



Main Streets & Town Centers

Full Circle

Main Street shopping puts us back where we started, only better

By Katherine Field



The 1.2 million-sq.-ft. mixed-use Pearlland Town Center, located just south of Houston and developed by CBL & Associates Properties, shows how the right mix of uses will create an incomparable destination.

Mass.-based W/S Development, believes that tenants will continue to gravitate toward the concept—with “some retailers being born specifically for this venue. The Main Street and town-center concept sharpshoots the best customer in a market. As the format grows in popularity, existing tenants are reinventing themselves [from a space-planning

shopping, like fashion, tends to follow a 20-year cycle. And the unveiling—and rollout—of America’s latest shopping format bears out the two-decade pattern.

In the 1960s, shopping was almost entirely a downtown, Main Street event, with local retail and national department stores clustered in America’s downtown and small-town shopping districts. By contrast, in the 1980s, the majority of the retail centers built were enclosed malls, moving shoppers away from America’s downtowns and into the suburbs.

Twenty years later, we’re right back where we started—only better. Main Streets and town centers, patterned after the shopping venues of the ‘60s, have emerged as the latest iteration of an open-air format that has all but obliterated the enclosed-mall blueprint. (In fact, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers, there are no enclosed malls planned in the United States for the next three years).

Interviews with five noted Main Street developers revealed five distinct trends that impact this hot format’s present state—and future proliferation.

Trend No. 1: Expect new retail to be born from the format. As Main Streets and town centers continue to resonate with customers, Brian Sciera, VP of lifestyle centers for Chestnut Hill,

ning and a merchandising standpoint] to create a concept that is ideally situated to express their brand in an open-air setting. I also see exciting start-up companies and new retailers with four or five stores that view Main Streets and town centers as the perfect avenue for expansion,” Sciera said.

Nashua Landing, just beyond the Massachusetts border in Nashua, N.H., is a W/S Main Street project that the developer feels will do exactly what is intended—cater to the best customer in the market. “We are putting together a project that is going to target the best customers in the trade area and give them multiple reasons to come to Nashua Landing several times a week.” W/S’s retail strategy is to anchor the project with Whole Foods Market, which “will bring that best customer two to three times a week, maybe more,” Sciera said.

Trend No. 2: Main Streets will become downtown destinations. Scott Simon, president of Brookfield, Wis.-based Simon Group, has observed a definite niche opening in municipalities that are looking for an alternative to big-box developments. Main Street projects are proving to be perfect niche-fillers. The company’s landmark project, Main Street Market in the Wisconsin village of Pleasant Prairie, will not only fill a need—it will become the community’s Main Street. “There was no Main



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Jim Wilson & Associates' River Crossing in Macon, Ga., adds a power-center component to its Main Street offerings, making it doubly appealing.

Street in the municipality of Pleasant Prairie," explained Simon. "Our project actually creates Main Street, which will tie a second alternative route to a state highway from the village downtown center. The only two shopping destination points in this entire village are going to be created into a Main Street Market and a town center," he said.

Giving a village a Main Street presents huge challenges. Simon Group found itself in discussions with the municipality and its fire department to allow the department proper access without losing a wide swath of land circling the development. And the bar is raised on architectural standards. "Main Street Market will be very traditional, but with a modern flair," he said. "You have to keep the municipality happy with the product it's getting, the tenants happy with the center you're delivering, and keep the customers happy by offering the right access, the right shops and the amenities they're looking for."

Trend No. 3: Mixed-use will be a Main Street mainstay. Chattanooga, Tenn.-based CBL & Associates Properties is developing multiple types of open-air lifestyle centers. According to chief development officer Michael Lebovitz, while all of these centers share one distinct attribute—the outdoors—each is otherwise quite different from the other. "Main Streets are uniquely designed for the markets they're in and for the types of tenants they'll have," said Lebovitz. "Some centers are anchored, some are unanchored, some bigger, some smaller—you can't generalize enough in describing the different formats of lifestyle-center developments."

What you can pinpoint, said Lebovitz, is a mix of uses is expanding the Main-Street concept and fur-

thering the format's progression. "Certainly when you mix uses, integrating a hotel with retail or office space or residential units, you're adding challenges in the development process," Lebovitz said. "You're also enhancing its offerings for the consumer."

Pearland Town Center, near Houston, is perhaps CBL's most classic example of an open-air center that contains all of the elements of a true-to-form Main Street center, but with added uses. Anchors Dillard's and Macy's join junior anchors Barnes & Noble and Dick's Sporting Goods (under negotiation), along with a Courtyard by Marriott, office space and residential units, and a diverse mix of small-shop retailers. "In the purest sense, it is a mixed-use suburban lifestyle center," said Lebovitz.

