Re-purposing a Dead Mall into an Art and Innovation Center

Veronika Gaska
Western Montana College, veronigirl96@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses
Part of the Interior Design Commons

Recommended Citation
Gaska, Veronika, "Re-purposing a Dead Mall into an Art and Innovation Center" (2019). Honors Theses. 3154.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/3154

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
Dead mall: A mall with a high vacancy rate, low consumer traffic, or dated/deteriorating in some manner. A dead mall could further be considered one having an occupancy rate in slow or steady decline of 70% or less.

Purpose: Positively affect the initial experience of visitors when entering the building. The waiting area provides an open space for gathering, waiting or relaxing, as well as a place for small groups to meet. The reception counter serves to welcome visitors, provide information, and register artists into the program.

Color: Features neutral and yellow colors to create a happy, welcoming space.

Scope: Reception desk (ADA), branding, seating, collaboration area, entrance to management offices.

Materials: Polished concrete floor, concrete wall, wood beams suspended on acoustical panels, wood ceilings, textured plaster walls, and stainless steel cornices.

Features: Neutral and yellow colors to positively affect the initial experience of visitors; greenhouses.

PROJECT DIRECTIONS

Re-Purposing a Dead Mall into an Art and Innovation Center

Designed by: Veronika Gaska

Background:

Approximately 1/3 of the 1,200 malls in America are dead or dying.

Problem:

Many years ago, when the shopping industry was booming, shopping malls were being built one after another—more than were needed for the population. They served as a hub for all kinds of people. But with time, the focus of the retail industry shifted to the convenience of online buying instead of in-store, which contributed to the lack of demand for retail stores, running them into the ground, and leaving the malls empty.

Some say that part of this change is because millennials were so influenced by the financial crisis of 2008 that they turned their backs on materialistic goods in favor of experience.

With malls emptying out, the future of these buildings comes into question: Is it that the malls are dated and unappealing to the younger generations? Or is it the lack of interest in the industry?

Previous Solutions:

Throughout the years, different solutions have been implemented. The simplest option is to re-tenant the spaces and change out stores for more profitable options. Other solutions have been transforming the space into community colleges, community centers, multi-family apartment complexes, and greenhouses. Anchor stores can be re-purposed to be fitness centers, churches, and medical centers.

Some have been successful, some not.

Concept:

Originally, a mall’s intent rested on providing a location to sell artifacts and goods externally sourced—often from outside of the country. With this method of retail, there is a disconnect between the origins of the product and the purchase.

In the new concept for the mall, the main idea is to create a location that is inspirational and functional for artists and artisans to create. The Center is open to the public, inviting people to view and share in the experience of the process of creation; they have the option to purchase the goods directly from the galleries located in the "anchors." This creates a more unified experience between the manufacturing of a product and the retail for both the artist and the consumer. It also allows for a dead mall to create new life through the process.

Project Direction:

The Art and Innovation Center is a facility designed to bring together artistic individuals and create a large co-working community meant to stimulate creation. By bringing artists of different trades together and providing an environment for them that has the necessary materials, inspiration, and support, each member has the opportunity to grow in potential. Not only is this an environment in which to create, but it is also one to share collaboratively with the community by opening up about the design process with studios enclosed in glass, open galleries, spaces for hosting events and classes; and the opportunity to buy creations from the artists directly at the site.

Goals:

- Create an atmosphere for individuals to come together, collaborate, and push their limits in their trades.
- Hold of proprietary.
- Create connections.
- Become a central spot people can touch the local creative scene, and gain and share from the creative process.
- Provide a place for students and entrepreneurs, set a space where they can create and continue from there.

Color:

Multicolored in order to signify the functional and artistic nature of the center.

Cinema

Studios

Classrooms

Kitchens

New Design Includes:

- Corridor
- Bar
- Reception
- Classrooms
- Garage Rooms
- Studio Offices
- Lounges
- Studio Baths
- Food Court
- Social Rooms
- Kitchens

Includes and innovation spaces, reinforce the power of physical place, community, and experience in an increasingly digital world, where traditional jobs are evolving and entrepreneurial solutions are empowering people to invent their own career path.

Collaboration lounge

Collaborative spaces should range in size and appearance in order to accommodate everyone. People outside the space need to be able to see in so as to not interrupt when a room is occupied.

Purpose: A lounge doubling as a collaboration space, outfitted with a variety of different group settings. Located adjacent to the food court to allow for close proximity to the bustle of foot traffic.

Scope: Collaboration privacy pods, high-top counters, sofa arrangements, booths, garage collaboration rooms.

Design goals: Visual complexity is a desired aspect of a workspace and can be achieved in a variety of different ways, including putting a simple layout on a diagonal axis, curving paths, or hinting at something interesting just out of eyesight to keep people curious, taking simple elements like walls and making them something noteworthy, and being daring with color choices.

Color: Multicolored in order to signify the power of collaboration between the artists from the different studios. The controlled chaos of the upholstery stimulates creativity and energy, while the simple walls help ground the individual environment.

Materials: Perforated wood room divider wall, wood beams suspended on acoustical ceiling. Colorful, patterned upholstery covering various furniture pieces.
Site of Renovation: **West Oaks Mall**

- 9401 W Colonial Dr. Ocoee, Florida 34761
- About a 15 minute drive from downtown Orlando
- 7 colleges/universities (with over 2000 students) within 21 miles of Ocoee
- 1.1 million sqft. indoor mall

**Existing Mall Components:**

- 115 Tenant Spaces
- Lots of Parking
- 14 Screen Cinema
- Skylight Along Corridors
- Food Court
- A Anchor Stores

**Purpose:** Create an experience in the travel, not just the destination. Encourage visitors down the hallway, incorporate unique in-between spaces.

**Scope:** Studio entries that lead through a glassed-in area, ideal for observing creation of art within the studio. The door to the studio itself is near the rear, adjacent to lockers for artists' personal possessions. Kitchens, bathroom rooms, exit corridors lead to the entrance, leading out to the corridor. A bar is located at the far south end of the mall in the center of the corridor.

**Design goals:** Adapt the corridor from the stereotypical mall corridor into something fresh, new, and innovative. Hanging glass waves create movement in the corridor, creating flickering colored light and shadows. Sunlight makes workers happier and more alert, so the skylight is left exposed and enhanced. Geometric wallcovering pattern creates visual interest contrasting the simple monochrome studio entries.

**Color:** Each studio has designated color. The studio can be easily located by following the corresponding color path from either corridor end.

**Materials:** Polished concrete corridor, epoxy studio entry flooring, colored glass waves, vinyl wallpaper, wood custom organic bench.

**Territories** are important for individuals. Groups work better together if they feel like they have their personal space. Physical barriers often work to create these areas but visual changes can be just as accommodating (changes in color, etc.).