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Horizontally integrated mixed-use: best of both worlds

Mixed-use projects, including residential and retail, historically have been thought of as vertically integrated – housing over shops at street level. These solutions are fraught with complications from working out technical issues like ducting through residential to managing disparate lending entities. For an apartment community, the idea of leasing units off paper is common and happens with a high degree of certainty. In the retail world, if your location isn't fire-hot, no one will sign a lease until the space is finished.

Thinking of mixed-use as horizontally integrated (MUHI) provides the best of both worlds. As the land planner and developer work on these communities, decisions get made on multiple levels to ensure success for the MUHI neighborhood. There are the broad-brush decisions about viability for retail: Where is the traffic, the visibility, the ease of access? Macro decisions about residential can be based more on the adjacency to retail. It's the finer details that set the stage for MUHI to be the sought-after community commanding better rents than its multifamily cousins that have limited connectivity to retail or other uses. When you can offer connection to transit, you really have a winner. The key is realizing an entire assemblage as a community to be connected. This gets accomplished in a number of ways. At Alexan Arista in Broomfield, the master developer provided a framework for the entire com-



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munity to be connected by a series of parks and urban detailing. Trammell Crow Residential has enjoyed a strong lease-up on this property, much of it based on the anticipation

of retail and jobs that eventually will call Arista home. At its Alexan Briargate location in Colorado Springs, Trammell Crow Residential is getting some of the highest rents in the city for a garden apartment product. A part of that story is the direct adjacency of this site to Briargate Crossing, which is anchored by a SuperTarget. Feedback from the on-site leasing staff indicates that walkability is a significant part of the decision-making process.

The value of walkability in community design gets validated on a regular basis. The Genesis Group undertook qualitative research in the consumer preferences for urban Denver living. The Genesis Group's Mike Rinner relayed that after basic considerations of safety, security and value, the single-most important feature to respondents was to be within walking distance of dining and entertainment venues. In a separate question about the importance of having various types



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Arista Place is the town center of the Arista retail pedestrian mall featuring the new aloft hotel, office space and residential units.

of retail uses in close proximity, restaurants/cafes were followed by a dry cleaner and coffee shop with no other retailers rating as very or moderately important by half of the respondents. It would be rare that a vertically integrated mixed-use building with as many as 300 units could support that coffee shop on its own. The horizontally integrated solution that maintains walkability to retail options is what today's multifamily dwellers are seeking. Cary Bruteig with Apartment Appraisers & Consultants notes that apartment communities that are part of a mixed-use community featuring walkability hold their value and, in fact, are among the better performing properties in town.

The MUHI communities are continuing to evolve and be improved. Embrey Partners is

planning an apartment community at Arvada Station, where the master plan for this MUHI community thoughtfully placed multifamily on the high ground to take best advantage of views. It is also directly adjacent to a stop on light-rail's Gold Line. Retail at Arvada Ridge is established, being anchored by a SuperTarget and filled in nicely with a host of other retail and a selection of boutique coffee shops. The apartment land plan features a visual portal providing resident access to the retail center that is reinforced with pedestrian-scale lighting, tree canopies and neighborhood gathering places. Future residential planned for Arvada Ridge will build on the community detailing initiated by Embrey. The MUHI concept is fast becoming the model of choice for future multifamily communities.▲