

# **RETAILING IN MY BACKYARD:**

## *CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS LOCATED WITHIN NEW URBANIST COMMUNITIES*

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### **Overview**

Land developers, urban planners, architects and governments have developed the concept that residents can “live, work, shop and play” within a walkable distance of their homes; this type of community design is known as New Urbanism. The purpose of this study was to explore the current state of retailing in New Urbanist communities, and to investigate factors influencing New Urbanist community residents’ perceptions of apparel shopping within their community and their patronage behaviors. A questionnaire was developed to measure attitudes of New Urbanist community residents toward shopping within their community and outside their community, and demographic information. Results indicated that retail establishments do exist in these New Urbanist communities, though they were limited in number and variety. The majority of residents participating in this study en-

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joyed shopping in their communities and ranked retail stores inside their communities higher than retailers outside their communities for the store attributes of locale, convenience, customer service, store layout, interior and exterior design and the use of space. Data from this study indicate that consumers want retail stores within their New Urbanist communities that are conveniently located to their homes, have a low amount of crowding, adequate walking space between merchandise, attractive merchandise display, knowledgeable and willing sales personnel and attractive interior and exterior design. They would like to see a higher level of quality and wider range of prices in apparel merchandise. There is a need for both discount and high-end retailers. National specialty stores were the most frequently requested store type.



## ■ Introduction

Debates have arisen in thousands of communities throughout the United States regarding the location of retail establishments in proximity to residential communities. Most Americans do not want regional shopping centers or even convenience stores located near their homes, and they typically shop in areas where the retail establishments are located away from residential communities. Consequently, many concerned citizens have led initiatives to stop retail development in areas close to their homes. “Not in My Backyard” (NIMBY) has been the battle cry in several community debates in response to proposed retail/commercial developments (Brickey, 2001; Materna, 2000). The separation of commercial/retail developments from residential areas has been the conventional way of designing communities in the U.S. since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Unfortunately, these designs have led to urban sprawl.

Recently, there has been a trend of lower consumer patronage at regional retail centers, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers (Pacelle, 1997). In addition, sales growth in the mall industry did not match the rate of inflation and industry experts suggest there are several reasons for this decline. Among them are: many malls look identical; stores often offer much the same merchandise; time-pressed consumers do not have time to go to the mall; and finally, fewer consumers state that they go to the mall because they enjoy the shopping experience (Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

In response to increased urban sprawl and lower consumer patron-

age at regional retail centers, land developers, urban planners, architects and governments are following the principles of smart growth and sustainable growth by designing communities where residential areas and commercial/retail areas are located together. The belief behind these concepts is that residents can “live, work, shop and play” within a walkable distance of their homes. This idea is known as New Urbanist (NU) design but is also known as neotraditional design, and traditional neighborhood developments (Steuteville, 2003). These communities are creating new shopping destinations for today’s consumer. One important question concerning these new shopping destinations is whether the residents of the communities will shop in these local stores. Outshopping is a concern, as it means that consumers travel to areas outside their communities to purchase consumer goods. The goal of these new communities is inshopping, meaning residents of an area purchase retail goods within their local area (Miller, Schofield-Tomschlin and Kim, 1998).

## ■ Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing NU community residents’ perceptions of shopping within the community and their patronage intentions. Shopping for apparel was targeted as the consumer product category in this study. The hypotheses for this study were:

- (1) There will be significant differences between NU community residents’ attitudes toward retail establishments located within their community and those establishments located outside their community in regard to store characteristics such as locale and convenience.
- (2) There will be significant differences between NU community residents’ attitudes toward retail establishments located within their community and those establishments located outside their community in regard to store and merchandise characteristics such as quality, price and customer service.
- (3) There will be significant differences between NU community residents’ attitudes toward retail establishments located within their community and those establishments located outside their community in regard to retail atmospherics such as store layout, interior and exterior design and the use of space.

The current study investigated consumers’ perceptions regarding the retail establishments of NU communities that have been and are being developed with the objective of bringing together retail and residential

areas. One study (Eppli and Tu, 1999) has been conducted investigating the economic impact of these NU communities but, to date, no studies exist that have examined consumers' perceptions of the retail establishments. This research seeks to fill the gap in the literature and to assist retailers in meeting the needs and expectations of residents living in communities combating urban sprawl. It also examines outshopping and inshopping behaviors by residents of these communities. This knowledge can aid planners of retail centers and retailers in achieving ultimate success in this NU shopping environment.

