

**RETHINKING THE RETAIL EXPERIENCE:
FROM TECHNOLOGY TO SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

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“Rethinking the Retail Experience - From Technology to Social Engagement”

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ABSTRACT

The expression “going shopping” suggests an activity that supports people's need to be social. Participating in the retail experience allows for that need to be fulfilled. Shopping provides movement in a community and interest in the urban context. Large shopping centers, such as malls, are tasked with engaging customers and creating an experience convenient and personal enough for them to want to return. However, shopping in recent generations has started to redefine itself. The lack of convenience, outdated design standards, and minimal enticing experiences in large physical retail stores have pushed users to resort to other methods of shopping. Online shopping has become increasingly popular because of its convenience, efficiency, and flexibility. Because of this, many consumers have made online shopping their go-to way of purchasing goods. Yet, something is missing in the virtual world of online retail. Shopping in physical spaces allows for a connection to the community, it builds interpersonal skills, and it offers many people the opportunity for human contact which is so important to our emotional well-being. We now wonder, how can retailers consider new and innovative ways to draw customers back into their stores, and is there an alternative to the often-isolated condition of online shopping? Through the research of in-person retail, online retail, human experience, current health and safety standards, and the exploration of case studies, The Country Club Plaza and Area 15 can the architect, through design, help retailers to make the fulfillment of in-person shopping in settings like the mall, a desirable experience once again?

INTRODUCTION

The joy of shopping is important to everyday life because it fulfills our need for social interaction and our participation in commerce. The structure of shopping has continued to evolve from mercantile booths to malls and online retail, but in-person models are becoming obsolete. This is due to economics, the current pandemic, and online shopping which created a new easy way to buy products. The reason online shopping has become popular is because of convenience. Current in-person models do not have the luxury of being able to click a button and have your goods delivered. With 227.5 million people in the US online shopping¹, retailers need access to new ways to safely promote the concept of engagement. Economists such as Austan Goolsbee, a professor of economics at the University of Chicago is concerned that in-person shops, like malls, cannot compete with online shopping. Perhaps the focus should be about integrating online technology with experiential architecture as it highlights our need for social engagement. Can architecture and the design of retail interiors energize a new opportunity for the shopping experience?

METHODOLOGY

Through the study of the contemporary history of shopping, business trends, experiential architecture, and the current COVID-19 pandemic, many key factors arise when understanding why the brick and mortar retail sector has started to take on a more digital platform. This paper discusses the connection between online shopping, the current pandemic, and why malls specifically are closing. Through technology, new design standards, and applications, one could potentially create an entirely new retail hybrid that brings forth a new experience for all shoppers. Through observations and interviews, other areas of research will investigate the evolution of the mall, and specifically, why these once thriving centers of interaction are now dying.

Considerations have been made to interpret certain conveniences of the online world into real in-person applications. With these criteria in mind, the following case studies are discussed: The Country Club Plaza, Kansas City,



Figure 1

and Area 15, Las Vegas. These case studies, involving brick and mortar retail, will present ideas on how to avoid phenomena such as Rem Koolhaas' discussion of "Junk Space" and "dead malls," while still keeping social interaction alive by creating everlasting experiences. Empty shopping malls have a poor impact on the communities they are in and do not provide enough interest to keep people coming back. This, in turn, drives shoppers to the internet, instead of spending time in soon to be empty shopping malls that devalue the architectural context of a neighborhood. These case studies explore what modern changes are currently being made towards the areas of human experience and technology in the brick and mortar context. Through the study of these precedents, the development of a new hybrid of retail is considered.

THE MALL

Manuel De Landa stated in his book, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, "weekly markets have always existed at the heart of most cities and towns constituted veritable motors, periodically concentrating people and goods from near and far away regions and then settling them into motion again, along with a variety of trade circuits."² The shopping center, beginning with Main Street, was a setting where shops line both sides of the street and related to their surroundings. This type of shopping was designed to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians and was an essential place for

¹ "Find out How Many People Shop Online in 2020." Oberlo. Accessed March 13, 2020.

² Landa, Manuel De. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York: Zone Books, 2019. Pg. 28

interaction.³ The organization of main street consisted of two to three-story buildings with shops on the ground floor, providing easy access to offices and apartments above. The activity on the street was highly visible and bustling drawing in shoppers to the scene.



Figure 2 South Dale Center

As automobiles became more popular the evolution of the shopping center continued. The strip mall, first built in Los Angeles in the 1920s, attempted to organize the stores by regulating commercial development while still accommodating parking. The design of the strip was like main street with storefronts pulled back from the main road and parking lots located in front. Little considerations were made for pedestrians.

In the 1950s, with suburban growth, a new form of shopping emerged. The atrium mall was another adaptation for vehicle accommodations. Leading the way with this concept was Victor Gruen and his designs of the Northland Center in Detroit and the Southdale Center in Minneapolis. This ideology emphasized cleanliness, safety, comfort, and efficiency in their designs. With the automobile segregating pedestrian accommodations, Main Street and downtown shopping needed an update. Essentially, Gruen's concept was an inverted deconstruction of main street with acres of parking directly connected to main roads and highways. He incorporated climate control, landscaping, water features, and lounging between the enclosed storefronts. Minimal, but

³ Michael Southworth, "Reinventing Main Street: From Mall to Townscape Mall," *Journal of Urban Design* 10, no. 2 (June 2005): pp. 151-170

⁴ Lauren Thomas, "The Demise of America's Malls Can Deal a Blow to the Towns That

some natural lighting was incorporated into the mall through skylights and large atrium spaces where services like food courts were located. Soon malls with similar features began to appear everywhere. However, with many elements affecting the distinction of the mall, it soon began to take on a new dispiriting form.

