

ORLOPP, VICTORIA P., M.F.A. Adapting to the Times: Rethinking the Function and Design of Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Shopping Malls in North Carolina. (2021)

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Sixty years ago, enclosed regional and super-regional shopping malls were grand symbols of American retail culture and society. Today these malls remain as a testament to the retail culture of the past, but they are largely stigmatized as outdated and unappealing to today's consumers. Factors that led to their waning popularity include the Great Recession, online retail, and shifting generational preferences for authentic, convenient retail experiences. Of the 31 enclosed malls built in North Carolina since 1960, seven have been demolished, abandoned, or temporarily closed while awaiting redevelopment, a pattern that reflects a national trend of malls closing at alarming rates.

For this study, a database of regional and super-regional NC malls was created, and five NC malls successfully adapted for continued retail use served as case studies. Archival photos were collected to illustrate malls' pre-adaptation appearance, and site visits were conducted to photograph current mall sites, exteriors, and interior public areas. A visual analysis comparing archival and current photos identifies which strategies to revive underperforming malls are reflected in the design modifications and use changes. The database and analysis generated in this thesis will help designers, historians, and planners understand how this iconic building type can be adapted to meet the times.

ADAPTING TO THE TIMES: RETHINKING THE FUNCTION AND
DESIGN OF REGIONAL AND SUPER-REGIONAL
ENCLOSED SHOPPING MALLS
IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

Victoria P. Orlopp

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Approved by

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by VICTORIA P. ORLOPP has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sixty years ago, the enclosed shopping mall was a grand symbol of American retail culture and society. Today, these malls remain as a testament to retail culture of the past, but are largely stigmatized as being outdated, defunct, and no longer appealing to a modern consumer audience. As a reaction to the advent of the automobile and the consumer's desire to have a convenient, climate-controlled retail experience, the first enclosed mall, Southdale Center, was built in 1956 in Edina, Minnesota. From then onward, enclosed malls exploded in popularity throughout the United States, with more prevalence in severe climates of hot and cold, such as Texas and Minnesota. The number of enclosed malls grew from roughly 300 in 1970 to roughly 1,200 by the 2000s (Isidore, 2017). "Dead Mall Syndrome" and other similar phenomena have increasingly become a topic of interest since the Great Recession of 2007-2008. Consequentially, 2007 was the first year since 1950 that no new enclosed malls were constructed (Esri, 2014).

Other factors such as the advent of "big box" retail in the form of stand-alone stores, power centers, and lifestyle centers disrupted the livelihood of enclosed malls even further. Online shopping, particularly the "Amazon Effect" disrupted the success of enclosed malls even further, as pedestrian traffic slowed

and retail sales per square foot fell at a national scale. In 2008 and onward, news broadcasters as well as economic and real estate analysts nationwide began reporting that enclosed malls were becoming defunct and the number of “dead” malls has increased significantly throughout the country. States that still have a need for climate-controlled shopping have more operational malls left than weather-neutral states such as North Carolina.

North Carolina is or has been home to thirty-one regional and super-regional enclosed shopping malls, seven of which are either permanently closed (dead) or have been demolished. This equates to nearly a quarter of North Carolina enclosed malls being defunct, which reflect the national trend of enclosed malls closing at an alarming rate as well. Factors which have led to the waning popularity of enclosed malls include the Great Recession, online retail and Amazon, and changing consumer preferences for authentic and convenient retail experiences as shifts in generational ideals influence the industry.

Additionally, changes in consumer preferences for building use-type are also influencing the popularity of retail experiences. These preferences for building-use type include health and wellness (gyms, doctor offices), community (group meeting places, sense of place), entertainment (movie theaters, entertainment complexes), and dining options (fine dining, customizable quick food options). Examples of malls that have successfully adapted in North Carolina embody these changes that consumers are demanding in modern retail, which are prolonging the economic vitality of these malls.

This thesis examines the development of the enclosed mall in North Carolina leading up to modern examples that have successfully adapted in recent years. Although there are examples of successful and declining enclosed North Carolina malls, very little research has been conducted on the subject thus far. Mall decline has been a national trend for many years, affecting North Carolina, causing many mall developers to combat national trends in retail and adapt to the times. This research seeks to answer several questions pertaining to the adaptation of these North Carolina malls.

Research Goals

Although the problem of enclosed mall closings at an increasing rate is both nationwide and statewide, no existing public database exists for North Carolina enclosed malls, as most developers and owners keep this information well hidden from the public for protective reasons. This thesis research provides a record of all North Carolina's regional and super-regional enclosed malls, including those which are permanently closed or demolished. With this data assembled, it becomes easier to measure the significance of this building type in terms of retail culture, history, and economic impact in the US/North Carolina.

Future researchers will be able to use this database as a foundation for further inquiry about enclosed malls in North Carolina, other states, or nationwide as a whole. Additionally, very little research has been conducted on the adaptive reuse of enclosed malls aside from private architectural and contracting firms, to but the information is seldom available to the public. The enclosed mall is

imbedded in the American retail psyche and has played an important role both economically and culturally over the last sixty or so years. A major focus of this study is conducting visual analysis on successfully adapted case study malls in North Carolina to identify what adaptations were made thus establishing successful precedent strategies for saving failing malls moving forward.

Research Questions

1. What national strategies are evident in regional and super-regional enclosed malls in North Carolina that have been adapted in both design and use?
2. Are those strategies comprehensively adopted by the full mall versus individual tenants?
3. What design modifications were implemented in the five case studies of successfully adapted malls in terms of:

Exterior and Site

Site

Building Exterior

Building Signage

Interior Public Spaces

Public Circulation

Public Gathering Spaces

Retail Storefronts

Signage and Wayfinding

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In support of this study's objective, the literature review will present ideas resting under three major themes: History and Context of Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Shopping Malls, Defining Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Shopping Malls, and Major Influences in Design Changes. The first theme frames the history and background of these malls on a national and state level in North Carolina to further understand the quantity and impact these malls have had on the retail industry and American culture nation-wide. The second theme defines the differences between regional and super-regional enclosed malls and what fundamentally sets them apart from other retail experiences in the built environment. The third theme, Major Influences in Design Changes, examines the factors that will influence design changes of the site, exterior, interior, and public circulation spaces within regional and super-regional enclosed shopping malls. These factors are Shift in Retail, Shift in Consumer Ideals, and Shift in Building Function.

History of Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Shopping Malls

To know the enclosed mall of today, a thorough exploration of American retail history was conducted, as to better understand how this building type was developed. Traditionally, American shopping began in downtown on 'Main Street'

long before the shopping mall existed during the 19th Century. With the influence of war, technology, and automotive ingenuity, America saw a shift from 'Main Street' to suburban shopping centers during the first-half of the 20th century, causing downtown shopping to fall out of favor. As automobiles began to dominate American culture, the sprawl of American cities became horizontally inclined, rather than vertically, causing an increased need for shopping to be pushed outwardly from historic city centers and 'Main Street'. Early shopping centers began increasing in presence and popularity during the 1910s – 1920s and were designed to cater to automobiles and 'convenience' culture. Two examples of these first malls are Market Square in Lake Forest, Illinois, and Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri (DNR, 2012). The typology of these shopping centers aligns with the "strip malls" known today, with parking conveniently located curbside to quickly access storefronts. The 1930s saw the introduction of planned communities, such as Greenbelt, Maryland, where urban planners began overhauling housing, businesses, service, and goods in town across America. These planned communities typically incorporated a shopping center, convenient to residents (Greenbelt Historic District, 2018).

Quickly after World War II ended, America saw the rise of the automobile and resulting urban sprawl. A massive push for the construction of shopping malls occurred during the 1950s, and as a result of government stimulus legislation passed in 1960, construction was pushed even further throughout the 1960s. Stimulus legislation allowed investors to acquire REIT's (Real Estate

Investment Trusts) to avoid corporate taxes (Nareit, 2018). In 1950, the first shopping mall, the Northgate Center in Seattle, Washington, was opened which incorporated an 'open air' design, allowing for natural daylight and breezes to pass through the building. Many malls of this type began opening around the country throughout the early 1950s due to Northgate Center's massive success (Smiley, 2002). It was not until 1956 that the first true 'fully-enclosed' mall, Southdale Center, opened in Edina, Minnesota. Designed by Victor Gruen, this new mall typology was completely enclosed and climate-controlled from the elements, which was and still is very appealing for extreme climates such as found in Minnesota. Gruen combined elements found to be both significant and necessary to cities, modeled around the traditional 'Main Street' model of downtown and incorporated them in to Southdale Center. These elements included shopping, dining, and positive public gathering space (Cohen, 1996).

Several fully-enclosed malls were built around the country throughout the late-1950s due to Southdale Center's great success. Although Gruen enjoyed initial success from his vision, his full proposal of adjacent apartment buildings, medical facilities, public parks, and a nearby lake were never realized. Gruen quickly realized that his creation resulted in a greater push for urban sprawl, leaving cities to abandon the very downtown centers that inspired his designs. In 1978, Gruen went so far as to publicly criticize and disavow his creation of the enclosed shopping mall, stating that mall developers had "bastardized" his ideas and he "refused to pay alimony for those bastard developments" (Cohen, 1996).

Although no longer favored by Gruen, the American enclosed shopping mall quickly became popular throughout the remainder of the 20th century into the 21st. These malls typically include common elements such as open atrium space, anchor retail stores, zig-zagging escalators (in the case of 2+ story malls) and long, spanning wings lined with storefronts (Cohen, 1996). Due to government and tax incentives, most of these malls were constructed throughout the 1950s – 1970s, with updates often occurring in the 1980s – 2000s, if at all. In states with milder climates, enclosed shopping malls tended to show up later in history, often being built in the 1960s – 1980s. In North Carolina, most regional and super-regional enclosed shopping malls were built between 1960 and 1979, with 20 of 31 being built within that timeframe (ICSC, 2018).

New formats of shopping malls have been constructed since the late 90s into the 2000s, which stray away from traditional, fully-enclosed retail space. These new formats include outlet malls, mixed indoor and outdoor malls, and “village” format shopping centers that have exclusively exterior-facing entrances with public gathering and green space between. An example of outlet malls is Tanger Outlet Malls, an Eastern United States regional chain of discount retail brands situated with exterior facing stores and common pedestrian walkways between.

The Streets at Southpoint located in Durham, NC, is an example of mixed indoor and outdoor mall. Half of Southpoint mall is an enclosed mall featuring a food court, anchor stores, and public circulation and gathering spaces. The other

half of Southpoint Mall is “The Streets at Southpoint,” modeled after a downtown “Main Street,” a wide pedestrian walk-way filled with public gathering spaces, fountains, and public art leads guests from the main enclosed mall to smaller-scale retail stores, dining, and entertainment space, all of which have exterior-facing entrances. Finally, a “village” shopping center is The Shops at Friendly Center, located in Greensboro, NC. The Shops at Friendly Center feature exclusively exterior-facing retail stores, dining, and entertainment space with connected pedestrian-friendly pathways, greenspace, and low-profile buildings. These new mall and shopping center formats have proven to be successful despite changes in retail and the economy, and they pose a solid competition with traditional enclosed malls.

Defining Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Malls

According to the ICSC, International Council of Shopping Centers, who currently acts as the leading source on shopping mall classification, there are both definite and blurred lines between regional and super-regional enclosed shopping malls. Both typologies of malls are completely enclosed, include a surrounding parking-lot and inward-facing stores, house two or more anchor stores, and are typically built between the 1950s – 1980s (ICSC, 2018). The major difference is the square footage, a regional mall is 350,000 – 800,000 SF and a super-regional mall is 800,000+ SF. North Carolina is roughly one decade behind the national trend, with the majority of its enclosed malls having been built from the 1960s – 1970s, due in part to its milder climate and less demand for

climate-controlled retail space (Howard, 2015). North Carolina currently has nine enclosed malls of regional status, 14 enclosed malls of super-regional status, and the remaining six are either demolished or permanently closed (Table 1). In this study, as both regional and super-regional malls are pertinent to the economic life of North Carolina, both typologies were studied.

The Hoyt Sector model is an important factor in understanding the classification of enclosed malls. Developed by Homer Hoyt in 1939, the Hoyt Sector model altered the way cities were examined both by their growth patterns and spatial arrangement. Hoyt developed this model based on Ernest W. Burgess' theory of cities forming in concentric rings, thus taking this information to research the way in which cities grew, measuring their variables such as rental rates, housing conditions, and race (Beauregard, 2007). Hoyt's Sector Model was established in 1939 and resulted in the knowledge that cities grow outward in wedges, rather than concentric circles. Hoyt's classification system has been mirrored in the ICSC's ranking of shopping centers and malls today (ICSC, 2018; Beauregard, 2007).

