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# Invented and Reinvented Streets: Designing the New Shopping Experience

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*Third Street Promenade and CityWalk have differences in style and substance, but ultimately both use visual and physical entertainment as a means of providing visitors with an experience that could not be simulated through virtual or tele-shopping.*

**T**his article examines the phenomena of invented and reinvented streets, each of which represents an attempt to present a new shopping experience to counter the growing threat of such non-traditional retail formats as mail-order, television, and Internet shopping, and the in-home inertia those practices create. Invented streets, such as CityWalk in Universal City and Two Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills are products of design imagination, built with flair and aimed at breathing new life into urban areas where no shopping streets existed. Reinvented streets, such as Third Street Promenade (TSP) in Santa Monica, Fremont Street in Las Vegas, and the downtown Sacramento Mall, are the latest of several face-lifts and refurbishments, each responding to a declining market and targeted at serving a shifting population.

Fremont Street, Las Vegas



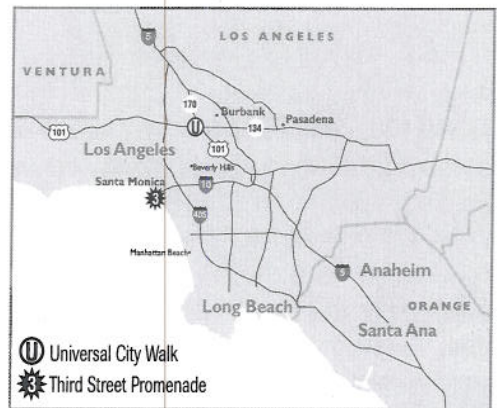
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## Invented Streets

Invented streets are primarily open air pedestrian streets, designed and managed by the private sector to serve as a destination for the public in its search for entertainment, food, and shopping. They are shopping streets like Hollywood movie sets: either imagined and constructed from scratch, or proposed where none existed before. Simulations of reality, they are designed as sites for retail activities cleverly transplanted into the existing urban fabric. Invented streets are designed as safe places, with parking nearby, to draw people from all walks and stages of life. Although King (1993) and Sorkin (1992) see them as a variant on the mall, Rybczynski (1993) suggests that they represent “an alternative exemplary model.” According to the *Wall Street Journal*, CityWalk shows “how far developers are going to make shopping entertaining” (King 1993).

Four invented streets have been developed in Southern California: Horton Plaza in San Diego; Two Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills; One Colorado in Pasadena; and CityWalk in Universal City. San Francisco architects Kaplan, McLaughlin and Diaz designed Two Rodeo Drive and One Colorado, while the Jerde Partnership of Los Angeles designed Horton Plaza and CityWalk.

Each development uses the elements of the urban fabric differently, but each creates a stage set on which elements of the cityscape can be constructed. CityWalk draws on Los Angeles for its inspiration, while Two Rodeo Drive is reminiscent of a stroll down a historic shopping street in London, Paris, or Rome. The design of One Colorado was carefully, even zeal-



ously, overseen by preservationists determined to maintain the look of old Pasadena. Horton Plaza has been described as “a tour de force that includes bits and pieces of almost every stylistic period in history—Egyptian, Renaissance, Moorish, Art Deco, Victorian, Mediterranean. The result resembles a Cecil B. deMille backlot.” (Rybczynski 1993).

## Reinvented Streets

Reinvented streets represent a public sector effort to design an entertaining shopping experience. Since undergoing a face-lift several years ago, Third Street Promenade has received considerable acclaim as a model for development nationwide. Although its history includes several phases of “reinvention”—either face-lifts or refurbishment—the latest has made it one of the most popular destinations in the Southern California area.

The cycle of reinventions began in reaction to a revolution in retailing in the 1950s. The original suburban shopping malls challenged, then replaced, the retail primacy of downtown “main streets.” They were trying, in a contrived and exaggerated manner, to imitate the

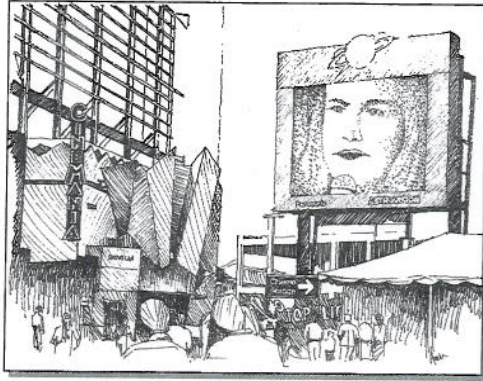


successful main street of the past, with its vital public life. Reinvented streets thus become copies of the original imitation, still searching for ways to resuscitate the diminished public realm.

