

Remodel Helps Change 'Z' Priorities

BUSINESS:
Pizza shop owner says customers and service took on new importance

Most store owners and customers agreed: Alton Square didn't need a makeover.

"We wondered why The Irvine Company was doing this," said Jeremy Megroz, co-owner of Z Pizza. "The center already looked good. But once it was done: Wow! The end result is fabulous."

Nowadays, more customers enjoy gourmet pizzas outdoors, on cushioned seating. At night, people linger because of the heaters.

"They think it's more interesting when they see all the people out there, relaxing and eating," Megroz said.



Jeremy Megroz and Juliana Chan, co-owners of Z Pizza in University Center and Alton Square.

The remodel has done more than boost sales and foot traffic. It helped change Megroz's mindset.

"I was playing a lot when I should've been working," he said. "I decided that if The Irvine Company was going to commit to something like this – I was going to commit."

The frequent trips to Europe and Asia stopped. He formed a partnership with former Z Pizza accountant Juliana Chan, a UC Irvine graduate. And he remodeled the inside of the Alton Square and University Center restaurants.

He painted the interiors red and white, added wooden tables and chairs and installed 100-gallon salt-water fish tanks. Both stores now have the same look.

Megroz, 33, took over in 2001, after his mother – franchise founder Suzanne Megroz – died of breast cancer.

A native of France, his mother was the creative genius behind Z Pizza. She had a way of blending ingredients in unique and delicious ways: fresh salsa and spicy lime chicken, feta and pine nuts, spicy ginger chicken, carrots and roasted peanuts.

She also gave each store a different look and feel. What would she think of the new look?

"I think she'd be proud," he said. 🍕



Before

Alton Square before the renovation.



After

Alton Square with much improved people space.



Promontory Point's updated fitness center.



Pelican Hill's® Augusta white—and brilliant view.



Before

The original Westcliff Plaza.



After

Westcliff Plaza today.

As a result of reinvestment...

- Promontory Point residents work out on stationary bikes with television sets attached to them. And those lounging by the pool can mix drinks in a palapa – an outdoor bar similar to those in tropical resorts.
- The sand in the world-class bunkers at Pelican Hill Golf Club® is 75 percent Augusta white and 25 percent U.S. tan. The sand traps look white – but not too bright.
- During the renovation now under way at The Crossroads shopping center on Barranca Parkway, we will plant 245 new trees, including 50 palms. We will add 169 decorative pots and more than 35,000 brick pavers.
- The first retail center to open on The Irvine Ranch® was Westcliff Plaza, circa 1963. Halliday's Men's Shop and Katie McGuire's Pie Shop are long gone. Today, neighbors visit Sav-On, Starbucks and Pick Up Stix.

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Character counts in builder's mall

Irvine Co. hopes more plush, homey shopping areas will attract business and foster community

By TIFFANY MONTGOMERY
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

A fire burns in the outdoor fireplace. Guests lounge in over-size, tufted chairs with thick cushions, while underground heating and exposed glass walls keep them warm. An elaborate overhead structure with exposed wooden beams and large pillars blocks the sun during the day and retains heat at night.



RIGHT AT HOME: A gathering place at The Bluffs shopping center in Newport Beach has a fireplace and seating.

"It's cool. Casual, a different kind of look. Kind of like a living room."

LUCY BOWEN
38, OF SILVERADO CANYON

can stroll and people-watch," said Michael Beyard, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. "They want a sense of connection, a sense of place, something they never had before."

The first phase of suburban life was very private, he said, with suburban dwellers driving into their garages and in and out of shopping centers quickly without a lot of human contact. Now, the trend is housing

tracts and shopping centers that foster interaction. It makes sense that Orange County is on the leading edge of the evolution, since it is the "post-suburban" and Irvine Co. is known nationally for being innovators in the field, he said.

The innovations appeal to Nancy Leighton, 48, of Irvine, who likes to sit at outdoor tables near the fireplace. "I like that it's a little bit upscale. And I love the heated floors in the porches."

Many of the fancier features such as underground heating, thick padded seating

The Irvine Company Creates Pleasing People Spaces

Its newest centers are like a "community living room."

A mother and her teen-age son share a laugh in front of the fireplace. Nearby, a man on a sofa munches a Krispy Kreme doughnut.