The enclosed regional and super-regional shopping malls that have not been renovated or updated have become socially, economically, and architecturally obsolete. Most of these massive structures no longer meet the needs of the communities they serve on many overlapping levels, leaving them in disrepair and often lead to abandonment, decay, and demolition (Hudson & O'Connell, 2009). Despite, at times, suffering from architectural obsolescence,

enclosed shopping malls on the regional and super-regional level have maintained great value to the economy, community, and social structure of American cities. From an economic perspective, brick-and-mortar stores, specifically malls, provide jobs to residents of all ages, socioeconomic standing, and other demographics. Successful malls also have a positive impact on property value and potential for job growth within a city, assuming the mall is profitable as well (Kunstler, 1993). The mall impacts the surrounding community it inhabits; for example, when a shopping mall closes, without any of sign of a renovation plan, it potentially decreases the value of its surrounding area, dragging down real estate value as a dead corridor and unleaseable property.

Enclosed shopping malls were, at one time, the social heart of a city or region, as a place for people and groups to meet and for events to happen. They were climate-controlled havens for not just shopping, but for first dates, business meetings, walking groups, intelligent discussions, and socializing of all age groups to take place (Goss, 1993). Entering the 21st century, many social aspects of the mall have been lost, with the implementation of age-discriminatory rules, and a loss of designed elements such as public seating and vending to keep this shopping experience limited to just shopping.

Table 1. Current Database of North Carolina Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed Malls

Regional and Super-regional Enclosed Malls of North Carolina											
No	City	Mall	Status	Retail \$/SF AV	Leased Space	Yr. Built	Square Feet	Stores	Anchors	Developer	Owner / Management
1	Asheboro	Randolph Mall	C	\$239 (2016)	90% (2016)	1982	379,097	50	4	Richard E Jacobs, David Hocker	Hull Property Group
2	Asheville	Asheville Mall	A	\$360 (2018)	95% (2018)	1972	974,399	132	5	R. L. Coleman and Compan	CBL & Associates Properties
3	Cary	Cary Towne Center	B	\$292 (2018)	95% (2018)	1979	1,004,210	113	5	Seby Jones and J.W. York	CBL & Associates Properties
4	Charlotte	Northlake Mall	A	\$721 (2017)	99% (2017)	2005	1,071,000	140	5	Taubman Centers	Starwood Capital Group
5	Charlotte	Eastland Mall	D	\$0	DEMO 2010	1975	1,031,746	0	0	Faison	Faison
6	Charlotte	Southpark Mall	A	\$800 (2018)	99% (2018)	1970	1,676,223	145+	6	Belk & Ivey's	Simon Property Group
7	Charlotte	Concord Mills	A	\$700 (2017)	96% (2018)	1999	1,334,000	200	15	Mills Corporation	Simon Property Group
8	Chapel Hill	University Place	A	\$450 (2017)	90% (2018)	1973	366,000	54	3	Madison Marquette	Madison Marquette
9	Concord	Carolina Mall	A	\$400 (2016)	95% (2016)	1972	550,000	50	4	North Hills, Inc.	Hull Property Group
10	Durham	South Square Mall	D	0	DEMO 2002	1974	790,000	0	0	Faison	Howard Phillips
11	Durham	Northgate Mall	B	\$400	90%	1960	900,000	100+	2	W. Kenan Rand	Northgate Associates
12	Fayetteville	Cross Creek Mall	B	>\$375 (2018)	98%	1975	1,054,034	150	4	Henry Faison	CBL & Associates Properties
13	Gastonia	Eastridge Mall	C	<\$200	84%	1976	919,557	70	4	Carlson Property	Cityview Commercial Properties/Westfield
14	Greensboro	Carolina Circle Mall	D	\$0	DEMO 2004	1976	750,000	0	0	Alpert Investment Corporation	Alpert Investment Corporation
15	Greensboro	Four Seasons Town Centre	B	\$400	98% (2018)	1974	1,141,000	141	2	Koury Corporation	General Growth Properties
16	Greenville	Carolina East Mall	B	\$300	90% (2017)	1965	500,000+	60	2	Rouse Properties	Brookfield (Rouse) Properties
17	Hickory	Valley Hills Mall	A	\$400 (2016)	95% (2016)	1978	862,703	80	4	Rouse Properties	Brookfield (Rouse) Properties
18	High Point	Oak Hollow Mall	D	\$0	CLOSED 2017	1995	1,262,440	0	0	CBL & Associates Properties	High Point University
19	Jacksonville	Jacksonville Mall	A	\$498 (2017)	93.8% (2017)	1981	490,000	60	4	Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust (PREIT)	Priet Properties
20	Kinston	Vernon Park Mall	D	\$0	CLOSED 2017	1969	623,967	~10	0	Unknown	Vernon Park Mall Holdings Corp.
21	Monroe	Monroe Crossing	A	\$450 (2016)	95% (2018)	1979	395,000	45+	3	Madison Marquette	Time Equities Inc.
22	Mount Airy	Mayberry Mall	D	\$0	CLOSED 2018	1968	365,000	~20	0	Unknown	Under Contract, 2019
23	New Bern	New Bern Mall	A	\$400	98% (2018)	1979	361,000	29	4	Hull Storey Gibson	Hull Storey Gibson
24	Pineville	Carolina Place	A	\$600	97% (2018)	1991	1,200,000	133	5	Belk & Ivey's	General Growth Properties
25	Raleigh	Crabtree Valley Mall	A	\$655 (2012)	98% (2018)	1972	1,326,000	220+	4	Plaza Associates	CVM Holdings
26	Raleigh	North Hills	A	\$400 (2017)	99% (2017)	1960	~530,000	100	2	Kane Realty Group	Kane Realty Corporation
27	Rocky Mount	Golden East Crossing	B	\$350 (2017)	75% (2018)	1986	589,000	80	6	JMB Realty	Hendon Properties
28	Shelby	Cleveland Mall	B	\$280 (2017)	90% (2017)	1980	360,000	20+	2	Hull Storey Gibson	Hull Property Group
29	Wilmington	Independence Mall	A	\$360 (2015)	95% (2017)	1979	997,525	142	4	Rouse Properties	Brookfield (Rouse) Properties
30	Wilson	Wilson Mall	D	D	CLOSED 2013	1964	450,000	0	0	Hull Storey Gibson	Hull Property Group
31	Winston-Salem	Hanes Mall	B	\$342 (2018)	98% (2018)	1975	1,558,860	200+	5	CBL & Associates Properties	CBL & Associates Properties

blue = super-regional

green = regional

yellow = demolished/closed

Mall Ranking System

The ranking system of regional and super-regional malls is developed by both the REIT and ICSC systems, categorizing malls with an “A” to “D” rank. These ranks are based on retail sales per square foot, an A being above \$500/SF, B \$350-\$500/SF, C \$250-350/SF, and D lower than \$250/SF (Figure 1). “A” malls are the most successful and thriving malls, whereas the “Ds” are typically dying or dead. “A” malls make up only 20% of the overall number of enclosed malls on a national level, whereas most malls are a “B.” Vacancy plays a role in these ranking systems, too, as retail sales per square foot in the mall will plummet as retail stores begin to close and drag down the average. The real estate industry ranks malls with letter grades like report cards, assigning “A++” to the highest-end locations that make nearly \$1,000 in sales per square foot and a “C” to those that generate one-third or less of that and are at risk of closing. Sears, Macy’s and J. C. Penney, the biggest mall anchors, are most exposed to risk of closing in “C” rated malls, according to Green Street Advisors (Maheshwari, 2017).

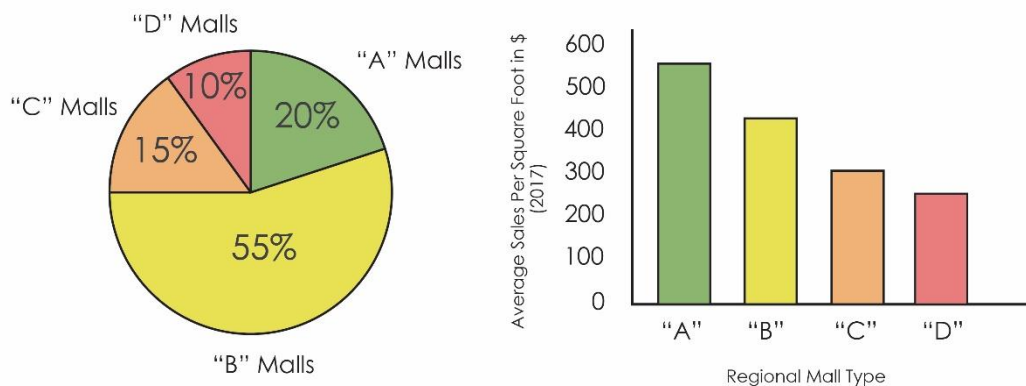


Figure 1. Mall Ranking Averages Nationally (adapted from REIT 2017 analysis).

North Carolina has seen three of its super-regional and regional malls demolished in the last 20 years, including Carolina Circle Mall of Greensboro, South Square Mall of Durham, and Eastland Mall of Charlotte. Two regional malls purchased from outside affiliates are Oak Hollow Mall in High Point, which was purchased by High Point University, and Mayberry Mall in Mount Airy, which was purchased by a developer based out of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. One regional mall, Wilson Mall (formerly Parkwood Mall) in Wilson, NC, was completely abandoned with no potential for an outside buyer or redeveloper. Many of these malls were once or are still located in large cities and adjacent to highways, which raises the question of what factors led to their demise, and, more, importantly what design modification strategies can be implemented to save them.

Major Influences in Design Changes

Many different factors have influenced design changes in enclosed malls: shift in retail culture, consumer ideals, and necessary changes in building function. These three significant changes are key in understanding why design changes are happening and how they can be analyzed and replicated in dying malls to allow them to thrive once more. These major influences are illustrated below as themes in this literature review (Table 2).

Table 2. Literature Review Themes (2019).

Literature Review Themes		
Dart (2017), Robin Report (2017), Quittner (2016)	Dart (2017), Carr (2017), Robin Report (2017)	Moses, Brown & Lubelczyk (2007), Semuels (2015)
Shift in Retail	Consumer Ideals	Change in Function
Experiential Retail	Generational Differences	Mixed-Use
Digital Retail	Convenience	Entertainment
Virtual Reality Retail	Authenticity	Health Services
In-Store Pick-Up	Customization	Institutional

Shift in Retail Culture

There have been several shifts in retail culture that have negatively affected enclosed malls. The factors include shift in retail culture, which is composed of experiential retail, digital and virtual reality retail, and in-store pick-up. In 2018, retail and the method in which Americans purchase products changed dramatically, as digital retail is at the forefront of American consumerism by way of computers, tablets, smart phones, and virtual reality. There is an ongoing debate whether brick-and-mortar stores are becoming

antiquated despite documentation of the increasing rate at which major retailers are going bankrupt and stores are closing nationwide.

Retailers which have become bankrupt or are declining in physical stores include Sears, JCPenney, Belk, and Toys'R'Us, meaning malls will potentially be losing their largest anchor tenants. Other contributing factors include the push for small business over big-box corporations, as many Americans would much prefer to shop small, local, and within their historic downtowns as the 'Back to Main Street' movement is rising in popularity (Bickle, 2014).

Architecturally, most enclosed shopping malls are outdated, even if they were renovated or updated at some point after initial construction. These buildings often feature outdated interior and exterior architectural elements, cheap and outdated material selections, and dated color schemes and graphics (Steiner, 2016). The original concepts of expansive views, spacious central atriums, food courts, and mezzanines are typically found throughout enclosed malls.

The economy has been a major factor in the decline of enclosed shopping malls. For the first time in American history, supply outweighs demand, particularly in the realm of retail with an added layer of extremely high retail square footage costs of roughly \$20/SF nationwide, with malls on average being as low as \$158/SF up to \$430/SF by state (State Master, 2018). Brick-and-mortar retail is becoming more difficult to maintain due to high costs, less demand, and increase of competition online and on Main Street.