Although invented streets represent a conscious attempt to refashion the mall, designers of reinvented streets claim that their creations bear no relation to malls. Frank Gehry, the prominent L.A. architect, advised TSP's management: "Don't succumb to a theme, don't build a mall." Tom Carroll, former executive director of Bayside District, which oversaw development of TSP, went even further, saying that CityWalk "is not a community center like TSP. Comparing CityWalk to TSP is like comparing apples to oranges; TSP is not a mall!" Although true, such protests overlook the important similarities between the two shopping experiences. TSP and CityWalk have differences in style and substance, but ultimately both use visual and physical entertainment as a means of providing visitors with an experience that could not be simulated through virtual or tele-shopping. Also, both aspire to be community centers, but define their communities quite differently.

### CityWalk

CityWalk represents the first phase of the Master Plan for MCA's property between the Universal Studio Tour and the Cineplex Odeon Theaters, which were the first developments on the old Twentieth Century movie studio backlots. It is located along a previously existing road at the top of a hill on the Universal property and is connected to parking by five entries. CityWalk was designed to bring the various elements of the MCA



CityWalk

development together, while providing a new source of income.

As planned and constructed, CityWalk has three distinct sections with specific sub-themes:

- EastWalk, emerging from the shadows of the theaters, emulates "the glitzy excitement and frenetic energy of 'Sunset Boulevard.'" With animated lighting, a projection tower, large projection screens, billboards, and signs, EastWalk's 'energy' was expected to be "youthful and exciting."
- Central Plaza is an "elegant landscaped district fashioned as the street arboretum that Los Angeles never had." This section is a garden plaza with a main entry court filled with "filtered light, exotic palms, densely planted wall arbors, and water fountains."
- The Village (also called WestWalk) connects CityWalk with the crowded entrance of the Universal tour, so designers viewed it as a "people street." The Village, they hoped, would have the ambiance of such districts as Sunset Plaza and Larchmont Village, both popular neighborhood spots in Los Angeles.

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The designers planned for a unique, upbeat, and active street lined with distinctive shops, restaurants, offices, and "community classrooms." Instead of establishing a rigid code for facades, graphics, and lighting, management aimed "to encourage innovative, ever changing, distinctive, and original designs that reflect the eclectic architectural characteristics of Los Angeles." Standard formulas, corporate images, and generic "mall" designs were discouraged. As Lawrence Spungin and Jim Nelson, MCA's management team for CityWalk, emphasized, "the only design rule was that there was no rule." Management did, however, retain final refusal rights on all designs.

The Jerde Partnership insisted on infusing the project with their understanding of how actual city streets work and applying that concept to the instant, invented streets at CityWalk. According to designer Richard Orne, the Jerde team wanted their design to reflect the "quintessential Los Angeles." After photographing many Los Angeles streets and stripping them of various layers of signs, lights, fixtures, and other commercial accouterments, they extracted an urban typology. This edited framework inspired the design of CityWalk, which would allow growth, variety, and individuality. Asked to comment on this "layering" concept of design, Jon Jerde observed: "The architectural style of Universal CityWalk is a brand new architecture invented uniquely to be a hybrid language of Los Angeles...." The hope was to "create a background architecture that's a texture that sets up a certain scale, sets up a certain sort of enclosure, a certain rhythm and pattern.... We picked the

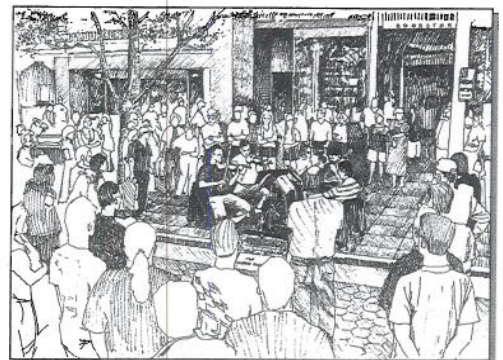
anonymous, unselfconscious buildings to form background texture."

