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Identity Integration and Repositioning in the Retail Market

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With the current state of the economy and slowdown in new development, many development and asset management organizations are now focusing on investment in existing properties to compete with lifestyle centers for tenants and customers. Neglected existing properties have become outdated and out of position with the current shopping demographic. The use of graphics in a mall renovation can have an enormous effect on its revitalization. The redesign of a signage, identity and way-finding system can create the perception of a new community destination drawing more tenants and customers and, in turn, increasing profits for the developer.

Expanding and Rebranding

Identity repositioning can be very useful as the demographics of communities change, as is shown with Brookfield Square Mall in Brookfield, Wisconsin. This CBL & Associates Properties (CBL) asset is located in a region that was once considered more rural, but over the past decade, the demographics changed making it a wealthier community with a very progressive new group of residents whose needs could not be met with the old facility. The community was ready for upscale restaurants and a more dynamic atmosphere. A high standard was anticipated for the repositioning from planning, to image to the use of quality materials.



Brookfield Square Mall
Brookfield, Wisconsin

The community of Brookfield was not looking for a heavily-themed mall but was looking for a "real" place that would reflect their desire to create an upscale destination for its citizens. The developer met with city officials to better understand their needs and where they were looking to go in the future as the community grew.

CBL followed the trend of "de-malling" by creating a few outward facing restaurant tenants, a porte cochere at the main entry, and re-branding the project with a new logo and color palette. The additional out parcels created in the renovation

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allowed for unique design opportunities within the interior design plan. Vertical overhead directional signs were implemented to serve as guideposts for visitors navigating to exterior out parcel destinations. The clean lines of the signage and use of rich materials and color palettes compliment the architecture. The palette incorporated warm colors offering visitors an inviting experience into a dynamic, yet relaxing environment.

Signage was also added to effectively identify the project off of a now major road system. As the community had grown, numerous competing retail venues had begun to sprout up adjacent to the Brookfield Square property. The addition of vehicular directional signage was instrumental in creating and maintaining effective traffic control within the project. Although, city code would not allow the use of the vehicular directional signage, our company, in collaboration with CBL, established a trusting relationship with the city educating them on the benefits of revising the code to allow for such signage. The use of cultured stone and textured aluminum painted in rich, warm colors was in keeping with the contemporary and upscale look in this directional signage.

Tuning into a Theme

Northpark Mall, another CBL asset, is located in Joplin, Missouri and runs through the heart of Route 66. A completely different approach to graphic integration was implemented in the renovation of the property.



Northpark Mall
Joplin, Missouri

With its proximity and nostalgic connection to the Route 66, an opportunity was presented to create a dramatic impact through theming.

In the renovation of the mall, the use of different typefaces for the graphics of the food court gives the viewer a sense of what the graphics and typefaces would be like during the heyday of Route 66. In its design, our company understood the importance of selecting typefaces so that they create the intended environment. Typefaces can convey mood, attitude, and tone while having a distinct image based on the font's unique features. The font can connect the mood, purpose and intended audience to a project. The personality of the selected fonts enhanced the consumers feeling of walking through America's first main street — Route 66.

Further fostering the theming concept was the introduction of custom designed circular light fixtures with the names of cities along Route 66. The long curvilinear LED lights are hung off the ceiling and connect each "city" as you walk through the food court. The entry sequence of the food court also includes history panels describing the origin of Route 66, designed to incorporate materials and elements of the signage of that era. Columns have blade signs that use the old-time interstate mileage markers indicating the distance until the next city and blade-mounted historic postcards with brilliant typefaces and graphics in line with the 1940's. The color selection and precise application complement the intended environment. Even the food court tabletops are feature collages of old postcards and graphics from Route 66 souvenir shops.

The graphics component of the renovation project was a nominal part of the construction costs but brought a huge new look to the project.

Adding Lifestyle

At Beachwood Place in Northeast Ohio, a General Growth Properties (GGP) enclosed mall, the center court and main exterior entry were enticing to a variety of high-end tenants. The challenge was the limited available frontage at the mall's primary entrance. This was due to a small cramped food court located on the lower level off center court.

GGP added lifestyle center components to the North side of the mall as part of a renovation including outward facing upscale restaurant tenants. The mall's main entry was relocated in the plaza area between the two tenants, creating a dynamic entry sequence through the addition of a kinetic sculpture near the outdoor seating area and pedestrian area. Valet parking signage was also added due to the addition of the two upscale restaurants.



Beachwood Place
Beachwood, Ohio

The dark, antiquated lower-level food court was relocated to the upper level of the project. It included all new food court tenant storefronts and signage. Uniformity in the approach to the food court tenant counters, signage and lighting led to a cohesive aesthetic creating a "restaurant" feel rather than a typical chaotic food court. The overall design of the signs were rich in colors and materials that complemented the new flooring and color scheme. An internally illuminated artistic graphic panel with vibrant colors welcomes customers as they ride the escalator from the first floor directly into the food court.

Different thematic objectives in each of these projects provided great impact on the changing market place sometimes even more than costly construction. Changing perception, improving identity and providing community can occur through a wide variety of applications and thematic solutions.

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