



▲ VILLAGE WALK AT EASTLAKE

Sudberry Properties' ±158,700 SF specialty retail center in the heart of the prestigious EastLake trade area. From winding walking paths and the grand clock tower to the hand-carved stone fountain and pond home to turtles and koi fish, Village Walk offers shoppers the opportunity to linger, relax and enjoy the unique lifestyle ambience.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RETAIL AUTHENTICITY

By Brad Williams

If you are like me, you have felt inundated by retail statistics these past several weeks during Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday, etc. You might be numb at this point to “\$0.44 of every dollar spent online is through Amazon” or “American shoppers spent a record \$5 billion in 24 hours online” on Black Friday. While some critics may argue whether retail is, in fact, alive and well, we can all likely agree that retail continues to morph at a faster pace than ever before.

Like all of you industry friends, clients, and colleagues, I constantly find myself answering the question, “what is the future of brick-and-mortar retail with the emergence of online shopping?”

To me, retail begins with AUTHENTICITY. “Authentic” can be defined as real, original, and true to one’s personality, spirit, or

character. To me, authenticity means that something is different or stands out from all the rest. We have all heard some of the retail buzz words...“gathering places”, “experiential”, and “sense of place”. “Retail-tainment” is another good one. Last I checked, none of us can use all five of our senses shopping online. Perhaps in a world with everyone’s noses buried in their phones, there is still a critical human need to be entertained and for in person social interaction.

If you look around San Diego County, what are the most authentic retail offerings and why? To me, areas like Little Italy, East Village, and Liberty Station offer a higher degree of authenticity than sterile Fashion Valley and touristy Seaport Village. If you have out-of-towners in town, my guess is you are much more inclined to take them somewhere they can only find in San Diego...and where the locals go more than the tourists do. You can

go to Ruth's Chris in any major market in the country, but you can only find Cowboy Star or Born & Raised here in San Diego. Why do you think Hillstone Restaurant Group has so many different unique concepts that are specifically tailored to their various markets...because it provides authenticity with streamlined operations and a strong track-record behind them. (And I for one am pumped that Hillstone has plans to open their first local outpost here along Coast Highway in Del Mar).

beer behemoths like Ballast Point and now exclusively seek out more locally authentic beer like Resident Brewing (I will personally vouch for their Chasing Citra IPA – one of my favorites right now).

Interestingly enough, there have been several statistics thrown around this past week about how millennials actually favor shopping...in stores! Even retailers such as Macy's, Sears, JC Penney, and Michaels saw increases to their stock price following strong brick-and-

▼ **RESIDENT BREWING**
Resident Brewing delivers a San Diego cool, inviting, and relaxed beer experience under the stewardship of award-winning brewer Robert Masterson.



Meanwhile, suburban shopping centers like Sudberry Properties' Village Walk at EastLake have made an annual tradition of their nightly snowfall events during December, providing their customers with an additional reason to experience their shopping center... and creating strong customer loyalty in the process. Of course, a \$600+ million overhaul at UTC has also made the Westfield mall one of the most authentic and unparalleled retail assets in the region.

mortar sales over this past Thanksgiving weekend. Some of these iconic retailers may not ultimately be long for the world based upon their products or operations. However, it is my staunch belief that consumers will continue to seek unique personal encounters that enable and require use of all five senses... and this desire for authenticity will fuel the future of retail. ■

In my judgment, people crave authenticity... what is new, hip, and different. Many of us go out of our way to frequent Philz Coffee, Lofty Coffee, or Bird Rock Coffee Roasters versus Starbucks – heck, my favorite coffee right now is Stumptown...and I have to go to LA, Portland, and NYC for it! I also have friends that have written off local craft



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