CityWalk opened to great fanfare, and was an immediate success. Young people have swarmed into its half-moon street, spending hours in the Central Plaza. Others, on leaving the Cineplex or the Tour, stop for food, to be entertained by the fountain, or simply to people-watch. The existence of a captive audience already present at the Cineplex and Tour has resulted in an increased demand for retail space that has reportedly driven up rents. Because CityWalk actually has a relatively small amount of retail space, compared to TSP or a typical shopping center, businesses face less competition onsite, increasing their chances for success. CityWalk has boosted Universal City as one of the premier attractions of Southern California.

### Third Street Promenade

Third Street Promenade reclaimed an existing shopping street that had fallen on hard times. Situated in downtown Santa Monica, three blocks from the Pacific Ocean, the original district adjoined a zone of resort hotels along the ocean and provided nearby shopping for north-

Third Street Promenade



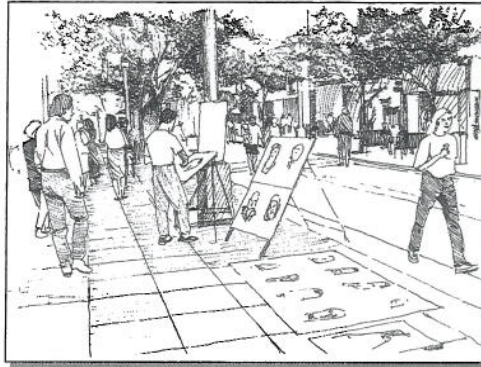


ern residential areas. Although Santa Monica's boosters had hoped the city would grow into a great metropolis, by the 1920s it had assumed its current status as a regional center.

During the immediate post-World War II years, new regional shopping centers had a devastating impact on Santa Monica's downtown, including Third Street, and the street deteriorated. In response, the city closed three blocks of Third Street to vehicular traffic in 1965 and renamed the area the Santa Monica Outdoor Mall. The Mall struggled until 1973, when the Rouse Corporation, working with architect Frank Gehry, announced plans to develop a mixed-use complex (hotel, residential condominiums, and offices) adjoining a new indoor shopping mall at one end of the Santa Monica Outdoor Mall. The complex was not completed as planned; only the indoor mall, Santa Monica Place, was constructed.

This project alone was not sufficient to revive Santa Monica Outdoor Mall. In 1984, the city formed the Third Street Development Corporation as a non-profit, public-benefit corporation to manage improvements. In 1986, ROMA Design Group oversaw a streetscape redesign that focused on scale, mix, and activity densities, and a mixed use development plan was adopted in 1987. Third Street Promenade was completed in 1990 by a renamed and expanded overseer, the Bayside District Corporation.

The central design challenge for reinventing TSP was how to upgrade the street and change its "theme" to attract more shoppers. Boris Dramov of ROMA feels that it was the "right mix" of ele-



Third Street Promenade

ments that created the successful environment of today's TSP. First, designers reconsidered the street, whose closing had made TSP appear more like a private space. Second, they felt that its configuration, three blocks 2,000 feet long by 80 feet wide, contributed to the undifferentiated visual appearance of the space. Although many commentators have cited a series of new parking structures that offered easy access to the street as the prime reason for TSP's success, ROMA designers believe that answering these two challenges made the project successful.

The first answer was very unconventional: The designers argued that cars should return to the pedestrian space. As Johannes Von Tilburg, local architect and property owner on TSP, asserted, the return of the cars was particularly important in the evening when people coming to the area's upscale restaurants could drive up to the restaurant and use the valet service without worrying about walking to nearby parking structures. The presence of automobiles reduced the perception of the space as private and restricted. As the crowds returned, public officials first severely limited the

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times when automobile access was permitted. Then, after cars became dangerous to the large numbers of evening pedestrians, they were once again banned. In the meantime, the cars served their purpose. They provided signs of activity, assurances of proximity, and a feeling of access that improved the public's impression of the space.

