

Whither Disney, Whither Rouse

Truly unique placemaking—the heritage of Disney and Rouse—has not occurred recently because entertainment development has been driven by landlord and tenant deal-making, not consumer needs.

- Most urban entertainment centers (UECs) are simply collections of branded shops, restaurants and theaters, loosely grouped together in a themed shell. For example, Irvine Spectrum, which is very successful in a suburban new town, is designed to recreate a Moroccan village. However tenants' typical "trade dress" (e.g. Dave & Buster's) is inconsistent with the landlord's development.
- The emphasis on big box branded tenants prevents UECs from developing their own distinct identities and precludes visitors from having a truly seamless guest experience and sense of escape.
- The landlord's incentive to lease to market-proven, credit tenants and the relative lack of public sector subsidies (UDAG, Block Grants, etc.) to "buy down" the cost of placemaking risks crowding out unique entertainment venues with homogenized entertainment experiences.
- Despite some co-tenant synergies, interaction and coordination among tenants is limited. Breaking up entertainment offerings between non-integrated tenants makes it more difficult for visitors to have fun and spend money.
- Many UECs have adopted "in your face" billboard architecture, featuring huge iconic signs and lots of glitz. Although billboard architecture is appropriate for Times Square and LA's CityWalk, it is out of context in most sites around the country.
- Public areas are under-developed and under-utilized and often do not contribute to the overall guest experience. Understandably, tenants are primarily concerned with their leased space and developers with collecting rent.