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Outlets Pave The Way with Good Intentions

Giving back – sometimes called Corporate Social Responsibility – is a long-standing tradition in the outlet sector.

By Patience Kramer
Contributing Writer

Corporate social responsibility has great buzz these days, but outlet centers were doing their part long before the concept acquired such cache. When outlet centers developed giving-back programs, now dubbed “socially responsible,” those initiatives evolved from both the corporate level and from individual outlet center employees. Regardless of their origins, these programs were driven by the determination to do good by addressing real needs.

For example, in the late 1990s, a group of Simon Group employees noticed children hanging out at the mall during hours when they should have been in school. Concerned, these employees got to work and created the Simon Youth Foundation (SYF), a nonprofit launched in 1998 and dedicated to preventing at-risk children from becoming school drop-outs. Today, the Foundation supports 23 Simon Youth Academies in 13 states, including one at Edinburgh (Ind.) Premium Outlets.

The academies are alternative schools for at-risk students who, for a variety of reasons, ranging from health problems to family issues, are unable to attend traditional high schools. The academies post a brag-worthy 90 percent graduation rate; more than 10,000 youths have graduated from the schools.

In addition, SYF funds support Simon Youth Scholarships, which have been awarded to more than 3,300 students at the academies and other high schools. Since their inception, more than \$10 million in scholarships have been awarded. The scholarships are both one-time and renewable and go to students in communities where Premium Outlet Centers, The Mills and Simon Malls are located.

Supporting education initiatives ranks high with Tanger Factory Outlet Centers, as well. The developer has raised money to support children's education for decades. The efforts evolved into Tanger Bucks for Kids in 2005 and the money raised has been for purchasing books, computers and sports and playground equipment, as well as funding reading programs and field trips, among other things.

Recently, Tanger took a more targeted approach and launched TangerKIDS, a program that awards grants to schools in communities served by the centers. Local schools submit online requests for grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500. The grants fund special projects, programs and equipment, sometimes for specific studies, such as music or fine arts. The grants are open to schools from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The grant funding comes from a portion of the sale of coupon books and Tanger contributions.

“We raised about \$750,000 just from the sale of coupon books,” says Carrie Geldner, SVP and chief marketing officer for Tanger Outlet Centers.

Focus: Women’s health

Women’s health initiatives, especially breast cancer research, are another area targeted by the outlet industry. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and outlet centers play an active role in bringing the issue to the public’s attention. In 1994 Tanger launched its PinkSTYLE Campaign, in which shoppers purchase \$1 Pink Cards, which are good for a 25 percent discount on a single item at participating stores in Tanger Outlet Centers.

Pink Card sales totaled \$819,301 in 2012. Since its inception, the campaign has raised more than \$11 million. Geldner notes that 100 percent of the sale of the Pink Cards goes to the campaign. The money is donated locally through the Stanley K. Tanger Breast Cancer Fund to more than 35 different breast cancer organizations across the country and to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, which funds research focused on prevention and cures.

In addition to the Pink Cards sales, which will be available in a digital version this year, Tanger holds an annual 5K fundraiser and other activities, including early-detection demonstrations, prevention kiosks and fashion events. During October Simon’s Premium Outlets holds a month-long fundraising campaign, Premium Outlets Pink Event, that supports Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Shoppers who donate \$10 or more at the center receive a card that has 25 percent off a single item from participating merchants.

Michele Rothstein, SVP-marketing for Simon Property Group’s Premium Outlets, says about 75 percent of the developer’s outlet tenants participate in the campaign. Several Simon centers also host the American Cancer Society’s Making Strides Walks. The walks are held at various times in different Simon centers during the year. The largest of these walks, Rothstein says, is at Woodbury Common Premium Outlets in Central Valley, N.Y., where more than \$725,000 was raised in 2012.