Overbuilding, a mass recession, the rise of e-commerce, and several big brand retailer bankruptcies have forced landlords and property managers to re-envision a Foot Locker into a health clinic, a Sunglass Hut into mixed-use office space. According to Greenstreet Advisors, nearly 25 enclosed shopping centers around the country have closed since 2010, and another 75 are in danger of failing. (Steiner, p. 2, 2016)

Many socio-economic factors have affected both the trend in shopping mall closures as well as the shift in consumer retail habits. “The number of individuals living below the poverty line has nearly doubled since the recession in 2008, wiping out a large group of consumers who populated the B and C mall brands” (Steiner, p. 2, 2016). The Wall Street Journal reported in 2016 that “A Malls” currently make up only 3.5% of malls (all mall typologies, not just enclosed), yet account for 22% of all value (Steiner, 2016).

The last, and largest group of factors affecting enclosed malls are the shift in consumer habits, such as the desire for individual products or retail spaces to be authentic, provide an experience, and allow for customization of product or said experience. In 2018, the retail industry is oversaturated with brands, products, and variety, as there is much more supply than demand. Consumers can select and choose exactly the product they want, customized the way they want it, and often for their own ideal price. There has never been a time in American retail history that products and the shopping experience were so in control by the buyer and not the manufacturer (Dart, 2017). Millennials prefer a retail experience when taking the time for a physical visit to the store. Studies have shown that a physical experience within a store, such as a hands-on

cooking class in a Williams-Sonoma, appeal more to younger generations and entice a physical visit versus shopping online (Saiidi, 2016).

Over the last decade, a massive shift in American retail has taken place, due to the advent of online technology promoting retail transactions online, the Amazon Effect, and a desire for genuine retail experiences by the consumer. As Dart reported in 2017:

The rapid expansion of chains and malls created a uniformity across the retail landscape that has drained consumers' energy and failed to provide a meaningful and fun escape from the everyday routines of life. The formula that was great at spreading product across the country was not great at evolving. (Dart, p.111, 2017)

Malls that once were excellent at targeting and attracting their consumer audiences are no longer fit to compete with online competitors in the realm of retail. In this way, retailers, big box stores, chains, and shopping malls must adapt to stay relevant and profitable in the American shopping industry moving forward. The Amazon Effect has impacted the shift in retail greatly, as Amazon has posed a huge threat against brick-and-mortar retailers as it offers a vast selection, fast and efficient shipping, free returns, low prices, and "Prime" subscriptions services which create high customer expectations for any retail to compete with.

On the topic of competition with the Amazon Effect, a 2018 *Forbes* article suggests that physical stores which will be the most competitive in the digital age must offer something that online stores cannot. This means that the brick-and-

mortar stores must include the opportunity for a physical experience with the product as opposed to simply seeing it online (Grosman, 2018). Furthermore, although modern technology has been impacting brick-and-mortar retail for over a decade, there is hope that physical retail, including malls, can implement innovative changes that speak to these shifts in retail appropriately. Although a disconcerting rate of malls are dying across the country, ones that are adapting appropriately to compete with factors such as Amazon are thriving with low vacancy rates and high retail sales per square foot. Cushman and Wakefield cited in their 2016 report that mall vacancy rates across the U.S. were down from previous years at nearly 8%, the 16th straight quarter in which overall vacancies remained at a steady decline (Cushman & Wakefield, 2016).

Consumer Ideals

By mid-2018, American Millennials (born 1982-1999) surpassed every other generation in population at 24.7%; the Millennial population surpassed the Baby Boomer generation by more than four-million people. Subsequently, Gen Z (born 2000-2016) is also predicted to surpass the Millennial group by several million, currently at 21.5%. All the while the aging populations of Baby Boomers (23.5%), Silent Generation (8.9%), and the Greatest Generation (1.2%) are rapidly losing members (Fry, p.1, 2018). As the baton is passed off from one generation to another, consumer ideals are rapidly changing and impacting the success of retail. The buying power of the modern consumer has also experienced a shift in ideals pertaining to convenience, authenticity,

customization of product, mainly being driven by a shift in age demographics. These younger consumers desire to have more meaningful retail experiences that can be customizable to their unique personalities while offering the convenience they desire to combat the business of modern, everyday life.

In a 2017 study of consumer retail habits, a desire for emotional connection or understanding was found to determine where consumers chose to shop. Research across nine diverse consumer categories showed that emotionally connected consumers spent 52% more money than those who are 'highly satisfied' but not actually emotionally engaged. This study was primarily focused on younger generations of consumers, implying that the winner in retail or consumer goods twenty or so years from now will be the connection with or understanding of people's lives. Consumers, particularly younger consumers, prefer a connection and a worthwhile, authentic retail experience, particularly while visiting a shopping mall.

Customization of retail experience is highly significant in the shift of consumer ideals and is having a direct impact on the effectiveness of shopping malls. One technique suggested by retail experts is the offering of highly personalized recommendations as a way for brands and retailers to begin fulfilling the need of customization (Mulqueen, 2017). This applies to individual retailers, food offerings, classes, etc. offered in the mall itself. Many experts are reporting that "retailtainment" is another powerful trend in consumer ideals and preferences that will change the face of retail, particularly in shopping malls. In a

report by *Storefront* in 2017, a case study of seven effective retail experiences found that interactiveness, originality, and connectedness of the user to the retail experience is a positive driving force in thriving shopping malls (Storefront, p.5, 2017).

Historically, the enclosed shopping mall was once a place dedicated to community. As a public entity, the mall served as a place for public events, dances, fundraisers, date nights, and group events. These community-based programs have since disappeared almost entirely due to issues of security, age restriction curfews, and a subtraction of public furniture and gathering spaces in most enclosed malls. A trend in consumer values today is a demand that this sense of community return to the mall, in the form of public classes, gathering spaces, and group activities, which influence building function as well.

There are many places where people go for community. One growing trend is exercise communities. Soulcycle, a chain of cycling communities, has attracted hundreds of thousands of followers to pay \$35 for a challenging forty-five-minute workout that taps into people's desires to be entertained, be the best, and be a part of something bigger than themselves. (Dart, p.214, 2017)

If retailers and malls can harness these tactics that cover several of the shifting consumer ideals and adapt their built environment to match, the success of the mall will occur naturally.

Changes in Building Function

The shifts in both retail and consumer ideals influencing the function and design of retail spaces moving forward, specifically with enclosed shopping

malls. The new format for malls features uses types that newer, younger generations prefer including entertainment, health and wellness, fine dining, as well as craft and local brands. Additionally, services including grocery stores, fitness centers, and local venues such as a farmer's market are preferred as a means of making visits to the mall a more dimensional, fulfilling, and convenient experience for the consumers. A constant change of unique experiences within a highly engaging environment will continue to attract consumers back to the mall.

Speaking on the revamped Roosevelt Field in 2015, *TheStreet* noted:

[Roosevelt Field] which now includes a luxury wing crowned with a newly minted Neiman Marcus as one of its anchors, reimagined food courts serving up various price points and tastes, and a complete redo of floors, walls, ceilings, and lighting and a sleek fresh façade, all built with sustainable materials. (*TheStreet*, p.3, 2017)

Mall developers must be aware of and keep up with current trends in the architecture, materiality, and public circulation space of malls to compete with changes in the retail market. The functionality of malls must adapt to compete with changes in the retail market or become advanced, dimensional versions of the past. Historically seen as an amenity, entertainment implemented in the mall has become a new necessity, attracting a wider range of visitors. Successful entertainment initiatives implemented in malls include those that incorporate grand attractions, which in turn stimulate the mall environment as a multi-functional entertainment space. The implementation of grander entertainment initiatives does require much more investment up-front from the developer, but

these costs are often quickly recovered by admission charges and a rise in visitation (Hertz, 2017). As mall vacancies are on the rise and Americans are becoming more health-conscious with aging populations, a trend in gyms and fitness centers occupying vacant spaces is on the rise. A 2018 article found that health clubs such as LA Fitness, Planet Fitness and Golds Gym have been gradually opening new locations on an annual basis, a notable percentage within shopping malls (Wolf, 2018).

Additionally, the increasing aging populations of Baby Boomers and Silent Generation members are influencing the prevalence of health and wellness centers, which have taken a similar route as gyms in occupying cheap real estate in dying malls. According to AARP, malls are making a comeback, with a new use as medical facilities, specifically for aging populations. As an anchor tenant, wellness centers and health facilities attract a constant stream of users and support a solid base of medical workers, both of which groups support the life of the mall, showing occupancy up to 98% in most case studies (O'Connor, 2017).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research project is an exploratory investigation in a mixed-methods format. The mixed method research approach to exploration and analysis integrates multiple forms of data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilized. A methodology beginning in the 1980s, the mixed method research approach to exploration and analysis integrates multiple forms of data and is based on multidisciplinary fields like retail studies, real estate analytics, and urban planning. By bringing multiple methods together, one can reduce the shortcomings related with each approach when individually conducted (Creswell, 2003).

Further, the results of these methods yield various perspectives on a topic, producing in various perspectives of a topic producing an enriched understanding of the subject being researched. This research design encompasses quantitative, qualitative, and case study approaches as well as historical research for background information. The historical research presented gives background to the rich history of the retail industry and shopping in the United States, leading to the creation and many adaptations of the enclosed shopping mall.

After the explanation of the methodology, this chapter provides a detailed description of the procedures employed to collect the data and analyze all the

information. A detailed description of the five case study malls which were utilized for this research follows.

Mixed Methods

The methodology of this research is a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2003). The methodology consists of five steps (Figure 2). Step one was the gathering of all qualitative and quantitative data in order to create the database. Qualitative data consisted of searching for archival images and information. Quantitative data consisted of comparing retail sales per square foot, overall square footage, number of anchor stores, and number of retail space per mall. Both the qualitative and quantitative data assisted in the generation of the database of all enclosed regional and super-regional malls in North Carolina. These malls must meet the size and anchor store requirements to specifically define them as regional or super-regional. Several malls which have been demolished or are currently defunct are included in this list. The second step of the research was identifying a sample selection of five malls which had recently been successfully adapted. The third step was conducting archival research in order to identify prior existing features on the exterior, site, interior public corridor, and individual retail spaces as seen from the public view. The fourth step required the researcher to conduct on-site visits and take photographs of all necessary spaces within and outside of these sample selections. Finally, a visual analysis was conducted comparing changes from malls prior to adaptation to current day.

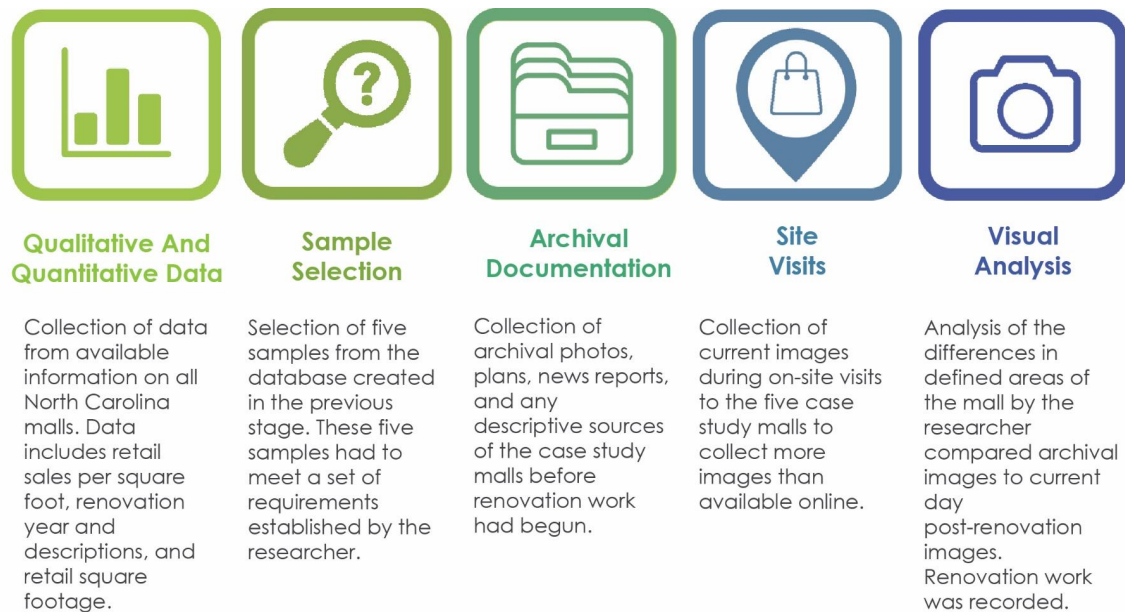


Figure 2. Research Methodology Design.