## ■ Review of Literature

### *New Urbanist (NU) Communities*

What exactly is NU? The concept of NU is not new: in fact, it is based on the early beginnings of this country. When the U.S. was founded, and as immigrants began to settle in the newly formed country, most citizens worked and shopped within walking distance of their residence (Wright, 1981). Small towns and neighborhoods were the norm, whether located within a larger urban space or in more rural locales. Most daily living activities were conducted on foot. However, after World War I, with the introduction of the automobile and mass transit, people were able to live farther away from their places of employment and commute to work and shop (Wright, 1981). Commuting to work and shop is one of the factors that have led to urban sprawl; NU is a response to this phenomenon (Steuteville, 2003).

Leading the NU movement are architects Andres Duany, designer of the NU community of Seaside, Florida, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. Duany and Plater-Zyberk, along with the organization Congress for New Urbanism, created a *Charter for New Urbanism* in the mid-1990s, which outlines the basic elements of NU design (Congress for New Urbanism, 2003). The *Charter for New Urbanism* is comprised of three categories: the region, the neighborhood and the block/street/building. For example, for the region, the *Charter for New Urbanism* mandates that residents should be able to live and work in the same area, which decreases the need for the automobile. For the neighborhood, the *Charter for New Urbanism* requires that all residents should live within a walkable distance from the town center, which in turn promotes community interaction, environmental protection and interdependence for daily living. Finally, for the block/street/building, the *Charter for New Urbanism* demands that all streets and thoroughfares of the community be pedestrian friendly. In addition, a chosen architectural theme for the entire community promotes

unity. Examples of NU communities are Seaside, Florida; Prospect, Colorado; Kentlands, Maryland; Celebration, Florida and Montgomery Village, New Jersey.

In this study, residents of NU communities were surveyed to determine the degree that consumers utilize and accept the retail establishments located within them. Past research has shown that consumers' attitudes toward store characteristics impact their choice of retail establishments and purchasing decisions (Wakefield and Baker, 1998). In addition, positive attitudes towards one's community have been found to enhance inshopping (Miller et al., 1998).

Empirical studies related to retail store attributes show that consumers are affected by store characteristics. Research studies discussed below reveal the impact of specific store attributes on consumer attitudes towards shopping, purchase intentions and patronage.

Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) examined consumer perceptions of retail store attributes and their effect on patronage decisions. It has been established that store attributes range in importance not only by store type, but also by customer characteristics (Bellenger, Robertson and Greenberg, 1977; Forsythe and Bailey, 1996). In response, this study sought to identify the store attributes affecting store preference. Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) found that situational conditions, the reasons consumers seek to buy products or services, and demographic characteristics are significant determinants of the importance of store attributes on store choice. Information was gathered from adult women about two department stores, four discount stores and seven specialty stores. Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) concluded that the type of clothing that the consumer preferred significantly affected store preference; appealing merchandise drew the consumer to believe that the store was a desirable place to shop. Exterior architecture was also a contributing factor of store preference. Finally, the level of education affects perceptions of store attributes: the higher the education level the more critical the attributes become (advertising, return policy, sales assistance and parking).

Leszczyc and Timmermans (2001) found that consumers choose a variety of stores when shopping and prefer shopping at specialty stores. Other attributes that consumers preferred were lower prices, lower parking costs, better assortments and reduced travel and checkout time. It has been found that consumer expectations differ according to type of store; expectations for customer service at discount stores were lower than expectations from specialty stores (Lee and Johnson, 1997; Shim and Kotsiopoulos, 1992).

Babin, Hardesty and Suter (2003) found that store attributes of color and lighting impact patronage intentions. In fashion-oriented stores, blue interiors elicited more favorable evaluations, more customer excitement

and higher purchase intentions. Soft lighting combined with an orange interior produced the highest level of perceived price fairness. Color, lighting and price were linked to patronage and purchase intentions.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Consumer behavior has been defined as the decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring and using goods and services (Loudon and Della Bitta, 1993). Consumer behavior models assume that when consumers make purchase decisions, they search for product information in order to compare similar products and make wise consumer decisions (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1993). One factor that impacts consumers' buying decisions is attitude. Attitude can be defined as a learned tendency to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1994). One of the most noted multi-attribute attitude models is the Fishbein Model (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004). Fishbein's (1967) Attitude Model proposes that an individual's attitude toward performing a behavior is a function of two components: the strength of beliefs held about an object and the individual's evaluation of those beliefs. A multi-attribute attitude scale is one way to measure consumers' attitudes (evaluation) about an object and their beliefs about several attributes of a store or merchandise product. Consumers prioritize attributes by the importance that they assign to each.

