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Mariners Row, City Center's new retail district, utilizes all of these approaches to create a retail setting that encourages strolling, people-watching and, of course, shopping. Like City Center's other districts, Mariners Row has a dedicated parking structure, which sits along Thimble Shoals Boulevard, one of the City Center's primary perimeter arteries. Its placement creates ease of access for visitors and workers, while reducing City Center's interior traffic. Further enhancing the already pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, the garage itself has been incorporated into the Mariners Row streetscape, with first-floor retail shops leading out to the district's main street.

The parking structure's interior is also designed to meet the particular needs of its retail community. Wide lanes and generous parking spaces ease navigation through the garage. Bold directional signage gives visitors clear and easily-remembered indication of their location. "When designing an office complex, you're dealing with a group who will be very familiar with its surroundings," says CMSS Founding Principal and CEO Burrell Saunders. "But individual shoppers don't come into the same garage every day of the week, so we create a design to facilitate their needs."

Perhaps the parking structure's most important function, aside from the obvious, is that of a gateway. Once shoppers leave their cars, design features such as the facility's vibrant environmental graphics and glass-walled elevator tower offer visitors a taste of the variety of experiences that awaits them.

Reasons to Walk Parking Strategies For Urban Retail

For most modern retail developments, success hinges on the availability of adequate parking. "Adequate," however, has often been limited to immediately adjacent, expansive asphalt lots or garages. Consumers, it was thought, preferred the shortest possible journey from their cars to their destination – the less walking required the better.

While it is true that few people enjoy crossing large, often dangerous parking lots, the rise of urban centers has shown that people are much more than willing to walk when the journey offered is a pleasant, safe, and engaging one.

City Center at Oyster Point, a CMSS designed urban center located on the Virginia Peninsula, offers just such a journey. Detailed streetscapes and landscaped public spaces invite visitors to stroll and take in their surroundings.

Incorporating sufficient convenient parking into a safe but engaging retail experience often requires a more organized approach than would typical big box or mall retail. The placement and design of parking structures, on-street parking, directional signage, and the aesthetic transitions between parking and retail destinations are all important elements of an overall parking strategy.



Extensive wayfinding signage has also been incorporated in the Mariners Row parking structure to help visitors know where they are and how to return there later.

