

Together

Strategies for Promoting
Health and Community in
Privately Owned Third Places

About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

Cover: Weaver Street Market in Carrboro, North Carolina, offers a vibrant public space that encourages the formation of community. (*Donn Young for Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau*)

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About Building Healthy Places

The ULI Building Healthy Places Initiative leverages the power of the Institute's global networks to shape projects and places in ways that improve the health of people and communities. Since its inception in 2013, the Building Healthy Places Initiative has been engaging, informing, and inspiring ULI members to promote human health and wellness through their professional practice as well as through their leadership and influence in communities. Building Healthy Places strives to cultivate champions for health and social equity among the ULI membership, drive industry change toward health and social equity, and make communities healthier and more equitable. Learn more and connect: uli.org/health and health@uli.org.

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Executive Summary

Third places—the places beyond homes and workplaces where people have opportunities to connect with others—are important components of a community. Privately owned spaces—stores, restaurants, and the like—are common places where people come together, places in which small, daily interactions occur, whether they are spontaneous or planned.

These spaces have the power to provide opportunities to local residents, foster community connections, be a common ground for civic discussion, and become economic drivers—all of which directly and indirectly affect the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of community members and visitors.

This report uses research and interviews conducted over the course of a year to outline opportunities and strategies that can be adopted by developers, property owners and managers, business owners, and design teams alike to create commercial environments that are inclusive and responsive, promote health and community well-being, and are economically successful.

The report identifies three key opportunities to maximize health and social connection in privately owned third spaces. These opportunities are coupled with strategies that represent replicable approaches to creating private third places that successfully support both business success and community health.

Opportunity: Use Design to Support a Sense of Community

Design decisions in privately owned, publicly accessible third places can create community connections and foster understanding and trust among residents and patrons.

Blur the Public and Private Realms. Invite the community into publicly accessible third places by removing physical barriers to entry, including signage that welcomes people in, and using creative and vibrant plantings. Using design strategies that soften the edges between the public and private realms creates spaces that are more likely to be perceived as welcoming and inclusive, which in turn enhances interaction and the desire to linger.

Create Comfortable, Inclusive, Flexible Gathering Spaces. Design spaces to be welcoming and inclusive to people of all ages, races, and abilities by engaging with the existing community to identify and meet community needs. Flexibility such as moveable chairs and tables also allows spaces to adapt to the changing needs of people and communities over the short and long terms.

Design for Multimodal Access and Active Transportation. Provide infrastructure that encourages biking and walking and contributes to a robust multimodal transportation

system. High-quality end-of-trip facilities and resources for bicyclists—including ample short- and long-term bicycle parking, publicly accessible bicycle repair stands, bicycle education, and shower and changing room facilities for employees—can promote biking.



The Bike Distribution Program at Bikes Together in Denver provides participants with bikes and bike education to further equitable access to active transportation.

Opportunity: Promote a Strong, Inclusive Local Economy

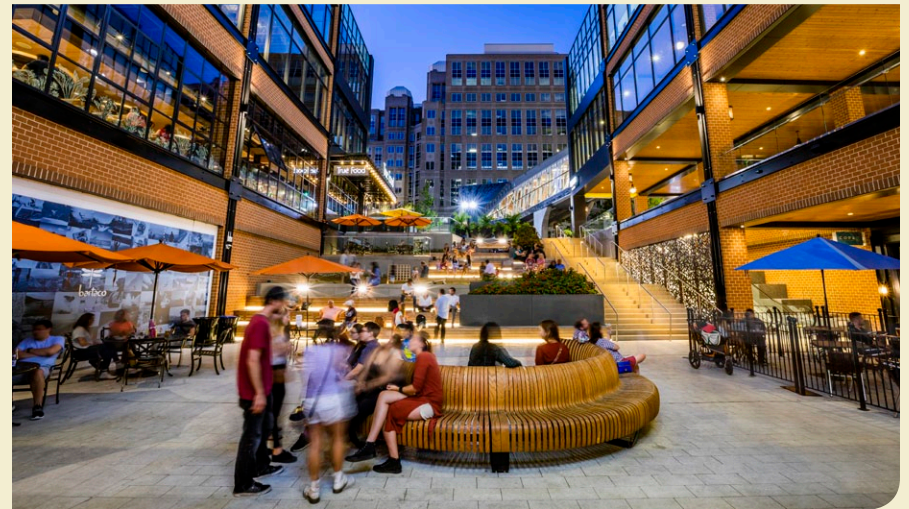
Privately owned and operated third places can foster sustainable local economies that elevate and grow communities by attracting and preserving local talent and businesses.

Design and Develop Projects with Needs of Small Businesses in Mind. Attract and support small businesses by creating shared resources such as kitchens, restrooms, and trash collection facilities. Offering commercial and other retail spaces of varying sizes helps increase access and opportunity for small business owners.

Help Ensure Business Success by Fostering a Network of Resources. Developers and project owners can help establish networks for the small businesses in their projects, making connections both among the business owners and to organizations that provide technical expertise for business management tasks, as well as marketing and event planning that may be critical to business promotion.

Co-Invest with Tenants. Developers and owners can underscore their commitment to tenant success—and cultivate up-and-coming business owners—by entering into rental agreements

that are tied to gross sales or revenues. These arrangements, which might involve a base rent plus a percentage of gross sales, help align tenant and owner business interests.



Ballston Quarter in Arlington, Virginia, has an inviting courtyard where people linger alone or in a group. *(David Madison)*

Opportunity: Create Places and Programs That Address Community Needs

Privately owned third places that address the needs of a community, in terms of community events and retail options, can help bring community members together to build and reinforce these systems.

Implement Feedback Mechanisms to Learn Needs of the Community. Prioritize hearing directly from local community members and community-based organizations through community engagement processes or local planning community processes. The support of a community has a direct impact on the success of a development endeavor or business.

Design Programming and Events That Meet Community Needs. Use publicly accessible gathering spaces for events and programs that engage community members and create opportunities for social interaction and celebration. Programs can support and celebrate community culture, through relevant food, events, and art. Supporting the expression of cultural identity can celebrate the rich cultural background of an area and help the businesses and local community thrive.

Use Public Input to Seek Community-Supportive Businesses. Community conversations, particularly at the onset

of a new project, can help developers understand not only what types of events are of interest but also what new businesses or other commercial uses might be needed in the community.



Victoria Yards established the Makers Valley Partnership as part of the redevelopment of the site in Johannesburg, South Africa, to fortify relationships with the community beyond the potential workforce. Community members were integral to determining the best use of the space. (NO1000D)

Letter from John Bucksbaum

Dear Reader,

My family has long believed in the power commercial environments have in fostering well-being and community. Since 2001, our family has been funding a fellow at ULI to explore emerging issues in retail, and we are very excited that ULI engaged Christina Contreras as the 2020–2021 ULI Bucksbaum Fellow for Retail to explore the intersections of commercial environments, third places, and health and well-being.

This work has an important history. In the 1970s, sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term “third places” to refer to those places which are not home (the first place) and not work (the second place).

As my family knows well, privately owned third places including stores, restaurants, and other retail establishments can connect people with each other, with the local history of a place, while meeting their need for goods and services.

Commercial spaces have had a challenging time in recent years, with the rise of e-commerce and the onset of the pandemic. This has coincided—perhaps not coincidentally—with the rise of civic discord, of frayed and fraught social ties, and an epidemic of loneliness that the U.S. surgeon general has called a threat as grave as smoking.

At the same time, there is now an even greater need to reinvigorate civic life, and an incredible opportunity for privately owned third places—retail, restaurants, entertainment venues, and stores—to help bring people together through strong design, a sense of authenticity, and a commitment to community.

These strategies can also yield economic benefits for store owners and landlords alike, because they will bring people back again and again. This is good news!

This report summarizes three broad and effective opportunities for commercial spaces that enhance community health, equity, and civic well-being, along with specific strategies for each.