Mitchell and Olson (1981) used Fishbein's attitude scale to determine whether or not beliefs about product attributes were the only mediator of brand attitude. Advertisements were used to test for brand attitude. Mitchell and Olson concluded that product attribute beliefs had a mediating effect on actual brand attributes, but also the consumer's cognitive beliefs had an impact on behavioral intentions.

This study used the Fishbein (1967) model which posits that an individual's attitude toward performing a behavior, such as shopping, is a function of the components of (1) strength of beliefs held about an object and (2) the individual's evaluation of those beliefs. This attitude is derived from these two components. The customer mentally processes information about each store and forms an impression of the benefits the store provides. Each customer has a unique set of needs when shopping. The importance of a store's benefits differs for each person and may also differ for each shopping category. The multiattribute attitude model predicts consumers' evaluation of alternative shopping sites and the consumers' choice (Solomon, 2002).

$$A_{ijk} = \sum B_{ijk} I_{jk}$$

where:

A = attitude toward the shopping site.

B = belief regarding extent to which shopping site possesses attribute.

I = importance weight given attribute by the consumer.

i = attribute.

j = shopping site.

k = consumer.

## ■ Methodology

The methodology of this study was two-fold. First, an exploratory search was conducted to increase the understanding of NU communities in Florida. Using site visits, Internet information gathering, personal communication and promotional materials, data were collected that described the six communities selected for this study. Characteristics such as location, size, amenities, retail establishments and educational facilities were identified.

### *Questionnaire*

Secondly, this study employed a questionnaire that gained approval through the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board and was pilot tested. One section of the questionnaire solicited information regarding consumer interest in apparel shopping and purchase behaviors. The next section of the instrument gathered information related to apparel shopping within the selected NU community (inshopping); questions addressed convenience, stores, merchandise, store atmosphere and customer service. Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "very unlikely" with a score of one, to "very likely" with a score of seven. This was followed by a section containing the same questions related to apparel shopping outside the participant's NU community (outshopping). The next section of the questionnaire used the same factors and asked respondents how important they considered these attributes when deciding where they would shop for apparel, with the same seven-point Likert range. Fishbein's attitude scale was used to compute the mean scores for the shopping attributes, both inside and outside the NU community. The last section of the questionnaire gathered demographical information such as gender, age, race, marital status, income and educational level.

### *Procedure*

One thousand surveys were mailed out to six NU communities located within the State of Florida; 113 were returned as undeliverable. One

hundred fifty four valid surveys were returned for analysis, which yielded a 17.4% return rate.

### *Sample – NU Communities*

Each community surveyed in this study was located within the State of Florida and ranged in size and development status. They were all non-resort communities. The six communities were Abacoa, Jupiter; Celebration, Orlando; Haile Plantation, Gainesville; Miami Lakes, Miami Lakes; Mizner Park, Boca Raton; and Silver Oaks Village, Zephyr Hills.

Abacoa is located in Jupiter. Construction began on the NU community in 1999. On 2,100 acres, amenities of Abacoa include a residential university, three public schools, a baseball park, public golf courses, municipal recreation facility, town center, commercial centers and workplace campus. An example of an apparel store in Abacoa is Dress Me Up.

The second community selected was Celebration located in Osceola County. Construction began in July 1996 and was completed in fall 1997. Celebration's commercial district occupies 5,200,000 square feet out of a total 4,900 acres making this NU community the largest of the sample. This community not only consists largely of residential space, it also has numerous amenities. Celebration consists of a downtown area, office park, health care center, k-12 school, teaching academy, golf course, telecommuting infrastructure and two community development districts. The Lollipop Cottage, Soft as a Grape, Village Mercantile, Downeast, Orvis Shop and Hopskotch are examples of the apparel shops located within Celebration's business district.

Haile Plantation, located in the city of Gainesville, began construction in 1994. Covering 50 acres, Haile Plantation is occupied by approximately 50 businesses including retail establishments, office space and a meeting hall. One example of a retailer at Haile Plantation was Four Seasons Ladies' Apparel and Fine Gifts.

Miami Lakes of Miami Lakes covers a total of 150 acres and is still under construction. Offering the three main aspects of the NU community lifestyle, live, work and play, Miami Lakes has two apparel retail shops, MIA and Purple Rain.

On 28.7 acres, Mizner Park of Boca Raton began as a downtown redevelopment community in October 1989. Mizner Park's commercial district occupies 236,000 square feet and includes apparel retailers Ann Taylor Loft, Arlene Boutique, Banana Republic Women, Bolufe Leatherware, Chico's, CP Shades, Deborah James, Evelyn and Arthur, Fitigues, Jami's, JCC, Martier, Simply Natural, Suzi Saint Tropez and Tommy Bahama's. This community also offers dining and cultural activities, along with residential units.



