

THE EXPERIENCE ENGINE

A New Playbook for
Commercial Destinations

IA

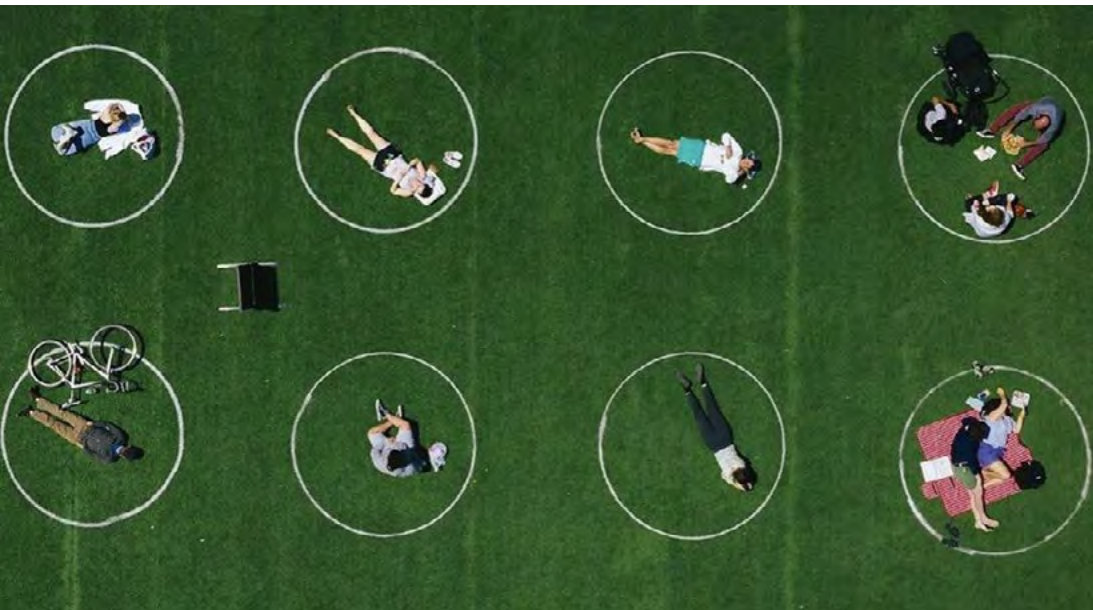


INTRODUCTION

A New Playbook For Commercial Destinations

HumanX by IA Retail explores the future of commercial destinations through a deeper understanding of people's changing needs, behaviors and expectations.

This edition identifies the emerging needs destinations must fulfill to stay relevant, earn time in people's lives and create lasting asset value.



INTRODUCTION

The Changing Value of Place

Commercial destinations have spent decades optimizing for tenant mix, footfall and spend. But the role of physical destinations is changing. Traditional ROX drivers alone is no longer enough to create frequency, relevance or loyalty, while the activities that do drive everyday life are increasingly fragmented across multiple places.

The challenge is no longer simply what to put in a place, but how a destination can fulfill meaningful roles in people's lives, from convenience and connection to restoration and discovery, creating reasons to come, stay, and return.