Simon is also a founding partner of GivingTuesday, often written as #GivingTuesday to give it a Twitter boost. It is a national day of giving to charitable organizations designed to follow Thanksgiving Day weekend. The first GivingTuesday was Nov. 27, 2012, in partnership with 92Y (92nd Street Y in New York City) and the United Nations Foundation. The event brings together retailers, charities, online organizations, community centers, individuals and families. On its inaugural day last year, shoppers at all Simon properties could make donations for the Simon Youth Foundation and the American Red Cross at each center's guest-services desk.

Focus: Green and clean

Environmental concerns are also taken seriously by outlet developers, such as Pyramid Management Group. The Syracuse-based developer widely touts its green initiatives, and the 1.3 million-sf expansion of Destiny USA achieved LEED Gold certification in February 2012. In addition to meeting the stringent building specifications for that certification, the Pyramid undertook a wide range of environment-friendly initiatives, including:

- *Using biodiesel fuel during construction
- Installing a heat-reflective roof
- *Designing an advanced storm water collection system
- *Installing multiple electric car charging stations (drivers of electric cars get prime parking spots)
- *Adding 200 bike racks on the property
- *Composting, recycling, the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, and a wind power demonstration project are all part of the center's daily operations.

Other centers have taken up the green mantle as well. Simon has installed 1,300 solar panels at Jersey Shore Premium Outlets to generate 335,000 kilowatts, just one example of the developer's green agenda. Simon focuses on energy efficiency as a core sustainability strategy, Rothstein says. Through energy conservation practices, energy efficiency projects and continuous monitoring and reporting, Simon has reduced energy consumption at comparable properties every year since 2003, she says, which adds up to a 26 percent reduction in electricity usage across the comparable portfolio.

“Simon's documented reduction in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from our energy management efforts is equivalent to 210,000 metric tons carbon dioxide,” she says.

Focus: Building Loyalty

Everyone intuitively feels that despite the considerable time and effort that goes into any kind of giving-back initiative, these undertakings pay for themselves in many ways, and there is some evidence that they do.

When Nielsen conducted its Global Corporate Citizenship Survey in 2011, it asked respondents if they would be willing to pay more for products and services from companies that gave back to society. Nearly half of the 28,000 respondents said “yes.” As for causes, environmental sustainability topped out with 66 percent of respondents assigning it top priority, followed by education (56 percent) and elimination of poverty and hunger (53 percent).

A 2010 study, the Edelman GoodPurpose global study, surveyed 7,259 adults from around the world. It found that 72 percent of Americans reported they were “more likely to give their business to a company that has fair prices and supports good causes than to a company that provides deep discounts but does not contribute to good causes.”

October, 2012

Expansion Planned by Vanderbilt Equities for Manchester Center

Vanderbilt Equities Corp., which opened Manchester Designer Outlets in 1985 as one of the nation’s first outlet centers, is planning an expansion of the 27-year-old Vermont center. At 30,000-sf, the expansion is in good proportion to the 150,000-sf center, and proof, says the developer, that independents can thrive in this sector.

“We’re one of the small guys, but we’re true pioneers,” says Lana Hauben, who, along with her husband Ben, developed MDO (daughter Alissa Hauben Appel handles leasing while her mother now concentrates on marketing).

Ben’s plan was to develop a center that was woven into the fabric of the town, with individual buildings especially suited to high-quality tenants. Through the years, the center has been the site of the first outlet store for many brands, including Armani, Baccarat, Marimekko and Tse Cashmere. And a few years ago, MDO became one of the first green outlet centers in the U.S., employing geothermal HVAC, low-VOC paints and high-efficiency lighting.

“We have a lot going for us – for instance, we’re one of the top tourist attractions in New England – but we have a lot of competition, too,” Lana Hauben said. “We work our hearts out for our tenants. We’re devoted to this business.”

Tenants in the boutique center include Ann Taylor, BCBG Max Azria, Brooks Brothers, Chico's, Coach, Crabtree & Evelyn, Armani Outlet, Cosmetics Company Store, J. Crew, Kate Spade, Kenneth Cole, Marimekko, Michael Kors, Polo Ralph Lauren, Theory, TSE Factory Store, Tumi and Yves Delorme. Loft Outlet is scheduled to open a 6,000 sf unit soon.