We are very excited about this work to explore and advance synergies between strong commercial environments and community well-being. We hope that real estate practitioners and others who shape these environments will recognize and act on this important opportunity.

John Bucksbaum
CEO, Bucksbaum Properties
Chicago, Illinois

Introduction

At a time when many people are craving in-person connection, commercial and retail spaces that offer the opportunity to engage, mingle with neighbors, and enjoy local programs are an important commodity to communities.

These spaces, coined “third places” in the 1970s by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, are places beyond home (first place) and work (second place) where people enjoy spending time with others.¹

Third places—coffee shops, parks and plazas, stores, and more—can provide opportunities for vital community connection, health-promoting activities, and civic engagement. In third places, people exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships. A vibrant network of third places is essential for civil society, democracy, and civic engagement to thrive, and for people to feel a sense of belonging and connection to other people and their community. These types of places can be publicly or privately owned and operated, but they are all publicly accessible spaces that welcome everyone.



(Christina N. Contreras)

These third places also can have significant impact on physical and mental health of people who visit or otherwise use them. Extensive research has been done on the intersections of health and public third places, such as parks, plazas, and the like, including, for example, the classic book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*² by William H. Whyte, and more recent research such as *Assembly: Civic Design Guidelines*³ by the Center for Active Design. But **privately owned spaces**—shops, restaurants, stores, and the like—are less well explored. Yet they are the types of third places people interact with most on a daily basis.

This report represents the culmination of over a year of research into the essential role that privately owned third places can play in fostering inclusive, healthy, and thriving communities and in shaping people’s everyday lives. From restaurants and coffee

shops, to malls, to individual stores, to hair salons and everything in between, privately owned and operated commercial spaces are vital community building blocks.

In a time of great churn in the commercial environment, thoughtful owners and managers can maximize the potential of privately owned third places to support individual and community health and well-being. The actionable strategies presented in this report bring people to spaces and help maximize the potential for commercial success.

Third places are “homes away from home, where unrelated people relate.”

—Ray Oldenburg

The Value of Privately Owned Third Places

Despite being less well researched than publicly stewarded third places like parks, privately owned third places are ubiquitous and play an important role in promoting health, well-being, community connection and interchange, and small “d” democracy. Privately owned third places have immense value because they form one of the primary land uses in communities. Welcoming and responsive commercial environments are instrumental in helping weave a strong community fabric and are crucial to maintaining or improving the health and social equity of neighborhoods.



(Halcyon/JLL)

Commercial spaces—and the communities they are part of—are constantly evolving, and it is important to continually invest in these third places to ensure environments that benefit residents, property owners and managers, and tenants remain in place. There is a strong business case for this work. Developments, stores, and brands that create a sense of belonging and community have been shown to be more sustainable, resilient, and competitive.⁴ Value is created in both monetary and nonmonetary terms for the developers and owners and for the residents whose lives are enhanced by access to these spaces.

The way in which third places are physically accessed is equally important to the mere existence of the places. Multiple studies have shown that building a public realm that provides comfortable walking and bicycling facilities with easy access to the private realm can lead to increased foot traffic and retail sales for local businesses.⁵

Through research recommendations and highlights from third places across the United States, this report demonstrates how privately owned third places have the power to foster community connections, provide opportunities to local residents, become economic drivers, and be a common ground for civic discussion—all of which directly affect the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of community members and visitors. These benefits are directly tied to the financial and economic success of commercial spaces.

The State of Retail

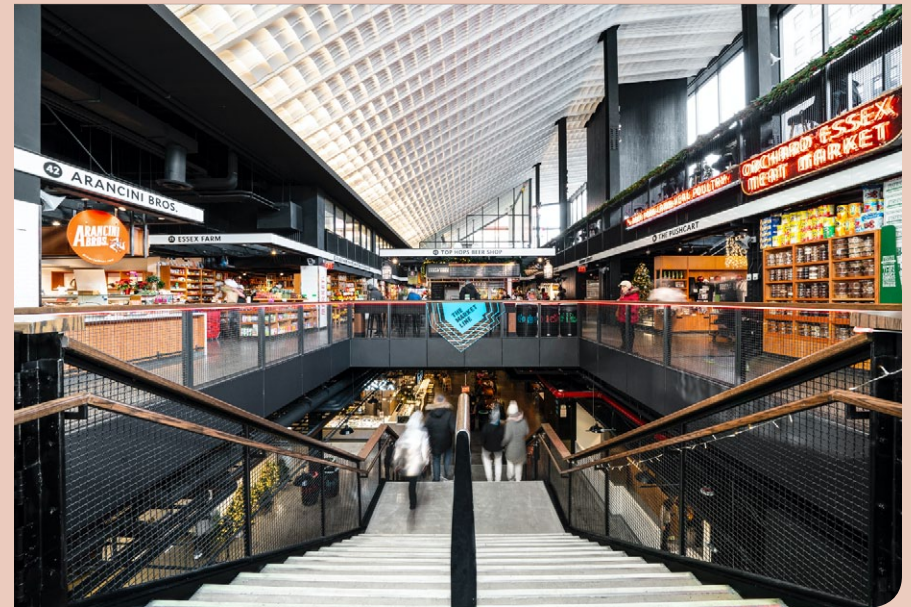
In recent decades, retail in the United States has been in a state of flux. Brick-and-mortar stores face unrelenting pressure from e-commerce, with retail online sales growing by an average of 16 percent annually since 2010.⁶ Despite the rapid acceleration of e-commerce, brick-and-mortar stores still accounted for 80 percent of retail sales in 2020 and still have an important role to play in urban ecosystems.⁷

In the United States, retail environments abound. The country has one of the highest rates of gross leasable retail area per capita in the world at 24 square feet per capita—a figure which is 50 percent higher than the next highest retail area per capita country, Canada.⁸ The availability of retail area across class A, B, and C is not equal, with class C retail dominating the retail landscape.⁹

Overall, the future of retail will include elevated expectations from customers who want multiple options for purchasing goods conveniently, whether that is in person or online, or somewhere in between.

Importantly for this report, many customers are also looking for more meaningful and high-quality experiences when shopping in person, including high-quality retail areas with enhanced urban design and unique, authentic, and place-based characteristics.

The e-commerce boom and other recent trends are not death knells for brick-and-mortar retail but rather an invitation for retail owners to provide enhanced experience to build a customer base—and build community.



Essex Crossing in New York City, a public/private partnership, has worked with the community to identify necessary amenities, including local-cost groceries, fresh food, and varied retail options. (Qualls Benson)

Measuring Success of Third Places through Frameworks of Well-Being

Actions taken by developers and property owners can enhance access to third places. Traditional economic measures and frameworks, such as gross domestic product (GDP), have long been used as the key measure of the value of goods and services within a country. However, a number of frameworks centered on well-being have emerged as alternatives or complements to more economic-focused metrics.

“[T]here is a rising disconnect between countries’ per capita GDP and their citizens’ well-being, as rapid output growth exacerbates health challenges and erodes environmental conditions.”¹⁰

—David Lovatt, Deloitte

Well-being frameworks recognize the limitations and drawbacks inherent in the use of measures that privilege output and production over human and ecological well-being. They respond to the desire by many researchers and practitioners for measures that reflect a broader definition of what it means for individuals and societies to be healthy and sustainable. Most frameworks measuring well-being include a combination of objective and subjective indicators and consider the state of the environment.

These frameworks have the potential to expand how we define and understand “health” by addressing the multifaceted aspects of human health—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. These frameworks include both objective and subjective measures about how people perceive the quality of their lives. In discussing the health of populations, well-being is context-sensitive and reflects the values of community members.