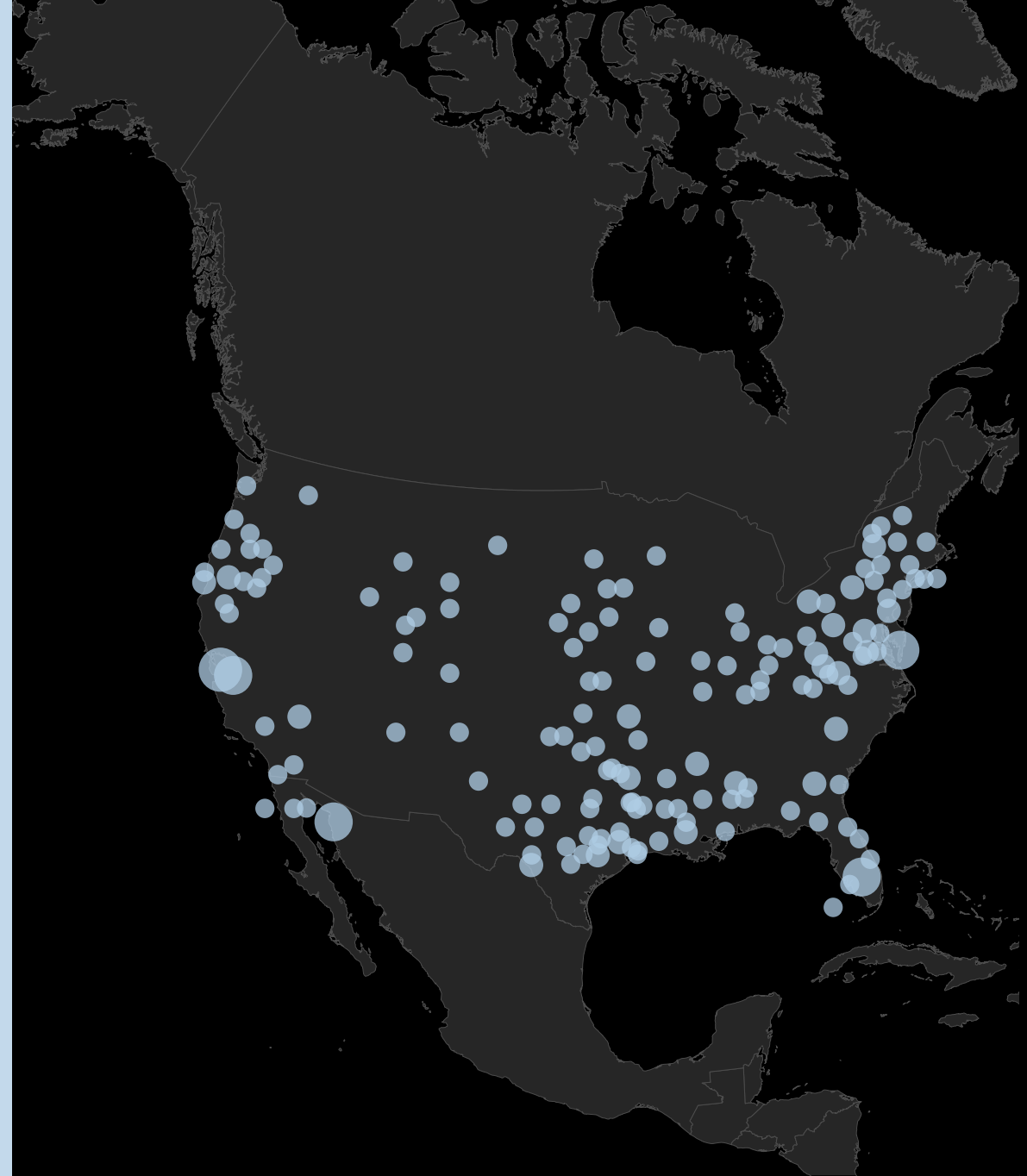
INTRODUCTION

From Behavior to Emerging Need

Our research starts with the everyday behaviours competing for people's time, what they do, how often, where, and what they combine. We then look beyond the activity itself to identify the **underlying need or tension driving it**: what people are ultimately trying to gain, avoid or feel.