The expansion will be constructed next to the complex with Kate Spade and Theory, across from Michael Kors, Coach and Tse.

September, 2012

Nike's Sports Ethos

With athletics imbuing everything it does, Nike takes its outlet store design up a notch with a new concept.

By Linda Humphers

Editor in Chief/Director

As one of the world's leaders in athletic apparel and footwear, Nike has also been one of the outlet industry's vanguard retailers since joining the sector in 1985. Recently the 150-unit Nike Factory Store chain has begun stepping forward in the outlet sector with the introduction of a new store concept aimed at giving the consumer a one-of-a-kind retail experience.

The new design, steeped in athleticism and sport, aims to improve the consumer journey while continuing to exceed consumer expectations. Simple and consumer-centric, the atmosphere exudes sport. With updated dressing rooms, easier-to-read signage and an industrial, state-of-the-art production quality, Nike Factory Store conveys the adrenaline of determined athletes.

"We want shoppers to focus on the experience the space provides," said Jeff Nichols, Nike Factory Store general manager. "With easier-to-read signage and simplified navigation, consumers can shop without distraction and effortlessly find what they are looking for. We wanted to strike a balance between storytelling and capacity, and with that, set the bar for ingraining sport in all we do, especially when it comes to design.

"In fact, if you removed all the product, you would still know this is Nike." To communicate its inherent DNA of sport, Nike Factory Store uses square footage to transfer the world of athletics to consumers.

Clean bleacher wood in the exterior windows and the iconic Nike Swoosh usher guests in and out. To delicately balance the story and the space, Nike Factory Store worked to create a more spacious category-driven layout with the same amount of product as previous store versions and a dynamic sports-driven aesthetic.

Much like on the football field or at the track, Nike Factory Store set out to minimize distractions on the floor. To elevate the store's premium brand experience, television screens have been eliminated from the shopping areas and at the checkout counters and decorative fixtures have been replaced by industrial lighting set beneath a steel frame.

Throughout the store, the discovery of sport is everywhere. The product, playing the role of hero, is supported by details (such as locker tags at the cash wrap that read "1972"), the words "Just Do It" encouraging consumer athletes as they finalize their purchases and a clean duo-tone backdrop that lets both the product and simple details speak for themselves.

Perhaps the most innovative addition to the new stores is the fitting room. To build upon the consumer-centric theme, the Locker Room boasts clean white walls, large, private changing areas and visual encouragement through pictures of accomplished athletes and the globally motivating Swoosh icon.

Another part of the new concept is the brand station, which is a computer set up where consumers can log on, find out more about Nike, more about sports, sign up for email blasts, order product from Nikestore.com (including NFL merchandise) and even design their own shoes on NikeID.com.

In keeping with its continuous push for innovation, the all-new Nike Factory Store, with at least seven already open, will be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. With this certification alone, Nike Factory Store adheres to high standards in performance in the following areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Nike has been putting an emphasis on sustainability since August 2011 when it opened its store at Horizon Group Properties' Outlet Shoppes at Oklahoma City, said Rory Hume, senior manager of consumer communications.

"Every new store since has been LEED certified and every new store we open in the future will be LEED certified," Hume said. "In fact, our door in Henderson, Nev., qualified for LEED Platinum certification – we haven't found any others in the outlet space that have that distinction."

In its total devotion to sports and its ethos of ingraining athletics throughout the entire Nike culture, store employees are referred to as athletes and management as coaches. The consumer experience, then, continues to be defined by the idea of athletes serving athletes, with advice and product recommendations coming from someone who knows and is passionate about both sport and the Nike brand.

And it all works – the new consumer-centric design has improved Nike's Net Promoter Score, a customer loyalty metric, and sales are 1.5 times stronger in the new concept than in previous store layouts. The new redesign, which made its debut in Lincoln City, Ore., in late 2011, will sweep the nation with more than 20 locations expected to undergo remodeling in 2012-2013.