Qualitative Data: Database Generation

The first step required the researcher to create a database of all enclosed regional and super-regional malls located in North Carolina. A review of secondary data collected on all these malls was also implemented to gain as much possible information for this database. The database contains the current name, city located within, the current status A-D ranking, retail sales per square foot available, year built, year renovated, retail square feet, the original developer, and the current property owner. Additionally, the total number of retail stores and total number of anchor stores are also listed. This database was created to determine the number of successful “A” ranking malls and if they had recently been renovated.

The first step in creating this database was searching for any public information on each individual mall. This included searching on property management websites, tax document databases, and other third-party outlets such as www.deadmalls.com (this website is a social media platform for users to submit photos, information, memories, etc. pertaining to malls which no longer exist or are permanently closed).

After gathering this information, a list of all North Carolina enclosed regional and super-regional malls was created. The database created of these malls contains several descriptors previously listed in this section (Table 2). The information collected in this database contains the number of regional and super-regional malls in North Carolina that currently and formerly existed. The reasoning for including malls which no longer exist or are abandoned is to further justify the need to adapt failing malls moving forward. These malls are also illustrated on a map of North Carolina (Figure 3).

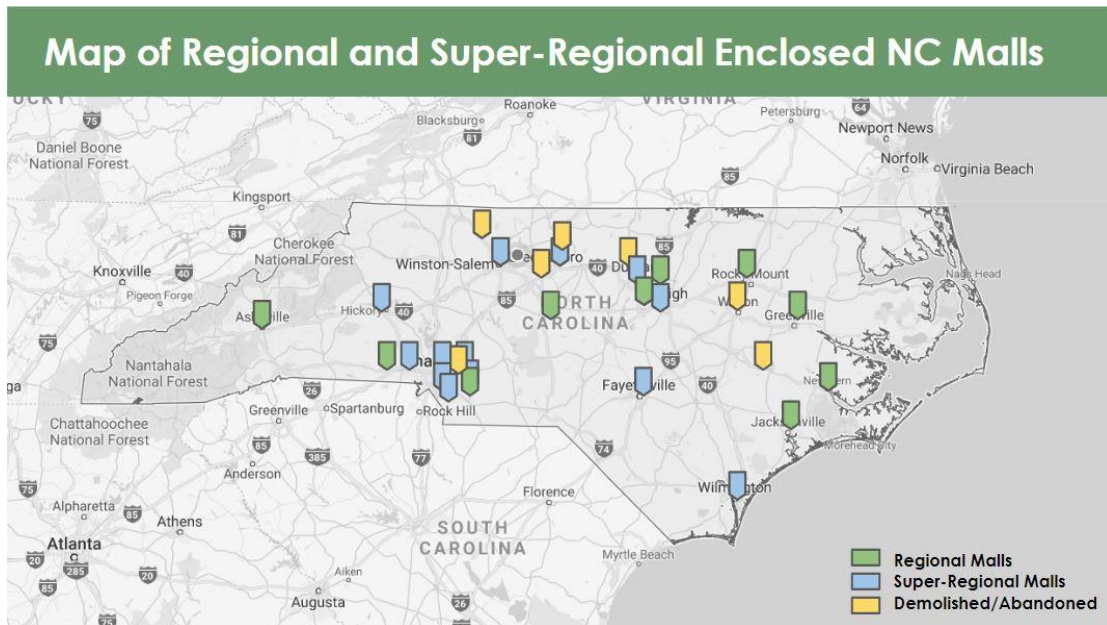


Figure 3. Map of Regional and Super-Regional Enclosed NC Malls (2019).

Sample Selection

After completing the database, a sample was selected based on the “A” ranking malls, which met the criteria defined by the researcher. A sample of five malls was selected for the case studies. Criteria for these case studies fall into three categories:

1. The case study mall must currently be of regional or super-regional status located in North Carolina
2. The case study mall must be an “A” ranking
3. The case study mall must either be of physical or locational similarity.

Physical similarity will pertain to the size, regional or super-regional, or the layout, j-shaped or dumbbell, etc. The locational similarity will pertain to the location of the mall in proximity to major highways or access roads.

From this database, the top “A” ranking malls were identified based on retail-sales per square foot and approximate leased retail space with the most current information available. This quantitative data was collected from an intense study of public retail information found digitally over the last ten years. Through this study, information about current ownership for existing malls was found. Additionally, information on “A” ranking malls which have been recently updated in terms of use-type, features, and layout, was uncovered, which allowed for case study malls to be selected.

Of the “A” ranking malls, case study malls were then identified to study what about their adaptations coincide with what makes the malls successful during an unprecedented period of retail struggle. The five malls (Figure 3) identified for case study were North Hills Mall (Raleigh, NC), University Place Mall (Chapel Hill, NC), Monroe Crossing (Monroe, NC), Concord Mills (Concord, NC), and New Bern Mall (New Bern, NC). Each case study included design modification strategies each mall made of three main components: exterior, interior, and individual retail stores as seen from public view. Exterior includes entrances, facade, and wayfinding signage as well as the relationship of the mall to its surrounding site, including freestanding buildings, landscaping, and parking lots. Interior includes public circulation space, gathering spaces, and food courts. Individual retail stores as viewed from the interior public space include materiality and signage.

Table 3. Case Study Samples (2019).

Case Study Samples			
Mall	Year Built	Adaptation Year	Developer
Concord Mills	1972	2016, ongoing	Simon Property Group
Monroe Crossing	1979	2016	Madison Marquette
New Bern Mall	1979	2009, 2012	Hull Property Group
North Hills	1960	2001-2003, ongoing	Kane Realty Corporation
University Place	1973	2010	Madison Marquette

Case Studies

Concord Mills Mall, Concord, NC. Concord Mills Mall is located at 8111 Concord Mills Boulevard, Concord, NC, situated on Interstate 85, one of the busiest highways in North Carolina which connects the Winston-Salem area to Charlotte. Concord Mills is the largest enclosed mall in North Carolina at roughly 1.4 million square feet. Additionally, with over 200 individual retail stores and 15 anchor stores, Concord Mills Mall is larger than any other North Carolina mall in terms of retail square feet. First opened in 1999, the former Concord Mills was themed specifically to nearby Charlotte Motor Speedway. The interior floor plan of the mall was themed like a racetrack; the public circulation space was built in an oval-shaped track with seven major entrances, rather than a traditional dumbbell-shaped mall with anchors at each end. Acquired by Simon Properties, phased, extensive adaptation work occurred from 2016-2017, and formally finished in mid-2018. Formerly, interior public corridor spaces were filled with large NASCAR cars, bright colors, banners, and bright lighting. The exterior of the building formerly had large, oversized signage at all entrances and mismatched color schemes (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Former Public Circulation Space (Concord Mills, 2002).

Monroe Crossing Mall, Monroe, NC. Monroe Crossing Mall is located at 2115 West Roosevelt Boulevard #3333 in Monroe, NC, situated on Highway 74, a busy connector highway to Interstate 485 and the metropolitan city of Charlotte. Built in 1979, Monroe Crossing Mall was opened under the name Monroe Mall. Initial renovation work on exterior facades began in 2001, but then the mall was acquired by Madison Marquette in December of 2005. Since the acquisition, Madison Marquette approved the name change and further adaptations in 2009. The general aesthetics, signage, branding, as well as interior and exterior adaptations were implemented. Madison Marquette then successfully sold Monroe Crossing to New York based firm Time Equities, Inc. who has held it since 2014. Monroe Crossing is a regional status mall at roughly 400,000 square feet, offering three anchor stores and 45 individual retail spaces.

New Bern Mall, New Bern, NC. New Bern Mall is located at 3134 US-17 BUS, New Bern, North Carolina on the corner of a major highway of New Bern. Built in 1979 under the name Twin Rivers Mall, it was purchased by Hull Property Group and the name was changed from Twin Rivers Mall to New Bern Mall in 2009. Adaptations to the mall took place in 2009 and in 2012, with minor work continuing through 2019. The mall offers four anchor stores and 29 individual retail stores. To note, some adaptation work has been impacted by more chaotic than normal hurricane seasons over the last several years, notably massive flooding of the mall and New Bern area occurred in 2018.

University Place, Chapel Hill, NC. University Place is located at 201 South Estes Drive, Chapel Hill, NC, situated on Highway 501, a major connector of Chapel Hill to Durham and Interstate 40. University Place was built in 1973 and opened under the name University Mall. Madison Marquette acquired the mall, changing the name in 2010, and conducted a series of adaptations to the exterior and interior. The mall offers three anchor stores and 54 individual retail stores. University Place is notably the only mall within the city of Chapel Hill and is at regional status of roughly 400,000 square feet.

North Hills Mall, Raleigh, NC. North Hills Mall is located at 4321 Lassiter at North Hills Avenue, Raleigh, NC. Originally built in 1960 and later converted into an enclosed mall in 1967, North Hills Mall has had an extensive history of renovation and development. Situated between Six Forks Road and Highway 440, North Hills Mall experiences heavy traffic and high visibility. Regionally, it

was the first two-story mall between Washington, DC, and Atlanta and was anchored by three major retail chains. Formerly an entirely enclosed mall, North Hills Mall underwent a complete adaption between 2001-2004 with an almost entire mall demolition in 2003 by Kane Realty Group as a mall which provide all retail units with exterior entrances and small pedestrian walkways throughout. Although no longer a dumbbell-shaped mall, North Hills features two anchor stores and over 100 retail stores.

Archival Documentation

Archival documentation in the form of photos and articles on each case study mall reinforces the impact of design changes post-adaptation. The quantitative portion of the research consists of data collection and research on specific enclosed malls in North Carolina and produces a database providing the classification system of North Carolina malls. The case studies and qualitative features are used to gain insight into explanatory processes, revealing the process of adaptive reuse in enclosed shopping malls. The qualitative portion of this research consists of a visual analysis of updated design features, use-types, and space planning to better understand what design changes have been successful in adaptation. Case studies of adapted enclosed malls in North Carolina were conducted to understand which national strategies have been successfully implemented through design modifications.

The archival documentation part of this research relies on text descriptions, floor plans, photographs, and news articles to understand what

changes had been made during renovation. The documentation shows the condition of these malls before renovation work.

Site Visits

The fourth step of this methodology consisted of site visits. This step of the research applied visual methodologies in the form of images produced by the researcher while on site. The type of visual method used in this step is called photo-documentation and was used to compare changes in these malls from the existing structures before renovation work to after renovation work took place.

The comparison between the new set of images and those gathered from archival research provide a better understanding through illustration of national strategies implemented in the successful design modifications of these buildings.

Visual Analysis of Sample

The visual analysis of the selected sample was a two-part process. The first step was the analysis of all archival documentation compiled from various sources. Images, text documentation, and plans were gathered for each of the five case studies. The second step was collecting of new images and information during the site visits the researcher conducted. The data allowed the researcher to determine:

1. What national strategies are evident in regional and super-regional enclosed NC malls that have been adapted in both design and use?
2. Are those strategies comprehensively adopted by the full mall versus individual tenants?

3. What design modifications were implemented in the five case studies of successfully adapted malls in terms of:

Exterior and Site

Site

Building Exterior

Building Signage

Interior Public Spaces

Public Circulation

Public Gathering Spaces

Retail Storefronts

Signage and Wayfinding

Once data was collected, an analysis of the case studies and visual analysis of archival and current image, it was possible to identify patterns of changes in design and use implemented in these malls. The patterns identified contributed in answering the previously mentioned research questions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Analysis Discussion

The discussion reexamines the research questions, synthesizes qualitative data from the visual analysis, and provides findings for each question. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and processed in response to the questions in Chapter I. There were three main objectives for this research, to first identify what national strategies were successfully implemented to revive underperforming or dead enclosed malls. Secondly, identify whether those strategies have been implemented by the entire mall or the individual components of the mall public space. Finally, identifying what patterns in North Carolina enclosed malls have been adapted in both design and use reveal an influence in design decision making. A detailed discussion of the findings as well as a synthesis of the visual analyses conducted in the five case study malls follows.

Data Analysis Overview

The overall question that this research tries to answer is what national strategies are evident in regional and super-regional enclosed malls in North Carolina that have been adapted in both design and use? The second question, are those strategies comprehensively adopted by the full mall versus individual

tenants? Finally, the third question, what design modifications were implemented in the five case studies of successfully adapted malls in terms of:

Exterior and Site

Site

Building Exterior

Building Signage

Interior Public Spaces

Public Circulation

Public Gathering Spaces

Retail Storefronts

Signage and Wayfinding

The answer to these three questions was obtained through a comparison of archival images to current day images of post-renovated malls. The discussion pertaining to all three research questions is in relation to the five case study sample malls that have been recently adapted in the state of North Carolina. The five case study malls were originally built between the 1960s-1970s and were renovated since 2010 (Table 3). In each of the malls, historic images of the malls before renovation have been archived in order to track key features of the renovation work conducted. These key features include exterior of the building, including the site and signage, interior public space, branding, and individual retail spaces as seen from the public corridors.