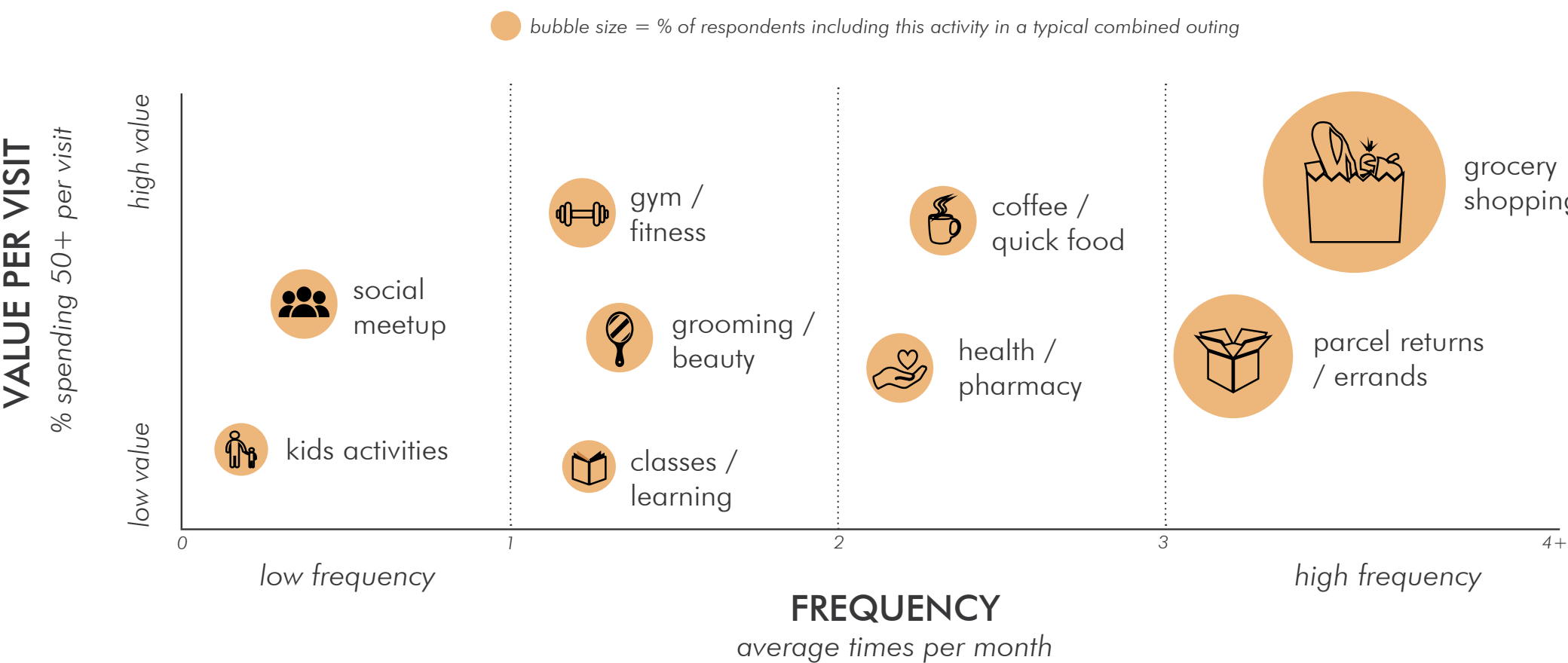
Combining industry research, project learnings, social listening and a **nationally representative survey of 244 US consumers**, we identified recurring behavioural signals and explored how those needs may be evolving.

The result is a set of **emerging need states** that move beyond what people want to do, towards how they increasingly expect commercial destinations to make them feel.



The Behavioral Baseline

Before asking what destinations should become, we mapped the activities already shaping people’s everyday routines



Emerging Needs for Commercial Destinations

We asked people what would make them visit commercial destinations more frequently, and started categorizing their responses into emerging need states

#1 Give Me Time Back

I need everyday life to work harder and more seamlessly

89%

want to get multiple things done in one trip

79%

want a better mix of retail, dining and services

#2 Help Me Belong

I want more reasons to spend time with other people

71%

want places that feel social and enjoyable beyond spending

44%

want stronger community connection

#3 Restore Me

I want places that help me feel better, not just get things done

45%

want outdoor spaces, seating and gathering areas

34%

do fitness/gym activities at least 2–3 times per week

#4 Surprise Me

I want experiences worth leaving home for

53%

want experiences beyond shopping

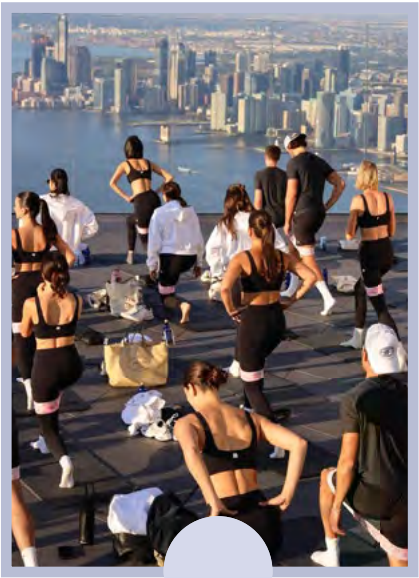
55%

want destinations that feel unique and worth visiting

DESIGN

Design Exploration

Design directions that respond to the evolving expectations and needs of today's visitors



