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Question of the Month: Why is the Boston retail market so successful? We begin before the beginning

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Whether New Englanders realize it or not, we live amidst one of the most historically and present day innovative retail markets in the country, Boston, Mass. A longtime merchant city built on rich history, it shouldn't go unnoticed that such history includes leading edge retail concepts from the early days, including the birth of the country's first off price department store, Filenes Basement, which paved the way for similar concepts such as TJ Maxx and Marshalls, both owned by Framingham's TJX.

Talbot's red door, a branding icon recognized across the country originated in Boston's backyard, as well as other unique national brands including Dunkin Donuts, BJ's Wholesale Club, Ann Taylor, Staples and CVS Pharmacy.

Thanks to Taunton based Jordan's Furniture, New Englanders also have the access to one of the most unique shopping experiences, or "shoppertainment." Jordan's has taken the operation of their retail stores beyond just appealing product presentation, but provides a one of a kind shopping experience for their customers.

Cheeseboy, saw Boston's potential to support their not-so-conventional retail concept when they opened their first location in Boston, Mass. which has now become America's first quick-service grilled cheese franchise, rapidly expanding across New England. What makes quick serve grilled cheese so exciting? It's a fresh, simple, original - similar to many of the successful retail concepts that are derived from New England.

In nearby Rhode Island, the self-proclaimed jewelry capital of the country is home to Swarovski, Ross-Simons and newcomer Alex and Ani. It is the simple concept of positive energy, individuality and the use of recycled materials that's brought their bangles and charms from a 15-employee operation in 2004, to 16 stores across the country and they were selected to produce charms for the 2012 Olympics - talk about growth!

Boston is also home to many innovative shopping center environments. Much to the chagrin of hard core Harvard Square patrons, national chains have found a way to adapt and thrive among the innovative and very uniquely "Cambridge" retailers. Also our beloved Newbury Street is home to as many one off home grown retail concepts as international retail chains.

In this great merchant city, there is nothing we can't sell. From burgers to cupcakes to financial services, Bostonians have risked it all to fulfill their retail dreams.

One might assume such strong historical retail ties may hinder a city's potential to uphold a leading edge in the retail market - not Boston.

Boston continues to grow a strong unique retail market where new, unusual retail concepts are consistently developed, executed, and succeed, making Boston one of the most diverse retail landscapes, comprised of fresh, exciting ideas, fostered by the city's rich retail history.

In a day and age where at times it seems the fate of the retail market is at the mercy of the economy, it is refreshing to see that fresh, new ideas have the ability to excite consumers, defy the economic odds and produce sustainability and growth for retailers.

Fresh thinking isn't a new concept for Phase Zero Design. In just the past few years we've had the chance to work with innovative thinkers such as those behind the development of Eat Kitchen, one of Boston's new fresh foods to-go restaurants, designing the first Checkers Drive In Restaurant in New England and adapting Lindt & Sprungli's international store design for the US market.

Fresh retail concepts aren't just exciting—they're necessary. As communities change and evolve, so do their needs. When we teamed up with Winstanley Enterprises for the Norwichtown Mall redesign, we realized our services would go beyond bringing them a grocery anchored community center, but a place that better fits and serves the community.

Phase Zero Design finds the opportunity to take part in catalyzing these retail market transformations extremely exciting. Beyond the market, we see the value in thinking innovatively beyond our design services, but in our day-to-day practices as a firm. The Phase Zero Design team, a group that has been together years before the company's founding, are creative, out of the box thinkers and do-ers, always working towards producing the most innovative solutions for our clients. Founded in the depths of the recession, Phase Zero Design's forward thinking nature has propelled our growth to a 21 person, mid-sized firm in just three years.

Our development has shown us firsthand what fresh thinking and strategic risk taking can bring. Similar to some of the new and noteworthy Boston retailers, we not only open our mind and recognize new ideas and trends, we embrace and act upon them - We begin before the beginning.

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