Achieving improved health outcomes, higher levels of well-being, and a deeper satisfaction with life requires fundamental changes, transformative action, and a shift in power dynamics, and well-being frameworks are typically dynamic and reflective of individual and community goals. Well-being frameworks center equity by illuminating injustices and inequities; rethinking what matters to individuals and communities through an inclusive process; including and respecting culturally specific priorities and needs; acknowledging human health is dependent upon ecosystem health; and providing a framework to understand and evaluate human rights.¹¹

“Corporations, funders, nongovernmental organizations, and others across civil society are asking different questions about how to set goals, measure outcomes, and chart a course for the future.”¹²

—Alonzo L. Plough, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

OECD Better Life Index

This report uses concepts in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index framework to explain the link between the following opportunities and strategies and health and well-being. The OECD framework was created as an interactive tool that governments could implement to compare their policies with the subsequent impact on well-being at both local and national levels.¹³

The framework and its adoption by governments also have private-sector implications. This report applies concepts in the framework to each of the opportunities to illustrate the intersections between actionable strategies and individual and community health and well-being.

Concepts in the Better Life Index include¹⁴ the following:



Civic Engagement: Government transparency builds trust among constituents, which in turn leads to social cohesion, well-being, and a greater likelihood of public contribution to society and engagement.



Community: Humans seek social connections, and the quality of these relationships and networks and the frequency of engagement provide emotional support and access to jobs, services, and other opportunities.



Education: Access to knowledge and skills allows individuals to participate in society more fully, as it improves their economic stability, health, civic participation, and happiness.



Environment: Environmental quality is key to ensuring quality of life through improved satisfaction, mental well-being, stress, and physical activity. The quality of natural resources also plays a direct role in creating and maintaining healthy economies.



Health: Good health (physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual) lends itself to many benefits, including a longer life expectancy, lower health care costs, improved social relations, increased productivity and wealth, and access to employment and education.



Housing: Affordable and adequate housing is a fundamental need that provides an environment of relaxation, safety, privacy, and comfort.

Well-Being Framework

To link the recommendations for improving third places that are identified in this report with metrics of health and well-being, the concepts outlined below are communicated at the start of each opportunity. The concepts you will see in color indicate how the opportunities and strategies outlined directly impact the health and well-being of individuals and communities.



Income: Higher economic wealth increases one's ability to achieve greater well-being through the access of higher living standards, good-quality education, health care, and housing.



Jobs: Beyond the economic value of employment, a good-quality job directly helps individuals remain connected with society, develop skills, build self-esteem, and have access to more opportunities through financial stability.



Life Satisfaction: Subjective well-being provides personal assessments of one's health, education, income, personal fulfillment, social conditions, and happiness.



Safety: Reducing exposure to crime provides a sense of security and maintains quality of life, health, and property.



Work-Life Balance: Supportive work practices create flexibility to encourage a balanced home environment for families, as well as individuals, which in turn decreases stress and improves health and safety.



(Wembley Park and Quintain)

Using This Report

This report identifies three key opportunities to maximize health and social connection in privately owned third spaces. These opportunities are intended as replicable approaches to creating private third places that successfully support both business success and community health.

Although these opportunities are presented separately, they are interconnected and are most effective when implemented in tandem or all at once. The report also connects each opportunity to applicable concepts from the OECD Better Life Index.

Each of the three opportunities is accompanied by three actionable strategies.

This report is intended for use primarily by developers, property owners, and property managers. These real estate leaders, in collaboration with small business tenants, can use these strategies to make a meaningful difference in the communities they serve. Designers, public officials, and community members can benefit from understanding how commercial environments can maximize community health, equity, and civic well-being.

The information in this report is likely to be primarily applicable to smaller third place settings geared to local businesses. Report authors hope that the opportunities and strategies outlined in this report provide inspiration for stewards of retail spaces that are seeking to maximize both community benefit and commercial success. When places bring people **together**, everyone can thrive.

Opportunities and Strategies for Promoting Health and Social Connections in Third Places

Research for this report found three overarching—and interconnected—opportunities for enhancing privately owned third places in ways that improve health outcomes and social connectedness for the people who use these places. Implementing physical design strategies to improve both access to and the environment of third places, supporting the local economy by providing space and resources for small business owners, and listening to the needs of existing residents have all been shown to have positive impacts on physical, mental, and social well-being indicators. Each opportunity is made actionable through specific strategies that developers and property owners and managers can employ, and third-place highlights show the opportunities in action in places across the United States.

Investment in privately owned third places not only benefits the community members who use the spaces but also benefits the owners. Thriving commercial environments, where people shop, mingle, and consistently return, are indicative of financial success and stability for property and business owners alike.



Creating inclusive and flexible gathering spaces allows for creativity, connectivity, and exploration. The Yellow, Wembley Park's community hub in London, welcomes people of all ages to engage with one another. *(Wembley Park and Quintain)*

Opportunity: Use Design to Support a Sense of Community

Design is powerful. Design decisions made by real estate and land use professionals can form, foster, and support a sense of community in a place. Design decisions in privately owned, publicly accessible third places should strive to create community connections. Done well, privately owned third places can provide accessible meeting places that encourage the building of community, understanding, and trust among residents and patrons. Key opportunities include blurring the public and private realms, creating inclusive and flexible gathering places, and facilitating multimodal access.

Research shows access to inclusive community gathering places, like third places, positively affects health outcomes. The design of these spaces is one important component of whether these spaces are well used or left empty. Adults of all abilities, genders, and races who are able to build strong social networks by engaging

in inclusive and welcoming environments may see a 50 percent increase in their overall life span.¹⁵

People who have regular access to well-designed and accessible third places enjoy additional physical, emotional, and mental health benefits. For example:

- Both regular and spontaneous interactions between members of a community create connections, trust, and respect, which in turn build social capital and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.¹⁶
- Individuals with strong social capital are less prone to experience colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, depression, and premature death.¹⁷
- Active transportation facilities in third places can promote physical activity having direct impact on improving psychological and physical well-being, from reduced stress, anxiety, and depression to the prevention and management of chronic diseases. People who partake in regular physical activity see a 20 to 30 percent reduction in their overall mortality risk.¹⁸



Civic
Engagement



Community



Education



Environment



Health



Housing



Income



Jobs



Life Satisfaction



Safety



Work-Life
Balance

Moreover, evidence is clear that commercial spaces that promote a strong sense of community benefit economically:

- The New York City Department of Transportation found that after the installation of protected bike lanes, retail sales along Eighth and Ninth Avenues increased 49 percent compared with a level of only 3 percent borough-wide.¹⁹ Similar reports detailing the economic benefits of safe and active transportation infrastructure have been published in Toronto, Ontario; Portland, Maine; and London, England, where a study showed those who walked to town, rather than drove, spent 4 percent more in their local shops.²⁰
- As of 2017, the King's Cross development in London, England, saw local spend increase by £77 million (US\$97 million) per year from development residents alone. Regeneris attributes this rise to a deliberately relaxed approach to management and attempt to garner an inclusive and vibrant environment that gives back to society. This has been a critical part of the successful economic model used by Argent, the developer, and in turn has created a resilient community.²¹
- Research has shown that community experiences and personalization are growing in necessity, as e-commerce grows, to bring retail customers to physical establishments.²²