Silver Oaks Village of Zephyr Hills is a fairly small NU community of about 40 acres. This community consists of residential, retail, civic areas including a village park and YMCA, a village center, recreation, open space, adult care living facility and office space.

## ■ Results

### *Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

Examining the demographic characteristics of the sample, as shown in Table 1, 71% were female and 29% were male. Addressing marital status, 76% (n=115) were married, and eight percent each (n=12) were single, divorced or widowed. One hundred thirty seven participants identified themselves as Caucasian, one as African American, 12 as Hispanic, and one as Asian. Household income ranged from less than \$25,000 to more than \$126,000. The majority (66%) had incomes over \$76,000. The income range cited most frequently was \$126,000 or greater. Respondents varied in age from 18 to over 70 years. The age ranges that were listed most frequently were 40–49 (n=37) and 50–59 (n=33).

Participants were asked if they owned or rented their house or apartment; 92% (n=138) owned their dwelling and seven percent (n=10) rented. The NU community home was the primary residence for 98% of the respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of children living at home; answers ranged from zero to more than four children. The mean number of children living in the NU home was 1.8. Addressing educational level, no respondents stated they had below a high school diploma, while 76% stated they held a bachelor's (n=46) or graduate/professional degree (n=69). Thirty two percent (n=48) stated they were retired, and 68% (n=100) of the respondents stated they were not.

### *Descriptive Apparel Shopping Behaviors*

Participants were asked several questions to determine their apparel shopping behavior and patterns, and the results are shown in Table 2. Respondents were asked approximately how much money they spent on apparel per month. Sixty-one percent (n=91) spend less than \$200 per month on apparel and 39% (n=45) spend \$200–\$499 per month. Another question asked what percentage of total apparel purchases were done within their NU community; 95% of the people surveyed stated that they did less than 25% of their apparel shopping within their communities, and four people stated they purchased 25–50% of their apparel within community retail stores. Respondents were asked how often they

**TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESIDENTS OF NU COMMUNITIES**

| Demographic Characteristic |                       | (n) | %    |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----|------|
| Gender                     | Male                  | 44  | 29   |
|                            | Female                | 106 | 71   |
| Marital Status             | Married               | 115 | 76   |
|                            | Single                | 12  | 8    |
|                            | Divorced              | 12  | 8    |
|                            | Widowed               | 12  | 8    |
| Race                       | Caucasian             | 137 | 91   |
|                            | African-American      | 1   | 0.5  |
|                            | Hispanic              | 12  | 8    |
|                            | Asian                 | 1   | 0.5  |
| Income Level               | Less than \$25,000    | 4   | 3    |
|                            | \$26,000–50,000       | 22  | 16   |
|                            | \$51,000–75,000       | 21  | 15   |
|                            | \$76,000–100,000      | 27  | 19.5 |
|                            | \$101,000–125,000     | 13  | 9.5  |
|                            | \$126,000 or above    | 52  | 37   |
| Age                        | 18–29 years           | 6   | 4    |
|                            | 30–39                 | 21  | 14   |
|                            | 40–49                 | 37  | 25   |
|                            | 50–59                 | 33  | 22   |
|                            | 60–69                 | 28  | 19   |
|                            | 70 or older           | 24  | 16   |
| Residential situation      | Own                   | 138 | 92   |
|                            | Rent                  | 10  | 7    |
| Number of Children         | 0                     | 85  | 57   |
|                            | 1                     | 23  | 15   |
|                            | 2                     | 31  | 21   |
|                            | 3                     | 9   | 6    |
|                            | 4                     | 2   | 1    |
| Education                  | High School Diploma   | 39  | 24   |
|                            | Bachelors Degree      | 46  | 30   |
|                            | Graduate/Professional | 69  | 46   |
| Employment status          | Employed              | 100 | 68   |
|                            | Retired               | 48  | 32   |

take shopping trips for apparel outside their community; a majority of the respondents stated twice a month or less, with 39% (n=58) stating once a month or less and 29% (n=42) stating twice a month. However, 28 people said they shopped outside for apparel once a week and 18 shopped outside two or more times per week.

When asked on a multiple response question regarding the reasons why NU residents shopped outside their NU community stores, the following reasons were stated: store selection (72%), variety of merchandise

(70%), price (57%), brand (41%), convenience (11%), preference for malls (14%) and customer service (4%). Over 17% of the respondents chose additional reasons for shopping outside their community such as no apparel stores (n=9), no discount stores and respondent works at the mall.

**TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE APPAREL SHOPPING BEHAVIOR OF NU COMMUNITY RESIDENTS**

| <b>Apparel Shopping Behavior</b>                   | <b>Description</b>        | <b>(n)</b> | <b>(%)</b> |
|--|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Money spent on apparel/month                       | Less than \$200 per month | 91         | 61         |
|  | \$200-\$499 per month     | 45         | 39         |
| Purchases made within NU community                 | <25%                      | 140        | 95         |
|  | 25-50%                    | 4          | 2.5        |
|  | 51-100%                   | 4          | 2.5        |
| How often participant shopped outside NU community | Once per month or less    | 58         | 39         |
|  | Twice per month           | 42         | 29         |
|  | Once per week             | 28         | 19         |
|  | Twice per week or more    | 18         | 12         |
| Reasons for shopping outside NU community*         | Store Selection           | 110        | 72         |
|  | Variety of Merchandise    | 107        | 70         |
|  | Price                     | 86         | 57         |
|  | Brand                     | 62         | 41         |
|  | Prefer Malls              | 14         | 14         |
|  | Convenience               | 17         | 11         |
|  | Customer Service          | 6          | 4          |
|  | Other                     | 11         | 7.2        |

\*Note. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Participants were asked where they do most of their apparel shopping. Fifty two percent replied in department stores, 33% in specialty stores and 15% in discount stores. Respondents were also asked to list stores that they would like to see in their town center, which were: specialty stores (n=146), department stores (n=28), food stores and/or restaurants (n=27), off-price retailers (n=12), discount stores (n=11) and hardware (n=7). Specific stores that were requested are shown in Table 3. Stores that were requested most frequently were: Target, Dillard's, Gap, Burdines, Banana Republic, Home Depot, Barnes & Noble, Borders and Talbots.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted on the three hypotheses using Two Tailed Paired Comparison T-Tests. The level of confidence for this study was set

**TABLE 3. ADDITIONAL RETAIL STORES CONSUMERS REQUESTED IN THEIR NU COMMUNITIES**


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|                               |                                |                        |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Department Stores (n = 28)    |                                |                        |
| Dillard's                     |                                |                        |
| Burdines                      |                                |                        |
| JC Penney                     |                                |                        |
| Macy's                        |                                |                        |
| Sears                         |                                |                        |
| Specialty Stores (n = 146)    |                                |                        |
| Apparel Stores                | Houseware/Hardware/Electronics | Other Specialty Stores |
| Ann Klein                     | Ace Hardware                   | Barnes & Noble         |
| Ann Taylor                    | Best Buy                       | Bass Pro Shops         |
| Ann Taylor Loft               | Bombay                         | Borders                |
| American Eagle                | The Container Store            | Cabela's               |
| Banana Republic               | Crate and Barrel               | Hallmark               |
| Belks                         | Home Depot                     | Orvis                  |
| Bloomingdale's                | Pottery Barn                   |                        |
| Brooks Brothers               | Williams-Sonoma                |                        |
| Charlotte Russe               |                                |                        |
| Chico's                       |                                |                        |
| Eddie Bauer                   |                                |                        |
| Express                       |                                |                        |
| Gap                           |                                |                        |
| J. Crew                       |                                |                        |
| J. Jill                       |                                |                        |
| Johnston & Murphy             |                                |                        |
| Nordstrom                     |                                |                        |
| Old Navy                      |                                |                        |
| Men's Warehouse               |                                |                        |
| New York & Co.                |                                |                        |
| Saks 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue   |                                |                        |
| Talbots                       |                                |                        |
| The Limited                   |                                |                        |
| Food and Restaurants (n = 27) |                                |                        |
| Kroger                        |                                |                        |
| Publix                        |                                |                        |
| Starbuck's                    |                                |                        |
| Applebee's                    |                                |                        |
| Off-Price Retailers (n = 12)  |                                |                        |
| Burlington Coat Factory       |                                |                        |
| Marshall's                    |                                |                        |
| Ross                          |                                |                        |
| TJ Maxx                       |                                |                        |
| Discount (n = 11)             |                                |                        |
| Target                        |                                |                        |
| Wal-Mart                      |                                |                        |

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at 95%, and the results are shown in Table 4. The first hypothesis was tested to determine if there were significant differences in NU community residents' attitudes toward retail establishments located within their community and those established outside their community in regard to store characteristics of locale and convenience. These characteristics were measured by the following variables: *ample parking*, *short walking distance between parking and stores* and *short travel time or distance between house and shopping center*.