Sound like any Orange County living room on a weekend morning?

It's not. This scene unfolds at The Bluffs, a retail center equipped with an outdoor fireplace, cushioned seating, underground heating – all the comforts of home.

"We want our retail centers to be the community living room," said Rob Elliott, group senior vice president of Urban Planning and Design for The Irvine Company.

The Bluffs in Newport Beach, Quail Hill® Village Center and Trabuco Grove in Irvine are the community's newest retail centers. The homey feel results from The Irvine Company's four decades of retail center design.

The Orange County Register recently ran a front-page story profiling the plush new shopping areas.

"People want outdoor cafes, places they can stroll and people-watch," said Michael Beyard, senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington D.C. "They want a sense of connection, a sense of place, something they never had before in a suburban environment."



"It's a great place to sit outdoors and enjoy a meal with my family," said Joe Prado, Sr., a Fletcher Jones Motor Cars salesman.

People spaces (n) – Open areas where neighbors, friends and family congregate. Includes outdoor furniture, beautiful landscaping and protection from the elements. Must offer a sense of place.

Elements of People Spaces:



Above: Trabuco Grove in Irvine.

Right: Quail Hill Village Center in Irvine.



THE IRVINE COMPANY

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Planning Ahead

A publication of The Irvine Company that explores elements of a balanced community.

Spring 2005

Who Says You Can't Get Better With Age?

Photos tell the story of substantial enhancement program

The Irvine Company is engaged in an unprecedented \$240-million initiative to refurbish dozens of shopping centers, office buildings, apartment communities and resort properties.

Why?

"As we age, we don't just abandon our older properties," said Rob Elliott, group senior vice president for Urban Planning and Design. "We plan to

remain a community partner for a long, long time and want the community to be among the best – and best looking – in the world."

The effort began three years ago. It is designed to keep the company's investment properties fresh and current.

As a comprehensive master planner, The Irvine Company is committed to the highest standards of quality.

The company's core values emphasize planning principles that create balanced and sustainable communities. Key to making this value a reality is a long-term outlook and an appreciation for how different parts of The Irvine Ranch® – from the shopping centers to residential housing to office buildings – work together to create a vibrant whole.



After

Ambrose apartment community now: Comfortable and inviting, with an outdoor fireplace, furniture, lush landscaping and brick pavers.



Before

Ambrose before reinvestment: Functional and well maintained but lacking that something special.



University Center:

Improved signs, community gathering spaces.



MacArthur Court:

Enhanced landscaping, interiors.



The Colony:

Upgraded appliances, cabinets, granite counter tops.



Four Seasons Newport Beach:

A new spa, renovated guest rooms, public areas.

"We will continue to offer amenities that meet your changing needs. Our commitment to quality is a commitment to ensuring the community's continued beauty, appeal and success."

-- Clarence Barker, President, The Irvine Company's Investment Properties Group.

More Great Stuff Inside:

CULVER PLAZA p.2

College students now mingle at lunch with business people and families.

Q & A p.3

Company explains why good isn't good enough.

PERFECTING THE ART OF PEOPLE SPACES p.6

The Bluffs in Newport Beach and Quail Hill in Irvine showcase the latest in outdoor gathering spaces.





Culver Plaza after its renovation.



Before



After

The project, by the numbers:

- 100 loads of concrete
- 160 tons of steel, enough for a four-story building
- 240 terra cotta plant pots
- 350 olive trees
- 115 palm trees
- 1,201 parking spaces

Culver Plaza Sets New Gold Standard

Makeover wins prestigious Gold Nugget award

The building's wooden shingles began to look their age. Gym customers wanted more parking. The food court needed shaded seating.

Culver Plaza, in the heart of Irvine, was always popular. But the 22-year-old retail center lacked a sense of place – that something special to make it memorable.

Designers from The Irvine Company's reinvestment team rearranged store locations, created more people space and transformed the aging retail hub into an award-winner.

"It looks more elegant," said Kenny Hung, 22, a UC Irvine student. "I used to come here just to get groceries. But now I'm shopping and eating here a couple of days a week."


At the food court, designers added a giant tent for shade, cushioned seating and outdoor heating. The impact was immediate. College students like Hung now eat lunch outdoors, next to families and business people. Parking spaces were reconfigured to improve circulation.