Nike has a long-term remodeling strategy that is reviewed every quarter. "We looked at what stores were up for remodel and which ones should be remodeled to the new fixture package," Hume said. "We base the decision on location and the type of remodel scheduled."

Stores slated for remodel, she said, are Premium Outlet centers in Allen, Texas; Wrentham, Mass. and Orlando, plus all new stores moving forward, including Merrimack (N.H.) Premium Outlets and Paragon Outlets Grand Prairie, Texas.

Nichols said the new concept elevates the way the company communicates with its consumers.

“Without taking any product off the floor, we’ve redesigned the space to reflect our rich history and core component of sport,” he said. “The atmosphere reflects our attitude of leaving it all on the field, never quitting and always on top.” Don Blair, Nike VP and CFO, told analysts on June 28, “We continue to strengthen our network of factory stores, which give us a highly profitable vehicle for managing the marketplace.”

Blair said direct-to-consumer revenue has increased 21 percent, driven by comp store growth in both factory and in-line doors. He added that Nike is preparing its Cole Haan and Umbro divisions for sale and will sharpen its focus on driving growth in the Nike, Jordan, Converse and Hurley brands.

September, 2012

L.L. Bean’s Big Boot Visits Settlers’ Crossing

Settlers’ Crossing Outlet, North Conway, N.H., got the boot in July. The L.L. Bean boot, that is, when the 13-ft tall replica of the classic LL Bean Boot in a moving “Bootmobile” visited the outlet North Conway Outlet, as part of the L.L. Bean Company 100th anniversary. LL Bean Outlet at Settlers’ Crossing opened in 2008 in approximately 14,000 sf in the company’s first LEED certified factory outlet store. Settlers’ Crossing is located across from Settlers’ Green Outlet Village. Both are managed and developed by OVP Management, Inc.

June-July, 2012

Cause Marketing Scores If Done Right

Cause marketing has become the next big thing, but as with any “big thing,” caveats apply. Before aligning their brand with a cause, companies need to identify which causes are most relevant to their business. They also have to consider what causes are important to their customers. Globally, 66 percent of socially conscious consumers in a Nielsen Global Survey of Corporate Citizenship (Q3 2011) said they thought companies should ensure environmental sustainability.

Next up was “improving science, technology, engineering and math” at 56 percent, followed closely by “eradicating extreme hunger and poverty” at 53 percent. Who are these socially conscious consumers? Sixty-three percent are under age 40, and 66 percent said they would prefer to buy products and services from companies that give back to society. But beware of “greenwashing.” Companies that cloak themselves in environmentally friendly products and services are quickly found out when they’re actions don’t match their claims.

April, 2012

Development Briefs

Glimcher Realty Trust's 1.3 million-sf Jersey Gardens in Elizabeth, N.J., has gone live with the largest rooftop system of solar panels in the U.S.; the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recently awarded LEED gold certification to Pyramid Management's 850,000-sf Destiny USA in Syracuse, N.Y.; Ground work has started in Rosemont, Ill., on the seven-level parking garage that will serve shoppers at Fashion Outlets of Chicago; a totally new JCPenney store, sporting new merchandise, a new pricing strategy, and an entirely remodeled, 106,000-sf interior opened in March at Potomac Mills in Woodbridge, Va.; and leasing updates from Simon Property Group, Tanger Factory Outlet Centers, AWE Talisman, Was Group, Taubman Centers, Glimcher, OVP Management, Howard Group, Prism Company and OTB Destination.

April, 2012

Centers Go Green, But Not With Envy

Glimcher Realty Trust's 1.3 million-sf Jersey Gardens in Elizabeth, N.J., has gone live with the largest rooftop system of solar panels in the U.S. The 15,000 high efficiency SunPower panels are expected to generate 11 percent of the center's electrical demand.