National Strategies Present in Case Study Malls

The national strategies listed in Table 4 were selected based on consistent themes from the Literature Review. These nine strategies are evident on a national level and pertain to use type offerings present in the mall, as well as specific strategies retailers and malls as a whole are implementing. Four of these strategies were evident and recorded in the five case study malls; Shopping Local and Local Identity, Dining Experience Options, Entertainment, and Health and Wellness. The remaining five strategies were later discovered in the visual analysis to be identifiable when studying individual retail stores, not directly from public view but, rather, from the interiors of these stores. Visual documentation revealed the four strategies evident in the five case study malls.

Table 4. National Strategies Presented in Case Studies.

National Strategies Presented in Case Studies					
National Strategy	Concord Mills Mall	Monroe Crossing Mall	New Bern Mall	University Place Mall	North Hills Mall
Shopping Local and Local Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dining experience options	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Entertainment	✓		✓	✓	✓
Health and Wellness Center	✓	✓		✓	✓
Online and Virtual Reality*					
Authenticity of the product or retail experience*					
The convenience of retail*					
Customization of Product*					
Experiential Retail*					

*These strategies were later discovered to be identifiable when studying individual retail stores which were not located within public areas.

Shopping local and local identity. The national strategy of encouraging shopping local or promoting a local identity has been increasingly evident in retail. In all five case study malls, shopping local or a local identity was encouraged through signage, public art, retail or entertainment type. University Place Mall implemented local businesses such as Frank Gallery, a Chapel Hill area art gallery, to display local work (Figure 5). In the New Bern Mall, promotional signage can be seen throughout public circulation space for things to do in the town of New Bern (Figure 6). Additionally, historic photos and information are posted on walls throughout public circulation space to better educate visitors on New Bern's rich history (Figure 7).



Figure 5. New Retail Space (Frank Art Gallery, University Place Mall, 2019).



Figure 6. New Promotional Signage (New Bern Mall, 2019).



Figure 7. Historic Image in Public Circulation Space (New Bern Mall, 2019).

In Concord Mills mall, the NASCAR Speedpark is a designated family-friendly entertainment space both on the interior and exterior of the mall (Figure 8). The NASCAR elements of this speedpark harken back to the local identity of Concord, as the Charlotte Motorspeedway is less than a mile from the mall. The Charlotte Motorspeedway has been an important part of the Concord-Charlotte Metropolitan area's identity.



Figure 8. NASCAR Speedpark Entertainment Space (Concord Mills, 2019).

In Monroe Crossing, a large public mural is present in the East wing of the mall. The mural titled “Smoke and Water: Catawba” is a 16 by 70 foot mural, designed by a North Carolina-born artist, Greg Lindquist (Figure 9). The mural was created by Lindquist and a team of local artists to spread awareness of water pollution to the nearby Catawba River and to educate visitors of Monroe Crossing to the ecological impacts on this river.



Figure 9. New Public Mural (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

The outdoor public circulation and gathering spaces at North Hills mall are open to many different types of use. Every year, North Hills holds an arts and music festival in the public gathering space in front of the movie theater area of the Main District (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Arts and Music Festival in Public Gathering Space (North Hills, 2018).

Dining experience options. The national strategy of providing more dining options, particularly those with experiential qualities, is evident in all five case study malls. In all five, dining options have increased, and at times doubled in quantity (North Hills, University Place, Concord Mills). University Place Mall gained several new dining options, many of which have exterior-facing entrances such as Bartaco, an upscale South American street-food chain (Figure 11). North Hills mall opened many new exterior-facing dining options, but also included a freestanding building which houses a Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's Ice-cream, adjacent to public gathering space and a nearby movie theater (Figure 12).



Figure 11. New Bartaco Restaurant (University Place, 2019).



Figure 12. View Toward New Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's (North Hills, 2019).

Concord Mills implementation of dining options was the most dramatic of the five. The food court features newly adapted finishes, lighting fixtures, furnishings, and updated modern signage. Several new food options with clearly labeled signage, as well as aesthetically consistent façade fronts can be seen from public view (Figure 13).



Figure 13. New Dining Pavilion (Concord Mills, 2019).

Both New Bern Mall and Monroe Crossing Mall implemented new exterior-facing dining options as well as restaurants in freestanding buildings on site. New Bern Mall prominently displays new restaurants at the main entrances such as the Buffalo Wild Wings (Figure 14). Monroe Crossing Mall prominently displays new restaurants at the main entrance such as a new Red Bowl restaurant (Figure 15). Freestanding dining options include a Buffalo Wild Wings, Pizza Hut, and Starbucks (Monroe Crossing) and a Starbucks (New Bern).



Figure 14. New Exterior-Facing Restaurant (New Bern Mall, 2019).



Figure 15. New Exterior-Facing Restaurant (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

Entertainment. The national strategy of providing more entertainment options is evident in four of the case study malls (University Place, North Hills, Concord Mills, and Monroe Crossing). University Place implemented several new entertainment options including a Silverspot Movie Theater (Figure 16) and the Kidzu Interactive Children’s Museum (Figure 17). Although not pictured, Monroe Crossing holds a weekly kids’ camp in the public circulation space, with online registration.



Figure 16. New Movie Theater (University Place, 2019).



Figure 17. New Interactive Kidzu Children's Museum (University Place, 2019).

North Hills Mall and Concord Mills implemented new movie theaters as entertainment anchors to each mall. North Hills mall features a new Regal Cinemas with exterior access at the heart of the public gathering space with drive-up accessibility for pick-up and drop-off (Figure 18). Concord Mills features a new AMC movie theater with both interior and exterior access. Next to AMC is Seaside Aquarium pictured with interior and exterior entrances as well as drive-up accessibility for pick-up and drop-off (Figure 19). Additionally, Concord Mills

features the NASCAR Speedpark, putt-putt course, and a new Dave & Busters entertainment complex.



Figure 18. New Regal Cinemas Movie Theater (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 19. New AMC Movie Theater and Sealife Aquarium (Concord Mills, 2019).

Health and wellness center. The national strategy of providing health and wellness centers is evident in three of the five case study malls (University Place, Monroe Crossing, and North Hills). Both University Place (Figure 20) and

Monroe Crossing (Figure 21) feature two new Planet Fitness Centers with exterior and interior entrances. North Hills features a new Fitness Connection Center with an exterior entrance from the public circulation space, adjacent to nearby retail and hotel (Figure 22).



Figure 20. New Planet Fitness Center (University Place, 2019).



Figure 21. New Planet Fitness Center (Monroe Crossing, 2019).



Figure 22. New Fitness Connection Center (North Hills, 2019).

Design Modifications Present in Case Study Malls

The design modifications listed in Figure 23 were developed from the visual analyses conducted on each of the five case study malls. The two main categories of design modifications are “Exterior and Site” and “Interior Public Spaces.” Exterior and Site consists of three categories: Site, Building Exterior, and Building Signage. Interior Public Spaces consists of four categories: Public Circulation, Public Gathering Spaces, Retail Storefronts, and Signage and Wayfinding. All these design modifications are present in each of the five case study malls.

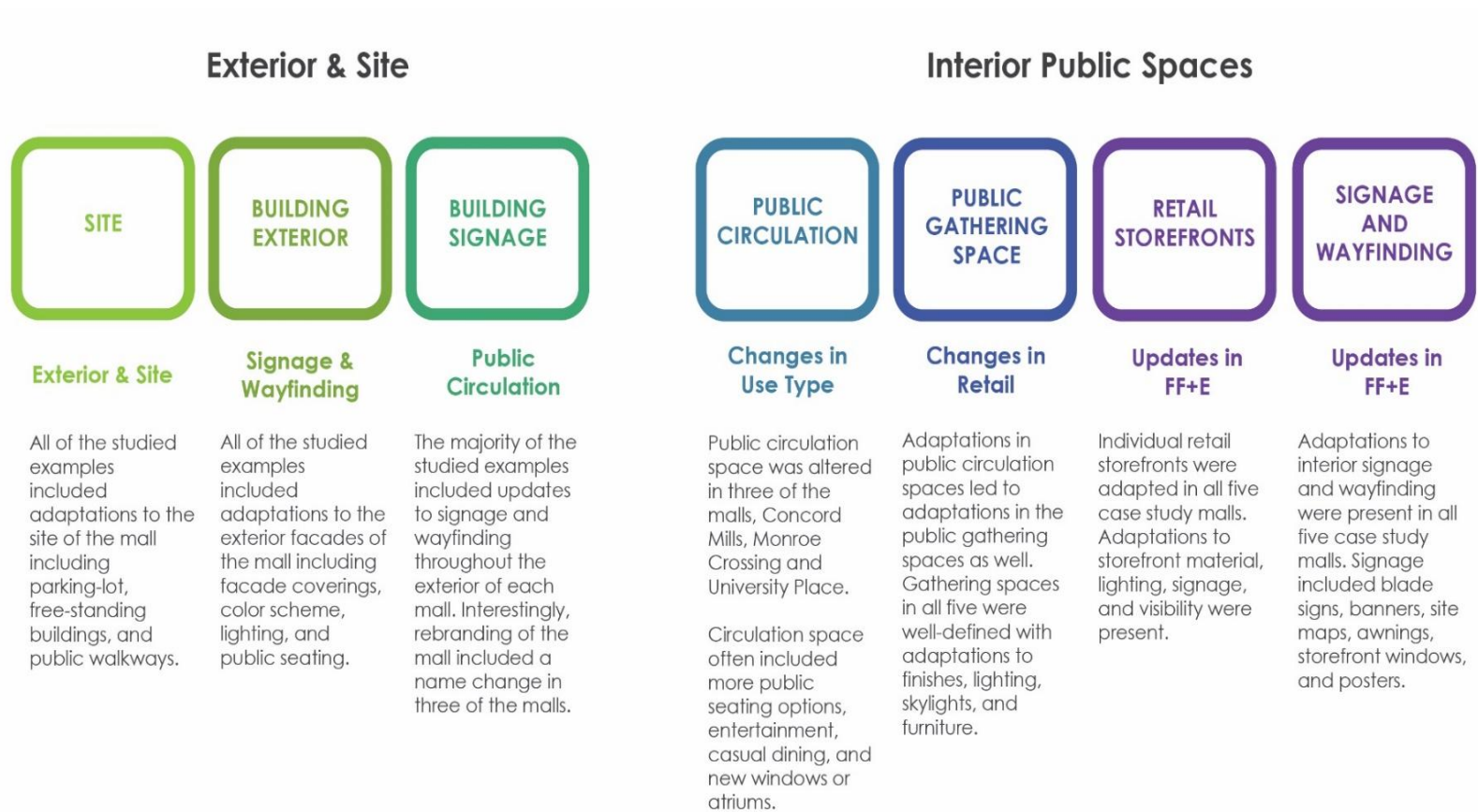


Figure 23. Design Modifications Found Between Case Studies

Exterior and site. All the cases studied in this research included renovations to the exterior facades and site of the mall including facade coverings, signage, and wayfinding. Specifically, at Concord Mills, distinctive signage depicting entrance numbers and the mall name are clearly labeled from a distance (Figure 24). A new paint scheme and pedestrian lighting have also been introduced at Concord Mills. Facades were painted or coated with a new surface material that broke up the monolithic “big box” appearance of the existing facades. New signage was incorporated to assist visitors in finding the main entrance and understand where other entrances were located on the outside.



Figure 24. New Mall Entrance (Concord Mills, 2019).

Signage and wayfinding. Most of the studied examples included updates to signage and wayfinding throughout the exterior and interior of the mall. Interestingly, rebranding of the malls included renaming in several of the malls. The new exterior of New Bern mall main entrance is shown with new, clearly

labeled signage with the name of the mall, implemented after the mall name change from Twin River Mall to New Bern Mall (Figure 25).



Figure 25. New Mall Entrance (New Bern Mall, 2019).

Public circulation. Public circulation space was altered in all the case study examples. Circulation space often included more public seating options, entertainment, casual dining, and new atriums and windows opened. In Concord Mills public circulation space, interactive televisions, sales kiosks, as well as updates to flooring surfaces and lighting suggest public gathering and walking space (Figure 26).