The problem of undifferentiated visual appearance was addressed by creating a mix of public art and street furniture to guide pedestrians through the three blocks, providing them with landmarks along the way. As the accompanying illustrations show, the dinosaurs and other topiaries provided a design motif for pedestrians while serving the vital function of narrowing the visual line to make the space more inhabitable. The wrought-iron benches (tame compared to the brashness of CityWalk), offered sites for relaxation and rest rather than active participation. Street performers and pushcarts, closely regulated by Bayside District, encouraged additional activity. Reinvented streets, which are public enterprises and involve retrofitting existing streets, offer less latitude than invented streets for manipulating the shape of the

street or visually engaging the customer. Nonetheless, the new features broke up the tunnel effect of the street, creating spaces in which children could play, the elderly could rest, and shoppers could relax.

In this new environment, entrepreneurs supported by the City of Santa Monica began to reshape the shopping environment. The first, and most important, new business, was the Promenade cinemas. The theaters were immediately popular, bringing to the street younger, more desirable shoppers. Around the cinemas a series of retail stores and restaurants developed to cater to this clientele. TSP soon held a desirable mix of stores and restaurants offering services for a wide range of ages and incomes. The mix allowed TSP to draw customers from throughout Southern California in addition to local residents.

TSP was also shaped by its location in the politically activist community of Santa Monica. Considerable pressure was placed on designers to maintain the public look of the Promenade, and community members and merchants scrutinized the design guidelines. Guidelines for rehabilitation and in-fill development encompassed color, details, facades, and decorative features. A detailed inventory and analysis of the buildings along Third Street noted the vintage and architectural history of each building. Third Street was closely structured to draw crowds, yet retained the look of a main street of the past.

Overall, the reinvention created a new, popular shopping and entertainment center for Santa Monica. Rents rose dramatically, and larger retailers began

Third Street Promenade





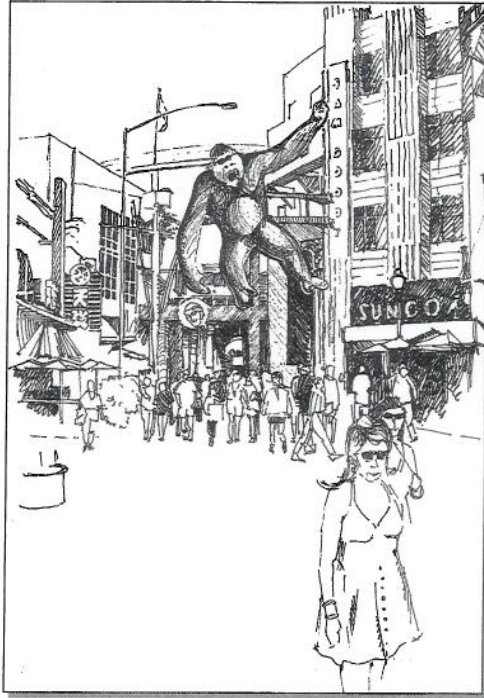
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to consider TSP a desirable location. Success held dangers, however, as rising rents threatened the unconventional shops and restaurants that had originally drawn customers to TSP. Moreover, crowds brought more people looking for handouts, which increased safety concerns. Bayside District's managers worried that success would destroy the mix of conventional and unconventional that had made TSP a popular public gathering place and shopping Mecca.

### Similarities

CityWalk is a cacophony of sounds, lights, and actions, while Third Street Promenade is a slower, more conventional street. Although Frank Gehry rejects any comparison between the two, arguing that CityWalk is nothing more than an outdoor Westside Pavilion, important similarities between the two developments require analysis and interpretation.

- Both CityWalk and TSP are organized around a central spine.
- Although most regional shopping centers depend on drive-by visibility, these developments are largely invisible to drivers and depend on pedestrian traffic. Nevertheless, most people who visit either site arrive by car, which has made the parking structures essential for TSP and has burdened existing parking at CityWalk. Pedestrians come to use the facilities offered by CityWalk and TSP, but they are also drawn by nearby Universal Tours and Cineplex Odeon, or Santa Monica Outdoor Mall.
- Neither has a conventional retail anchor, and neither is autonomous.



