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Armageddon: Not yet - by Carol Todreas

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Over and over again since the pandemic, there have been continued predictions that brick and mortar retail would take its final hit, leaving all of us consumers with the simple joys of internet consumption. No one could have foreseen the changes influencing retail since those days of lockdown. Clearly, now in the dawn of recovery, how we live, work, and play has not yet been reset and how all that effects retail is still uncertain. So, even though the dust has not completely settled there are certain factors to keep in mind when thinking about current conditions and brick and mortar retail:

- Lifestyle changes caused by the pandemic are worth noting
- Brick and mortar still outperforms E-commerce
- Well located malls across the country are alive with new concepts and retailers
- Shoppers plan to shop for holiday gifts in physical stores
- New retail concepts include, but are not limited to:
 - Mixing merchandise categories in one store
 - Department stores (often smaller) bringing in specialty stores
 - Clicks to bricks for digitally native stores

The bottom line is that brick and mortar retail is innovating and re-emerging into malls, shopping centers and shopping streets. Top picks at this writing are in three categories:

1. Local Businesses Mixing Merchandise Categories

Tres Gatos, a tapas restaurant in Jamaica Plain, Boston. It is also home to the Tres Gatos Book/Record store with its own hours that features vinyl records and selected books.

Trinktisch in Belmont, Mass., combines an old fashioned German beer hall with a family-style restaurant.

Beacon Hill Books and Café, Boston, a carefully curated book store with an elegant café/restaurant.

The Greenhouse, South Natick, an Irish pub with a farmers market.

2. Department stores with specialty stores (stores within a store) or SWAS

Target has Apple stores and is adding ULTA Beauty stores to 800 Target stores.

Walmart has Claire's Accessories and is bringing on Popable, a short-term vendor that leases to small, pop-up merchants .

Macy's is adding Toys "R" Us for Christmas, and has developed a new smaller concept called Market by Macy's for a curated shopping experience.

Kohl's has Sephora at Kohl's as their new SWAS, and additionally is rolling out a 35,000 s/f store, considerably smaller than their typical 80,000 s/f store.

3. Clicks to Bricks.

Glossier—cosmetics and beauty products

Wayfair—furniture and furnishings

Allbirds—comfort shoes made with natural fibers

The take away is brick and mortar is resilient and dynamic. It continues to evolve to meet the demands and needs of every generation. Hopefully this retail resurgence will trigger inspiration for public and private investment in revitalizing shopping streets, shopping centers, and malls to attract vibrant new tenants. Shoppers are ready.

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