

HORIZONTAL MIXED USES INCREASE IN POPULARITY

Mixed-use projects including

residential and retail have historically been thought of as vertically integrated, such as housing over shops at street level. These solutions are fraught with complications, from technical issues such as putting ducts through residential areas 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 proximity to retail.

It's the finer details that set the stage for MUHI to be the sought-after community commanding better rents than their 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 community to be connected by a series of parks and urban detailing. Trammel Crow Residential has enjoyed a strong lease-up at this property, much of it based on the anticipation of retail and jobs that will eventually call Arista home.

At its Alexan Briargate location in Colorado Springs, Trammel Crow Residential is getting some of the highest rents in the city for its garden apartment product. A part of that story is that the project is directly adjacent to Briargate Crossing which is anchored by a Super Target. 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. 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.



ARISTA PLACE FEATURES A PEDESTRIAN MALL, NEW HOTEL, OFFICE SPACE AND RESIDENTIAL UNITS.

In a separate question about the importance of having various types of retail uses in close proximity, restaurants/cafes were followed by a dry cleaner and coffee shop with no other retailers' ratings deemed 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 a 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 adjacent to a stop on the proposed light rail Gold Line. Retail at Arvada Ridge is established, anchored by a Super Target and filled in nicely with a host of other stores. The apartment land plan features a visual portal providing residents access to the retail center which 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. 🏠

Paul R. Campbell, AIA is president of KEPHART. His vision focuses on designing communities that are great neighborhoods. His leadership and commitment to quality housing design inspire each team member to tap his or her exceptional skills. Through his open communication and creative thinking, KEPHART and its builder partners continue to find success in the home building industry. Paul has led KEPHART to be a nationally recognized community design firm. The KEPHART team has designed planned communities, single family and multi-family housing with uncommon sensitivity to municipal concerns, environmental diversity and builder profitability. For more information please visit www.kephart.com.