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The power of retail design: It's innovative and the opportunities never stop!

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I love retail design! It's powerful. It's innovative. And the opportunities never stop!

My passion for retail design was ignited many years ago while working for Casual Corner. Our Petite Sophisticate brand just hired a new president and I was responsible for helping him create an interim store design and at the same time manage a renowned design firm we retained to create the go forward store design.

I quickly learned the power of great retail design.

When asked why I enjoy retail design, I simply reply it's about power. I can measure the success of my design by how much you spend. If you plan on spending \$250 on a new outfit, I can get you to spend \$300 or more. Now that's the power that every retailer would love to harness. As a designer, we want to create a space that creates an emotional response and make it memorable. With retail design, we are creating a branded environment that directs the customer to behave the way we want her to behave (yes, we always referred to the customer as "she" or "her"). A successful store design will direct customer flow, offer many compelling points of sale and instill brand loyalty for repeat visits. As the designer, you can make the customer go right or left, move her through the store and focus her eye where you want it, hold her attention and make the sale in a space that feels right. The various tools that are employed include visual merchandising, display lighting, fixture design and graphics. The key to driving a higher transaction, typically called add on sales or impulse buys, is merchandise placement. In the typical women's apparel store you'll notice that accessories or shoes are in areas adjacent to the misses departments or blouses that go with a women's suit or outfit are in the next rack.

Ever go the deli department at the supermarket and notice the artisan breads and rolls in front of the cases? They look good don't they? Notice the price? Probably not, but the price is usually higher than what you will find in the bread aisle. It's easier to just pick it up and place it in your cart right there.

Great shopping center design is no different. The most successful shopping centers employ the same tactics as store design. Let's break it down. A good shopping center design will provide easy to access to the parking field and shops and have great sight lines. The architecture will be interesting and create a back drop for the individual shops all in a branded environment. A good tenant mix will enhance the shopping experience and give the shopper numerous choices for impulse buying. In concept, it's the same as shopping in a department store. Shopping center patrons can visit a few apparel stores then shop for accessories, shoes and jewelry. And when they're finished they can choose among a diverse number of food establishments for lunch or dinner.

Our team at Phase Zero Design has been creating successful shopping environments for over 20

years. We understand that our job is to design places and spaces that generate sales for retailers and drive leasing for shopping center owners.

The firm's retail store team is working with numerous national retailers including Ann Taylor, Foot Locker, Hair Cuttery and O'Reilly Auto Parts. The team is also working with local retailers such as Big Y, Cumberland Farms and Tedeschi's Food Shops.

The team is also creating innovative store designs locally for Muse Paint Bar, UCONN Co-op Bookstore and Mike's Pastry.

More recently, we have been adapting our retail design expertise to reposition or rejuvenate distressed retail properties. We are currently master planning the revival of the Rhode Island Mall in Warwick, R.I. and we just completed the transformation of the former Norwichtown Mall in Norwich, Conn. into a vibrant retail center with small shops and restaurants. Our team's experience with national and local retailers and restaurants provides the basis of our transformative design capabilities.

Great retail design embodies the art of persuasion. We want you to be comfortable opening your pocket book and parting with your money. And let you feel good about it. That's the power of retail design.

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