

# One Of The Best Experiments In Urban Design? This Las Vegas Shopping Mall

THE LINQ, A NEW OUTDOOR SHOPPING DISTRICT IN VEGAS, IS BETTING ON THE PROFITABILITY OF HUMAN-SCALE URBAN DESIGN.

The most walkable place in Las Vegas may be a shopping mall. The LINQ, a new outdoor shopping and entertainment district located on the site of a former service alleyway and parking garage between the Flamingo Hotel and The Quad Resort, is specifically designed to appeal to pedestrians--a somewhat neglected contingent in Vegas.

Though downtown Las Vegas has gotten a recent spur in urbanist idealism in the form of Zappos founder Tony Hsieh's Downtown Project, a \$350 million endeavor to turn the neighborhood into a vibrant, walkable innovation district only a few miles away, Las Vegas Boulevard is, in many ways, a poster child for anti-pedestrian urban design. The major thoroughfare is wide, and traffic is busy. The resorts are gargantuan and the distances between their set-back entrances vast--totally out-of-scale with humans. It's not like people don't walk there--a 2012 county study found "unacceptable" levels of pedestrian congestion on the sidewalks along the Strip--but there are few places truly designed to encourage it.

David M. Schwartz, the Washington, D.C.-based architect who designed the LINQ, says he's "out to prove that Las Vegas can be a pedestrian-oriented

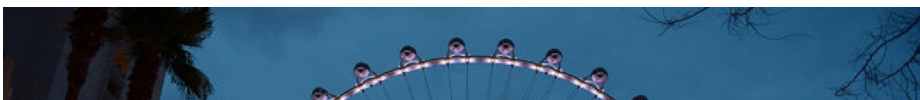




Photo by Denise Truscello

place."

"THE BUILDINGS ARE  
INTENTIONALLY  
MODEST--JUST ONE OR  
TWO STORIES, MADE OF  
BRICK AND STONE."

"It feels comfortable to walk in,"  
Codiga says. "You don't feel you're  
being overwhelmed by some kind  
of Disney version of what life should  
be like." The idea is, the more  
comfortable people feel, the longer  
they'll stay. Walking down a street  
doesn't feel like as big of a decision

as going into a giant casino, so people may be more  
likely just to pop in. "I think people prefer a little less  
hard commitment," Codiga says, and the LINQ creates  
an environment that feels like you could stop by and  
hang out, grab a cup of coffee and move on...but maybe  
you'll stick around and shop, or maybe you'll wander  
into one of the casinos next door. Any of those choices  
is a winning proposition for Caesars.

And if the LINQ, which opened in late February, can  
prove that pedestrian-oriented design is good for  
business, more of Vegas may follow suit.

[Image: Courtesy David M. Schwartz Architects]



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I know that as a Las Vegas local I'm not supposed to say this, but I will: I LOVE The LINQ and I prefer it over downtown Vegas. There. I said it.



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