

Land Planning

You lost your anchor – now what? How a property can reinvent itself in the community



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For decades, the neighborhood shopping center has been a pillar of the community it serves. It is the go-to for groceries, hardware, and soft goods, even the favorite pizza shop and barber. The mix of tenants is symbiotic, with larger anchors supporting the small shops, and the small shops providing variety to patrons of the anchor. Without the anchor, the success of the entire center can falter. In the new economy, anchor and grocery stores that have been the magnet for community centers have been increasingly eliminated by larger standalone “category killers” and mega-stores down the road. What opportunities are there when an anchor leaves?

How can the property reinvent itself into a place the community will embrace and continue to support? When a new direction is chosen, it is imperative that the local citizens and community leaders believe in and support the new vision. It is not always true that “if you build it, they will come.”

When embarking on the path to redevelop the property, several key members of the team must include: a land use attorney, a traffic engineer, a planner or landscape architect, a civil engineer, and an architect. Each one plays an important role in ensuring the vision of the property does not come to an early end and can lead the project to successful completion.

What obstacles to redevelopment may stand in your way? When introducing new uses or non-traditional tenants, the team must be prepared to review deed restrictions, REA's, ROW's, and planning and zoning ordinances to understand what can and cannot be done. Challenges from traffic and access to the site, as well as parking restrictions, should all be considered early. Be sure to engage the governing agency and local community to gather support for the new direction of the property.

Is it appropriate to add new uses or non-traditional tenants? Depending on the needs of the community, multifamily residential, municipal or community uses such as a library, athletic club, or sports fields can all serve as the new anchor and once again drive traffic to the center.

Multifamily residential that replaces the anchor tenant can significantly increase foot traffic around the property with a captive audience. This audience demands a high level of built aesthetics around a common open area, which will encourage and create a distinct vibe for the new project's identity. This open space can

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also encourage the privacy of the new residents while providing the convenience of amenities including dining, recreation, and shopping.

Can the center become a dining destination for the larger community? Offering multiple cuisines and after hours entertainment can provide a non-stop draw of patrons. Existing services and smaller retailers can benefit from

the additional dining options.

Can the introduction of offices support the new center's identity? Adding offices and professional services may not sustain traffic into the evening hours long enough to generate the necessary dwell time for the existing tenants to survive. A perfect blend of medical or professional services with extended hours along with multiple

food and beverage choices may encourage small shop dwell time and increase opportunities for specialty stores.

Can the property be reconfigured for pad development? If so, which types of pads are needed or required? How will it impact the remaining tenants and flow of the center? Bridging the pads to the core of the center with green space can be important to the reinvention of the center. These spaces can be used for community activities and outdoor dining, furthering a blend of patrons. Landscaped areas with seating, which invite relaxation and interaction by the patrons, can create a sense of place that users will appreciate and revisit time and again.

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tion to the needs and opportunities available, a neighborhood center that has lost its anchor can continue to thrive and serve its community. The ever changing landscape of retail has a mantra of “adapt or die” and is always striving to stay relevant to the consumer. Aesthetic and experience rule the day and require astute attention to detail when planning for the reinvention of a property. Losing an anchor is not the end of the world. With the right team, dedication, approach and a strong vision for the property, it may be a blessing in disguise.

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Image of the new CHOP center at the revised Promenade at Granite Run

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