is no specific answer to the question, “How many uses are necessary to make a project a mixed-use development”? Few industry players may be aware that the ULI created a definition for mixed-use more than 30 years ago. ULI says that a mixed-use project must have *three or more significant revenue producing uses; significant functional and physical integration of the different uses; and conform to a coherent plan*. This appears to reflect the development concept of the best, currently-available mixed-use projects, and can serve as a reasonable guide.

Mixed-use developments are more time-consuming to complete and more complex than traditional shopping centres. They are also more difficult to finance, and may generate complex liability issues. Technical conflicts can arise, with building configurations between retail and residential space, timing of construction components, sharing of utilities, common areas, etc.

Although usually initiated by retail developers, the non-retail components of mixed-use developments are frequently sold to other investors. Depending on the experience of the developer, some prefer to develop the total project, and then sell the non-retail components, whereas others invite co-developers from the beginning.

Successful mixed-use developments include a “main street” tenanted by small specialty stores. The main street usually permits parallel parking. Large stores are placed as end-caps. Current trends also include the addition of a single, freestanding, small-format, fashion department store. The inclusion of public green spaces and pedestrian walkways is essential, with fountains, street furniture and outdoor fireplaces playing a significant role.

One of the indispensable components of a mixed-use centre is the inclusion of an extraordinarily large selection and variety of sit-down restaurants. In fact, the restaurant category comprises between 12 per cent and 15 per cent of total space in mixed-use centres, compared to less than 5 per cent in regional malls. For example, at Crocker Park, there are 22 eating establishments, while Legacy Village has nine sit-down restaurants. Entertainment venues such as programmable public spaces, art galleries, cinemas and recreational facilities are commonplace as well.

The mix of uses, along with high-quality design features and synergy between adjacent buildings, create an ambiance and vitality, as well as security, that cannot easily be achieved within a standard retail

configuration. Even though the addition of several hundred residents or office employees does not play a significant role in the total retail sales volumes of such a development, their presence creates a sense of place, somewhat similar to that found in the traditional villages of old town centres.

Future Directions

Mixed-use is more than the flavour of the month. It incorporates many of the features now demanded by an increasingly sophisticated and educated customer base, particularly in mid- to high-income areas. Concentrating shop, live, work and play in one area fosters walking and bicycling. Mixed-use developments tend to be more environmentally friendly than their single-use counterparts. Successful mixed-use developments are area-specific and reflect their local, unique environment. They are not 'cookie cutter' projects. Landscaping is used as a unifying element, and trees, flowers and foliage can provide geographic relevance.

Its logical extension would include a partnership with the local government to add more civic and cultural services, including public infrastructure (parks) and institutional (library, museum), medical and sports facilities, as well as educational uses (schools, universities and technical colleges).

Mixed-use developments are occasionally complemented by adjacent power centres as well as office clusters, thus focusing even more of the commercial services onto one specific location, encouraging the use of public transit.

Mixed-use developments can also facilitate the updating of traditional regional malls by converting part of the single use adjacent parking areas to higher-density developments. With land costs already absorbed, the financial implications of structured parking, to serve the additional uses, is an option that should not be overlooked by the owners of regional malls.

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