

HOW THE SQUARE CYPRESS CAME TO BE: A MODERN RETAIL AND LIFESTYLE HUB IN CYPRESS, CALIF.

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Nestled in the heart of Cypress in north Orange County, The Square Cypress is a vibrant new 31,150-square-foot retail center that promises to become a premier destination for shopping, dining, and community engagement. Strategically located with seamless access to four major freeways—405, 605, 22, and 91—this modern development is designed to cater to both local residents and visitors alike. Featuring a thoughtfully curated mix of specialty grocery stores, boutique shops, fitness studios, and sought-after restaurant brands, The Square Cypress is more than just a retail hub; it's a dynamic gathering space that blends contemporary design with functionality. As part of a larger 13.33-acre mixed-use community, it complements the upscale 251-unit Acadia luxury apartments and a 128-room Homewood Suites by Hilton, creating a cohesive live-work-play environment. With its convenient access, pedestrian-friendly layout, and a diverse array of amenities—including a medical office building and three single-story commercial buildings—The Square Cypress is poised to redefine the retail and lifestyle experience in Cypress, offering a seamless blend of convenience, style, and community.

In the following Q&A, Sammy Saludo, [AO](#) Partner, Commercial Studio, shares insights into the vision and design behind this exciting new development.



Saludo

How did AO approach the architectural design of The Square Cypress to balance aesthetics and functionality for a mixed-use development?

AO approached the architectural design of The Square Cypress with the goal of creating a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development that balances aesthetics and functionality while meeting the city of Cypress's needs for housing, hospitality, and retail spaces.

From the initial planning and visioning stages to the final execution, AO focused on ensuring seamless integration between spaces for residents and visitors. To enhance privacy and residential appeal, the apartments were intentionally placed away from the bustling Katella Avenue, providing a quiet retreat while still offering residents direct access to notable retail destinations.

Retail and hospitality components were strategically positioned along Katella Avenue to maximize street frontage, visibility, and accessibility. A well-designed shared parking lot serves as the connective element between these uses, offering a convenient and intuitive experience for visitors. The retail corner invites shoppers into a lively and engaging environment, with tree-lined patios and thoughtfully curated open spaces that foster a relaxed atmosphere for dining and gathering.

AO tied the development together through a cohesive palette of modern colors and materials, ensuring visual harmony across the project. The result is a thoughtfully designed community space that combines function, accessibility, and modern aesthetics to serve both residents and the broader Cypress community.

What unique challenges did the suburban Orange County location present, and how did AO overcome these in the design process?

Suburban Orange County is characterized by many horizontal mixed-use projects, which can sometimes lack cohesion across different uses. For The Square Cypress, a key challenge was ensuring the development's various components—retail, residential, and hospitality—were visually and functionally unified despite being designed by multiple architectural teams. AO was responsible for the design of the retail and residential portions, while Boulder Architects handled the medical office building (MOB) and Design Cell Architecture designed the hotel.

To overcome these challenges, AO took the lead in coordinating the aesthetic vision across all uses. By aligning colors, finishes, and materials, AO ensured that each building complemented the others, creating a seamless and unified look throughout the development. This cohesive approach resulted in a project that feels like a single, harmonious community, rather than a collection of separate buildings, meeting the suburban design expectations while elevating the user experience.

With The Square Cypress encompassing residential, retail, and hospitality spaces, what design strategies were employed to harmonize these diverse elements?

To unify the residential, retail, and hospitality components of The Square Cypress, AO implemented key design strategies that create a seamless and cohesive experience across the development.

A central feature is the landscaped pedestrian walkway, thoughtfully designed to connect the stores, residences, and hospitality spaces. This walkable pathway fosters a pedestrian-friendly environment, encouraging residents and visitors to move through the development by foot rather than by car, enhancing accessibility and interaction between the different uses.

Another unifying strategy is the cohesive modern color palette, which incorporates complementary shades of white, brown, and beige. AO applied this palette consistently across the retail, residential, and hospitality components, establishing a harmonious aesthetic that ties the diverse elements together and reinforces the project's identity as a unified, inviting community space.

The Acadia Apartments offer over 31,000 square feet of private amenities. Can you provide insights into how these amenities were chosen and designed for residents?

The Acadia Apartments' private amenities were thoughtfully designed to provide a balanced living experience that fosters community and celebrates the natural surroundings. In collaboration with AO and CDC Designs, the developer, Shea Properties, curated features that cater to residents' desires for both relaxation and activity while seamlessly blending indoor and outdoor environments.

Drawing inspiration from nature, the design team embraced the concept of "bringing the outside in and the inside out," a theme that defines the property. One standout feature is the clubhouse's "tree house" design, a playful and relaxing focal point where residents can gather and connect. Inside the club room, ceiling motifs of trees and vegetation further reinforce the connection to nature, creating continuity between the lush outdoor landscape and the interiors.

These amenities were carefully selected and designed not only for their aesthetic appeal but also to provide a cohesive experience that reflects the area's natural beauty. By prioritizing wellness and a connection to the outdoors, The Acadia Apartments deliver an environment where residents can enjoy a lifestyle rooted in comfort, community, and nature.

What architectural features or design elements contribute to the modern aesthetic seen throughout The Square Cypress?

The Square Cypress embodies a modern aesthetic through a carefully curated blend of architectural features and design elements that prioritize clean lines, open spaces, and contemporary materials. Key components include the use of sleek materials such as glass, metal, and smooth stucco finishes, which create a minimalist yet sophisticated look.

Expansive windows are a defining feature, inviting an abundance of natural light into the interiors and fostering a connection between indoor and outdoor spaces. The development also incorporates geometric forms and a subtle color palette to reinforce its modern character, while bold accents and structural elements are used selectively to provide visual interest without overpowering the overall design.

Additionally, the integration of open courtyards and green spaces throughout the project enhances the sense of cohesion, offering communal areas that feel both stylish and organic. This seamless blend of functionality and forward-looking design ensures that The Square Cypress delivers a modern, inviting environment for residents and visitors alike.

What role did local culture and the Orange County community play in shaping the architectural vision for The Square Cypress?

The Square Cypress reflects the evolving needs of the Orange County community by thoughtfully blending the characteristics of urban and suburban lifestyles. Its horizontal mixed-use design fosters seamless connectivity for residents and visitors through walkways and green spaces, echoing the community-oriented and relaxing qualities of a suburban environment. At the same time, the project's modern contemporary architecture introduces an element of sophistication that aligns with Orange County's rapid urban growth and its dynamic, business-oriented culture.

In shaping this vision, AO collaborated closely with the City of Cypress to design a development tailored to community needs. As a relatively small city, Cypress sought a revitalized modern identity, which The Square Cypress delivers by incorporating much-needed housing, retail, and hospitality components. Despite its modern aesthetic, the project maintains an intimate atmosphere, with thoughtfully designed indoor and outdoor spaces aimed at fostering connection and relaxation.

This balance of modern sophistication and community-focused design ensures The Square Cypress not only meets the practical needs of the city but also resonates with the cultural identity and aspirations of the Orange County community.