

Q2 Viewpoint



Mixed-use. Mixed messages?

Often in the form of single buildings, city blocks and sometimes even whole neighbourhoods, mixed-used developments offer diversity without compromising a clear sense of purpose.

As property terminology goes, the meaning of ‘mixed-use’ is fairly self-explanatory.

It has advantages for a developer where single-use developments do not – optimisation and synergies of land use, consolidation of resources, lower costs... The projects themselves can range from the creation of a new ‘township’, the innovations of urban planning in the blank canvas of the deserts in the UAE to the revival of areas within more mature western or Asian markets, often complicated by the layers of land ownership, pre-existing developments and equity within the community.

Their presence is ultimately established to serve the modern demands of an urban lifestyle where the boundaries between life, work and play are more and more blurred. Consumers seek dynamic environments where convenience facilitates every level of their needs, where people gather and experience community, particularly in regions such as the UAE and GCC or Asia where audiences enjoy being in one place and actively seek to avoid travelling from place to place.

But how does mixed-use avoid being mixed-up?



Urban Development, Manila

We have been fortunate to collaborate with our clients on creating brands for such developments and are often faced with overlapping challenges. Projects have included a number of new townships in the developing country of Philippines with Robinsons Land Group, the creation of Bluewaters Island, a manmade urban island and dynamic lifestyle playground and Marsa Al Seef, the re-animation of a historical part of the cityscape, both in Dubai with Meraas Holdings, a mixed use residential complex in Rama III, Bangkok with the Country Group, and Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, a flagship project to create new resort community and strategic international tourism destination to establish Abu Dhabi as major regional hub.

What these developers have in common is the vision to create legacies and make a long-lasting difference to the cities in which they exist and for the benefit of the people who will visit there.

For this to be achieved, there should be a shared philosophy and purpose behind the overall development. It must deliver a holistic and attractive sense of place that harnesses the characteristics inherent in its location, be diligently respectful to its discerning audience and contain an infrastructure that seamlessly and effortlessly connects one experience to the other.

In turn, it needs to be sustainable in all senses – environmental, social and economical and as such, adapt its personality and voice to flex according to different contexts and messages. The primary criteria to successfully creating and branding a mixed-use development is to strike a balance of variety without chaos, and uniting multiples into a single-minded experience.

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Bluewaters Island, Dubai

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