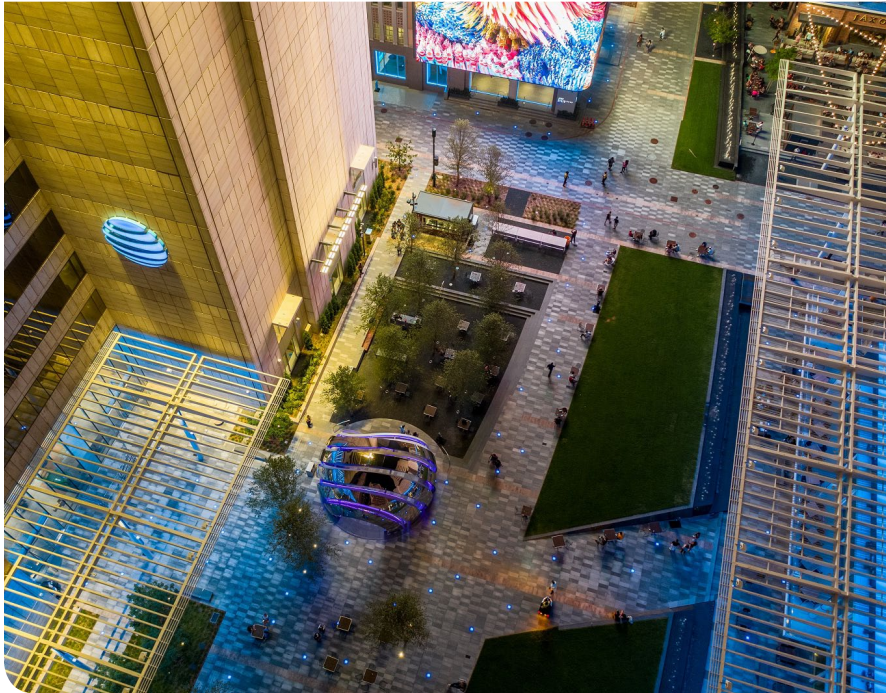
Specific ways that developers and property owners can design third places that are part of their project are explored in the following strategies.



(IGphotography)

Opportunity: Use Design to Support a Sense of Community

Strategy: Blur the Public and Private Realms



The AT&T Discovery District in Dallas creates a welcoming environment for the public to congregate and engage. *(Richard Elmer)*

Blurring public and private realms means being intentional about design choices that invite the community into a privately owned but publicly accessible third place, particularly an outside space such as a plaza or outdoor seating area. When providing space for third places within a development, the design and the programming should communicate to the public—even nonpaying patrons—that they are welcome to use the space.

Removing physical barriers to entry—including fences and other barriers such as steps—allows fluidity and often creates a less intimidating environment. Other strategies include signage that welcomes people in (and omitting signage that indicates that use of the space by the general public is not allowed), and creative and vibrant plantings. A place-based attractive environment can encourage people to enter and use the space, alone or in groups.

By using design strategies that soften the edges between the public and private realms, spaces are more likely to be perceived as welcoming and inclusive, which in turn enhances interaction and the desire to linger.

Opportunity: Use Design to Support a Sense of Community

Strategy: Create Comfortable, Inclusive, Flexible Gathering Spaces



Ballpark Village in St. Louis has created a handful of flexible spaces that can be transformed to meet the needs of the community, such as the yoga classes shown here. This space is also used on game nights by spectators watching the Cardinals play. (Ballpark Village)

A sense of wanting to belong to a group or community is fundamental to who we are as human beings. Studies show that in America while 60 percent of people feel a sense of belonging to the nation, only 35 percent feel connected to their local communities.²³ Third places can help mitigate this disconnect.

To respond to the different wants and needs that people have, third places should be designed in ways that are welcoming and inclusive to people of all ages, races, and abilities. Developers and designers can partner with the existing community on the design and use of third places and meet community needs to the greatest extent possible. For example, free wi-fi and bathroom access can create more inclusive conditions for people visiting the space.

Understanding the demographics of the community and proactively reaching out to residents and community groups can help inform design and programming.

Flexibility is also key. Flexibility allows spaces to adapt to the changing needs of people and communities over the short and long terms. For example, moveable chairs and tables can invite people to sit and linger in a variety of seating arrangements. These strategies foster opportunities for people to engage in impromptu interactions.

Opportunity: Use Design to Support a Sense of Community

Strategy: Design for Multimodal Access and Active Transportation



Carmel, Indiana, has created a multiuse linear park, known as Monon Boulevard and Midtown Plaza, which is adjacent to and connects City Center, Midtown, and the Carmel Arts & Design District. Its multimodal design encourages safe and welcoming passage to neighboring retail and restaurants by pedestrians and cyclists. (Hadley Fruits, Rundell Ernstberger)

Access by a variety of transport modes is an essential consideration. Third places can provide infrastructure that encourages and facilitates biking and walking, such as bike storage, helping contribute to a robust multimodal transportation system.

Such a system has a multitude of benefits. In a 2018 study of 1.2 million people in the United States, participants who bicycled reported 23 percent fewer poor mental health days than those who did not exercise.²⁴ Research has also shown that mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods are the most likely to promote social capital, which has related health benefits.²⁵

To prioritize the health of patrons and employees, as well as create equitable transportation opportunities, developers and owners can devote resources to on- and off-street bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in and around their projects, including sidewalk improvements, protected bike lanes, and shared-use paths or trails. To encourage biking, which has positive environmental benefits, high-quality end-of-trip facilities and resources for bicyclists—including ample short- and long-term bicycle parking, publicly accessible bicycle repair stands, bicycle education, and shower and changing room facilities for employees—should be integrated into projects.

Third places that are designed in a way that communicates to the public that the space is available for public use can positively impact the health and equity outcomes of a community.

Third Place Highlight

Weaver Street Market Food Co-op

Carrboro, North Carolina

Weaver Street Market in Carrboro, North Carolina, is an employee- and shopper-owned co-op grocery that is committed to being “a market for the community, by the community.”²⁶ Offering natural,



Weaver Street Market is a co-op, owned by its members and employees. This model has created strong community bonds and ensured access to high-quality food for all. (Jon Steinman)

local, and fair-trade products, as well as hot food, coffee, and baked goods, Weaver Street Market is a hub for the community; it is a place where people go to meet up with others or to people watch while enjoying food and drink.

With four locations in the Raleigh-Durham area, the flagship store is located in downtown Carrboro and is easily accessible on foot or by bike. At this location, the market has both indoor and outdoor seating areas that invite all types of people to socialize or relax. While college students from the nearby University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill frequent the hangout spot, they are not the only ones who appreciate it; it is an inviting space for younger students, adults of all ages, and families with young children.

The outdoor space at Weaver Street Market in Carrboro is designed to facilitate both social contact and refuge, which respects the fact that people have different needs and comfort levels with interaction. Movable chairs allow patrons to form the seating groupings that work best for them. A shaded front lawn, adjacent to the outdoor seating area, is an area for kids to play while their caretakers can sit and watch. Although Weaver Street is a private business, benches placed throughout the lawn area give the sense of a public gathering space, where purchases from the market are not required in order to sit, relax, and talk with friends or strangers.

Weaver Street Market Food Co-op

Carrboro, North Carolina

The Carrboro location is in the heart of a walkable and vibrant downtown with a number of events and amenities within walking distance of the market, including a farmers market, art galleries, concert venues, and many shops and restaurants. The seating options and gathering spaces offered by Weaver Street Market make it the ideal place to meet up with a group of friends before a show or to grab lunch before afternoon shopping.

As a co-op, the success of Weaver Street Market directly benefits its employees, members, and the community. Members buy shares in the co-op that allow them to have decision-making authority through participation in board elections and member surveys and advisory groups. Weaver Street Market and its member-owners are committed to investing dollars back into the local community through successful strategies including carrying locally sourced products, implementing a program for shoppers to round up their transactions to support local hunger relief programs, and a no-cost share program for qualified low-income households to participate in the co-op.²⁷

Local businesses such as the Weaver Street Market that are invested in supporting and improving the communities in which they operate, can directly affect the health and well-being of area residents as well as experience sustained commercial success.

“I would often go to Weaver Street alone for a cup of coffee or snack with a book in hand, knowing full well that I would never open the book because I was sure to see a friend or neighbor at Weaver Street to sit with and visit. If you don’t want to be alone, if you want to be in community, you can always go to Weaver Street.”

—Ella Wise, former Carrboro resident

Third Place Highlight

Bikes Together Workshop and Retail Store

Denver, Colorado

Bikes Together is a full-service bicycle repair workshop and retail store located in Denver, Colorado's La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood. Bikes Together sells bikes, parts, and accessories, and is also a pay-to-fix full-service bike shop. Profit generated from the retail shop is invested into Bikes Together programs. Bikes Together sells fully refurbished bikes to offer people a high-quality, durable bike they can use for years at only 50 to 60 percent of the cost of a new bike.