THE MALL PROBLEM

With the evolving of e-commerce, the current pandemic, new technologies and changes in consumer wants, the role of the once-popular mall is becoming obsolete. According to Coresight Research, a retail advisory firm, as many as 25,000 closures could happen this year with 55% to 60% of those closures occurring in malls.⁴ These findings surpass the previous record held in 2019 with roughly 9,800 closures. A major factor in the acceleration of the closures is the current COVID-19 pandemic. With people staying home, the main source of purchasing goods has come from online retail, therefore leaving brick and mortar shops with low foot traffic and plummeting sales. However, closures pre-pandemic were already occurring. After the Great Recession, malls and other retailers struggled to keep their doors open and when people decided to spend their money the spent it online. Mark Cohen, Director of Retail Studies at Columbia Business School, stated that "during this recession, it became clear that there was no way all of these stores would survive" and now " these closures have accelerated this past decade leaving hundreds of dead and dying malls."⁵



Figure 3 Dead Mall

Depend on Them," CNBC (CNBC, June 20, 2020)

⁵ Abha Bhattarai, "Malls Are Dying. The Thriving Ones Are Spending Millions to Reinvent Themselves.," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, November 22, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/20>

With the narrative of the mall changing a once active destination is now a space with closing sale signs on many doors. Not every mall has succumbed to the same outcome. The mid-tier malls built in the '70s, 80s, and '90s are on the cusp and now are considered dying malls or properties that are still operating but have very few tenants. These malls typically hosted anchor tenants such as Sears and J.C. Penny, which were once successful department stores that accounted for 30% of most malls' square footage. These stores like many other department stores have filed for bankruptcy. With the leaving of these stores, malls lost large sources of income as well as smaller tenants. In typical leasing contracts, if anchor stores left the mall, remaining tenants could then either break their lease or get reduced rent. Many smaller tenants than took these opportunities to relocate to more successful locations, leaving a dying mall behind. With stores filing for bankruptcy like department stores Sears and J.C. Penny, the mid-tier malls will soon be experiencing the same fate as lower-tier malls.

The upper-tier malls are surviving because they have the financial means to reinvent themselves. These malls also supply higher-end products with anchor tenants like Nordstrom and Apple, pulling in a wealthier customer. They heavily invest in restaurants, spas, and gyms to keep the customer coming back. Even so, these malls still lose customers day after day to online shopping. Some mall owners, like Triple Five Group, who own Mall of America have gone to the extreme to keep their mall up and running. With the focus on huge attractions, they have created spectacles, that provide entertainment that pairs well with retail.

CURRENT ADAPTATIONS

Recently, other hybrids of the standard mall have emerged and evolved in an attempt to reinvent the shopping center. The townscape mall was constructed when developers realized there was something to the concept of main street. This type of mall utilized multiple architectural styles and arranged itself like an old strip mall with setback shops fronted with parking lots. Its characteristics include clocktowers, water features, streetlamps, street

signs, historic details, and entertainment centers.

Another mall alternative is the open-air mall. Very similar to the Townscape Mall, this type of mall resembles a larger scale main street with parking lots located near or next to shops instead of in front of them. Storefronts with connecting streets lined with retail, services, and restaurants often centered around a central landscape and a main building with indoor retail are often features of open-air malls. Similar to townscape malls the open-air mall typically has streetlamps, entertainment, and street signs that reflect a typical main street.



Figure 4 Mall of America

Perhaps the most extravagant hybrid of the mall is entertainment malls. These malls house an arsenal of attractions to attract customers to the mall. The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, for example, has an amusement park, an aquarium, a concert venue, miniature golf, bowling, zip-lining, a movie theater, a pool and so much more. Customers come to these massive malls to see the attractions with a side benefit of also being able to shop.

Finally, the outlet mall which is organized similarly to the open-air mall in a strip configuration, sells discounted products straight from the manufacturer. Typically found in rural or tourist locations these malls have pedestrian paths leading from the parking lots in front of the shops that pave the way throughout the site.

ONLINE SHOPPING

19/11/22/malls-are-dying-only-these-ones-have-figured-out-secrets-success-internet-age/.

Twenty years ago, supermarket companies, Tesco and Asda experimented with shopping services using a computer, but it was not until after the development of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee that the true potential of online retail became evident.⁶ With the launching of Amazon as a book retail company in 1995, it soon became the leading organization paving the way for online shopping. Soon, many businesses started making their presence known in the world of e-commerce. From pop-up ads to social media



Figure 5 Warby Parker

pages, businesses were utilizing the world wide web in a multitude of ways. "One of the first e-commerce transactions was made back in 1982, and today, it is growing by as much as 23% year over year."⁷

What is it about online shopping that makes it so popular? "A 2017 US survey found that over half of consumers, 52 %, said their main reason for shopping online was convenience and the ability to price compare. Consumers also stated that many online retailers have a wider choice of merchandise that is easier to navigate through than in some brick and mortar stores. The shops also provide access to more detailed product information, customer reviews, deliveries, and returns."⁸ The convenience of online retail is almost unmatched, and the customer journey is set up so each experience is personal. Companies like Warby Parker have

implemented technologies with their online sites to achieve this. They allow customers to digitally try on glasses using augmented reality. Customers then get an idea of what the product looks like before they make their purchase. Warby Parker also allows customers to select five frames and try them on at home for free. Strategies like these bring speed, transparency, convenience, and relevance affiliated with the shopping journey, allowing customers to shop anywhere anytime.

THE DOWNSIDE

At the same time, Apple's Senior Vice President of Retail said in a 2017 observation that "while people are more digitally connected than ever, many feel more isolated and alone."⁹ **Error! No bookmark name given.** This is one advantage brick and mortar will continue to have over online retail. The lack of a physical experience, interaction and not being able to touch or try a product are all drawbacks of online shopping. Further obstacles that online retailers frequently encounter are abandoned checkouts and delivery issues. Online checkouts usually apply extra fees such as taxes and shipping, increasing the original price. Prompts to create accounts, web errors, and delivery dates are also reasons why many customers abandon their purchases. Another major flaw of online shopping is the lack of immediacy. When purchasing a product, customers must wait days to receive their purchase, thus, reducing the convenience factor. These are some of the main reasons why two-thirds of shoppers still prefer to make their purchases in-store. Brick and mortar are more upfront with pricing due to no delivery fees and it is what older generations prefer. Many younger generations are more accustomed to purchasing their products online. There is more of a learning curve for some people when it comes to online retail and it, at times can be more difficult to navigate the sites which is why they would rather spend more time roaming a store than purchasing goods from a device.

THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

⁶ "History of Online Retail." OpenLearn. The Open University, August 30, 2019.

⁷ "Ecommerce 101: The Impact, History & Future of Electronic Commerce." The BigCommerce Blog, February 19, 2020.

⁸ Berg, Natalie, and Miya Knights. *Amazon: How the Worlds Most Relentless Retailer Will Continue to Revolutionize Commerce*. London: Kogan Page Limited, 2019. P. 241

⁹ "History of Online Retail." OpenLearn. The Open University, August 30, 2019.