Figure 26. New Public Circulation Space (Concord Mills, 2019).

Individual Case Studies

The patterns described previously were the result of the individual case studies analysis conducted by the researcher. The analysis provides more in-depth information about the type of adaptations that occurred within each of the case study malls and images that support these findings. Below is the description of how each mall implemented these patterns in their respective adaptations.

Concord Mills Mall. The case study mall, Concord Mills, embodies these national-level strategies implemented within North Carolina. Built in 1999, Concord Mills mall is one of the largest super-regional malls in North Carolina

totaling roughly 1,334,000 square feet, featuring 15 anchor stores, an aquarium, movie theater complex, a Dave and Busters indoor entertainment center, and outdoor entertainment center (Plemmons, 2016). In 2016, Simon Property Group hired both Graycor Inc. provided construction services, along with architectural and engineering firm, Bermann Associates to implement a phased renovation of the entire interior and exterior of the mall. Phase I renovations consisted of the complete renovation of the food court and dining areas, new lounge areas, interior and exterior wayfinding, and charging stations. The scope of work included flooring, ceiling elements, interior lighting, furniture, fixtures, and equipment. Phase II renovations consisted of new decorative concrete, signage, rainscreens, glass canopies, lighting, landscaping, and site utilities and exterior signage of six entrances (Graycor, 2019). The goal of phasing this project was to cause as minimal disruption to the mall as possible so that customers could still shop around construction. Adaptations to the building included:

- Public corridor space; removal of NASCAR themed objects
- Updates to public seating and lounge spaces within the public corridor
- Complete renovation of food court space including individual food business and public dining space
- Updates and consistency in lighting, floor material, wall coverings, ceiling fixtures, hand rails, staircases, and wheelchair ramps throughout
- Updates and consistency in all individual retail spaces; every store must have a blade sign, signage above entry door, and similar lighting style

- Oversized signage from exterior entrances was removed and replaced with consistent signage at every entrance. Neutral color scheme was implemented at each entrance. Pedestrian lighting was installed at all entrances.
- Interior public corridors have consistent wayfinding signage throughout.
- New entertainment options were opened including an aquarium and updates to an existing AMC Movie Theater.
- As updates to interior “racetrack” were made, signage was made clearer and easier to understand, as there is not a specific stopping point to oval shaped public circulation

Quantitative research was conducted to find historic archival images of Concord Mills, pre-renovation. Most archival images found ranged from 2001-2003, recent to its opening in 1999. Concord Mills was formerly “themed” in some areas to NASCAR, The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, due to the close relationship the city of Concord has with the sport and Charlotte Motor Speedway being located nearby. This theme can be seen throughout public circulation spaces in the archival images. A product of the late 1990s, Concord Mills original design included bright colors, dim lighting, bright tiled floors, and coverings on every surface. The exterior was formerly covered in bright colors and overscale, Disney-like signage at every entryway, as seen in the archival photos.

Exterior and site.

Site. The main facade of Concord Mills is composed of seven entrances to the building surrounded by exterior parking lots. The parking lot which surrounds Concord Mills on all sides was formerly all asphalt. Since adaptation, it does include minimal landscaping. Pedestrian-friendly crosswalks from parking lot to entries have been put in place (Figure 27).



Figure 27. New Site Plan of Concord Mills Mall, 2019.

Building exterior. Formerly, mall entrances were brightly colored with large, oversized signage at each one (Figure 27). The disorienting signage and color scheme made it difficult for pedestrians to know which entrance they were at. Furthermore, the signage and color were inconsistent on all sides of the building as seen in a comparison to Figure 10. In the later renovation, a consistent paint scheme at main entrances was introduced. A consistent format for signage to highlight designated entrance numbers was also introduced to make navigating this massive mall much easier. The exterior of Concord Mills

which does not include actual entrances has been painted in several colors and patterns to visually break up the monolithic nature of the building. This can be seen on all sides with colors varying throughout.

Building signage. Building entrances include consistent signage and color scheme (Figure 28). The top image of Figure 28 depicts a before image of Concord Mills from 2002, the bottom image depicts and after image of Concord Mills in 2019. Additionally, each entry is sheltered by a large awning and features pedestrian lighting and furniture (Figure 29). A large obelisk-like tower with a designated color for which entrance it marks can be seen out front of each major entrance.



Figure 28. Concord Mills Entrance 5 (top image 2002; bottom image 2019).



Figure 29. Concord Mills Entrance 7 (top image 2002; bottom image 2019).

Interior public spaces.

Public circulation. In public circulation areas through the mall, the configuration of seating was implemented to better direct the flow of foot traffic. Seating areas (Figure 30) are now better defined by a change in flooring material (Figure 33). Formerly, Concord Mills was themed with NASCAR elements seen particularly in circulation space such as flags, large cars, and bright colors. This was later removed in the renovation and replaced with a cohesive paint color scheme, elegant up and down lighting, directional floor finishes, and clearer access to skylight windows above (Figure 30). Removal of outdated ceiling and wall features as well as implementation of consistent lighting is also implemented in other sections of public circulation space (Figure 31); (Figure 32).

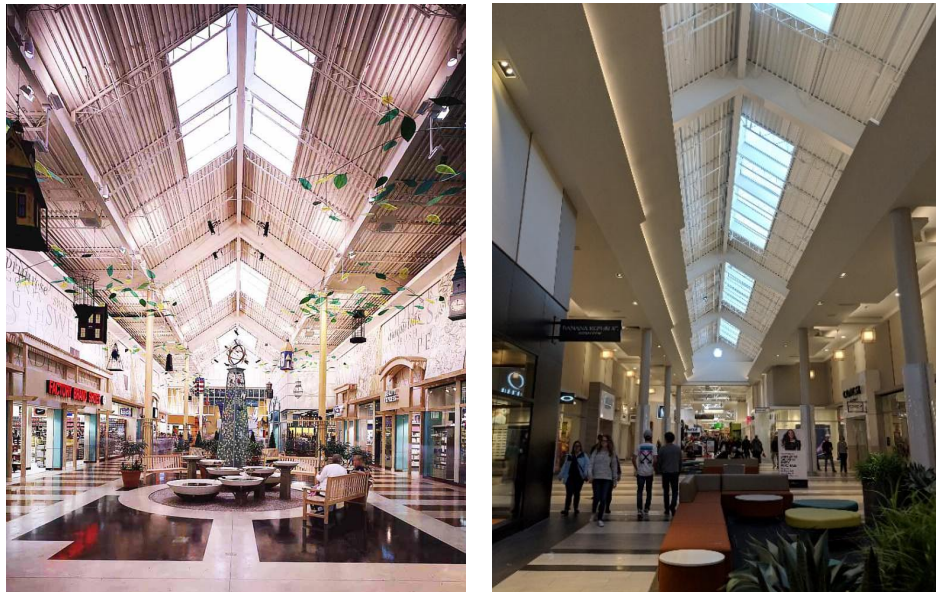


Figure 30. New Concord Mills Public Circulation Space (left 2002; right 2019).

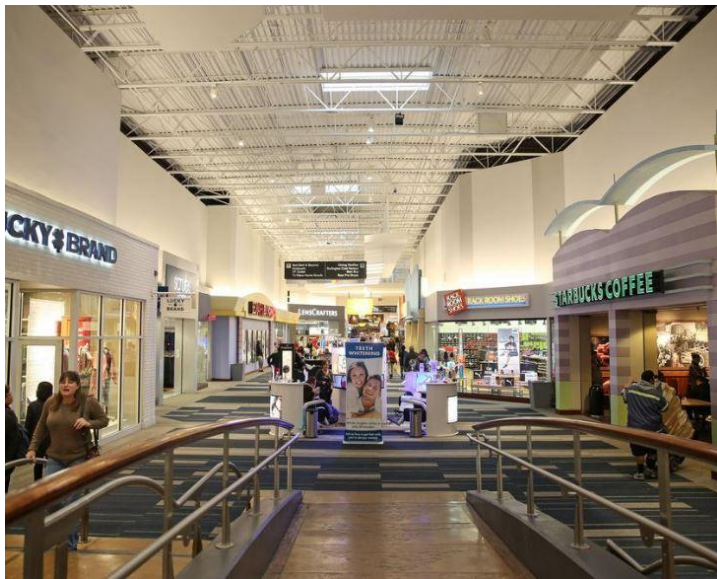


Figure 31. New Concord Mills Public Circulation Space (top 2002; bottom 2019).



Figure 32. Concord Mills Help Kiosk Circulation Space (left 2002; right 2019).



Figure 33. New Directional Floor Tile (Concord Mills, 2019).

Public gathering spaces. Public gathering spaces increased in quantity within the public corridor space. These gathering spaces are defined by using multiple types of flooring material to signify where furniture for gathering space should be located within the public circulation space. The ceiling above public gathering space has been opened with more skylights and artificial lighting, as

well as featuring a unique layered effect in the cornice (Figure 34). Furniture layout on the carpeted area indicates that this space is to be used for a public gathering space and a respite from the busy and crowded public circulation space. Potted indoor plants reinforce furniture placement on the corners.

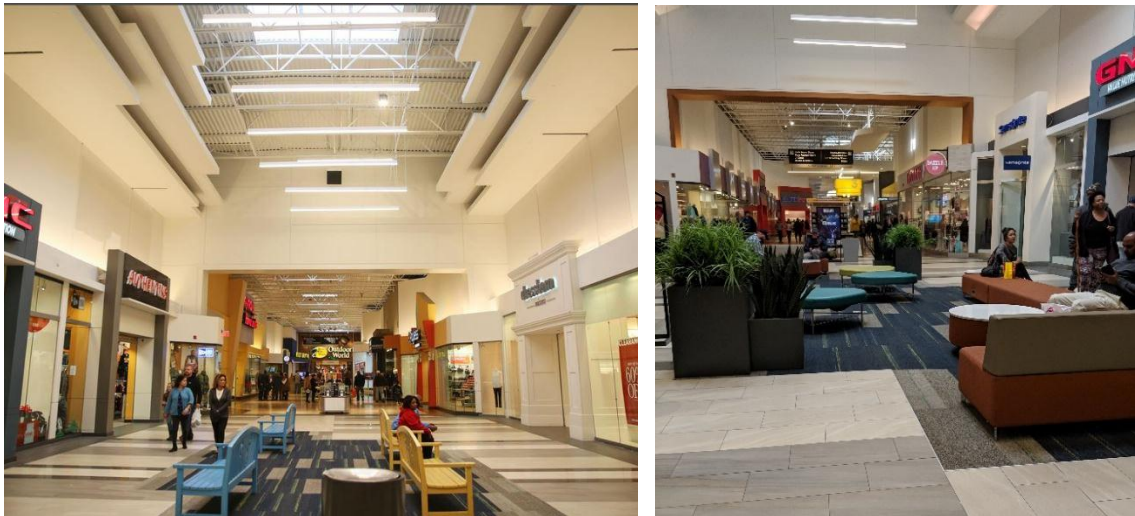


Figure 34. New Public Gathering Space (Concord Mills, 2019).

Food court. The food court of Concord Mills was dramatically changed from the original food court before renovation work. As shown in Figure 35, the existing food court featured bright paint colors, dining room furniture, floor tiles, and ceiling finish. The renovation included an updated color scheme which is much more neutral and elegant in contrast. Pendant, chandelier, cove, and downlighting were installed throughout the food court. Individual food vendors received updates to their spaces in terms of lighting, color, finishes, and signage. Dining room seating is visually broken up with U-shaped seating nooks as seen on the right (Figure 35). Neutral colors, directional tile flooring, soft light

chandeliers, directional cove lighting, and modern furniture selections are seen throughout the food court dining pavilion area (Figure 37). Images of the Food Court post-adaptation illustrate the introduction of neutral colors, directional tile flooring, soft light chandeliers, directional cove lighting, and modern furniture.