The mean of residents' attitudes toward the store characteristic of *ample parking* within their community was 26.33 (S.D. 13.90), and the mean of residents' attitudes toward the store characteristic of *ample parking* outside their community was 29.11 (S.D. 11.97). The difference between the two means (2.97) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p=0.03$ ). This result suggests that NU residents had a slightly more negative attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to the amount of parking available.

The mean of residents' attitudes toward the store characteristic of *short walking distance between parking and stores* inside their community was 29.88 (S.D. 11.74) and the mean outside their community was 21.93 (S.D. 12.07). The difference between the two means (7.95) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ). This shows that NU residents had a more positive attitude regarding *short walking distance between parking and stores* inside their community compared to stores outside their community.

Finally, the mean of the residents' attitude on the variable of *short travel time or distance between house and shopping center* inside their community was 35.11 (S.D. 10.80) compared to 19.39 (S.D. 10.80) outside. The difference between the two means was 15.72 and was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ). This result indicates that NU community residents had a more positive attitude toward a *shorter travel time between their house and the shopping center* inside their community than outside. All three variables tested in the first hypothesis were statistically significant; therefore, hypothesis one was accepted.

The second hypothesis was tested to determine if there were significant differences in NU community residents' attitudes on retail establishments located within their community and those established outside their community in regard to store and merchandise characteristics of quality, price and customer service. These characteristics were measured by the following variables: *good quality apparel merchandise*, *variety of price ranges of apparel* and *sales personnel's willingness to assist you*.

The mean of residents' attitudes toward the store and merchandise characteristic of *quality* within their community was 32.49 (S.D. 11.54), and the mean of residents' attitudes for this variable outside their com-

munity was 35.06 (S.D. 9.83). The difference between the two means (2.57) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p=0.028$ ). This result suggests that NU residents had a slightly more negative attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to *quality*.

The mean of residents' attitudes on the store and merchandise characteristic of *variety of price ranges* inside their community was 15.36 (S.D. 8.9), and the mean of residents' attitudes toward this characteristic outside their community was 37.70 (S.D. 9.85). The difference between the two means (22.34) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ). Therefore, in regards to *variety of price ranges* NU residents had a more negative attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community.

Analysis of the store and merchandise characteristic of customer service was measured by the variable, *sales personnel are willing to assist you*. The mean of the residents' attitudes towards customer service within their community was 33.47 (S.D. 12.47) and the mean of the residents' attitudes toward customer service outside their community was 25.16 (S.D. 11.38). The difference between the two means (8.31) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ). This result indicates that NU residents had a more positive attitude toward *customer service personnel willingness to help* in stores located within their community than outside their community. Therefore, the second hypothesis for this study was accepted as all variables were found to be statistically significant.

The third hypothesis was tested to determine if there were significant differences in NU community residents' attitudes toward retail establishments located within their community and those established outside their community in regard to retail atmospherics such as store layout, interior and exterior design and the use of space. These characteristics were measured by the following variables respectively: *low amount of crowding in stores* (i.e., short check-out lines), *attractive interior decoration*, *attractive exterior decoration* and *ample walking space between merchandise*.

The mean of residents' attitudes toward *low amount of crowding* (store layout) within their community was 33.57 (S.D. 10.31), and the mean of residents' attitudes toward store layout outside their community was 19.49 (S.D. 10.05). The difference between the two means (14.08) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ); this result suggesting that NU residents had a more positive attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to store layout.

The analysis on the retail atmospheric characteristic of *attractive interior decoration* revealed that the mean of residents' attitudes toward stores inside their community was 26.79 (S.D. 11.28), and the mean of

residents' attitudes toward the *interior decoration* outside their community was 25.05 (S.D. 11.77). The difference between the two means (1.74) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p=0.04$ ). This marginally significant result suggests that NU residents had a slightly more positive attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to the attractiveness of the *interior decoration*.

The mean of the residents' attitudes on the retail atmospheric characteristic of attractiveness of the *exterior decoration* inside their community was 27.15 (S.D. 10.97) and the mean of the residents' attitudes toward *exterior decoration* outside their community was 20.99 (S.D. 11.23). The difference between the two means (6.16) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ), indicating that NU residents had a more positive attitude towards attractiveness of *exterior decoration* in stores located within their community than outside their community.

The analysis on the retail atmospheric characteristic of use of space measured by the variable of *ample walking space between merchandise* indicated that the mean of the residents' attitudes inside their community was 28.48 (S.D. 10.49) and the mean of the residents' attitudes towards *ample walking space between merchandise* outside their community was 21.82 (S.D. 9.47). The difference between the two means (6.66) was statistically significantly different from zero ( $p<0.0001$ ), indicating that NU residents had a more positive attitude toward the use of space and the amount of space available between merchandise in stores inside NU communities compared to those outside their community. Therefore, the third hypothesis was accepted due to the statistical significance of all three variables.