The point of retail is to sell items, make a profit, and to create an experience that makes a customer want to purchase that item. Advantages physical stores have over online retail include the human touch and the instant gratification when you get to instantly leave with the product. Unlike online shopping, we experience connections with the community when we shop in a physical store; new interpersonal skills become developed and opportunities for human contact emerge. To create a physical store that draws customers in, architecture needs to focus on creating a safe and enticing social experience. Even though



Figure 6

online platforms are more convenient and safer given the current pandemic, human interaction is one thing we miss that is yet to be achieved by the digital world. "Any great brand is built on trust. Without it, the prospect of offline shopping is nowhere near as appealing, and shoppers become more and more likely to turn to the digisphere."¹⁰ It is the job of designers alongside retailers to contest this by working together to create a more visually, and socially engaging shopping experience. For retailers to truly stand out, innovative use of space should define the experience. Frank Grillo, the Chief Marketing Officer of Harte Hanks marketing agency, stated that customer interaction is an essential part of shopping and called for "rich experience bazaars" that prioritized this.¹⁰ The designs of retail spaces through architecture and interior design reimagine the floor plans, use of spaces, and aesthetics to serve unique experiences that are hard for customers to find anywhere else. The goal that architecture should have in retail design is one that creates a resilient customer journey whose experience is almost impossible to copy. Memorable engagement of the senses, incorporation of technology and personalization are all

¹⁰ "Why Great Retail Architecture Is Key to Commercial Success." RMJM, September 4, 2019.

characteristics that need to be addressed throughout the design process. The utilization of digital platforms today would allow both online and offline retailers to work together even more strongly than some already do. "Digitally-savvy, customer-centric experiential retail outlets are well poised to survive in today's competitive market. To help make this a reality, architects and designers need to immerse themselves in the socio-economic issues driving this need for change."¹⁰ Rethinking the way business and socialization work together is an important factor, to ensure that brick and mortar retail does not become a fragment of the past.

EXPERIENCE ARCHITECTURE



Figure 7 Experience Architecture

Author Brian Solis, who is globally recognized for being a leader in business states in his book *X: The Experience when Business Meets Design*, "In an always-on world where everyone is connected to information and one another, customer experience is your brand."¹¹ So, in what ways can architecture encourage customers to leave their homes to shop? This is where experience architecture comes in. "Experience architecture is the art of engendering desired emotions, outcomes, and capabilities in customers throughout the customer journey. It's about branding through experiences; but it's also about storytelling through design, narrative, and user experience (UX) to evoke responses that shape experiences we want people to have and share."¹¹ The more people share their experiences the more people come. Technology, human behavior, expectations, and customer journey are all essential factors in creating an ideal experience. Questions to be asked when designing for experience are: What defines the intended customer? What is the difference in how a more

¹¹ Solis, Brian. *X: The Experience When Business Meets Design*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2015. P. 9, 151, 225

digital customer experiences the customer journey, versus how a more traditional customer experiences it? What are frequent touch-points that they encounter, what devices are used, and how are they used? What are the set expectations? How are the customers influenced, and by what? It is important to connect customers to what they value. Deeper insights into customer's feelings, thoughts, and lives can be interpreted through storytelling. A great experience brings the physical, digital, and emotional aspects of customers together in an engaging design. ¹¹

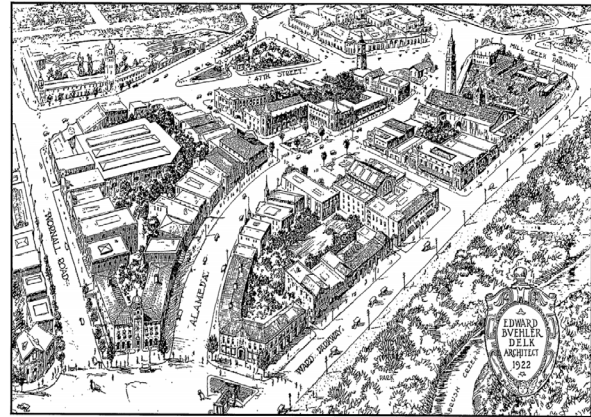
To maintain the attention of the customer, designing every encounter with three things in mind is essential. Customer actions, reactions/interaction, and transactions should be embraced. As Plato wrote, "Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge." Companies such as Apple and Disney pay attention and invest in researching how to use this customer-based knowledge to design the most effective experiences. Disney invested one billion dollars to learn how to improve customer experiences. ¹¹ Apple applied intensive controls on how employees interact with customers, they listen to the feedback and experience the customers have and invest in adding design elements like The Genius Bar into their stores. They do this to appeal to the needs of the customer. Apple's customer journey from searching for a product to maintaining that product has the customer in mind every step of the way.

Once we put our focus on the human experience, we can begin to close in on a new approach to reviving the mall. "This is the fundamental mission of experience architecture, to help us see things through others' eyes, to feel what they feel, and hear the thoughts they don't speak. The fact that this is so difficult to do is why experience design requires an architect," – Brian Solis. ¹¹

CASE STUDIES

The Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, MO

The Country Club Plaza, located in Kansas City, Missouri was the first open-air shopping mall built in the United States. The land was owned and developed by J.C. Nichols, a real estate developer who took advantage of the new automobile and saw an opportunity to create a place for social engagement. To create visual interest, inspiration from Seville, Spain was



Edward Buehler Deik Rendering of Plaza Plan, 1922.

Figure 8 Country Club Plaza, Kansas City

taken to create a Spanish Revival theme for the plaza, that included courtyards, stucco buildings, red-tiled roofs, mosaics, and ornate towers. Trees and outdoor cafes were added to increase the ambiance of the Plaza. As the automobile industry heightened, the incorporation of parking was added to serve the new way of travel. Later apartments were introduced to serve a greater population density. The plaza continued to adapt to changing times, adding new buildings, widening streets, updating storefronts, and paving new paths. The plaza introduced spectacles such as annual light shows, a location for movies to be filmed, and new technologies that brought more to do and see. The innovative design and planning concept for the Plaza remains a national precedent today and is significant first and foremost for its urban design context but

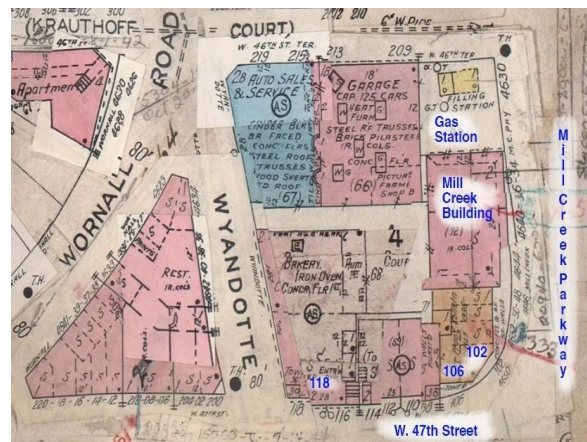


Figure 9 Country Club Plaza, Kansas City

for its architecture and contribution to making Kansas City what it is today.¹²

Area 15, Las Vegas, NV

A more contemporary approach to mall design is a project by Michael Benneville and Winston Fisher. The designer and real estate owner collaborated on a new and innovative way to bring a unique retail experience to Las Vegas, Nevada. The project utilizes the concept of storytelling to create interest and bring people in. Located near the Las Vegas Strip, the mall-inspired retail-entertainment complex is just as engaging and unique. The context of the complex is solely based on elements that encourage human connection. As Benneville puts it, "we understand what is happening with the immersive economy, the experience economy, and the Instagram economy."¹³ With this in mind, choosing eccentric anchor tenants like Meow Wolf, a Santa-Fe based arts company that prides itself on its creative interactive experiences. The space also includes Virtual Reality (VR) companies such as Nomadic, Augmented Reality (AR) integration, and traditional retail that displays festival gear, art-inspired clothing, gifts, and other products that are difficult to find online. Other features the complex has, includes chapels, a music hall, and multitudes of other digital experiences that also

