

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

And 5 More Reasons Why Retail Space Makes Sense for Public Libraries

Public libraries are changing fast. Knowing where and how to change, however, is not easy. Location is a critical element. When libraries meet patrons where they are – out in the community – impact is significant. In 2017, Moreno Valley City Library opened a branch in a local mall. The unlikely location quickly exceeded expectations and brought new life to the shopping center.

15,884
VISITS IN
AUGUST 2019

287
SUMMER READING
REGISTRANTS

1,075
COMPUTER SESSIONS
IN AUGUST

450
ATTENDEES AT JUST
ONE PROGRAM

2020
ANOTHER MALL
LOCATION OPENING

Following are 5 reasons why retail space is a great option for library location:

1. NEW PATRONS

Converted retail engages shoppers who might not otherwise visit a traditional library with bestsellers and other titles, technology access and programming. Visitors may drop by for Wi-Fi and find themselves searching online for jobs, researching a purchase, enjoying a literacy program or conveniently checking out or returning books. All while perhaps enjoying a cup of coffee.

2. GREATER CONVENIENCE

A retail location encourages more frequent visits thanks to convenience, ample parking and proximity to public transportation. Mall libraries also tempt visitors by providing refuge to those not interested in shopping and employees on breaks. Teens and seniors, who often frequent malls, can spend safe and productive time at the library.

3. OPTIMIZING BUDGET

Converting existing space costs much less than building a new facility. New construction cost can be daunting for any local government and might cause resistance to new library plans. Using existing space also leaves a much lighter footprint on the environment.

4. MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS

One major casualty of online shopping is dwindling success for brick and mortar stores. Some experts predict that one out of every four malls in America will close by 2022. Public libraries have the opportunity to replace anchor stores, which have traditionally been the key to driving mall traffic. An abundance of retail space can mean steep discounts on rent in exchange for long-term leases. Modern libraries have broad appeal and can attract a significant cross-section of the public, especially when co-located with coffee shops and bookstores.

5. MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Managing facilities at a public library is not only expensive, it is time consuming. Facility appearance is one of the first things patrons notice and one of the biggest sources of complaints. With professional facility management, library staff have one less thing to worry about and can focus on patron service.

Leveraging existing retail space for libraries is a win-win situation for local government and community members. The result is optimized budgets, increased library engagement and greater value to the community.



THINKING OF A NEW LOCATION FOR YOUR LIBRARY?

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