“We wanted to celebrate the completion of our rooftop with a community event,” said Crystal Stell, Jersey Gardens' marketing director, “so we enlisted the help of a local elementary school to create 564 miniature houses – representing the number of houses our rooftop could power – for a large in-mall display. We also partnered with the American Heart Association Go Red for Women Movement, and all of our houses glowed red at the same time to support the campaign. It was probably one of my favorite events in 12 years at the mall”

Jersey Gardens, which opened in October 1999, is just 30 minutes from Manhattan. Tenants in the mall include Gap Outlet, H&M, Lord & Taylor Outlet, Neiman Marcus Last Call and Nike Factory Store.

In other green news, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recently awarded LEED gold certification to Pyramid Management's 850,000-sf Destiny USA in Syracuse, N.Y. About 340,000-sf of the expansion will be filled with outlet tenancy, while the remainder is full-price and entertainment. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) provides building owners and operators with a recognized framework for achieving environmental health and sustainability. Destiny USA incorporated a number of features that helped achieve the gold certification, including a rainwater harvesting system that reduces the building's baseline water use by 78 percent, low or zero use of volatile organic compounds, recycling of 90 percent of all construction materials, and an energy conserving solar reflective roof.

Twenty-two tenants at Destiny USA are currently registered with the USGBC and are working toward individual LEED certification. Those tenants include Saks Off 5th, BCBG MaxAzria, Michael Kors, Gordon Biersch and Toby Keith's I love This Bar and Grill. Destiny USA and the USBGC will host a formal certification ceremony this spring.

November, 2011

Brand-Loyal Elderly Don't Want To Rush

Elderly consumers, those 80 and older, want personal attention from friendly, talkative cashiers, not speed. They want smaller stores closer to home. They want a clear, organized assortment with high-quality products at good prices, not unlimited choice of cheap, average -quality products or quantity-based promotions....” according to recent findings from management consulting firm A.T. Kearney. The findings were based on interviews with 3,000 people in 23 countries.

Retailers and older shoppers are at odds. While most retailers focus on speed and price competitiveness, mature consumers want quality and services, and are less price-sensitive. The older shopper likes to spend more time in stores and if retailers will let them it would be a smart move: These consumers represent up to 30 percent spending power.

“The over-80s are globally much more loyal to established brands, and less willing to spend money on products that offer health benefits or are considered ‘green,’” said Martin Walker, senior director of A.T. Kearney's Global Business Policy Council. “ After the age of 80, respondents are markedly more eager to have age-specific products and shopping environments tailored for them. It is almost as if 80 is the new point of self-definition for becoming old. If so, this represents a noticeable change from the traditional concept that old age begins at retirement.”

Finally, older consumers want marketers and retailers to recognize the realities of aging, but they don't want to be perceived as “elderly.”

Destiny USA is on track to be one of the largest LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certified commercial retail projects in the country. The center has a fulltime director of sustainability who, in addition to working with the construction team to ensure compliance with goals leading to LEED Gold certification, will also work with tenants on their green buildout and LEED certification. Destiny USA has a master plan and streamlined paperwork so every tenant moving in to the expanded area will qualify to almost half the points needed to be LEED certified. With all new tenants joining the expansion being LEED certified, Destiny USA will have the largest concentration to date of LEED certified businesses in one location.

Robert Congel told VRN that he has had a long-term commitment to the environment. “I began my career as a contractor working on clean water projects, and I always had a passion to merge economic development with environmental protection,” he said. Destiny USA racked up some impressive environmental numbers: 23,000 tons of 95 percent recycled steel was used in the site’s structure 90 percent of all building materials have been recycled, keeping 7,000 tons of used material from local landfills

Vehicles used in construction were powered by bio-diesel fuel, with Destiny itself purchasing more than 270,000 gallons of the fuel consumed Rainwater harvesting and low flow toilets will conserve 4 million gallons of water each year

Energy efficiency includes daylight harvesting, LED lighting, and heat reflecting roof

October, 2011

Who’s The Greenest of Them All?

