

Real Estate

A vision of retail living

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When looking for your dream home, you might consider an estate with a sprawling yard, a home near top-ranked schools or even a condo near downtown.

But would you consider living above a Kinko's or next door to a Nordstrom?

San Antonio residents haven't had many options to live among retail, but recently a smorgasbord of different lifestyle center developments are incorporating retail and residential living, making it mere steps to your shopping or coffee fix.

"It's certainly a trend that's happening nationwide," said Jeff Booth, senior vice president of development at Embrey Partners Ltd., which is developing the Quarry Village next to the Alamo Quarry Market. "This could be the perfect place where we can provide an incredible living environment and can take advantage of the retail location."

These mixed-use projects often cater to young professionals, who might be single and like to be in the middle of a lot of activity. Or they might appeal to retirees and empty nesters who want less living space but who enjoy staying active and connected to community activities.

The Quarry Village, for example, will have a 280-unit apartment complex called the Artesa at Quarry Village on top of 70,000 square feet of retail space. Another 33,000 square feet of retail space will be in the development.



(Courtesy photos)

One of the apartments at the redeveloped Pearl Brewery.

When picking the right retail mix, it's important to consider the customers who will be living right above the stores, and not just the ones who will be driving there.

"Each retail center has an idea of its tenant mix," Booth said. "Certainly, this one's a little bit different because there are residents living there. We thought our residents might be attracted to a more boutique class of tenants."

Tenants thus far include an Eddie V's restaurant, Jamba Juice, EyeMasters, a Così restaurant and a Starbucks.

The former Pearl Brewery, just north of downtown, is undergoing a redevelopment of its 22-acre site. The project will include apartments, offices and a variety of retail and restaurant space.

"It's not so much that living above retail is that exciting," said Darryl Byrd, director of development with Silver Ventures, the company behind the Pearl Brewery redevelopment. "But what's exciting is when the retail below you is unique and provides a varied experience that doesn't become boring to you. Why try to create a unique environment and then put in a retailer or restaurant that somebody can get anywhere?"



The Quarry Village is under construction near the Quarry Market.

The Pearl Brewery already has three apartment units — all leased — in the Can Recycling Building. There are plans for eight apartments in the Full Goods Building — above retail space — and the project will have several hundred more apartments when fully developed.

In November 2007, **Wereldhave USA** broke ground on **éilan**, a project just north of La Cantera along Interstate 10 that will have as many as 1,400 apartments commingled with 30,000 square feet of retail space.

"There is already plenty of retail in the area, so we're looking for the support retail," said Carmen Taveras-Cruz, president of Wereldhave USA.

That support retail might include restaurants, flower shops and a shipping center, she said.

If you want more than just support retail near your front door, perhaps The Town Center at La Cantera is more your style.

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Pearl Brewery
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The Town Center at La Cantera

USAA Real Estate Co. just last week announced its plans for The Town Center at La Cantera, where there will be 500 apartments on top of 200,000 square feet of retail space. It's also conveniently adjacent to The Shops at La Cantera, where there are a variety of high-end stores that hadn't been in San Antonio before, such as Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Anthropologie.

"San Antonio has grown up," said James Loyd, executive managing director for USAA Real Estate Co. "The market has caught up with the vision. San Antonio hasn't been big enough to do this (before)."

One key to creating an atmosphere that's conducive to residential development, Loyd said, is a neighborhood that maintains some privacy.

"As humans, we like to be around people. But as Americans, we also like to keep our anonymity," éilan's Taveras-Cruz said. "We're targeting the baby boomers because we will provide a convenience and the connectivity at their fingertips. These are people who have worked very hard and now they want to enjoy things."



Rendering of the Town Center at La Cantera, which will go in near The Shops at La Cantera. (Courtesy rendering)

One of the challenges to creating a successful residential and retail mix is balancing privacy with social activity.

"On the back side, you have the quiet lifestyle of golf course living," Quarry Village's Booth said. "In general, we tried to put the smaller units along the main street where we think it will be popular for those that are young and single and love to mingle."

In these developments, there's always something going on, as there are always different

people coming and going to visit the shops and restaurants. Such a constant buzz of activity might be attractive to those working from home who don't want to feel isolated.

"If it's just residential, you know what it looks like on a daily basis," Pearl's Byrd said. "What you wind up with is life in the early parts of the morning when people are leaving. During the day, you have very little life. If you have a cycle of use where you have people shopping and then you have restaurants, that creates energy from 8 in the morning to 12 at night."

Though the apartments at these developments will be new and upscale — apartments in the Artessa at Quarry Village will rent for between \$930 and \$4,547 a month — the retail component is one more bonus.

"The synergy that it creates when you have these two uses together is great," Booth said. "Part of what these renters are getting is their amenity package, but they're also getting the lifestyle that this whole concept creates. You'll have all the amenities and the opportunity to walk downstairs on a Saturday morning and get your coffee and read the newspaper. Our mantra there of 'shop it, live it' is really true."

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