Trend No. 4: Creative use of the land will promote format innovation. While land scarcity has contributed to the halt in regional mall construction, it has helped the Main Street format proliferate. "It's difficult to get that 100 acres for a regional mall next to dense, affluent demographics, but the Main Street developments have been easier to integrate into communities by virtue

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The Town Center at Levis Commons, in Perrysburg, Ohio, offered developer Hill Partners the perfect opportunity to play off the topography and create an innovative Main Street center.





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Trends

When Simon Group's Main Street Market opens in Pleasant Prairie, Wis., it will become a major shopping destination—and the village's true Main Street.

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of their smaller size," said Bob Spratt, president of Charlotte, N.C.-based Hill Partners. And some of the unique topographies offered by these communities have lent themselves to innovative developments. "When we go into different markets, the land topography and architectural vocabulary are different," Spratt said. "You always want to integrate architecture and design appropriate for the environment, rather than homogenize your program by applying it to any market you enter." By responding to a market's uniqueness, Hill Partners has found creative ways to adapt.

Clemmons Town Center, in the greater Winston-Salem, N.C., area, features two levels of retail with multiple facades, as the developer played off the rolling hills the site provided. Another Hill Partners development, The Town Center at Levis Commons, in Perrysburg, Ohio, rests on flat terrain, prompting retail with offices above it to create a better sense of place. "Main Street developments are always different," said Spratt. And showing themselves to be hugely successful. "Tenants are finding that integration into these lifestyle centers has come at a lower occupancy cost, yet they're capable of achieving the same—or greater—sales which results in enhanced profitability."

Trend No. 5: A new hybrid will dominate the Main Street format. "Everyone is continually trying to build a better mouse-



trap," said Will Wilson, president of Montgomery, Ala.-based Jim Wilson & Associates (JWA).

JWA is making its own mark on that mousetrap by fueling perhaps the most impactful trend in Main Street and town-center projects—adding different shopping formats to the mix and creating an all-new retail hybrid. "As with any format, not every tenant will find total success in a Main Street or town-center environment," said Wilson. "That's why, in Juban Crossing, we're introducing a part-Main Street, part-enclosed-mall shopping center."

Located near Baton Rouge, in Denham Springs, La., the mammoth Juban Crossing will feature department-store anchors linked to a 150,000-sq.-ft. Main Street linked to a 150,000-sq.-ft. enclosed mall area, allowing customers to flow seamlessly from one to the other. "We think we've hit on something important here," said Wilson. "Lifestyle retailers such as Coldwater Creek and Ann Taylor want to be on the Main Street. Charlotte Russe and Buckle? We think they'll want to be in the enclosed mall, near the food court and theater."

Another JWA development, River Crossing in Macon, Ga., also combines multiple formats: Its Main Street is augmented by a power-center component.

"I think we'll be seeing more Main Street hybrids," predicted Wilson. ■

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Nashua Landing, located in Nashua, N.H., near Boston, and developed by W/S Development, illustrates how Main Street projects, and the right tenants, sharp-shoot the most desirable customer base in America.



Clemmons Town Center is conveniently positioned along Interstate 40 between the Lewisville-Clemmons Road and the brand new Harper Road/Bermuda Run interchanges, offering unparalleled access. This regional development is the first open-air lifestyle center in the Winston-Salem area—one of the 100 fastest-growing markets in the nation.



With more than 540,000 sq. ft. of premier shopping, dining and entertainment uses, Clemmons Town Center is strategically positioned to be one of the most impressive shopping and personal leisure destinations in the region.

Clemmons Town Center will be merchandised to showcase key lifestyle retailers; the center will focus on apparel, lifestyle, home furnishing, and restaurant and cafe uses. The merchandising plan also includes a gourmet market, state-of-the-art theater and a 60,000-sq.-ft. Class A office component.

Clemmons Town Center

Location: Clemmons, N.C. (in the greater Winston-Salem market)

Size: 540,000 sq. ft.

Developer: Hill Partners, Inc.

Major tenants: Current tenants include Panera Bread, Marble Slab Creamery and Dream Dinners, all currently open in a center that has been acquired by Hill Partners and that will be incorporated into the greater Clemmons Town Center development. Hill Partners is in negotiations with lifestyle, apparel, home furnishing, and restaurant/cafe uses, along with a gourmet market and theater to round out the merchandising plan.

Status: Scheduled to begin construction in 2008 and open in the spring of 2009