

Going To Town

You see an opportunity to transform historic buildings into new offices and academic labs. Develop vacant lots into vibrant lifestyle centers. Rebuild city blocks into thriving mixed-use space where entertainment, retail and professional services meet.

Urban design is changing the way we think about our town centers. It's changing the way we interact with them and with each other. It's helping us re-discover the things we once loved about our cities that somehow were lost — walking downtown from store to store to shop; enjoying dinner with friends at an outdoor restaurant; catching a movie or play after work. Now, thanks to owners who see value in restoring our urban neighborhoods — and with the help of firms like JSA that understand how to transform urban ideas into reality — people are once again returning.

JSA has been involved with urban design projects for more than a decade. Our proven record with retail allowed us entry into the market, first as consultants on how shops should fit into the larger mixed-use property. What we brought to the design table that separated us from the pack was a sharp knowledge of what retail stores really need to operate successfully. It's one thing to design an urban plan that includes stores that look

attractive on paper. It's quite another to design them so they function practically and profitably within the confines of the space.

We've since transitioned into designing and planning entire urban projects throughout the country. Our commissions — which includes projects in Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, Missouri, and Nevada — continue to grow as our reputation spreads in the development community.

Urban design begins with examining the context of the site to be developed, sometimes a reclaimed brown-field site. Because the site is located within a city's limits, we must look closely at the surrounding buildings and land. We must dissect the building codes and guidelines so that our design falls within the parameters; analyze the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection infrastructures; study the architectural style of the existing buildings; and work with owners, developers, city officials and sometimes even neighbors to transform their collective vision into reality.

Since JSA is a single-source firm, we have architects, planners, engineers, and interior designers all in-house. Other firms often outsource at least one of these services. But we see the considerable advantage it offers our clients to have everyone working on the same team, in the same building, on a daily basis.

The new urbanism, as it's called, shows no signs of slowing down. People are returning to the city in droves. And as more entrepreneurs discover diamonds in the rough to develop, JSA is prepared to help transform them into urban treasures. ●

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