With a mission that, in part, seeks to “foster bicycling in Denver as a viable means of transportation, and as a means to address wealth and health disparities that exist in our communities,” Bikes Together focuses on making bicycling more accessible to people who have been historically excluded and underrepresented in mainstream bike culture. This type of commercial business—one that focuses on education for community members as well as retail—helps foster a community.

To provide equitable access to bicycles and bike education, Bikes Together sells refurbished bicycles at various price points and opens its repair workshop to community members of all experience levels—staff and volunteer mechanics are available to help identify replacement parts and make the repairs. Based on the parts used for the repairs, staff offers a suggested price and the community member can pay what is affordable. This Fix-Your-Bike program ensures equitable access to bike repair, and it helps empower bike owners to learn to care for and maintain their bikes; on average,



Bikes Together provides training courses to Fix-Your-Bike participants who gain skills and knowledge on how to use and maintain a bike, helping reduce historic disparities and provide equitable access to bicycles as a form of active transportation.

Bikes Together Workshop and Retail Store

Denver, Colorado

“We focus on being by and for populations that have been historically excluded from bike culture. . . . Many people who have been using and riding bikes for transportation and recreation since bikes have been around have not been represented in larger bike culture, and many people have had poor experiences and don’t feel welcome in a bike shop.”

—Caitie Miller, interim director, Bikes Together



Bikes Together leads volunteer training classes to help people repair salvageable bikes. The bikes are then sold at various price points, encouraging bicycling and active transportation.

287 people per month use this program. Access to programs like Fix-Your-Bike is important for encouraging bicycling as a form of active transportation for all people.

Bikes Together has a variety of programs and classes to offer community members, including summer bike camps, mechanics classes, bike rodeos, and gender-equality mechanics programs. Bikes Together also partners with community organizations to redistribute fully refurbished adult bicycles to individuals who can benefit most from a bicycle, including individuals who need reliable transportation to their job and do not have other means to get a bicycle. On Bike Distro Day, each program participant receives a bicycle, lock, helmet, and a basic bicycle safety and maintenance class free of charge.

Making space for organizations that are focused on improving health and equity can be of great benefit to a community. By acknowledging and addressing barriers that communities face within bicycle culture, Bikes Together is helping people learn new skills and new modes of transportation and is contributing to healthier people and a healthier environment.

Opportunity: Promote a Strong, Inclusive Local Economy

Real estate and land use professionals can leverage privately owned and operated third places to foster sustainable local economies that elevate and grow communities by attracting and preserving local talent and businesses.²⁸ By seeking and supporting local businesses as part of the tenant mix, understanding and accommodating their space needs, and prioritizing small businesses owned by historically marginalized populations—including people of color and women—owners and managers of privately owned third places can support the creation of a strong local economy. The promotion of these measures is beneficial to property owners and managers because such measures result in returning customers and an improvement in business performance.

The United States has the greatest economic inequality of any affluent nation; this inequality has been shown to have a direct correlation to community health outcomes.²⁹ Furthermore, the racial wealth gap is large and growing. In 2019 the median U.S. white household wealth was \$188,200 while the median U.S.

Black household wealth was \$24,000.³⁰ As reported by Citi, “Not addressing racial gaps between Blacks and Whites has cost the U.S. economy up to \$16 trillion over the past 20 years. . . . Providing fair and equitable lending to Black entrepreneurs might have resulted in the creation of an additional \$13 trillion in business revenue and potentially created 6.1 million jobs per year.”³¹

Financial disparities have a direct correlation to poorer mental and physical health outcomes. Developers and property managers who center small business and communities in their work have the ability to provide additional opportunities and in turn reduce the financial divide and improve the health of historically marginalized populations.

Small business ownership is a promising strategy to support wealth building and improved health outcomes, because people with greater wealth generally live longer and have lower rates of chronic disease as well as decreased risks of obesity, smoking, hypertension, and asthma.³² Wealth and income also improve access to environmentally healthier living conditions in safe neighborhoods with good schools, which can protect individuals and families from chronic stress associated with the inability to meet daily needs.³³



Civic Engagement



Community



Education



Environment



Health



Housing



Income



Jobs



Life Satisfaction



Safety



Work-Life Balance

Third places, although important for visitors, primarily serve to benefit residents, because they are sources of employment and income and directly impact the local economy and economic opportunities for locals:

- Local businesses generate greater investment back into their local economy: it has been found that for every \$100 spent shopping, local businesses generate \$68 of economic contribution whereas nonlocal businesses generate only \$43 of economic contribution.³⁴



Halcyon/JLL

- Locally owned businesses generate more tax revenue with less cost for cities than big-box retail shopping centers.³⁵
- Small businesses donate 250 percent more than larger businesses to local nonprofits and community causes.³⁶
- A healthy, diverse, and well-connected business ecosystem can help Black entrepreneurs overcome barriers, which can add \$290 billion in business equity.³⁷

As explored further in the following strategies, by prioritizing and supporting local and small business third places, developers, property owners and managers, and designers can create financially viable, culturally rich, and equitable and healthy communities. These outcomes create benefits for the building or property by building the customer base and enticing people to return and spend money again and again.

Opportunity: Promote a Strong, Inclusive Local Economy

Strategy: Design and Develop Projects with Needs of Small Businesses in Mind

Developers and designers can create opportunities within a project to attract and support small businesses by implementing shared resources such as kitchens, restrooms, and trash collection facilities. Because small or micro businesses often do not have the capital or investors to build out a new building shell or invest in necessary tenant improvements, developers could also consider and pursue opportunities to invest in tenant infrastructure. Offering commercial and other retail spaces of varying sizes helps increase access and opportunity for business owners, as small and micro businesses may not be able to afford large tenant spaces.

In addition to design and construction strategies, developers and project owners can be intentional about recruiting small businesses to fill gaps in the community retail landscape and support historically underserved community members. Conversations with community members before or during the early stages of projects can illuminate these gaps.

Recruiting tenants that respond to surrounding community needs can help ensure that the businesses succeed, potentially reducing risks to and increasing returns for the property owner. Community-focused developments have shown lower vacancies and higher retail revenues compared to regional malls.³⁸ Specifically supporting Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and women community members—as business owners and employees—can also help close the wealth gap and promote more equitable outcomes.



The Halcyon Village retail development in Alpharetta, Georgia, encompasses both national brands and local stores. The smaller footprint of several of the local businesses allows sharing of resources within the same facility and reductions in overhead costs. (Halcyon/JLL)

Opportunity: Promote a Strong, Inclusive Local Economy

Strategy: Help Ensure Business Success by Fostering a Network of Resources

Networks in all industries are important for success; for small businesses, the resources that networks can provide may be lifelines. Developers and project owners can help establish these networks for the small businesses in their projects, making connections both among the business owners and to organizations that provide technical expertise for business management tasks, including budgeting, reviewing contracts, and accessing loans. Providing tenants with information for social enterprises and community-based organizations that can offer education, mentorship, and other resources to help small business owners can help new business owners navigate complex business environments.

The access to a formal or informal network among adjacent small businesses—in one project or nearby—provides opportunities for cross-business learning and sharing of resources. When business owners support one another, they are more likely to help drive more customers to each other's businesses, creating more opportunities for success.

For many small businesses the cost of marketing and event planning that may be critical to business promotion can be cost-prohibitive;

a key benefit to a small business network in a project or space for the co-location of micro-businesses, is the ability to collaborate closely on events and offerings and cross promote events and efforts. Sharing the labor for these tasks across partner businesses in a project allows the businesses to focus more time and effort on delivering the products and services that make them unique.