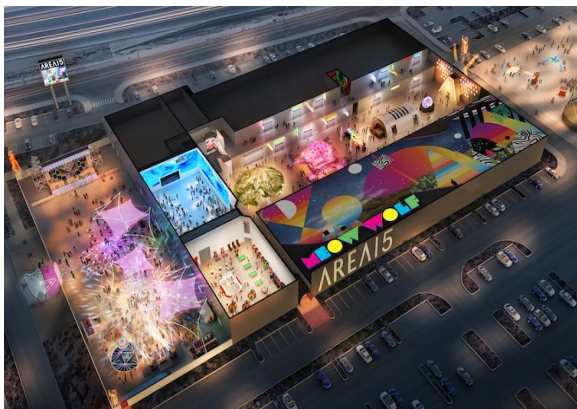


Figure 10 Area 15, Las Vegas

cater to Vegas-style events and celebrations. With the integration of these companies into the space the creators of Area 15 produced an environment where digital and physical reality can coexist. Benneville stated that "Area 15 is a laboratory for that. Ultimately it will be connected by a digital landscape as much as a physical one."¹⁴ "Area 15 will be a place where technology is something that one embraces, where one is not isolated but is folded in through it."¹⁵ By incorporating all of these important features together, an ecosystem of economic success is created and is the next in line for retail systems of the future.

CONCLUSION

There are many lessons to be learned from both sides of retail. The human aspect of brick and mortar is so essential to our humanity that online businesses strive to find ways to introduce that aspect. Brick and mortar may have some barriers to overcome, such as finding new ways to incorporate the technology of today's digital age into another aspect of our everyday life. The focus on the store is no longer primarily about the product, it is about the experience the customer has when he or she enters. As Maya Angelou stated, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." From browsing, buying, and experiencing, retailers can begin to bring in a new hybrid of interfaces and persuasive connectivity into brick and mortar retail. Applications such as augmented and virtual reality, personalization, storytelling, and other unique approaches can now start to create a memorable and progressive experience that keeps the customer coming back and revives the mall.

¹² "Country Club Plaza: History and Significance." Country Club Plaza: History and Significance. Accessed March 29, 2020.

¹³ Merlin, Lalla, Lalla, and St. Hugh's College. "AREA15: Retail and Immersive Entertainment in Las Vegas 2020." Blooloo, January 29, 2020.

¹⁴ Merlin, Lalla, Lalla, and St. Hugh's College. "AREA15: Retail and Immersive Entertainment in Las Vegas 2020." Blooloo, January 29, 2020.

¹⁵ Merlin, Lalla, Lalla, and St. Hugh's College. "AREA15: Retail and Immersive Entertainment in Las Vegas 2020." Blooloo, January 29, 2020.

ADDENDUM:

PROPOSAL

When choosing to narrow in on the areas where brick and mortar stores seem to be struggling the most, I focused in on the Mall typology. Looking first into what solutions have been made to these dying spaces, introducing various forms of entertainment zones or cinemas, these retailers still fail to maintain current tenants or draw new customers. Through further investigation, the problem seems to be more so associated in the scale and layout of these structures. These retail types were massively overproduced and in today's practice they are oversized, lack flexibility, are mainly vehicle-focused, and have minimal variation in the types of programs they offer. Lifestyle centers, similar to malls have had some success with keeping their tenants. Those tenants are more specifically geared towards chain stores and lack diversity when it comes to program and engaging with the community. These sites remain just pitstops rather than a destination for the community and visitors. Alternatively, my project Princeton Pike is a mixed program center for the community introducing a tech-based trade school and public recreation with interchangeable retail spaces that continually bring new attractions and a refreshing program to the site.

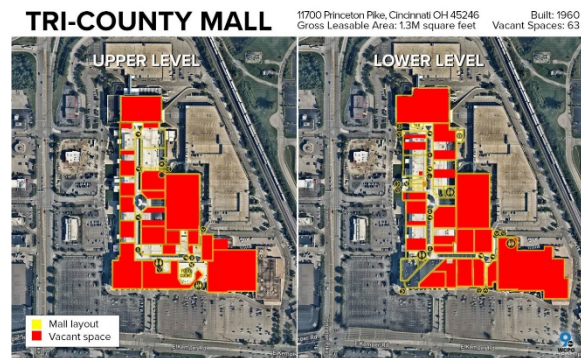


Figure 11 Tri-County Mall Vacancy

A site that needed a refreshing change is Tri-County Mall in Springdale, OH. It is a dying mall that recently has lost its last anchor and now is mostly vacant. Surrounding a five-mile radius of the site, Springdale has a population of around 128,000 with approximately 50,000 households. A majority of the residents are in their mid-thirties. The current site consists of three million square feet and a current gross leasable area of 1.3 million square feet. It is framed by three main roads and an industrial

railroad, Princeton Pike, Kemper Road, and Interstate 275.

Through all of this analysis and research, I developed 6 main design principles to help revive this site, structure, and its retail identity. Those principles are: A mix of program, improved pedestrian to vehicle ratios, transparency, flexibility of space, improved private to public ratios, and improved connectivity. This introduces a mix of programs making the main focus of the site about the community, not just retail. In addition to that retail, the combination of programs creates a destination not a quick stop. Improving pedestrian to vehicular ratios allows sites to be better accommodating to pedestrians and cyclists. Introducing transparency by breaking down walls of oversized massing to create site-lines across the area allowing for ease of access and a more efficient user experience. Flexible space allows for new programs to be introduced and an easier, more interchangeable leasing option that keeps up with the evolving consumer wants and needs. This allows tenants to fit a space that is suitable to them. Improving private to public ratios allows for constant usage of the site at all times. Making the space always usable and in continuous motion. Finally, improving connectivity is another principle introduced into the proposal. Breaking up continuous lengths of structure allows for connection to all aspects of the site. Not forcing a circulation but allowing users to choose their own paths.

