

Good Stewardship: Repurposing Sims

May 21, 2024 | 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Topic:

Community Placemaking

Presenter(s):

Kim Shipman, Principal - TOPO

Andy Pokorny, VP of Property Operations - TOPO

Number of Attendees:

21

Meeting Notes:

- Former Sims Elementary School campus is part of the district's repurposing process to identify future uses for underutilized sites that are responsive to community needs
 - Background information can be found on the district website >> [Site Repurposing | Austin ISD](#)
- [TOPO](#) is a full-service commercial real estate development company in Austin
 - Background in hospitality and restaurant industry
 - Think about placemaking as a key component of the project
 - Consider the surrounding neighborhood and uses
 - Focused just on commercial development, so their properties do not include any residential component
- TOPO's vision framework that defines the experience at their properties:
 - Community & common places
 - Attention to detail
 - Ease of parking & wayfinding
 - Engagement
 - Tenant success
 - Operator-centric
 - Authentic & transparent
 - Innovation
- [Canopy](#), 916 Springdale Road
 - Owned since 2011; renovation of an existing Goodwill distribution center
 - 65 suites, 103 tenants

- Created outdoor gathering spaces by opening up portions of the buildings to activate the property
- Worked to figure out where to invest to make the most impact but also keep the rents lower for tenants
- Focus on community management to help tenants be successful - events and social media promotion
- Learned that property management needs to make sure everything is running smoothly and efficiently
- Added “mobile retail” trailers to add more spaces onsite - incubator for newer artists and retailers
- Provide shared WiFi
- House both for-profit and non-profits, along with artists
- [Springdale General](#)
 - Owned since 2015, former 10-acre tank farm, ground up development
 - 106,000 square feet of creative commercial space
 - Goal is to be affordable for makers and creators
 - Used pre-engineered metal buildings, replicable design and cheaper materials to help make space more attainable for tenants
 - 51 tenants - mix of food & beverage, nonprofits, makers, businesses
- Q: What is an operator?
 - Term used to describe a tenant/user of the space
- *Comment:* concerned about not seeing people of color take advantage of the opportunity to house Springdale General and Canopy; further are not affordable
- *Comment:* concerns about community outreach and how the district can do more to involve stakeholders to get input
 - Coordinating with neighborhood associations in the area to get the word out about the repurposing of Sims
- *Comment:* Community organizations are going to be key to get buy-in to realize the opportunity at Sims; further a specific community manager/leader will be necessary to identify tenants
- Q: What is the range of rental rates?
 - Springdale General - \$23 - \$24 per square foot
 - Canopy - artists are charged gross rents (all operating costs and taxes included) and cost approximately \$750 per month
- *Comment:* Would like to see nonprofits, services providers and resources all be made available to community at Sims

Action Items:

- Next meeting is Thursday, June 27 at 6pm