CityWalk

- Both draw their design inspirations from the metaphor of the “urban village,” as discussed by Jon Jerde for CityWalk and Tom Carroll for TSP. The village is intended to create a sense of community, identity, and place. According to Jerde, CityWalk was designed as “an urban village which tries to address... everybody[’s]... need for a center, a community, an emotional place to relate to.” CityWalk officials proudly proclaim that surveys suggest that 60 percent of its visitors come from within a five square mile radius, and Bayside managers assert that TSP has become Santa Monica’s (not Los Angeles’) shopping village. Visitors from around Southern California and the world at large are expected and desired, but the im-



mediate community is an important presence in both spaces.

- Both developments are eclectic in style. TSP's palette of architectural styles, the result of decades of individual building decisions, ranges from "commercial vernacular," "Mediterranean," and "Art Deco," to "Moderne." CityWalk's eclectic styles capture the quintessential Los Angeles. Its designers did not want to create an ersatz tableau of a past time or mythical place, such as Main Street in Disneyland. Instead, they created a compilation, an edited version of everyday L.A., without parked cars, parking meters, and traffic signs. Themes of the futuristic L.A. portrayed in the film "Blade Runner" are reversed, and are made upbeat and fun rather than dark and foreboding.
- Both developments attracted retailers that fit within their unconventional frameworks, just as management and designers imagined. Instead of the typical chains that fill regional shopping centers nationwide, they encouraged one-of-a-kind stores, slightly unusual combinations, and other more eclectic offerings. The choreography of uses is more akin to a jazz improvisation than to a classical symphony.
- The evening experience is an important element at both streets, and the jazz improvisations become louder and more chaotic as night falls. Night life, with the necessary backdrop of neon lights, music, food smells, and noise, differentiates invented and reinvented streets

from shopping malls. Just as the malls are closing, invented streets are enticing additional customers. TSP has made its success largely from its revival of night life; CityWalk's night life supplements the studio tours and movie crowds, creating a new evening destination.

### Handling Security Issues

As a result of their popularity, CityWalk and TSP share a growing concern about safety. A recent murder in a CityWalk parking structure reinforced the need for active security even at a private invented street. Although they are important to all retailers, safety concerns are especially important to merchants in reinvented and invented streets, who depend on the public's willingness to be part of an entertainment experience.

#### *Third Street Promenade*

Previous versions of Third Street had an unsafe image. A concept plan prepared by ROMA Design Group in 1987 listed poor security as one of the key problems facing the facility. The mall was characterized as a "deserted environment" with numerous hideaways for criminals. Tom Carroll reported that many people were afraid to enter Third Street after dark. TSP was designed to respond to such fears:

- Designers improved the atmosphere by removing trees and obstructions that created secluded areas along the street, thus creating clear sight lines for pedestrians.
- The design team incorporated alleys into the project by encouraging new retail development along them. Neglecting the alleys would have



endangered the route most visitors would take from parking structure to TSP.

- Lighting was improved along the entire Promenade.
- Santa Monica officials worked to raise the surveillance capacity of TSP by promoting increased activity along the street.
- Previous regulations prohibiting outdoor dining were relaxed, so that cafes could serve not only as an attraction but as places where “more eyes were on the street.”
- TSP’s surface is scrubbed twice a week to remove graffiti, litter, and signs of vandalism.

### *CityWalk*

CityWalk’s design reflected similar solutions to security concerns:

- Clear, unimpeded sight lines guide pedestrians, providing them with unobstructed views to the front and back.
- Neon signs illuminate the sky, greatly increasing the level of lighting at night.
- CityWalk’s maintenance crew and security personnel work actively to eliminate any signs of graffiti, vandalism, and litter.
- Police are visible; the Los Angeles County Sheriff maintains a CityWalk branch, situated among the shops and attractions.

### Differences

Universal’s hope that CityWalk will reinvent Hollywood Boulevard in its glory years raises an important distinction between TSP and CityWalk: the degree



CityWalk

of control exerted over the public’s experience.