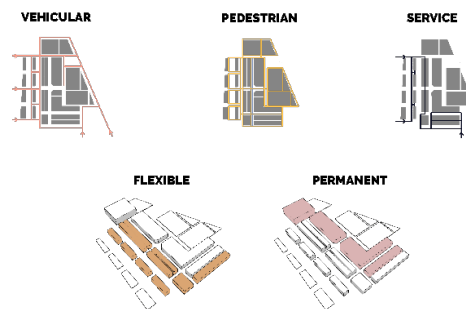


Figure 12 Circulation & Flexibility

In order to apply these principles to the existing structure, the removal of both parking structures and an anchor store occurred to reduce some of the single mass. The main circulation points of the existing structure were cut open to create better connectivity and transparency of the site. The central circulation of the existing mall was opened up, but the glass canopy remains to keep some of the memories of Tri-County alive. The facades of

the existing structure were also flattened to create a more smooth, linear appearance. The only structure added is alongside Princeton Pike to reduce parking and better improve vehicle to pedestrian ratios.

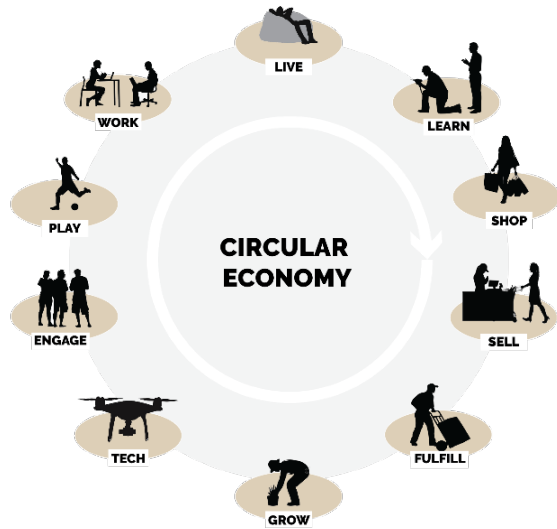


Figure 13 Circular Economy Concept

In addition to these principles, the concept of a circular economy is applied to the program of the site allowing all programs to work in unison, complement, and work together. Users can live, learn, work, play, and stay all within one location that is geared towards community interaction. A leasing style of allowing retail tenants to rotate and change every 3-5 months to keep a fresh feel on the site is also applied. To go along with the interchangeable retail, apartments are introduced where residents can live, work, and learn all in one place. Work hubs are integrated for all users either living on the site or visiting within the residential and school zones. A Trade School is introduced where students can learn new skills and technologies and then sell what they produce or show what they have learned. Smaller shops and markets bring in retail where vendors or new businesses can sell their products and test viability. Micro Fulfillment or dark stores, stores that have no interior public access, allow for efficient and touchless buying and pickup for the on-the-go consumer combined with drone landing locations for delivery. Rooftop gardens are placed for community engagement and the reintegration of green space onto the site. Touchpoints help to inform the customer and are placed along the customer journey to keep users integrated throughout the site. Social interaction zones are strategically implemented for users to engage and interact as well as

recreation space for the use of the community and events.

The experience of the site flows from living through the integration of apartments, to shopping with the variety of retail, to fulfillment through the dark stores, to recreation with soccer fields and basketball and urban gardens, to learning through the integration of the trade school, and finally to socializing throughout key locations both interior and exterior. This experience all ties back into the concept of the circular economy. Which allows one experience on the site to connect with the other. The technology introduced to the site plays off of the efficient wants of the user. Drone landing pads are placed on the rooftops allowing pickup and delivery zones. The dark stores create ease of access to the on-the-go shopper who prefers to buy online and pick up or buy in another onsite store and pick up at a later date. Pick up locations are on both sides of the structure one being car friendly on the roadside and the other being pedestrian friendly on the retail side. Other tech applications include the use of digital touchpoints throughout the public access points where stairs and restrooms are located. These points allow users to scan QR codes, download deals, connect to a map and see what new stores have circulated on to the site. Within each shop would be digital screens to allow pop-ups or tenants to upload their websites, connect with the shop, become digital mirrors, and allow customers to buy online in the store. The social interaction points are located in a variety of ways on the site. The community stair allows for both circulation and relaxation and provides interaction points. The central corridor which was once the main circulation of the tri county mall is now a covered interaction spine that connects shopping, living, and interaction, with relaxation and lounge points. The social decks that further break up the block of structure and allow users to socialize on all levels, and the rooftop gardens allow the public to partake in a group activity and socialize on another aspect of the site.

Finally, through the application of the circular economy, and the design principles: a mix of program, Improved pedestrian to vehicle ratios, transparency, flexibility of space, improved private to public ratios, and improved connectivity a refreshing program is brought to the site creating a central hub for the community and not just another stop off the highway but now a destination for the community.

REFLECTION

After developing these six design principles and applying the concept of circular economy to Tri-County Mall similar approaches can be made. Other sites that contain dying or dead malls allow for another base where a potential solution could be applied. Because of the overproduction of this typology, it only makes sense that changes to the existing structures could lead to a more sustainable and logical way to transform these buildings and bring new life back into the communities they occupy. Malls used to be a hub for interaction and shopping in their prime years, through changes to site, structure, and program these locations could revive the experience they once contained.

Further investigation and potential changes that could be made in the proposal per juror's feedback include pushing the concept of circular economy even further and implementing other programs such as more food farm to table options that could work alongside markets and restaurants. Other programs that could further the concept include daycares, fitness centers, a better integration of parking, recycling centers, car repair shops, or even more dark stores. Other potential adaptations that could be made to the proposal could include a more drastic mixture of where programs lie on the site. Mixing the living with the retail instead of keeping it separate could allow for a more

flexible and interactive use of space. Also, moving the public recreation space to the entrance of the site could create a unique experience when entering the site. Further changes to the existing structure could also be changed to reform the new building from the old and really give it its own identity rather than demolishing the old and building new. These structures are very valuable spaces even still to this day that deserve to benefit a community in ways that exceed just another parking lot or warehouse.

