

# When a shopping mall becomes a suburban Main St.

Easton Town Center near Columbus, Ohio, is styled after a small-town Main Street. But does it function as one for visitors?

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Lauren Klingel, 8, of Columbus, Ohio, left, and her mother Kerri Klingel, take a break from shopping on a bench in front of the central park fountain at the Easton Town Center. The center, opened in 1999, is a retail development with more than 180 retailers modeled after a traditional American main street. "Easton always reminds me of a small town," Kerri Klingel said. "It's a really nice way to spend the day."

— Noah Addis

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Visitors participate in a fitness yoga class at Easton Town Center in Columbus, Ohio. As consumers shift to online shopping, malls in the U.S. are trying to become more focused on offering consumers an experience or convenience that can't be duplicated online.

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Easton Station, which is home to a movie theater, several restaurants, a comedy club and other retailers, was designed to resemble a train station that harkens to another era. The design concept of the mall is "an open-air, pedestrian-friendly setting reminiscent of small town USA" according to the center's website.

— Noah Addis

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Left to right: Jeremy Bystrek of Columbus waits for the start of an outdoor movie with daughters Charlotte, 3, and Cora, 7, and wife Jaime at Easton Town Center. "People have gone away from traditional downtown Main streets", says Jeremy Bystrek, "I think this is today's Main Street."

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Spectators watch an outdoor movie at the Town Square at Easton Town Center. Free outdoor movie screenings are held weekly during the summer; that night "An American Girl: Isabelle Dances Into the Spotlight" was showing.

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According to the center's website, it attracts 21 million visitors per year. Although many people think the physical store is dying, that isn't the case. According to AT Kearney, a consulting firm, 95 percent of all retail sales are captured by retailers with a brick-and-mortar presence.

— Noah Addis

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Visitors dressed in superhero costumes walk through the mall during Superhero Day. The day featured face painting and entertainers in superhero costumes. A planned parade was canceled due to thunderstorms. High-end malls are thriving, but second- and third-tier malls are suffering a decrease in foot traffic and store closings.

— Noah Addis

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Michael Turoff of Bexley, Ohio, smokes a cigar while talking with friends at Tinder Box, a cigar store at Easton Town Center. According to Turoff, "This is kind of a lifestyle, there is just about everything that you need. You have all your shopping, you have all your entertainment, really everything within walking distance. You really can't beat it. Easton is definitely main street to me, it's really the place I come to relax, enjoy, have dinner, it's really everything that I need in a city center I suppose."

— Noah Addis

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