Opportunity: Promote a Strong, Inclusive Local Economy

Strategy: Co-Invest with Tenants

Developers and owners can demonstrate their commitment to tenant success—and cultivate up-and-coming business owners—by entering into rental agreements that are tied to gross sales or revenues. These arrangements, which might involve a base rent plus a percentage of gross sales, help align tenant and owner business interests. Owners have a vested interest in ensuring that tenant businesses, such as restaurants or shops, continue to grow. For their part, businesses know that their landlord is committed to their ongoing success and growth, because rent growth is tied to business performance.³⁹

Co-investment and shared risk structures can also help foster collaboration among tenants in a building, by ensuring that all tenants in a building are working together to promote project success. Opportunities for this collaboration could include shared marketing or buying each other's goods and services (for example, a restaurant might cater an event hosted by a bookstore or office in the building).

Other synergistic arrangements involve contributions of cash equity from project tenants. This strategy helps ensure that tenants are as committed to the success of the building and space as the owners and manager.



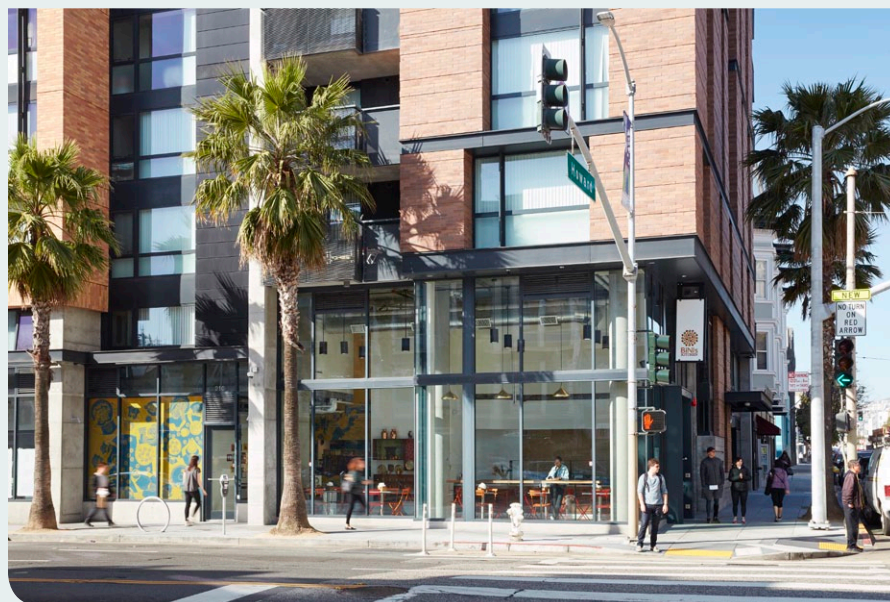
EastPoint in Oklahoma City is an example of how to co-invest with tenants. In this project, tenants build out their own space. Once the lease is signed, they receive 15 percent ownership of their space, which they can grow and hold until they choose to sell it. (Scott Schuman Photography)

Third Place Highlight

Commercial Development at Mercy Housing Communities

State of California

Mercy Housing California (MHC) is the largest regional division of Mercy Housing Inc., one of the country's largest affordable housing organizations that specializes in development, preservation, management, and financing of new and renovated affordable rental properties. MHC owns and manages 355,479 square



Mercy Housing California works with its residents to identify community needs and support local businesses. Bini's Kitchen is an immigrant women-owned Nepali restaurant. It started in an incubator space and has since opened its first brick-and-mortar storefront at the Bill Sorro Community in San Francisco. *(Mariko Reed/David Baker Architects)*

feet of commercial property in California, including projects in development. Its portfolio includes more than 60 retail storefronts that provide a range of services, including nonprofit offices, community theaters, and commercial kitchens.⁴⁰ The MHC commercial development approach is gaining recognition as a model for attracting and retaining locally owned, small business tenants.

The approach is equity driven, highly personalized, and flexes to the needs of MHC's tenant clients. MHC serves as commercial developer and asset manager to provide expertise specific to commercial development, and MHC devotes time and resources to attract and lease to locally owned small businesses. MHC identifies locally owned small businesses and businesses beneficial to the community that could locate within an MHC development and supports them through the entire tenant process from the letter of intent, to execution of the lease, and tenant improvement work. To identify community needs, MHC works with residents to determine if they have access to businesses and services to meet essential needs within walking distance, if any culturally specific businesses are desired, and what price point is a good fit for the existing community.

Commercial Development at Mercy Housing Communities

State of California

Most MHC commercial spaces are between 600 and 2,000 square feet to support small and micro-businesses that may not be able to afford large tenant spaces. When specific uses are identified in advance, such as a child-care facility or LGBTQ senior center, spaces can be larger, at 2,500 to 15,000 square feet. MHC acknowledges that as the number of its commercial tenants increases, management resource needs and operating costs also increase, but the organization sees the value in supporting small businesses in the long run. “We understand people with limited resources, whether it’s people living in our buildings or people trying to start a business in our buildings, inherently need additional support and additional resources to make their dreams a reality,” said Jennifer Dolin, MHC’s former vice president of operations.

MHC acknowledges its commercial development approach requires a willingness to take risks; for example, leasing to locally owned small businesses requires more time and resources than leasing to national chain businesses. The MHC commercial development team is supporting business ownership by people for whom the capital and procedural barriers may otherwise be insurmountable.

By encouraging businesses to hire local talent and attracting businesses desirable to and embraced by the community with

“Our commercial development approach has worked because we have been able to successfully establish long-term relationships with our tenants.”

—Jennifer Dolin, former vice president of operations, Mercy Housing California

accessible price points, MHC creates an ecosystem where businesses and residents benefit from and support each other through employment and patronage. In addition, neighborhood residents can conveniently access essential items and neighborhood amenities by foot without having to travel too far.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MHC has been striving to keep small businesses in their locations by offering rent concessions and renegotiating rent terms. MHC acknowledges significant challenges exist to lower rents when real estate costs and taxes are high—especially in San Francisco where MHC is based—but the organization views its commercial tenants as partners and seeks to establish mutually beneficial long-term relationships.

Third Place Highlight

Hecho en Westwood Collective

Denver, Colorado

The Hecho en Westwood Collective is a collection of Latinx, BIPOC, and woman-owned small and micro businesses that are primarily based in Denver, Colorado's Westwood neighborhood. The aim of the collective, which was formed in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about displacement, is to provide space and support for small businesses and business owners, to keep money in the local community, and to preserve cultural identity.

The collective includes a number of small businesses housed inside Cultura Chocolate on the RISE Westwood Campus. The campus is owned by Re:Vision, an organization that works with people in economically marginalized neighborhoods with a mission to develop resident leaders, cultivate community food systems, and create a community-owned economy.

A locally owned small business itself, Cultura Chocolate has offered space to a number of other local food businesses as part of the Hecho en Westwood Collective, including Honduran food venture Xatrucho, Latino coffee business Cabrona Coffee, vegan and gluten-free bakery Just Indulgence, and Mayan and Yucatan food truck X'Tabai (pronounced ish·ta·bī) Yucateco. The business owners see the collective as an important part of the Westwood community's efforts to prevent gentrification and displacement and to support community self-determination.



Cultura Chocolate houses the Hecho en Westwood Collective in Denver. This collection of Latinx, BIPOC, and women-owned small businesses work together to preserve and grow the local economy and cultural identity. (Christina N. Contreras)

Hecho en Westwood Collective

Denver, Colorado



Hecho en Westwood Collective serves as a community hub, where residents come together to celebrate their communalities and differences. *(Christina N. Contreras)*

Benefits to small business owners who are part of this type of a collaborative are many; each business helps promote the other businesses within the space, and they can collaborate to create culturally relevant events that engage community members. While the businesses in the collective are largely food-based businesses, they work with other local organizations to bring in dance, art, and music to these events to help make community residents feel welcomed to the space. With businesses that respond to the local community cultures, such as the ones in the Hecho en Westwood Collective, there is also an economy of scale when sourcing cultural products that can be shared among businesses.