## ■ Discussion and Conclusions

The overall goal of this study was to benefit shopping center practitioners and retailers in their proposed and existing projects. First, an exploratory overview of the availability, types and variety of retail establishments in selected NU communities was conducted to provide an understanding of what currently exists today. Questions addressed were: Retail establishments are included in the plans for these communities, but do they truly exist? What types and number of retail establishments are located there? Are they successful in terms of consumer patronage? To answer some of these questions, retail stores, such as apparel and gift shops, do exist in the six NU communities that were studied. These retailers would be categorized as specialty stores, with the majority being locally owned, not national chain stores. Five of the six NU communities had a very limited selection of apparel specialty retailers. Some NU residents stated they did not purchase apparel inside their communities because it was not avail-

**TABLE 4. PAIRED-COMPARISON T-TEST BETWEEN NEW URBANIST COMMUNITY RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT CHARACTERISTICS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THEIR COMMUNITY**

| Retail Characteristics | Attitude Within Community |               | Attitude Outside Community |               | Mean Differences | p-Value |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------|
|                        | Mean (S.D.)               | Mean (S.D.)   | Mean (S.D.)                | Mean (S.D.)   |                  |         |
| Ample Parking          | 26.33 (13.90)             | 29.11 (11.97) | 29.11 (11.97)              | 29.11 (11.97) | 2.97             | 0.03    |
| Short Walking Distance | 29.88 (11.74)             | 21.93 (12.07) | 21.93 (12.07)              | 21.93 (12.07) | 7.95             | <0.0001 |
| Short Travel Time      | 35.11 (10.80)             | 19.39 (10.80) | 19.39 (10.80)              | 19.39 (10.80) | 15.72            | <0.0001 |
| Quality of Merchandise | 32.49 (11.54)             | 35.06 (9.83)  | 35.06 (9.83)               | 35.06 (9.83)  | 2.57             | 0.028   |
| Range of Prices        | 15.36 (8.90)              | 37.70 (9.85)  | 37.70 (9.85)               | 37.70 (9.85)  | 22.34            | <0.0001 |
| Personnel Assistance   | 33.47 (12.47)             | 25.16 (11.38) | 25.16 (11.38)              | 25.16 (11.38) | 8.31             | <0.0001 |
| Low Crowding           | 33.57 (10.31)             | 19.49 (10.05) | 19.49 (10.05)              | 19.49 (10.05) | 14.08            | <0.0001 |
| Interior Decoration    | 26.79 (11.28)             | 25.05 (11.77) | 25.05 (11.77)              | 25.05 (11.77) | 1.74             | 0.04    |
| Exterior Decoration    | 27.15 (10.97)             | 20.99 (11.23) | 20.99 (11.23)              | 20.99 (11.23) | 6.16             | <0.0001 |
| Use of Space           | 28.48 (10.49)             | 21.82 (9.47)  | 21.82 (9.47)               | 21.82 (9.47)  | 6.66             | <0.0001 |



able and were interested in more apparel retailers in their town center. The information will aid shopping center practitioners and investors by providing an understanding of what is currently available and what is needed in NU communities in the State of Florida.

The primary goal of this study was to address differences in NU community residents' perceptions and attitudes toward retail establishments located within their neighborhood in comparison to those located outside. Three hypotheses were tested to address this question, and all three were accepted. In regard to store characteristics of locale and convenience, NU residents had a more positive attitude regarding *short walking distance between parking and stores* inside their community than outside their community. Consequently, they felt that parking was limited inside their communities in town centers, as they scored *ample parking* slightly higher outside their communities, rather than inside the NU communities. Residents had a more positive attitude toward *shorter travel time between their house and the shopping center* inside their community versus outside. This finding supports the NU principle that residents should be within walking distance of the town center and the stores should be located in close proximity, which makes the amenities of the community convenient and reduces the need for the automobile.

NU residents had a more negative attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to *quality* and *price*. Perhaps they felt the *quality* of merchandise was not high enough, as some of the consumers sampled requested high-end specialty stores as ones they desired in their NU communities, though this result was marginally significant. Consumers' mean score was higher for the variable *range of prices* for stores outside their NU communities versus those stores within their communities. Discount stores were not present in these communities, so perhaps some residents wanted the lower prices offered in these retail formats. Consumers had a more positive attitude toward *customer service personnel's willingness to help* in stores located within their community versus those outside; they requested knowledgeable sales personnel. Most of the stores found in these NU communities were specialty stores, and one of the strengths of the specialty store is a high level of service (Levy and Weitz, 2004). Consumer behavior measured by attitudes in this study supported this belief.