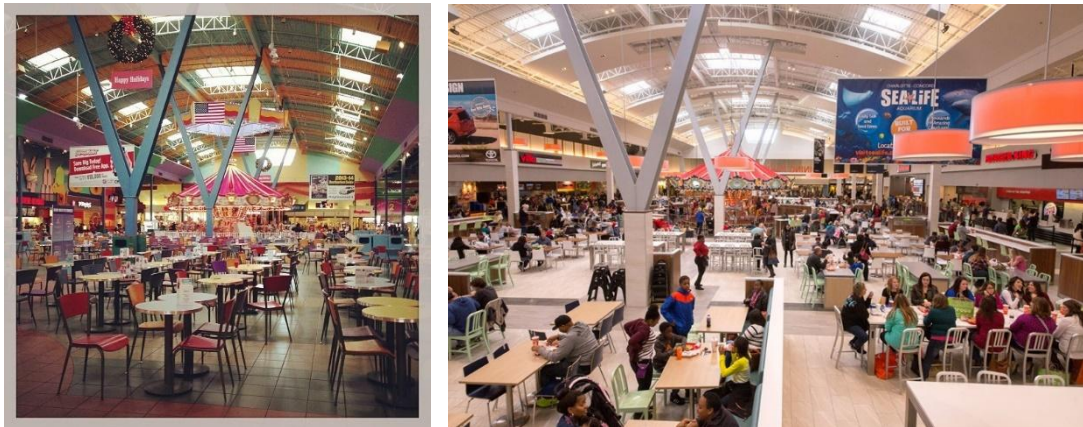


Figure 35. Concord Mills Food Court (left 2002; right 2019).



Figure 36. Concord Mills Food Court (left 2002; right 2019).



Figure 37. New Concord Mills Food Court (2019).

Retail storefronts. Retail storefronts in Concord Mills were included in the renovation work as well. They were adapted to show variation in the diversity of stores while consistently presenting clear signage, lighting, and updates in materiality (Figure 38). Additionally, many of the storefronts incorporated glass and large doorways, promoting transparency into the stores and a transition space between the public corridor and individual retail space (Figure 39).



Figure 38. New Storefront Facades (Concord Mills, 2019).

Signage and wayfinding. In addition to the exterior signage added in the renovation, on the interior public circulation space, signage and wayfinding solutions were added to help visitors navigate this massive mall. At every intersection of the circulation space with an entrance, large numbers were added to a suspended ceiling-mounted sign. Entrance 6 is coded with a large blue box mounted at the ceiling with a clearly labeled number 6. This blue box features a skylight above and directional recessed ceiling lights on all four sides for visibility at night (Figure 40).



Figure 39. New Blade Sign (Concord Mills, 2019).

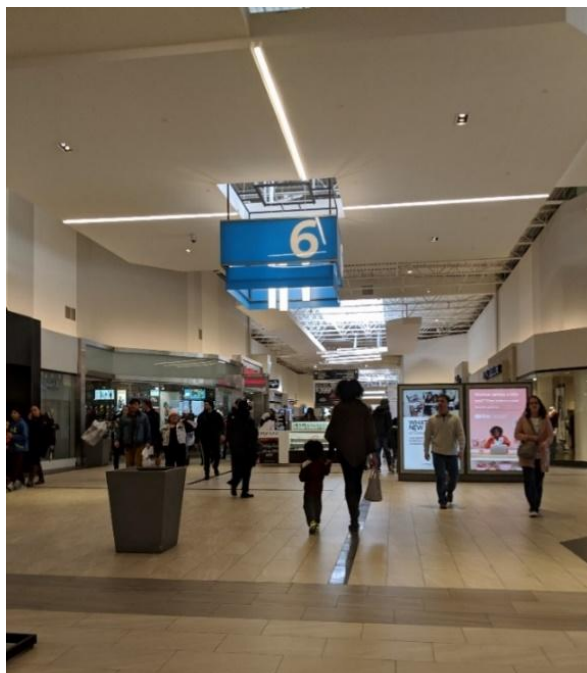


Figure 40. New Wayfinding Signage (Concord Mills, 2019).

Monroe Crossing Mall. Monroe Crossing Mall experienced major exterior adaptations and underwent interior adaptations as well in 2008. This adaptation includes completely new facade entrances, landscaping and the addition of new retailers. The mall has strong visibility, as it sits on the busy Hwy 74 and only minutes away from its intersection with I-485, one of the busiest highways in the Charlotte area. Adaptations to the building include:

- Complete renovation to front facade entryways including new stores with direct entrances from the exterior, color scheme, signage, lighting, landscaping, and pedestrian furniture
- Consistency in paint, lighting, and floor materials throughout the interior
- Addition of new, large wall mural on the Western wing of the mall, which was painted to promote community engagement with environmental issues in the Charlotte area
- Introduction of community programs such as “Just-KID-ing Around”, which holds community events for children
- The addition of several new dining options within the mall and with exterior entrances
- The introduction of new public corridor gathering spaces such as lounge seating
- Addition of Planet Fitness center

Exterior and site.

Site. The site of Monroe Crossing experienced some adaptation work in 2016. These adaptations include some landscaping improvements to the parking lot and additional freestanding buildings from the main mall. Additionally, a new Planet Fitness Center was added to the South wing of the main building, utilizing previously dead parking space (Figure 41).



Figure 41. Monroe Crossing Aerial Views (top 2014; bottom 2019).

Building exterior. Significant changes to the building exterior were incorporated into the adaptation of Monroe Crossing. Variations in the paint scheme indicate various businesses rather than one unified exterior paint scheme. New restaurants and retail with exterior doors were included to attract more attention to the mall from the interstate (Figure 42).



Figure 42. Monroe Crossing Main Entrance (left 2015; right 2019).

Building signage. New signage was implemented in the adaptation as new dining and retail spaces opened. This signage is consistent with the new aesthetic implemented by Madison Marquette and Monroe Crossing's new identity from Monroe Mall. At the main entrance door on the front façade, frosted glass signage can be seen on the center of each door (Figure 43). Above the main entrance doors, the updated "Monroe Crossing" signage can be seen above JCPenney and is reflective of the name change from Monroe Mall (Figure 44). The rear facade of the building was also given updated signage which is illuminated at night (Figure 45).



Figure 43. Frosted Glass Door Branding (Monroe Crossing, 2019).



Figure 44. New Exterior Signage (Monroe Crossing, 2019).



Figure 45. New Rear Entrance Signage (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

Interior public spaces.

Public circulation. The main public circulation space throughout the mall was adapted with new finishes, lighting, and access to daylighting. Updates to public circulation space can be seen in Figure 46 at Belk interior entrance, where pedestrian circulation has been altered and finishes have been adapted. Similarly, in Figure 47, public circulation within corridor hallways can be seen after adaptation to incorporate signage, lighting, and finishes.



Figure 46. Monroe Crossing Public Circulation Space (top 2010; bottom 2019).



Figure 47. New Public Circulation Space (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

Public gathering spaces. Three new public gathering spaces were either introduced or expanded upon in the adaptation. Specifically, the central atrium space now features public seating to accommodate new dining options nearby (Figure 48). Seating and lounge spaces are available throughout the public circulation space.



Figure 48. Atrium Gathering Space (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

Retail storefronts. It is evident, based on the archival images, that many of the retail storefronts were adapted. New retail and dining options also received adaptations from existing storefront shells. Adaptations to storefronts featuring distinctive lighting, signage, and materiality (Figure 49).



Figure 49. New Storefronts (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

Signage and wayfinding. With the name change of Monroe Mall to Monroe Crossing came a rebranding of all the mall signage. Signage from the highway, on the exterior, and the interior of the building have been adapted (Figure 50).



Figure 50. New Exterior Signage (Monroe Crossing, 2019).

New Bern Mall. The design modifications of New Bern Mall included implementing more dining options, with some specifically introducing exterior entrances. Significant updates to exterior façade entrance have been implemented, including color scheme, façade material updates, lighting, and signage. On the interior, all the individual retail spaces have a consistent blade sign and store signage. Updates to flooring material, paint color, and lighting can be seen throughout. One notable feature added to the mall is large banners, both suspended from ceiling and mounted to walls. These banners feature historical information, pictures, and maps of New Bern, promoting the city's heritage and tie the mall back to the community it serves. Adaptations to the building include:

- Complete renovation to front facade entryways including new stores with direct entrances from the exterior, color scheme, signage, lighting, and pedestrian furniture.
- Interior updates of flooring materials, color scheme, and lighting throughout.
- Blade signs and signage to all individual retail spaces.
- New Bern history banners and signs throughout public corridor spaces.
- Name change from "Twin Rivers Mall" to "New Bern Mall" to allow for a stronger sense of identity and changes to branding strategy.

Exterior and site.

Site. Although some progress on exterior and site have been impacted by unprecedented severe hurricanes and flooding the last several years, adaptations to the exterior and site can be seen in aerial view, including new freestanding buildings, minor landscaping changes in the parking lot, and updates to facades. (Figure 51). New freestanding buildings including a Starbucks. Minimal landscaping work was completed as well (Figure 52).



Figure 51. New Aerial View (New Bern Mall, 2019).



Figure 52. New Freestanding Starbucks (New Bern Mall, 2019).

Building exterior. Significant adaptations to facades occurred with focus on new, diverse palette of materials, signage, and minimal landscaping (Figure 53).



Figure 53. New Main Entrance (New Bern Mall, 2019).

Building signage. Once Twin Rivers Mall became New Bern Mall, signage and branding were adapted as well. A consistent adapted aesthetic in signage can be seen on the exterior facade (Figure 54).



Figure 54. New Exterior Signage (New Bern Mall, 2019).

Interior public spaces.

Public circulation. As more retail and dining businesses proceeded to fill New Bern Mall, public circulation space remained open and wide, but it was lined by new storefronts featuring glass display cases (Figure 55). Floor surfaces have been updated with carpeting and stand-up signs are seen filling the walkway space.



Figure 55. New Public Circulation Space (New Bern Mall, 2019).

Public gathering spaces. There are few newly introduced public gathering spaces within the public corridor. Gathering spaces are typically found near dining options or in front of department anchor stores (Figure 56).

Retail storefronts. Adaptations have occurred with many of the retail storefronts and anchor stores in New Bern Mall. These adaptations include façade material, color palette, signage, and lighting (Figure 56); (Figure 57).



Figure 56. Belk Entrance at New Bern Mall (top 2008; bottom 2019).



Figure 57. JCPenney Entrance at New Bern Mall (top 2008; bottom 2019).

Signage and wayfinding. Individual retail spaces feature clear signage above each store, and blade signs as well. As mentioned previously, another adaptation is the installation of large banners both suspended from the ceiling (Figure 58), on walls (Figure 59), and stand-up signs promoting history and events in the New Bern community. Blade signs are seen consistently on all retail storefronts (Figure 60).



Figure 58. Craven County, New Bern Banner (New Bern Mall, 2019).



Figure 59. Historic Photo Display (New Bern Mall, 2019).



Figure 60. New Blade Signs (New Bern Mall, 2019).

University Place Mall. Offering four anchor spaces and over 45 individual retail spaces, University Place diversified its store offerings post-renovation. Current anchors include a Planet Fitness center, an Aveda Salon Institute, and Southern Seasons, a gourmet kitchen supply store. Additionally, Silverspot Cinemas, a luxury movie theater, also anchors one end of the mall. New dining options have been added to the mall as well with exterior entrances. Many businesses from outside the mall moved into it after renovation, such as Kidzu Children's Museum. Several local art galleries have moved into retail spaces as well. Adaptations to the building include:

- Complete renovation to front facade entryways including new stores with direct entrances from the exterior, color scheme, signage, lighting, and pedestrian furniture.
- Addition of entertainment space in the form of a luxury movie theater, Silver Spot Cinemas.
- Addition of Planet Fitness Center, which includes fitness classes.
- New dining options throughout with exterior entrances.
- Interior updates to floor surface materials, color scheme, and lighting throughout.
- Blade signs and store signage to individual retail spaces.
- Name change from “University Mall” to “University Place” in 2014, allowing for a rebranding of the mall including signage, mall maps, and website.

Exterior and site.

Site. The site of University Place has adapted somewhat from the original University Mall scheme. Although none of the freestanding buildings have changed identity (Figure 61), some updates to parking lot landscape and signage have changed (Figure 62).



Figure 61. Former Mall Floor Plan (University Place, 2019).



Figure 62. New Mall Floor Plan (University Place, 2019).

Building exterior. The adaptation to University Place brought many changes to the exterior facades and public space surrounding entrances (Figure 63). In many instances, façade materials, color scheme, signage, lighting, and pedestrian furniture was adapted. Sidewalks and landscaping were improved in many locations around the exterior (Figure 64). Murals and façade variations in façade materials were implemented to break up the monotonous color scheme which was previously featured. One prominent adaptation is the replacement of Dillard's Department Store (Figure 65) on the rear corner of the mall, with Silverspot Cinemas in 2010 (Figure 66).



Figure 63. University Place Main Entrance (left 2008; right 2019).



Figure 64. University Place Rear Entrance (left 2008; right 2019).



