

# DEVELOPMENT DIGEST

FROM RENDERING TO GRAND OPENING

## Peaceful, easy feeling

El Segundo's The Works stages a remake starring James Franco  
By Ben Johnson

**R**etail redevelopment need not be done on any self-consciously grand scale to make an impact on the locality. The Works, a 190,000-square-foot retail center in El Segundo, Calif., may serve as case in point.

In 2012 Federal Realty Investment Trust acquired the 400,000-square-foot Plaza El Segundo, an upscale retail destination catering to the South Bay beach communities — and which happens to comprise both The Works and a 115,000-square-foot center next door called The Point.

"We had been looking at the Works for a while, and this particular part of the project is a little bit remote from the nexus of the center," said Stuart

MacDonald, Federal Realty's vice president of regional development. "We felt like it needed its own unique identity." Last December Federal Realty completed its \$4 million redevelopment of the 12-year-old Works — including the installation of energy-efficient lighting, the introduction of sustainable vegetation and some 20 varieties of shade trees, a water feature, a trellis with plants growing on it and some fresh gathering spaces. "We really got a lot of bang for our buck," MacDonald said.

In redeveloping the Works, Federal Realty drew on some things it had done with its remake of the Point, in 2015, MacDonald says. Early in

the planning for the two centers, the firm had embraced a decidedly uncommon aesthetic vision: each was to be suggestive of the public personae and acting style of a Hollywood film star — namely, George Clooney and James Franco. The Point, for its part, was to be sophisticated and polished in its presentation, more akin to the perceived personality of Clooney. The Works, on the other hand, was designed to evoke a "laid-back" feel, in keeping with Franco's film portrayals.

Lifescapes International, a Newport Beach, Calif.-based landscape architecture firm, had transformed the Point's common areas, and Federal Realty invited the firm back to do the same with the Works.

"As I watched how the space was being used [at the Works], I noticed people were trying to find places to sit in the strangest areas, [places] that were super-exposed and not comfortable," said Mike Meyers, a Lifescapes senior principal and project director. "We took our knowledge from the Point and [from] how we brought people together in multiple ways [to] provide different experiences for people in one space. We tried to translate that over into the Works, which is a different scale, but we still use the same principles."

The designers sought to create comfortable, gardenlike settings at the Works, in which visitors, younger and older, would be happy to linger and relax. Arbutus, camphor and sycamore trees offer lots of shade, and a central 'S'-shaped trellis anchors the main plaza. Beanbag chairs and turf lawns help boost the sense of ease and tranquility for parents and guardians



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sitting and watching their children in the play area.

“In the grand scheme of things, we saw it was a little bit grittier, a little less polished than the Point,” said Meyers. “That is the vibe we were hoping to instill in the space by using materials and some unique forms to have it be a little bit different, and maybe capture that younger clientele for a longer period.”

An art installation provides an area where visitors can take Instagram photos, to help boost the center’s social-media presence. “We really try to create these moments and these experiences within all of our centers, and it is a really cool thing, especially for the Millennials,” said Collette Navarrette, Federal Realty’s director



of West Coast marketing. “Definitely, we feel like the lease-up and the excitement for the property has increased since the rebranding and the renovation.

Perhaps other shopping center owners will be able to draw some inspiration from the Works for themselves, Meyers suggests.

“I think making comfortable spaces for people to go and creating an experience is rule number one,” he said. “You need to make it a place where people want to be, and the more time they hang around, the more likely they are to shop.” ■

## TIMELINE

- 2006** Local developer Mar Ventures builds Plaza El Segundo
- 2012** Federal Realty buys the property, which includes The Point and The Works
- 2015** The Point gets renovated
- May 2018** Renovation begins on The Works
- August 2018** Barry’s Bootcamp opens
- December 2018** The Works’ renovation is completed
- January 2019** Duff’s Cakemix signs on