The final hypothesis examined retail atmospherics: store layout, interior and exterior design and the use of space. NU residents had a more positive attitude toward shopping inside their community than outside their community in regard to *store layout*, *interior design*, *exterior design* and *amount of space available between merchandise displays*. Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) also found exterior design affected store preference. Many of the residents indicated that they desired more specialty type

stores in their NU communities, which concurred with Leszczyc and Timmerman's (2001) findings that consumers preferred shopping at specialty stores. NU residents had a positive attitude regarding *store layout* and *amount of space available between merchandise displays*. Implications for retailers would be to provide aesthetically pleasing interior design through generous aisle space, attractive merchandise displays and appealing store layouts. In addition, the respondents had more positive feelings regarding the *exterior design*. Shopping center practitioners and commercial/retail establishments may utilize this information. Retail stores are accepted and patronized by the residents, as there were many positive consumer attitudes toward NU community retail outlets; improvements may be directed to areas where negative attitudes were indicated by the residents.

One essential component of a successful retail center is the consumer. Research on the likes and dislikes of consumers is instrumental in determining which shopping formats people enjoy and in which retail formats they will spend their dollars. Research has shown that the community attachment concept of sentiment significantly influenced the consumer's tendency to purchase apparel and home furnishings retail products in the local area (Miller et al., 1998). This study examined consumer attitudes to see if they enjoy shopping in NU communities. Do they browse or purchase items? Do they like to shop close to home or travel? Which retail formats do they enjoy? Are familiar stores or new specialty stores preferred? Consumers did enjoy shopping in NU communities, as evidenced by their positive attitudes about NU retailers. Data were gathered on apparel purchases within the NU community retail establishments; 95% of the residents purchased less than 25% of their apparel within their communities. Perhaps this is due to a limited number of retail establishments.

According to the T-Test analysis of the three hypotheses in this study, price and quality of merchandise may be a limiting factor in residents' purchasing more apparel in these specialty stores; discount or off-price retailers could address the need for lower prices; however, many consumers stated a desire for high-end specialty stores, so there is a need for a variance in price levels of merchandise. The residents definitely preferred shopping close to home, as the mean for attitude within was almost twice the mean for shopping outside the community; the magnitude of this difference indicates that proximity to home is a viable strength.

Examining which retail formats residents preferred for apparel shopping showed that department stores (52%) were the type of store chosen most often; however, specialty stores were chosen by 33% of the respondents. In response to a question asking residents to indicate which stores they wanted in their communities, they overwhelmingly stated more spe-

cialty stores, as there were 146 requests for nationally known specialty stores. Consumers were concerned about the price in their NU retail stores, but only 15% stated they did most of their apparel shopping in discount stores. The discount store mentioned most often as desired was Target, a discounter that has carved out a niche with merchandising that emphasizes fashion and quality. Target has discovered that Americans who are in a higher economic level than the average discount store shopper will purchase apparel from Target, as they have become known for well designed, high quality merchandise (Levy and Weitz, 2004). The majority of respondents in this survey were in a higher income bracket, which may account for the numerous requests for this type of retailer.

Finally, the goal was to determine if residents accept and utilize these retail establishments, with results being used to gain a better understanding of the potential success of commercial/retail centers in NU communities. In summary, data from this study indicate that consumers want retail stores within their NU communities that are conveniently located to their homes, have a low amount of crowding, adequate walking space between merchandise, attractive merchandise display, knowledgeable and willing sales personnel and attractive interior and exterior design. They would like to see a higher level of quality and wider range of prices in apparel merchandise. There is a need for both discount and high-end retailers. National specialty stores were the most frequently requested store type by NU residents. These results have strong implications for both retailers and community planners. It would be advantageous for these groups to use this research when developing existing and future NU communities by incorporating retail establishments that NU community residents want and will patronize regularly. Potentially, this will be a successful investment strategy.

This research was undertaken to address the comment by Lane Kendig, well-known community planner, who has suggested that research was needed to convince land developers, lenders, realtors and investors that NU communities are a viable investment (Bookout, 1992). This research sought to fill that void. The ultimate goal was to expand shopping center research by exploring retailing in NU communities and consumer perceptions of them, so that developers and investors can create successful mixed-use communities in which residents can truly “live, work, shop and play.”

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