To enhance the overall look of the buildings, the team replaced the sun-beaten shingles with stucco and added brilliant new signs to storefronts. They planted hundreds of palm and olive trees.

Panda Express, Subway and It's A Grind moved behind the revamped food court. 24-Hour Fitness expanded. So did its parking lot. CVS pharmacy was brought in to anchor the area near the food court.

The results are in: Culver Plaza won a prestigious Gold Nugget award of merit for "Best Retail Project of 2003."

Gold Nuggets honor the best creative achievements in architectural design and land use planning from 14 western states.

"The most important thing is the recognition we've received from the customers and the merchants," said Keith Eyrich, president of The Irvine Company Retail Properties. "They've really embraced what has been done." 

Q&A:

Good isn't good enough

Company explains why reinvestment is so important

Q: Why engage in such a major campaign?

A: Paint chips. Pavement cracks. Needs change. A retail center that was beautiful and new 20 years ago might seem dated today. Making a huge investment like this is necessary to fulfill our commitment to provide the best properties on the market.

Q: How do you go about completing each project?

A: We ask many questions to make sure we are creating memorable – and functional – spaces. Do customers know how to get in and out of our retail centers? Are the signs clear? Is there something special to make you want to hang out longer? Does the landscape create character? Whether it's an office building, hotel or another type of project, there's a team of people who work hard to meet every possible challenge.

Q: Why the emphasis on people spaces?

A: They are meeting places for residents of the villages they serve. For example, our retail centers are the place where bike clubs stop for coffee and parents take their families for dinner. We hope the gathering spaces foster a sense of community.


Q: Is the gathering space concept new?

A: No. It is a hallmark of The Irvine Company. Many years ago in the middle of Fashion Island®, we set up couches and coffee tables. They were an enormous hit. We also designed many of our early centers with space in front for people to linger and visit. Through the years, we've learned as we've studied how people use the spaces. Now, they are a staple in most of our properties.

Q: What about the apartment communities? Are you renovating the interiors?

A: Yes. In some units, we are adding washers, dryers and refrigerators. In others, we are replacing tile counter tops with granite. We've upgraded carpeting, sinks, faucets, blinds, cabinets and light fixtures.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish?

A: To us, good isn't good enough. We want our retail centers, office buildings, apartment communities and resort properties to be the best, to be up to date and to reflect the beauty and appeal of the communities on The Irvine Ranch®. 



Before

660 Newport Center Drive



After

The enhanced lobby at the Newport Center® high rise offers visitors a nice place to sit—and an unobstructed view.



Before

Hyatt Regency Irvine



After

Six Park Grill is a hip, comfortable place to enjoy a meal with a colleague, a date or your family.



Before

University Park



After

Today, the ease of access and comfort of the gathering areas make this shopping center a great place to relax between errands.

A burger, fries... and study hall

**University Center:
Students use retail
center to prepare for
exams.**

UC Irvine students prepare for a final exam underneath the warm summer sun at University Center.

The retail center has served as a sort of outdoor study hall for Dhawal Vora, 22, of La Palma, an information and computer sciences major, and Holly Mikael, 21, of Downey, a philosophy major. They aren't alone. The center is a gathering space for hundreds of students who quench their thirst for knowledge – and coffee and soda.

For Vora and Mikael, the center is the perfect spot to prepare each Tuesday and Thursday for their 1 p.m. management class. They have spent dozens of hours peppering each other with questions – usually while nursing a fresh cup from Diedrich Coffee.

Both seniors, the students have noticed how the center has evolved. More grass. More trees. More shade.

“I think it's a great environment here,” said Vora. “It certainly satisfies a lot of needs for students. It's a great place to come study – or to grab a bite to eat.” 🌿



Signs help shoppers easily identify the center as one with top restaurants, retail and entertainment options.



Before

The old courtyard at University Center lacked trees and places to sit and relax.



Holly Mikael and Dhawal Vora look over their notes in preparation for a final exam. Hundreds of students use the center to study or take a break.



The center's entry breezeway invites visitors to spend the afternoon, dine and meet with friends.



After

New, improved people space at University Center provides a park-like setting for the local business and student community.