When it comes to actually applying design aspects like these in the professional field, implementing the six principles of a mix of program, Improved pedestrian to vehicle ratios, transparency, flexibility of space, improved private to public ratios, and improved connectivity could provide potential solutions to a variety of projects. These principles keep the needs and evolving wants of the customer in check and allow for adaptation and a variation of solutions to be drawn. The principles provide a baseline for the continuation of research on what changes will be successful or unsuccessful in other applications. Other principles can also be developed or drawn through further research and analysis. The evolution of the way retail is done and the wants of the customer will continue to change, therefore; it is important to develop and research ways that allow brick and mortar retail to be adaptable.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:

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Figure 2:

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Figure 3:

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Figure 4:

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Figure 5:

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Figure 6:

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Figure 7:

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Figure 8:

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Figure 9:

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Figure 10:

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Figure 11:

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Figure 12:

Personal Graphic

Figure 13:

Personal Graphic

**RETHINKING
THE
RETAIL
EXPERIENCE**

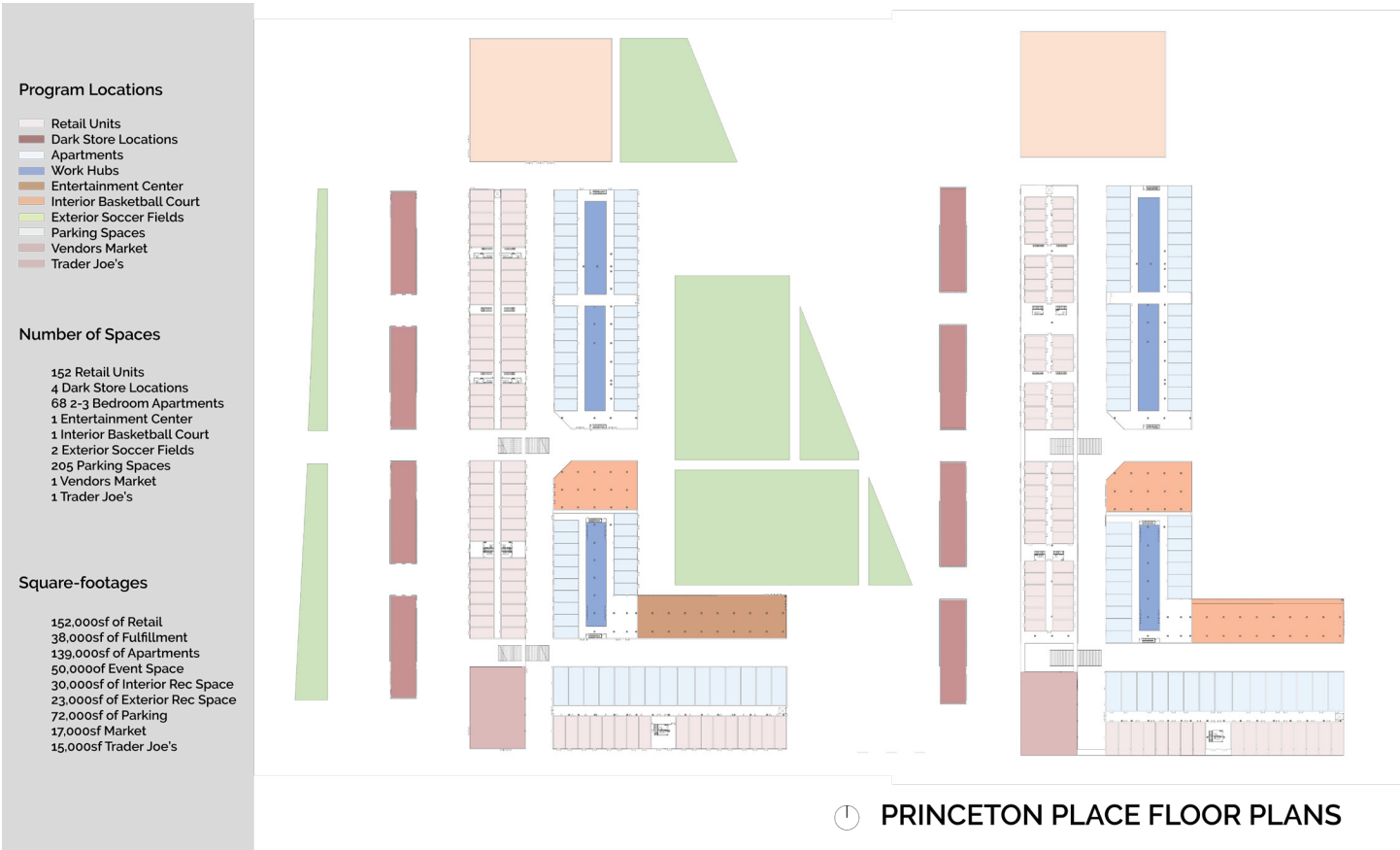
From Technology to Social
Engagement

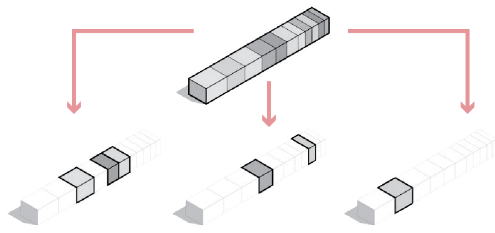


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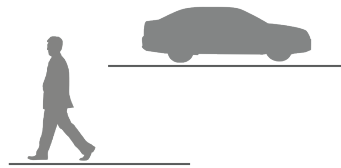
Entry Point





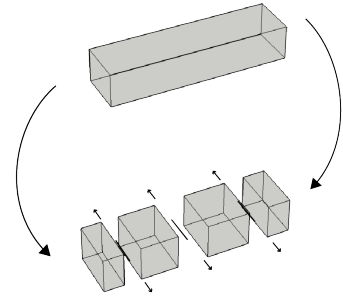
Mixed Program

Adding a combination of programs that makes the main focus of the space not just simply retail. In addition to retail, a combination of programs make the site a destination not just another quick stop



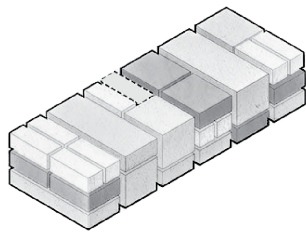
Improved Pedestrian / Vehicle Ratios

Transform heavily vehicle oriented sites into a space with a better pedestrian and cyclist focus. Create a ratio of mobility with pedestrians becoming a major focus



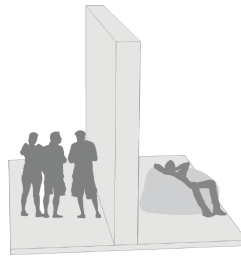
Transparency

Break down walls of oversized massing to create better site-line across the entire area allowing for ease of access and a more efficient user experience



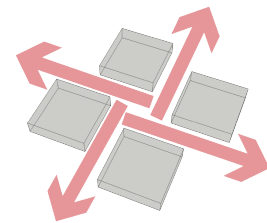
Flexible Spaces

Creating leasing spaces that can conform to any use and keep up with the evolving of consumer wants and needs. Starting out small and allowing to go big.



