

# BILD: Urban growth is changing the retail experience

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As we recover from the year's busiest shopping season, it's a good time to look at how the retail experience is changing and how retail space is evolving.

How and where we shop is changing, partly because our region is changing and partly due to online shopping. Communities are becoming more compact, land prices are rising and many municipalities are focusing on their urban growth centres.

As we grow up and not out, the industry is incorporating retail shops and amenities into new buildings as part of creating complete communities.

As more people shop online, retailers understand that consumers still want a tactile experience in bricks-and-mortar stores.

According to recent research by the National Retail Federation consumers spend more when they shop there.

With that in mind, many retailers are now adapting their stores to fit into an urban context, sometimes on the second or even third floor of buildings and often at the base of residential condominiums.

More and more, retail developers are working with residential developers to respond to the changing marketplace and mandated intensification across the GTA.

They combine their expertise and construct functional mixed-use projects that feature amenities that benefit those in the building and people living and working in the surrounding neighbourhood.

The mixed-use building at the corner of Queen Street West and Portland Street in Toronto is an example of this.

BILD member and retail developer RioCan partnered with fellow member Tribute Communities to incorporate three levels of retail space into the podium of a residential building including a 45,000-square-foot grocery store on the second floor and two major retail outlets at the base.

Another example is The Madison Condos on Eglinton Avenue east of Yonge Street currently under construction by BILD member Madison Homes. The building will feature two levels of retail stores and a second-floor grocery store.

The increase in mixed-use development and intensification in the GTA has some retail developers like RioCan looking at their existing properties such as shopping centres for opportunities to intensify them by adding residential buildings.

RioCan owns more than 300 properties in Canada and has already initiated plans to intensify 46 of its centres across the country.

In response to the rise of online shopping and in an effort to maximize their existing sites, another BILD member and shopping centre developer SmartREIT has created a new service called Penguin Pick-up.

Partnering with its retail tenants and other businesses that ship to Canada, the company is building pickup points in their shopping centres across the GTA. The 24-hour free pickup is available in Toronto, Vaughan, Oakville and Richmond Hill.

— *Bryan Tuckey is President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and can be found on Twitter ([twitter.com/bildgta](https://twitter.com/bildgta)), Facebook ([facebook.com/bildgta](https://facebook.com/bildgta)) and BILD's official online blog ([bildblogs.ca](http://bildblogs.ca)).*



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