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MANN REPORT

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Industrial mixed-use developments are gaining momentum as cities and developers look to strengthen revenues and community.

Rendering courtesy of Architects Orange

Strengthening Community via Mixed-Use Industrial

By Dan MacDavid, principal at Architects Orange

Over the past several decades, development trends have shifted to give more importance to placemaking and user experience. Retail, residential, hospitality and even office development have embraced the idea of incorporating various land uses to foster a stronger sense of community. Now, industrial development is beginning to follow suit.

Why Now?

The recent mixed-use trend can be attributed to one key change: the significant growth in size and scale of industrial master plans. We're currently working on several industrial master plans that range from 50 to 300 acres. Industrial developments of this scale were rare 25 years ago, where clusters of smaller business parks and warehouses were the standard, with building sizes hovering from 50,000 to 250,000 square feet. Today, it's common to see master plans with several buildings that are double, and even up to five times that size.

As these industrial master plans have grown to take over significant amounts of land, governing agencies now demand that they contribute a mixed-use experience that brings significant revenue to cities, promotes high-quality design, cultivates civic engagement, and builds community. This is becoming the new standard, allowing developers, businesses, cities and communities to flourish together.

Key Planning & Design Considerations

Industrial design and planning remain a very specialized niche in architecture. Those firms that do it well understand the key considerations for industrial planning, such as efficiency, operations and circulation, but aren't generally experienced in the nuances of community, retail or mixed-use design. This hybrid development is challenging firms to think differently and adapt to the changing landscape, and requires development teams to consider, design and communicate ideas at an unprecedented level.

The following considerations are integral in the delivery of successful mixed-use industrial projects:

Communicating the Vision

The ability to verbally and visually communicate the overall vision for industrial mixed-use developments is key in gaining support from cities and communities. Design and planning firms with expertise in both industrial and mixed-use/retail design provide a tremendous advantage in that they can deliver the best of both worlds, collaborate effectively and present a united vision for the community.

As an example, our team recently encountered a project where the city requested a full mixed-use master plan in addition to the industrial components already approved, and a cohesive vision needed to be put forward. Because of our mixed-use capabilities and design acumen, the client asked us to design imagery and graphics to present to the city and planning commission although we were not originally involved in designing all the components. This situation demonstrates the vital need for an architect's ability to present a cohesive vision to planning commissions and the public. This will also give the brokerage companies access to better marketing collateral, which will further benefit the city and community.

Creating Synergy

Linking industrial with retail, office and other uses can result in a balanced, symbiotic relationship that benefits all stakeholders: businesses, workers, communities and cities. In these types of developments, the large industrial workforce provides a major source of foot traffic for nearby restaurants and services located within the mixed-use retail. Similarly, offering a variety of smaller size office and retail spaces as a buffer between industrial and retail can be an attractive leasing option for communities. The creation of a walkable pedestrian network is also key to creating synergy throughout the overall industrial mixed-use development.

Carefully planned circulation patterns can promote interaction as well as distinguish the industrial and public spaces. Transition buildings are compelling components to the functionality of the site, and they must respond to the architectural context of the overall site. While beautifying the interfacing spaces enables a smooth, conflict-free transition between housing, industrial and retail uses, industrial functionality can be maintained by thoughtful building and traffic design. Segregating trucking against the edge of the property allows for full industrial site capabilities while remaining clear of public zones. Architects Orange is implementing this method of vehicular circulation on a large industrial mixed-use project for developer Goodman in Eastvale, California. Main access to the retail portion is off a public street that includes a greenbelt, which allowed for enhanced landscape. Industrial buildings that face retail have heightened design to create strong connectivity. Pedestrian pathways include benches and shaded areas for gathering that help further a feeling of connectivity.



Dan MacDavid

Elevating Industrial Design

Setting forth a vision to satisfy all the stakeholders requires a higher design articulation than industrial-only sites. Firms with only industrial experience will be pushed to consider the human element in new ways, balancing logistical practicality with aesthetic appeal. The transitional spaces between the industry, retail, and public can be addressed with thoughtful arterial design including landscaping and landscaping setbacks, sidewalks, or sitting areas. We are embracing the ability to uplift industrial design with a current project in the early planning stages. This infill project embraces forward-thinking design by implementing highly articulated design elements on the retail-facing industrial buildings. These elements create a cohesive community feel and achieve an elevated design beyond the typical industrial park.

The trend of industrial mixed-use development will continue to expand, establishing itself as a major economic driver particularly in California's Central Valley and Inland Empire regions. Because of the sheer scale of these master plans, it is imperative that cities and developers rely on the expertise of architects and consultants that fully understand industrial and mixed-use design, and how they should best integrate. There is tremendous opportunity and long-term potential for mixed-use industrial to strengthen our cities and communities for generations to come.

Dan MacDavid is a principal at Architects Orange, an Orange, California-based award-winning design and planning firm with ten studios, spanning industrial, mixed-use, commercial, hospitality, retail, office and multifamily. For more than 35 years, he has specialized in the design and planning of various development types, including industrial campuses, mid-rise Class A office buildings, low-rise office campuses and hi-tech corporate facilities, master planning, public stadiums, large retail centers, community centers, post offices and interiors. He can be reached at danm@architectsorange.com or 714-639-9860.