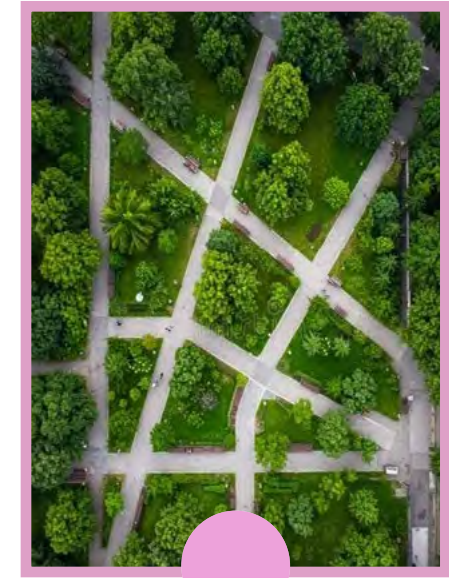
Daily Ritual
Infrastructure



Narrative
Threads



Points of
Pause



Collision
Design

DESIGN

Daily Ritual Infrastructure

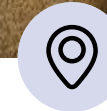
Create a one-stop commercial ecosystem that supports recurring daily routines by consolidating essential tasks into a single destination



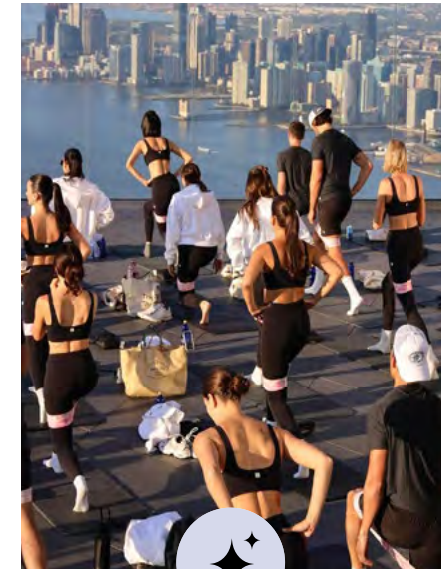
Strategic adjacencies reduce the need for separate trips (coffee near grocery shopping near grab-and-go meals, etc.)



Time-Based Activations (ex: morning coffee courts)



High-frequency services positioned at arrival and departure zones



Place everyday destinations alongside unexpected experiences to spark discovery and engagement

Routine • Efficiency • Familiarity • Convenience • Reliability

DESIGN

Narrative Threads

Weave local stories, culture, and community experiences throughout the destination to create a distinct identity and foster belonging



Create gathering spaces, such as neighborhood-scaled courtyards, where community connections and local stories can unfold



Celebrate local culture and heritage to give the destination a distinct sense of identity



Invite visitors to become part of the narrative through interactive and participatory experiences



Keep the destination's story evolving through community events, markets, and shared experiences

Belonging • Community • Familiarity • Identity • Connection

DESIGN

Points of Pause

Create environments that balance activity with calm, through intentional moments of pause that reduce stress and promote wellbeing



Create points of pause along circulation paths



Position moments of respite adjacent to placemaking and cultural spaces



Utilize transition spaces as opportunities for rest, reflection, and connection



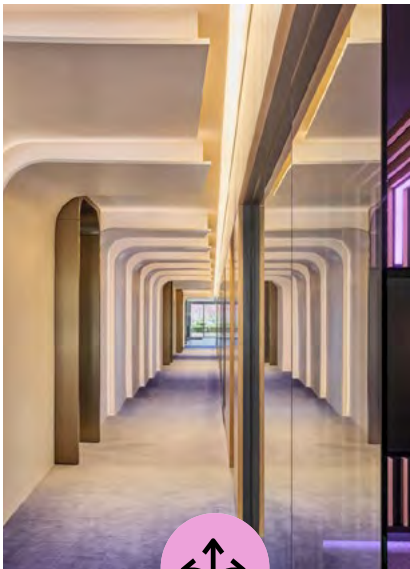
Create calming sensory environments through acoustics, materiality, and lighting

Wellness • Restoration • Pause • Comfort • Reflection

DESIGN

Collision Design

Design for discovery and curiosity through intentional collisions between people, places, and experiences



Intersect circulation paths to create natural points of encounter



Utilize campus-style layouts by creating interconnected, walkable spaces



Layer surprises along routine paths



Create opportunities for cross-discovery by strategically clustering complementary destinations

Discovery • Surprise • Exploration • Curiosity • Excitement

Consumer Experience

Designing a journey that helps visitors accomplish, discover, connect, and recharge, fulfilling multiple needs in a single visit



