



# Placemaking for Successful Mixed-Use Development



2023





# Placemaking

## Vibrant Places

Placemaking is city-building with human behavior and experience at the forefront of decision-making.

Successful placemaking contributes to a community's distinctive identity which results in increased activity and liveliness leading to a boost in foot traffic and increased commercial spending for the broader neighbourhood.



## Data-Driven

Placemaking requires two important elements: understanding the end-users and engaging with the community. By doing so, creative and effective spaces guided by data can be delivered while reinforcing and fostering trust and cooperation within the community.



## Emotion-Inspiring

A place cannot merely relate to the built environment but must also relate to the feelings or experiences of the people visiting it. Places should be memorable and should evoke positive emotions that create a prolonged desire to visit.



## Inclusive

The future of places should not only be shaped and governed by power structures and authorities, but by the needs, cultures and traditions of people who use them. Placemaking is NOT a top-down approach, rather it advocates for inclusivity and addresses the needs of minority groups so that they will not be excluded or marginalized in places that we create.



## Sum Of Its Parts

Places are composed of different elements that contribute to its wholeness, whether it is the natural features, architecture, or the composition of uses. A meaningful place is balanced with elements that complement each other, making that place special and unique.

# Mixed-Use. What Is It?

Major cities such as Toronto are experiencing unprecedented growth, therefore, they must be well-equipped to accommodate the influx of new residents per year, as well as the associated economic expansion. As a result, more developers and municipalities are advancing the development of mixed-use projects as a means to address the growing need for housing, employment and retail with the goal of creating vibrant places.

A mixed-use development incorporates complementary zoning and land uses within a project to deliver a place that responds to the needs of its target market, and the greater overall community. The goal of mixed-use is to promote experiences and foster meaningful connections, while carefully preparing for the future.

## EMERGING TRENDS

### LOCAL EXPERIENCES



Focusing on a community's diversity, local flavour, and local neighborhood tourism through small, independent, non-national businesses

### THE FOOD MOVEMENT



Curating diverse local food experiences to provide varied concepts within retail shops, restaurants, food halls, and pop-ups

### MOBILITY



Leveraging opportunities to connect to transit and encouraging other forms of active transportation, such as walking, cycling, and scooter-ing

### COMMUNITY-ORIENTED AMENITIES



Providing amenities based on the needs of the community. For example, public parks, green spaces, health services, play spaces etc

### THE APPROVALS PROCESS

Obtaining approvals from all levels of government may be time-consuming due to multiple layers of decision-making, and conflicting government policies.

### ASSEMBLING THE RIGHT CONSULTANT TEAM

Bringing together a team of subject matter experts that share a collective vision for the project and corporate objectives requires leadership, trust, and of course, time and money.

### TWO'S A PARTY, THREE'S A CROWD

Marrying residential, retail, office, institutional, and other uses is highly complex due to their competing needs for operation and infrastructure. Noise, smell, and security can present challenges that, if not appropriately managed on the front end, can harm the success of the project. Additionally, the phasing of the development can set a project back if not implemented carefully.

### EVOLVING DEMANDS

How do you design a project that is timeless, and will stand the test of time against changing trends?

### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Money makes the world go round, and oftentimes, projects of scale require well-capitalized players to achieve a successful outcome. Project timelines, unforeseen costs, and changing economic landscapes need to be carefully managed.

## Development Challenges in Mixed-Use Projects

**IF IT AIN'T BROKE...**  
 It has always been easy to stick to what has been done (successfully) in the past, because the formula works, and there is a reluctance to pivot from the status quo. However, this does not always equate to successful outcomes that responds to the needs of the end users.

# Fundamental Considerations

## For Successful Mixed-Use Projects

### 1 Target Market Analysis

One of the first questions that should be asked is “Who is your target market? Who are you building this development for?” By answering these fundamental questions, one can understand what the needs and demands are, identify different market boundaries, and analyze the implications of the existing surrounding market, in order to better plan for different uses and offerings within a development.

**PSYCHOGRAPHICS OF CUSTOMER DEMANDS**

- Personalities
- Social Class
- Lifestyle
- Values

### 2 The Identity Of A Place

Establishing a vision for a mixed-use development helps in creating its identity (its personality), while helping to identify the elements that attract people to a place and how it can be meaningful and special to them.

“ THE IDENTITY OF A PLACE IS TIED TO THE ENVIRONMENT THAT WE ARE TRYING TO CREATE.



### 3 The Master Plan

The blueprint is one of the most important technical tools in mixed-use projects. The master plan establishes the parameters from which long term planning of the project can be implemented and guides the overall framework and program of uses within a development.

### 4

### The Retail Program

A thoughtfully-curated retail program with a strong combination of key anchor uses and complementary smaller uses will promote vibrant spaces, encourage positive guest experiences, and generate strong economic outcomes. The different retail uses must complement each other and should be contextually-relevant.

#### RETAIL CATEGORIES

Retail | Food & Beverage

Neighbourhood Services & Conveniences

Arts & Culture | Pop-Up

### 5 The Numbers

Economics fundamentally impact the strategy and implementation for a mixed-use development. Therefore, the right financial model must be considered for such a development to be successful in the long term. Placemaking elements aside, a project must be, first and foremost, economically viable for it to be developed.



### 6 Stakeholders

Mixed-use developments are about the fundamental understanding of building relationships. These relationships can include governments, approval agencies, business owners, community members, and other stakeholders that will form part of the process of approvals and the eventual implementation of the development. An effective engagement process determines the outcome and timeline of the development.

“

The true essence of place is a fundamental understanding of human behaviour. The outcome of a great place should be to captivate and capture the wants, the needs and the desires of people who, everyday, must make decisions on how to spend their two most valuable resources –  
**time and money.**

”

– Rob Spanier, President, Spanier Group