Improved Private / Public Ratios

By making allowing people to permanently occupy the site, engagement can be 24/7 keeping the site in constant motion

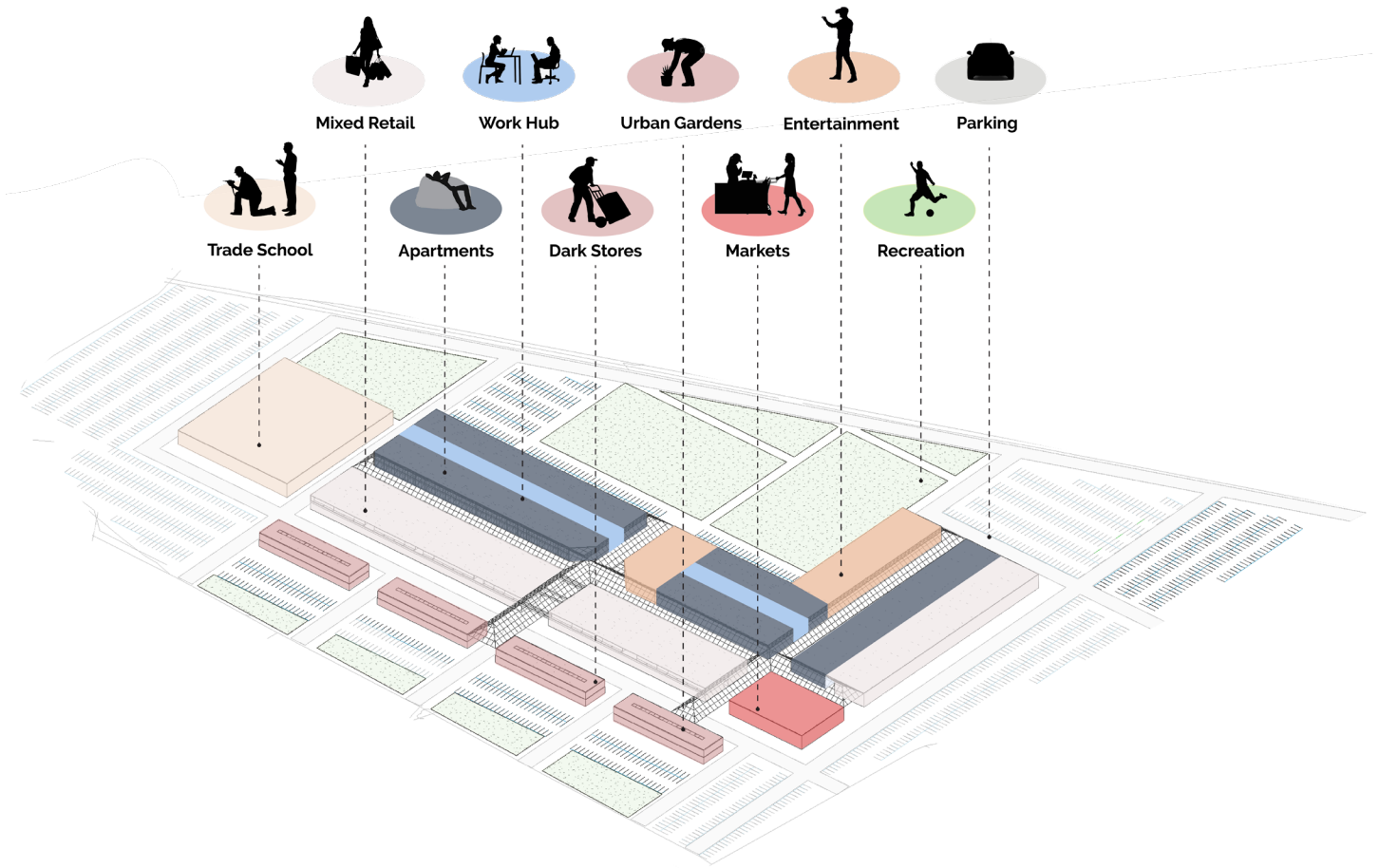


Connectivity

Breaking up continuous lengths of structure to connect all aspects of the site to each other. Not forcing a circulation but allowing users to choose their own paths