- CityWalk’s designers wanted to create a programmed experience similar to much older processional architecture. Although it is not as structured and meticulously programmed as a Japanese garden, CityWalk is nevertheless designed with a clear sense of arrival and departure, a well developed vector of movement in time and space, and careful parameters guiding the experience.
- TSP’s design is not so calculated; it is a public place without pretensions of control. Multiple access points and seamless transitions into the surrounding urban context make TSP’s boundaries more diffuse and make for looser controls on an individual’s experience.

The fact that CityWalk is private while TSP is public creates differences between the projects.

- TSP has all the attributes of a public space. Management’s attempt to hire private security and institute a curfew for adolescents were rejected by the city attorney’s office. TSP tolerates people panhandling and hold-

- ing signs such as "pregnant and homeless," Vietnam War Veteran," and "HIV Positive and need help."
- CityWalk, which encourages a public atmosphere, does not have the so-called liabilities of a public place—homeless people, panhandlers, ghetoblaster, or skateboards. Even the usual presumption of a public domain that Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1993) found in downtown corporate plazas can be tenuous in an invented street such as CityWalk. Yet photo-sweeps of both places found a genuine diversity of users representing many walks of life, ethnicity, and age groups. Nevertheless, CityWalk need not tolerate the "incivilities" that often occur in the public domain.

CityWalk remains a more contrived experience, offering participants a greater range of activities than TSP. Both engage and entertain the visitor, but CityWalk entices the visitor to participate more actively in a wider range of activities than does TSP.

- Most visitors stroll through TSP, browsing in stores while heading for the movies or a sidewalk cafe. A few street performers greet visitors, and children climb the topiaries or run around the kiosks. Especially at night, the crowd is its own entertainment; TSP managers do little to supplement the people-watching.
- CityWalk is a series of activities. The Central Plaza offers the most engaging action, centered around its fountain. Stepping through the randomly timed water-jets is a challenge few children can resist, even

on a cold, rainy day in December. Playing in the fountain, or watching others playing, transfixes large numbers of people at almost any time of day. Other visitors are drawn to alternative activities, such as the temporary skating rink in the cinema plaza opposite the entrance to the cinema. Not only are the skaters busy, but others watch as they go around. Some visitors drift through the video activities room at the other end of the "street" near the Tour entrance; others watch the giant outdoor movie screen.

### Replicating Success

CityWalk and Third Street Promenade are places of entertainment, where the crowd serves as the main attraction. Because people no longer need to leave their homes to shop or to be entertained, innovative retailers must entice them with promises of the unusual and the satisfying, all in a safe and non-threatening environment. The image of the invented street thus becomes its prime asset. More than a marketing tool, the image encapsulates the intentions of its developers, designers, managers, and retailers, along with the collective desires of its patrons.

Places like CityWalk and Third Street never existed, except perhaps in the movies or our imagination. As constructed, these projects are composites of "real" streets, condensed, edited, and intensified. They promise a sensory ride with a diminished sense of danger and an increased perception of order and comfort. The street becomes an urban experience, carefully constructed to be safe, well managed, and accessible.



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## CityWalk in Peoria?

**M**ost developers would disagree with this article's conclusion that CityWalk can be replicated. The authors overlook the fact that projects like CityWalk and the Forum Shops in Las Vegas depend for their success on the substantial foot traffic to their sites generated by the Universal Studio Tour and Caesar's Palace, respectively. If those conditions are present, then either project can be replicated.

Developers would want more information about Third Street Promenade before they would conclude that it can be replicated. Why did this new version of the "reinvented street" succeed when its predecessor failed? How have the finances and other circumstances changed? Developers would be more comfortable believing that Third Street is a paradigm if they knew more about the dollar cost-benefit relationships in the original version, which failed, and in the second venture, which is apparently successful.

—Harry Newman, Jr.