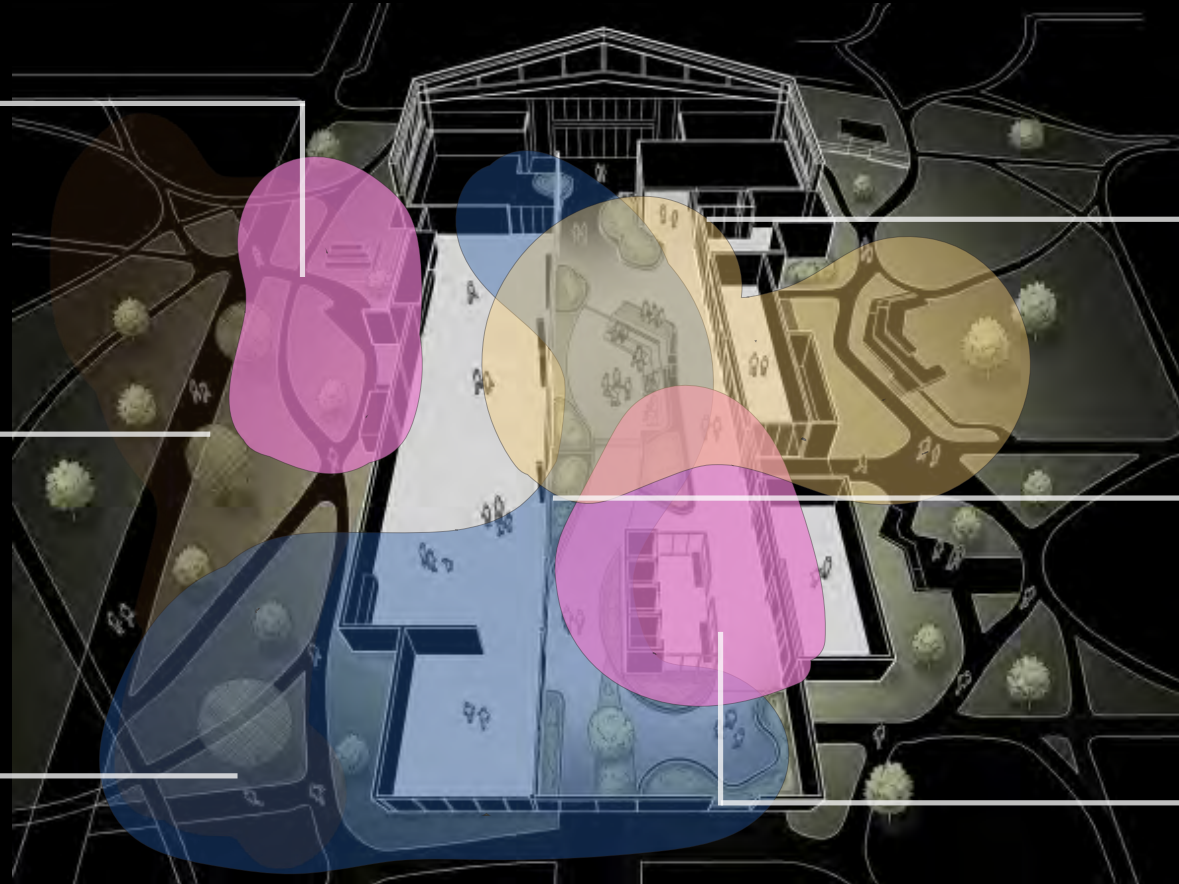
Move seamlessly between lively community spaces and quieter moments to pause, recharge, and take it all in



Connect with others through shared spaces and chance encounters woven throughout the destination



Enjoy moments of surprise without stepping off your intended route



Encounter local stories, culture, and character built naturally into everyday journeys



Accomplish multiple tasks in one seamless trip, with amenities and experiences that fit naturally into daily routines



Pause and recharge between activities in comfortable spaces designed to slow the pace and encourage longer stays