Another important part of this collective's goals is creating a welcoming space for community members at the RISE Westwood Campus. The physical space at the RISE Westwood Campus is not only providing tools and support for the local businesses that are part of the Hecho en Westwood Collective, it is also offering a place where local community members can gather and feel empowered to celebrate their culture.

Third Place Highlight

Chicago's Pullman Neighborhood and One Eleven Food Hall

Chicago, Illinois

The historic Pullman neighborhood in Chicago's South Side was built in the 1880s by George Pullman, owner of Pullman Works, for the employees of his factory. Pullman saw it as a complete model community with houses of varying sizes and types, schools, parks, stores, and churches. However, the neighborhood was hard hit by the industrial and railroad restructuring that began in the 1950s, and the neighborhood began to lose jobs and residents. Crime, poverty, and economic devaluation followed. Today, the area is revitalizing, with investment in housing, businesses, and rebounding economic development.

The Chicago Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) is playing a role in the comeback of the neighborhood. CNI's mission is to strengthen Chicago low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods by collaborating with communities on new economic opportunities. CNI notes that it is "committed to collaboration, innovation, and creativity to increase equity and attract the jobs and investments that will restore neglected neighborhoods and improve people's lives."

CNI began focusing on the Pullman neighborhood in 2010, recognizing the assets of the community—its unparalleled location for various modes of transportation, a strong human infrastructure of grassroots organizations, great housing stock, and land to build and grow a stronger community. Since 2010, CNI has helped facilitate the development of hundreds of new homes; commercial buildings, including a Walmart, an Amazon warehouse, and a



The 111th Gateway Retail Center in Chicago was once home to the former One Eleven Food Hall, which served as an incubator space that nurtured local South Side food entrepreneurs.

Gotham Greens greenhouse; and the Pullman Community Center, a multiuse sports and activity center that serves 1,000 youth and adults each week.

In response to the community's identified needs, retail development has been a core focus of CNI, with the redevelopment of a steel mill into retail center Pullman Park and the creation of the 111th Street Gateway Retail Center, which provided the opportunity for the neighborhood's first fresh food options in decades.

Chicago's Pullman Neighborhood and One Eleven Food Hall

Chicago, Illinois



Dominique Leach, chef and owner of Lexington Betty Smokehouse in Chicago, was a key tenant at One Eleven Food Hall. Due to her success, the food hall is now transitioning into a full-service restaurant run and operated by Leach.

In the 111th Street Gateway Retail Center, the One Eleven Food Hall helped anchor and nurture local South Side food entrepreneurs. CNI originally planned to bring national chain restaurants to this space, but quickly pivoted in response to resident feedback. For several years, the food hall housed three carefully curated local food businesses: Lexington Betty Smokehouse, AndySunflower Café, and Majani's Soulful Vegan Cuisine.

In 2022, as a sign of its business success, Lexington Betty Smokehouse is transitioning into a full-service restaurant that uses the full food hall space—a validation of the goals of the food hall and the neighborhood's needs and support.

Several factors have made the success of the food retail space and businesses possible. Importantly, local residents designed and managed the food hall. The single shared building space helped bring down overhead expenses for food entrepreneurs, and CNI also provided business development support. Together, these investments in food, housing, and industrial development have helped bring residents, jobs, and economic vitality back to Pullman.

Opportunity: Create Places and Programs That Address Community Needs

It is widely recognized that interpersonal relationships and support systems on many levels have powerful effects on physical and mental health. Sociology research shows a strong relationship exists between an individual's physical and mental health and life span and an individual's social ties and social support.⁴¹ Social support systems are critical to the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Privately owned third places that address the needs of a community, in terms of community events and retail options, can help bring community members together to build and reinforce these systems.

As communities evolve, longtime residents may lose connections to people and places that have been displaced, or they may be threatened with displacement themselves. With decreased attachment to place or with increased housing costs, these residents may choose to—or be forced to—leave these transitioning

neighborhoods, diminishing any cultural identity that existed before new, potentially more homogenous development.⁴²

To reduce displacement of longtime residents, thereby avoiding breaking up social support systems, their needs must be heard, respected, and acted on where possible as new development occurs. Keeping social support systems intact is important to community members' ability to undertake collective action—also referred to as collective efficacy—which describes residents' willingness to improve their neighborhoods.⁴³ Collective action is associated with better self-rated health, lower rates of neighborhood violence, and better access to health-enhancing resources, including medical care, healthy food options, and places to exercise.⁴⁴

The ability for community groups to convene in third places in this way provides opportunities for developers and property owners to tap into these networks to create programs and spaces that will benefit and engage residents, which in turn benefits the development economically with increased foot traffic, returning customers, and sustained value.⁴⁵



Civic
Engagement



Community



Education



Environment



Health



Housing



Income



Jobs



Life Satisfaction



Safety



Work-Life
Balance

Developers and building owners can be intentional about discovering community needs—at the onset of projects and throughout the life cycle of the project—by engaging with the community and listening to its needs for the neighborhood. Developers and owners should then prioritize taking that input and working with residents to develop culturally relevant programming and fill retail spaces with the types of businesses or uses desired by the community. This will also contribute to business success, because residents who desired certain types of establishments in their neighborhoods will be more likely to be regular customers.

Listening to community members and creating spaces that meet their needs—in terms of desired businesses as well as engaging programs and activities—can serve to bring more people to these third places, thereby increasing the social connections in the community and potentially retail sales in the development. The following strategies outline specific methods to help engage the community.



Providing programming that meets community needs, such as a farmers market selling fresh produce, can aid in supporting social connections and community resilience. (Rawpixel.com)

Opportunity: Create Places and Programs That Address Community Needs

Strategy: Implement Feedback Mechanisms to Learn Needs of the Community

The support of a community has a direct impact on the success of a development endeavor or business. When planning a project, it is important to understand the types of events or businesses that community members need or desire within their neighborhoods. Developers and project owners can prioritize hearing directly from local community members and community-based organizations through community engagement processes or local planning community processes.

Often these processes are required by cities to get project approval, but going the extra mile to engage community members



Community support is vital to a development's success. By prioritizing community engagement processes and asking community members key questions, developers can identify business gaps and opportunities to serve the surrounding neighborhood, garnering buy-in from residents. (Atstock Productions)

through surveys, online forums, and going to places where community members are already meeting can yield important information while indicating to the community members that what they think matters.

Community wants and needs discovered through this process can be used to complement data-based market research and gain a more accurate and holistic understanding than a solely data-driven market analysis can reveal. Questions to ask community members include the following:

- Do residents have access to businesses and services to meet essential needs within walking distance?
- What types of businesses/services are missing in the neighborhood?
- Are there culturally specific businesses that are needed and desired?
- What price point is a good fit for the existing community?
- Do any local businesses want to expand or relocate?
- Are food-related businesses needed/desired? And if yes, what kind?

Answers to these questions, as well as continuous engagement with the community beyond project completion, can help developers and owners plan programming and events and identify the types of businesses to recruit into available retail spaces.

Opportunity: Create Places and Programs That Address Community Needs

Strategy: Design Programming and Events That Meet Community Needs



The Wharf DC in Washington, D.C., offers free activities and events, including a splash fountain, Saturday night dancing, lawn games, and cultural events such as Mardi Gras and Día de los Muertos. The Wharf DC aims to have all feel welcome. (Zoya Hixson)

Publicly accessible gathering spaces within projects—such as plazas, lawns, or spaces within retail establishments—can be used to hold events and programs to engage community members and create opportunities for social interaction and celebration. Programs can support and celebrate community culture, through relevant food, events, and art. Supporting the expression of cultural identity can celebrate the rich cultural background of an area and potentially help the businesses and local community thrive.