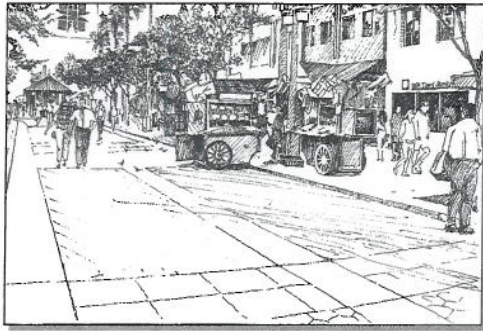
Replicating the success of either development will demand that designers and developers recognize the different contexts in which CityWalk and Third Street Promenade have been constructed. They share an ability to extend the shopping experience into the night and a reliance on entertainment. Not only do they have movie theaters, where people cluster before foraying into other areas of the street, but they also inte-

grate entertainment into the individual's experience. Street performers, ice skaters, flashing television screens, and cafe dining combine to make the visit entertaining. Indeed, the design of the buildings, the streetscape, and the landscape are all intended to heighten the experience. Especially at night, the scene is defined by more than the organized events; it reminds one of walking on one of the great commercial streets in Montreal, New York, or Paris.

### Third Street Promenade— Reinvented Streets

Third Street Promenade offers particular lessons for those considering revitalizing unsuccessful pedestrian malls. TSP has the potential to become an urban prototype for a reinvented commercial district, serving as both a town center and an entertainment and dining district. As a town center, TSP serves local interests; its managers resist having it become a tourist trap from which locals are alienated.

An important reason for the local population's extensive use of the Promenade is that TSP has been a dynamic project, whose managers have been willing to risk changing the formula when confronted with new circumstances. The best example of this attitude is the decision to lift the ban on automobiles. Lifting the ban was crucial to TSP's early success, but automobiles were becoming a menace after the street became crowded, especially at night. Reinstating the ban served to send a different message—that TSP's activities are safe—and it reinforced the image of intimate entertainment and relaxed society for which TSP had become known.



Third Street Promenade

Instrumental to TSP's success was the mixed private/public structure that guided development of the reinvented street. The business district tax financed TSP's initial development, and it has continued to provide Bayside District with funds for various projects. Bayside District's staff have played a variety of roles ranging from political advocacy for the retailers, to enforcement of the design guidelines, to management of the daily mundane realities of the street. Funded by the success of the street's retail sales, the district serves as a liaison with the politically aggressive communities of Santa Monica.

Third Street Promenade, then, offers a model for possible reinvention of pedestrian malls. Using pre-existing building stock, supported by private and public funds, maintaining a public atmosphere while reassuring visitors about safety, the Bayside District and retailers have successfully reinvented Third Street as a local and non-local shopping destination.

### CityWalk—Invented Streets

At first glance, replicating CityWalk seems impossible. Where else does a development company have a piece of

land that sits between an immensely successful theme park and an attractive cineplex? Without these anchors, CityWalk would seemingly lack the supports that made its success possible.

Another look suggests that CityWalk can be replicated, if we consider the essentials rather than the details. Replication of CityWalk is possible anywhere a combination of crowds in a leisure mode can be drawn into a linear space leading to an attraction on the farther side. People—lots of people—are clearly the most important element. Thus, an attraction that draws people to the invented street is crucial.

Unlike Third Street Promenade, which functions as a localized town center, invented streets are local destinations only in the broadest sense; their customer base is drawn from a wider radius. CityWalk is a “neighborhood” center only in the sense that the Los Angeles freeways, the “neighborhood streets,” bring people from the San Fernando Valley and the entire Los Angeles basin, the surrounding “residential areas of the neighborhood,” to it. These visitors do not use the invented street in the same manner as those at TSP; nonetheless, visitors view CityWalk's attractions as part of their broader “neighborhood.”

CityWalk, a street that connects several key pedestrian traffic generators, can be an inspiration for the design of districts with several points of attraction.

The mix of uses and activities, and the management and programming of the space, are also crucial elements. Finally, the lesson for urban design is that a successful urban place can be based on present realities and future



possibilities; it need not be another theme park, an ersatz spectacle with a historical theme.

CityWalk's design details become unimportant from this perspective. Whether to use gorillas or neon as attractions will depend on their suitability for a particular location. CityWalk's design borrowed elements from Los Angeles' popular culture. The next development might draw on the surrounding city, or it might rely on an invented history like those at Disney's various theme environments. In either case, the central characteristic will be creation of an invented street that offers retailers an innovative, entertaining venue for commerce and the public an enhanced and expanded domain. ■

#### Acknowledgment

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