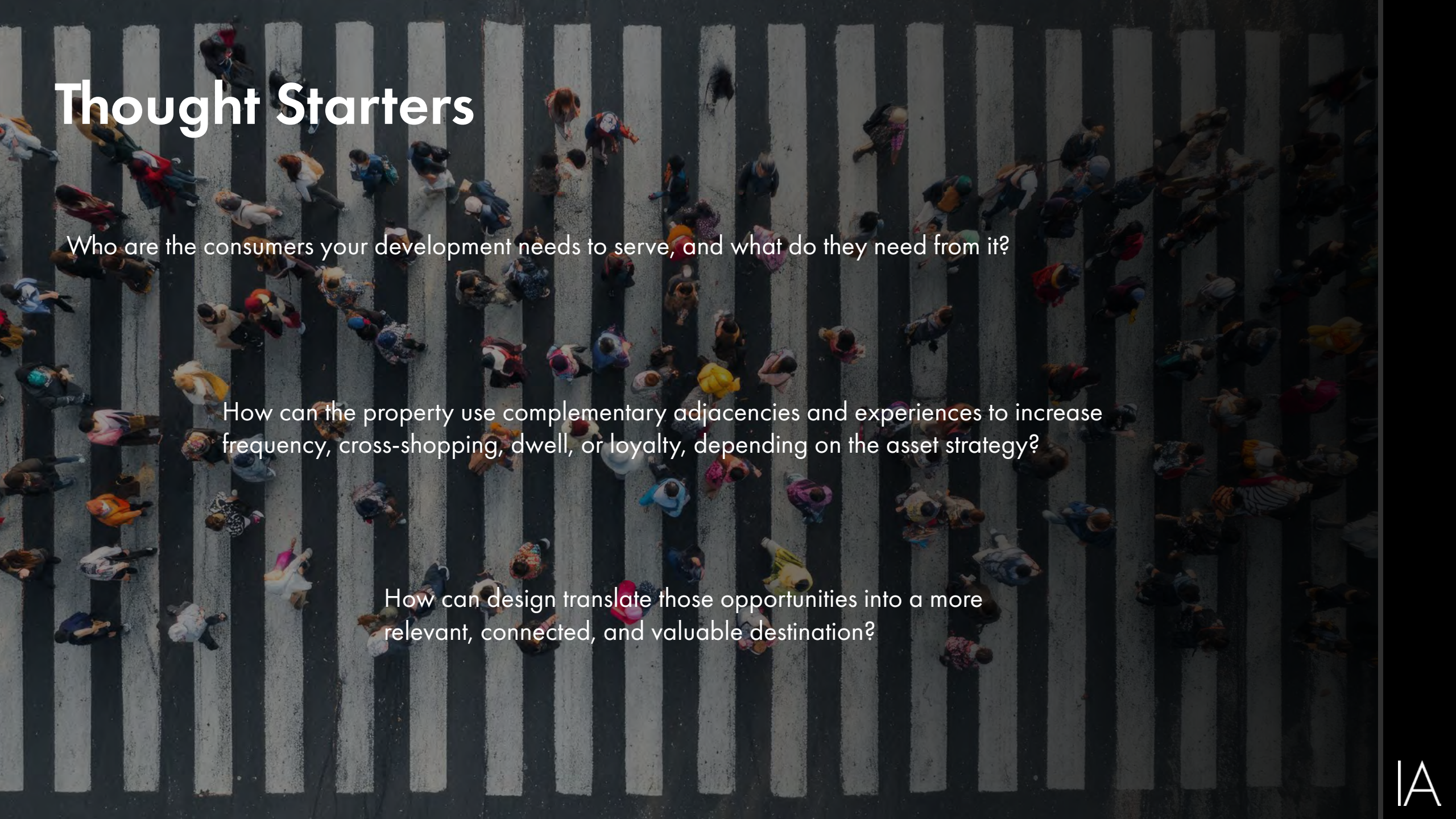


● Give Me Time Back

● Help Me Belong

● Surprise Me

● Restore Me

An aerial photograph of a large crowd of people crossing a zebra crossing. The white stripes of the crossing are prominent, and the people are seen from above, creating a pattern of movement across the frame. The image is dark, with the white stripes providing high contrast.

Thought Starters

Who are the consumers your development needs to serve, and what do they need from it?

How can the property use complementary adjacencies and experiences to increase frequency, cross-shopping, dwell, or loyalty, depending on the asset strategy?

How can design translate those opportunities into a more relevant, connected, and valuable destination?



Our Value

Find the Opportunity

Understand what people need, where a property is under-performing, what is missing in the market, and where the asset has permission to win.

Define the Experience Engine

Translate those needs into a distinctive proposition: the routines, occasions, adjacencies, tenant categories and experiences that create reasons to visit, stay, cross-shop and return.

Design for Performance

Turn the strategy into spatial and experience interventions that can increase frequency, dwell, cross-shopping, loyalty and ultimately asset relevance.



THE EXPERIENCE ENGINE

A New Playbook for Commercial Destinations

Book a Strategy Session

Bring us a site, challenge or repositioning opportunity, and we'll explore what your next experience engine could become.

[SCHEDULE HERE](#)

This link will expire on
November 15, 2026

IA