Local businesses in projects can host events and programs that also attract new customers and support social connections within the community, either on their own or in partnership with other businesses. Property owners or managers can work with multiple tenants to create joint events and help connect tenants with each other through newsletters and other communication channels. By partnering, these businesses may attract a more diverse group to an event which can help create new social connections between members of the community. Outreach to community members to ensure that programs and events are interesting and relevant is key to their success.

Opportunity: Create Places and Programs That Address Community Needs

Strategy: Use Public Input to Seek Community-Supportive Businesses



Wembley Park in London, England, welcomes residents and visitors to come together in celebration of community. Events include community art exhibitions, outdoor cinema screenings, and live music performances. (*Wembley Park and Quintain*)

Community conversations, particularly at the onset of a new project, can help developers understand not only what types of events are of interest but also what new businesses or other commercial uses might be needed in the community. Similarly, these conversations can highlight existing local businesses that community members want to ensure are preserved as new businesses open. When working to fill commercial spaces within projects, developers and property managers can use this information to target businesses and services that community members feel are lacking in their communities.

Businesses that directly support the needs of communities—such as daycares, grocery and drug stores, and self-care businesses like salons—can also serve as community gathering spaces, with the potential to create opportunities to build social connections.

Third Place Highlight

Crocker Park Lifestyle Center

Westlake, Ohio

Crocker Park is an experiential lifestyle center located in Westlake, Ohio, roughly a 20-minute drive west of downtown Cleveland. With a tagline of “It’s all happening here,” just about every type of business and event can be found at this 120-acre mixed-use development.

Cleveland-based developer Stark Enterprises opened the first phase of Crocker Park in 2004. The “city within a city” includes 534 rental apartments above ground-floor outdoor-facing retail space that includes over 2 million square feet of retail space occupied by more than 140 retail and restaurant businesses. Stark Enterprises strongly values supporting local entrepreneurs, and Crocker Park



Crocker Park has been called a “city within the city” of Westlake, Ohio. It caters to the community’s everyday needs and brings people together for various celebrations, including the yearly tree lighting during the holiday season. (Crocker Park c/o Robert L. Stark Enterprises Inc.)

is home to national brands as well as numerous locally owned restaurants and retail stores; the property has approximately 50 percent of each ownership type. There is also 1 million square feet of class A office space occupied by 15 offices, a 16-screen Regal movie theater, a Hyatt Place hotel, and 131 townhomes available for purchase or rental.

There are two full-service grocery stores on the property, eight parking garages, and metered on-street parking throughout the site. A new co-working space called Launch Workplaces opened in 2021, and the MetroHealth Westlake Health Center provides convenient access to medical care. An event space, Market Square, has 25,000 square feet of outdoor space and 8,500 square feet of indoor space that can host any type of event up to 1,000 people indoors.

Stark Enterprises has found that patrons visit Crocker Park consistently from up to a 90-minute drive away from the development, which indicates the dearth of engaging retail opportunities in the region. The developer is committed to creating unique activities and experiences for all people, whether they live in, work at, or visit Crocker Park.

Stark Enterprises organizes and hosts many annual community events for residents and guests that also draw customers to Crocker Park retail stores. During the winter season Stark Enterprises provides an ice-skating rink, a decorated tree garden, and an illuminated 50-foot Christmas tree in the main traffic circle at the center of the site. An Express Train takes kids around the site during select winter and summer months.

Crocker Park Lifestyle Center

Westlake, Ohio

Throughout the summer, the fountains run at the splash pad for kids and adults to cool off and in the evenings enjoy a fountain light show. Families enjoy movies on the lawn in Market Square Park. There is also a donation-based exercise class series called “Move with a Cause” led by one of the retail tenants, Athleta; donations benefit a different cause for each class. There is also live music in the park on weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Every Saturday morning year-round (outdoors from April to November and indoors from December to March), Crocker Park hosts the North Union Farmers Market, which includes produce from more than 20 local farmers. An annual community-oriented summer Wine Festival and Block Party with about 80 vendors encourages residents and visitors to interact.

Stacie Schmidt, vice president of marketing and communications for Stark Enterprises, oversees tenant relations for Crocker Park,

“We create community events that help generate traffic for our retail tenants and also create activities for our residents and guests. We care a lot about ensuring that whatever we put on is beneficial for both parties.”

—Stacie Schmidt, vice president of marketing and communication, Stark Enterprises



Crocker Park hosts celebrations that include wine festivals, concerts, and farmers markets. (Crocker Park c/o Robert L. Stark Enterprises Inc.)

and said the company deeply cares about creating a variety of experiences for people. “We support and engage the community wherever we can, because the community has been integral to the success of Crocker Park,” said Schmidt. To help create connections between tenants, Schmidt created a magazine in January 2021 where the company can create ads to share any of its new products or promotions with other tenants; Schmidt then takes that information and shares it on the Crocker Park website for guests to see as well.

With 10 social and event spaces, Crocker Park has a full calendar of events that keep people engaged, entertained, and wanting to come back again and again. And Stark Enterprises’ dedication to creating meaningful events and programs has paid off, as Crocker Park has nearly 20 million visitors per year.

Third Place Highlight

Copper Bamboo Salon and Retail Store

New Orleans, Louisiana

Copper Bamboo is a natural hair salon, barber shop, and cultural boutique in a walkable, transit-accessible neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. Copper Bamboo's location adjacent to other small businesses—including a gym, convenience store, and dance studio—allows clients of the salon to conveniently meet other needs. Owner and stylist Cassandra Daniel, also known as “Mama Sauni,” has prioritized creating a judgment-free environment where her clients can look and feel their best when they leave her shop. Putting people first in her business model and creating a space where people can be themselves and have a desire to come back has helped ensure the success of her small, local business.

Mama Sauni herself is why her clients are fiercely loyal and come back again and again to have their hair done or to shop. The notion of “self-care” is at the heart of what Copper Bamboo is all about, the importance of which Mama Sauni has understood from an early age. The attention she can give to her clients through doing their hair and helping them select clothing helps them look and feel their best.

Mama Sauni believes that whatever someone's self-care ritual is, people need to learn to honor it. The atmosphere that she creates at Copper Bamboo—where clients feel a sense of calm, where they can go to literally let their hair down and get some “retail therapy” at the same time—ensures that appointments are something that people really look forward to, for the physical and mental relief they can provide.

Businesses like Copper Bamboo are important to local communities, offering a service and space where people can



Copper Bamboo in New Orleans appears on the surface to be a retail clothing store, but within its walls, Cassandra “Mama Sauni” Daniel has created a community gathering place in the salon in the back. *(Monique Brown)*

“The hair salon has represented such an important third place for Black women for a very long time. Our hair is a big deal to us so if it's not right, we're not right!”

—Monique Brown, patron, Copper Bamboo

Copper Bamboo Salon and Retail Store

New Orleans, Louisiana

relax and feel like their best selves and also meaningfully engage with other community members. At Copper Bamboo, clients share wisdom with Mama Sauni that she passes on to other clients; clients also come with books, with refreshments, with whatever they need to make their experience meaningful and relaxing for them.

Mama Sauni's clients become friends and family to her and to each other, which is part of what keeps them coming back for their self-care experiences; a loyal customer base is crucial to the success of a small business, and loyal customers are crucial in referring new customers. To support the local community, Copper Bamboo also features art from local artists in the shop, rotating every three months or so, with a goal of having the artists come in for events, and hosts small business "pop-ups" where other small businesses sell their products on site.

The success of small, local businesses can be attributed to the interactions that people are able to have there, both with staff and other customers. For businesses that specialize in self-care, like Copper Bamboo, creating a space that people feel calm and happy in, to keep them feeling mentally stable, is important. And Mama Sauni is happy to have a physical space where people can come and feel that sense of retreat.

"We don't put enough emphasis on self-care and how that impacts our mental well-being."

—Mama Sauni, owner, Copper Bamboo



Mama Sauni, owner of Copper Bamboo in New Orleans, focuses on the self-care of her customers and ensures that she creates an environment that encourages physical and mental relief. (Monique Brown)

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