Design Principles





Program Diagram



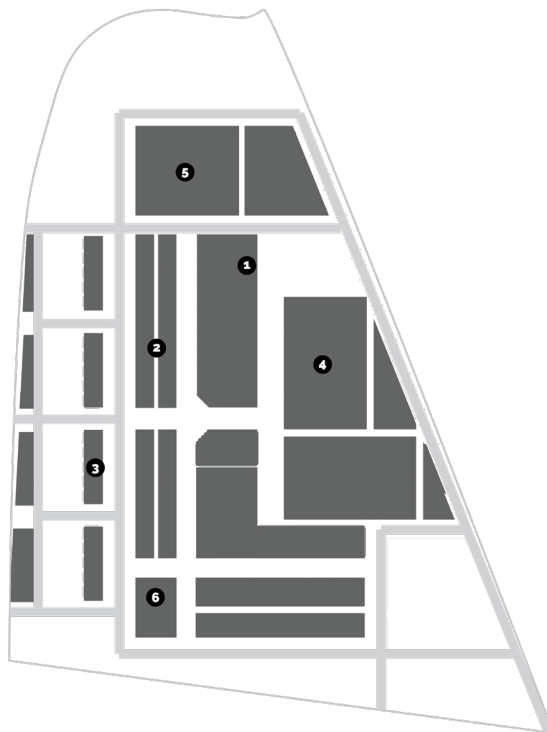
1 Apartments



2 Pop-Up Shops



3 Dark Stores



4 Rec Space



5 Trade School



6 Market & Trader Joe's

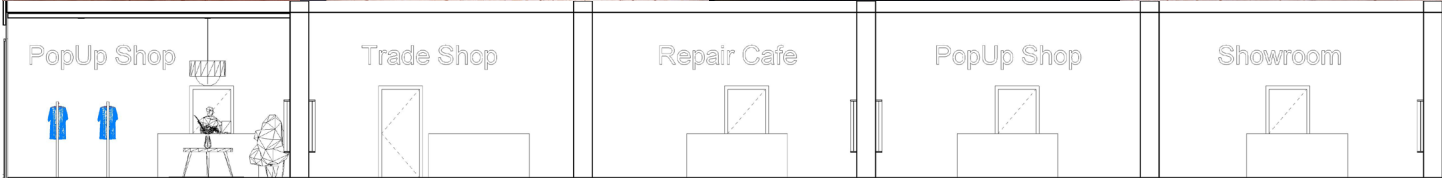
Experience Diagram



Rooftop Interaction Zones



Corridor Interaction Zone



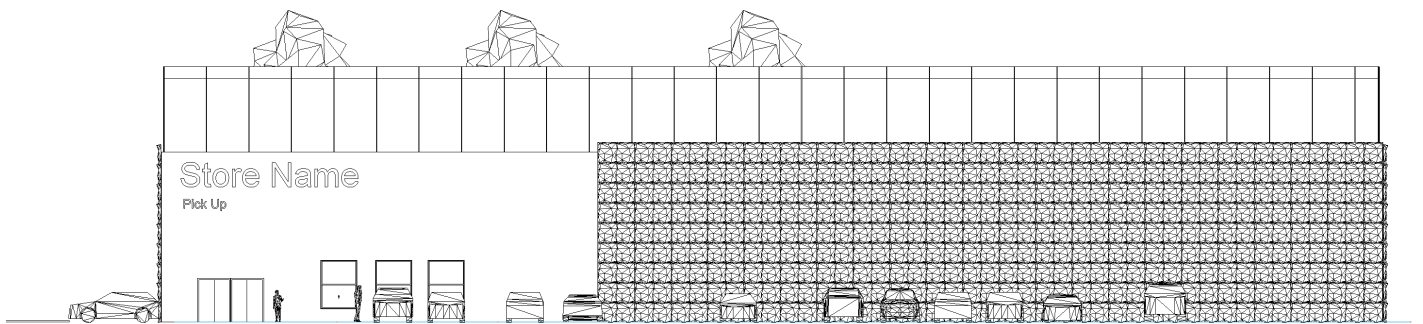
Retail Relationships



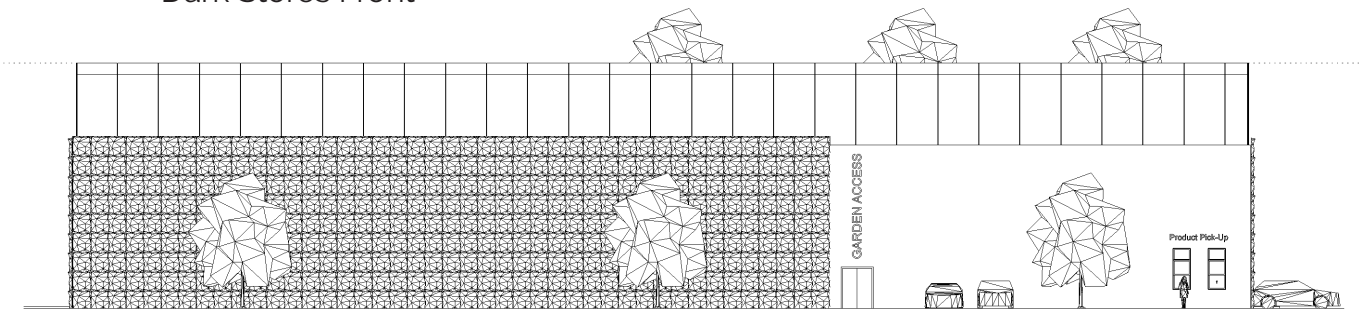
Social Stairs



Rooftop Gardens



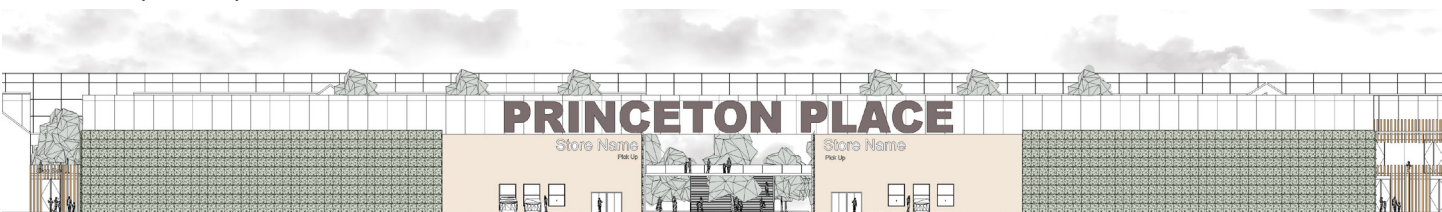
Dark Stores Front



Dark Stores Back



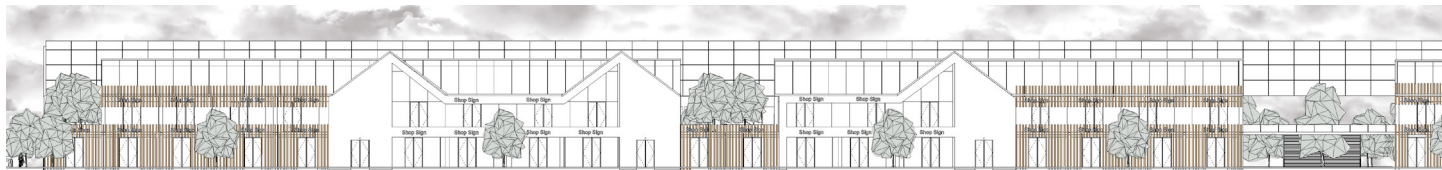
Retail Strip Perspective



Entrance Elevation



Market Interaction Space



Storefronts Elevation



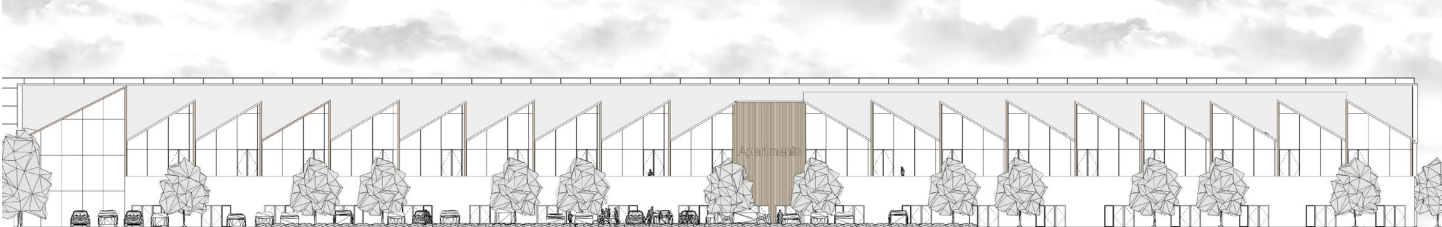
Soccer Fields



Retail Store Fronts



Apartments



Apartments