



MUSTEL GROUP
MARKET RESEARCH

PEOPLE ARE THINKING- Vancouver Lifestyles Magazine November 2007

Vancouver Shopping Streets Booming

It began with Robson Street, but now many of Vancouver's street shopping areas are booming. The 'Malling of America' throughout the 60's and 70's turned many of Vancouver's previously thriving shopping areas into ghost towns. The high-priced rent within these malls was crippling for the small businesses in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, they are making a comeback returning stronger and more vibrant than ever. A recent Mustel Group survey showed that over half of all shopping visits in Metro Vancouver were made to street shopping areas and two-thirds of all shopping trips in the City of Vancouver. This is a trend evident not just in Vancouver but across Canada, even in the less temperate climates.

What is driving this consumer trend? A lot of different factors, starting with...

People's desire for a more unique and enjoyable shopping experience. With the growth of no frills, no service big box shopping, many consumers are left feeling empty. Where is the adventure, excitement and personal touch of friendly staff?

Consumers are also starved for time and patience with people working longer hours and in many families both partners often work. It is not as convenient to have 50 stores in a mall when you are only interested in one or two. The result: 'hit and shop' consumers- individuals who opt for the more expedient approach of pulling up in front of the store, running in, shopping and moving on.

Moreover, with the increase in traffic congestion and gas prices, people have less desire to get into their cars and drive. A recent survey showed that 84% are shopping more locally for these reasons.

Also with the growth of sustainable communities encouraging people to walk, in addition to densification of our neighbourhoods with more mixed use developments (i.e., combined retail and housing), gives people more shopping options than ever right at their doorstep.

Many local areas now offer the same retail categories and major retailers only previously found in shopping malls (i.e., clothing on South Granville, 4th Avenue and Kerrisdale), which has helped propel local independents such as Lululemon, Mantique and Aritzia from single location to multi-chain stores.

Malls are also responding to this trend with the development of replicas such as The Village at Park Royal and Newport Village in Port Moody in an effort to recreate the charm and feel of street front stores.

Retail is an ever-evolving industry, constantly seeking to tempt consumers with new experiences and the latest trends. Can the novelty of street shopping remain strong or will the move of major retailers to the streets affect the original appeal....you be the judge!