Figure 65. Former Dillard's Exterior (University Place, 2006).



Figure 66. New Silverspot Cinemas Exterior (University Place, 2019).

Building signage. Once University Mall was changed to University Place in 2010, signage and branding became cohesive to reflect this change. Mall signage and maps were adapted to meet this new aesthetic (Figure 67). Additionally, large murals (Figure 68) and variations in building materials were implemented.



Figure 67. New Exterior Signage (University Place, 2019).



Figure 68. New Exterior Facade (University Place, 2019).

Interior public spaces.

Public circulation. Adaptations to finish materials and some lighting was implemented. (Figure 69). Notable adaptations include wall façade material, use of glass, and changes to storefronts.



Figure 69. University Place Public Circulation Space (left 2008; right 2019).

Public gathering spaces. New public gathering spaces were introduced as new retail and entertainment space was added to the mall. Specifically, at Silverspot Cinemas, the interior mall entrance lobby includes public seating where customers waiting for a movie frequently gather (Figure 70). Other spaces include public circulation space seating near dining options.



Figure 70. Public Gathering Space (University Place, 2019).

Retail storefronts. Several retail storefronts were adapted with a variety of facade materials, lighting and signage. A local art gallery, Frank Gallery, features an all-glass facade to allow visitors to see inward with branding adhered to glass (Figure 71). The Red Bowl restaurant features an all-rock facade with large iconography, new gooseneck lighting, and large signage above entry doors.



Figure 71. New Storefronts (University Place, 2019).

Signage and wayfinding. Various methods of signage and wayfinding were incorporated in the adaptation of University Place. New signboards with mall floor plans were seen in several locations (Figure 72). In currently vacant stores, large photo decals were placed in windows to give the illusion of not being vacant (Figure 73). Branding was even incorporated into small details of the mall including entry floor mats (Figure 74). Blade signs were also incorporated on the façade of most retail spaces (Figure 75).



Figure 72. New Sign Boards (University Place, 2019).



Figure 73. New Window Display (University Place, 2019).

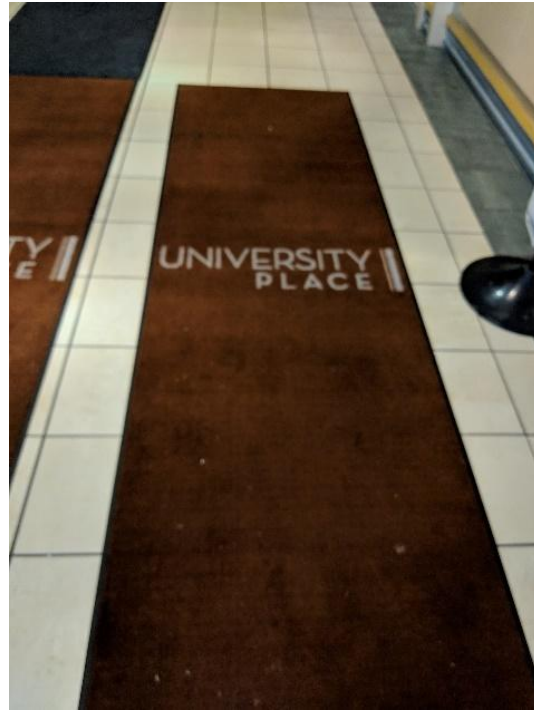


Figure 74. New Entry Floor Mats (University Place, 2019).



Figure 75. New Blade Signs (University Place, 2019).

North Hills Mall. The original JCPenney from the two-story mall remains intact with existing large water fountains in front of the store. Updates to the mall include façade entry materials, consistent signage and branding, lighting, pedestrian furniture, and landscaping. New use types have been introduced including a luxury movie theater, a hotel, a fitness center, and several dining options. Additionally, a small park and water features have been included around the area of the luxury movie theater, to promote a community gathering space. Pedestrian walkways and limited parking within the main mall area promote walkability and less traffic congestion. Adaptations to the building include:

- New retail buildings include consistent facade materials, lighting, and pedestrian seating out front.
- Consistent branding and signage throughout the mall can be seen in blade signs, store signage, banners, awnings, and directory signs.
- Public walkways and crosswalks to easily navigate around the outdoor mall with effective signage.
- Introduction of new use types such as luxury movie theater, hotel, and fitness centers.
- Landscaping and introduction of new fountains.

Exterior and site.

Site. The site of North Hills has been adapted the most dramatically and frequently of any other case study mall. Beginning as a completed enclosed mall (Figure 76) it was almost entirely demolished to make way for a mostly open walkway mall (Figure 77). The current “Main District” is indicative of where the original enclosed mall once stood, with the JCPenney being the only original building from 1960 (Figure 78).



Figure 76. Former Aerial View (North Hills, 1965).



Figure 77. Former Aerial View (North Hills, 2001).

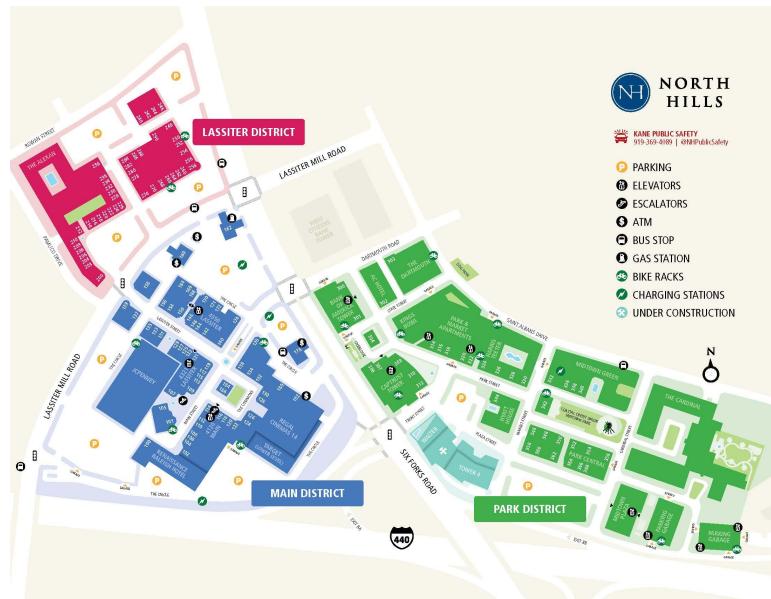


Figure 78. New “Main District” Aerial View (North Hills, 2019).

Building exterior. Due to the almost complete demolition of the original mall, the building exterior is almost entirely adapted from the original enclosed mall, spare the JCPenney. A former exterior facade entrance is seen in Figure 79, illustrating the height as a two-story enclosed mall. The adaptation of North Hills Mall allowed for open outdoor space between all retail, dining, entertainment, and hospitality entrances, connected by walkways, landscaping, fountains, and small parks (Figure 80; Figure 81). Public Gathering spaces are seen in the form of these small parks, around fountains, and seating out front of dining, entertainment, and retail (Figure 82; Figure 83).



Figure 79. Former Mall Facade (North Hills, 1965).



Figure 80. New "Main District" Exterior (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 81. New Exterior Park Space (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 82. New Public Gathering Space (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 83. New “Main District” Park Space (North Hills, 2019).

Building signage. Due to the fact that all retail storefronts are exterior-facing, they all feature blade signs, large store signage, awnings (Figure 84) with signage, and often times stand-up walkway signage, to achieve high visibility (Figure 85; Figure 86) Additionally, light poles feature banner signage to let pedestrians know which part of North Hills they are in (Figure 87).



Figure 84. New Blade Sign (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 85. New Light Pole Banner (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 86. New Site Maps (North Hills, 2019).



Figure 87. New Awning Signage (North Hills, 2019).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The number of enclosed regional and super-regional malls that have closed continues to increase nationally. Likewise, enclosed malls in North Carolina are under constant threat of becoming defunct, abandoned, or demolished. Mall owners and developers must continue to adapt these malls to stay ahead of the trends in retail in order to prevent negative outcomes. Strategies to attract consumers and the design modifications that result from those strategies have been employed to successfully revive and adapt the five malls included in the case studies for this thesis. The findings of this study provide a better understanding of what is working to successfully adapt enclosed malls in North Carolina to counter the “dead mall” syndrome as it continues to be a national trend. The database and visual analysis generated in this thesis will be helpful to designers, historians, and planners in understanding how this iconic building type can be adapted to meet the times.

Observations

The design strategies implemented by the select case study malls allowed for these buildings to both become less monolithic and incorporate trends seen in successfully adapted malls and newer models of shopping centers. The design strategies outlined in Chapter II are shown to be implemented, in some capacity,

to all five of the case study malls. All except one case study mall, Monroe Crossing, implemented new entertainment options in the form of movie theaters, aquariums, a racetrack, and children museums. Three of five malls, Monroe Crossing, North Hills, and University Place, all incorporated new health and wellness centers in the form of fitness clubs and gyms. All five case study malls implemented new dining options, some of which had created new entrances to the exterior facades of the mall. Dining options include fine dining, casual quick restaurants, customizable food options, cafes, and food courts. All five case study malls implemented a sense of local identity or shopping local in the signage, branding, retail options, and use of public space. For example, North Hills Mall allows for the main outdoor gathering space to be used as a concert venue and festival gatherings.

Although the site of each of the five case study malls was studied for adaptations, only one demonstrated significant changes. North Hills Mall almost completely demolished the enclosed mall and created an open concept shopping center with streets and sidewalk between. By doing this, green spaces, fountains, public seating, and exterior gathering spaces were introduced. Additionally, parking lots were broken up with landscaping, sidewalks, and lighting. The other four malls did not demonstrate significant adaptations to the site. All five malls, however did include new freestanding buildings located on site from the main enclosed mall.

Every one of the case study malls demonstrated adaptations to the exterior facades in terms of materiality, color palette, and new openings. For example, University Place Mall adapted its existing Dillard's Department Store into a Silverspot Cinema and several individual retail units and dining options. The cinema, dining, and retail incorporated a diverse palette of color, material, signage, and lighting to make this area of the mall feel lively, modern, and enticing to visitors.

Building signage, both on the exterior and interior, was dramatically adapted in all five of the case study malls. Signage includes directional signs, maps, banners, help kiosks, floor mats, and blade signs. For example, Concord Mills removed existing oversized, colorful signage on the exterior of each main entrance and replaced them with uniform, modern signage that was much easier to identify which of the seven entrances a visitor was entering. Concord Mills was built to mimic a racetrack, a nod to the nearby Charlotte Motor Speedway, and formerly was a confusing building to navigate, as there were no formal anchors bookending the mall, rather a large continuous loop. The adaptation of Concord Mills brought new navigational signage at each of the main entrances and throughout the public circulation space.

Public circulation, public gathering spaces, and retail storefronts were also shown to be adapted in all five case study malls. Updates in materiality, lighting, signage, and furniture proved to better identify circulation space versus gathering space throughout the public corridor. Retail storefronts updated facade material,

lighting, and signage, while many implemented the use of glass or large, folding doors for better visibility and circulation from the public corridor.

Interestingly, three of five case study malls went through a name change, likely to allow them to create a stronger brand and identity. Monroe Crossing Mall was formerly Monroe Mall, University Place Mall was formerly University Mall, and New Bern Mall was formerly Twin Rivers Mall. With these name changes came new signage on both the interior and exterior, color palette, website, and social media.

North Hills Mall was the outlier of these five case study malls and followed national trends in nearly all adaptation categories. New, contemporary shopping malls incorporate indoor and outdoor elements and open-air spaces, contrasting with the strictly enclosed mall format. North Hills reflects this national trend by having opened up the existing enclosed mall into an indoor and outdoor experience. Of the five case study malls, North Hills Mall is an example of best practice, when feasible to demolish a large portion of the enclosed mall and build new.

While time limited the opportunity to interview developers and designers involved in the adaptations to the five malls studied, interviews with those directly involved in the decision-making process would have provided additional insight to this study. Also, additional perspective could have been gained from looking at the design modifications made within the individual retail spaces and any shifts in the average square footage for retail spaces. Time limited the opportunity to

research the cost and sustainability associated with demolition of these malls, as opposed to saving them, which could be a further topic that would strengthen this study.

Future Study

This thesis looked at enclosed malls that remained primarily retail spaces. Additional insight could be gained by investigating the design modifications necessary to accommodate new uses such as residential, mixed-use, institutional, and medical facilities. Enclosed malls in differing regions could also be studied, as they can be seen as more or less desirable depending on more extreme climate conditions.

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