Nike’s new initiative to develop LEED-certified outlet stores going forward could be hitting just the right note with shoppers.

When it comes to the environment, the wealthy, healthy and well educated are the most eco-active, says Scarborough Research, a company that measures consumer behavior. Scarborough found that 5 percent of the U.S. population fits into a category the research company describes as “super greenies,” adults who engage in 10 or more eco-friendly activities on a regular basis, including buying organic food, planning to buy a hybrid vehicle, recycling and using reusable grocery bags. Unsurprisingly, these super greenies hang out in the Northwest, but they’re also scattered throughout the U.S. The 18 cities with the highest concentration of super greenies are, in order, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, San Diego, Denver, Austin, Washington, D.C., Spokane, Honolulu, Minneapolis, Raleigh, Boston, Providence, Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany, Baltimore and Albuquerque.

The super greenies are also rich (76 percent more likely than the average adult to have an annual household income of \$150,000 or greater), tend to be members of Generation X, and are more likely to own homes valued above \$500,000. They also have diverse investment portfolios (in case you were wondering).

Super greenies are very active online. Not only are they utilizing a wide variety of social media platforms (80 percent search on Google), but they use the Internet to seek out local information. Super greenies go online for newspaper, broadcast television and radio content. Scarborough suggests that marketers connect with them locally, by seeking out weather and news sites.

And, in good news for retailers, **they are top spenders across all retail categories**, and far more likely to spend more than \$500 in the past year on cosmetics, fine jewelry and clothing.

“Today’s environmentalists have traded sandals and hemp for cashmere and a Lexus,” Deirdre McFarland, Scarborough Research’s VP-marketing, said in a statement. “As the American economy continues to try to find its footing, luxury marketers – or, really, any marketer who wants to capture the American high-spending population – could benefit from green-focused marketing, promotions and products.”

May, 2011

Hilton Head I Opens in S.C.

Tanger Factory Outlet Centers celebrated the reopening of Tanger Outlets Hilton Head I on March 31, dubbing the occasion “Gloriously Green.” Green as in greenbacks was certainly in evidence as shoppers thronged the center. Traffic was backed up on Highway 278 and spaces were the object of pure-green envy during the opening weekend.

Tanger was also referring to green in the environmental context, as the 177,000-sf center was largely constructed with 15,000 tons of recycled building debris obtained from the demolition of the original center.

Going into the new center -- the first LEED Certified Green shopping center in Beaufort County – were:

- 10,600 tons of concrete
- 4,262 tons of asphalt
- 167 tons of steel
- 96 tons of landscape material
- 1 ton of fluorescent tubes
- 200 pounds of rechargeable batteries

Steven B. Tanger, president and CEO, spoke at the re-opening ceremony, sharing the stage with South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

“At a time when the economy tends to go up and down,” Haley said, “the people that are most successful are the risk takers. When I look at the shopping bags, all I see is jobs, jobs, jobs.”

Adding pep to the already happy day were celebrity co-hosts, Jenifer Andrews, a news anchor with WJCL-TV Savannah, and Derek Hough of the ABC show Dancing With The Stars.

The center, which cost \$34 million and took a year to build, is 91 percent leased, Tanger said. It is expected to be 100 percent by Labor Day. Hilton Head I, which first opened in 1987, and its sister center one mile down the road, Tanger Hilton Head II, which opened in 1996, make a substantial economic impact on the Hilton Head community and the state of South Carolina. The two centers generate a combined \$344,000 in annual property tax revenue and \$6.9 million in annual sales tax revenue. Tanger Hilton Head I and II also provide 800 full-time and part-time jobs for Hilton Head area residents.

Other surveys show that even in a bad economy, consumers rarely leave their favorite premium brand, but more than 25 percent avoid certain cosmetics and toiletries because of concern about some ingredients. Yet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that cosmetics are one of the safest product categories. Anyway, more than 90 percent of surveyed consumers in a study conducted by Grail Research said that a company being green was important to their buying decision, and “natural” ranked high with 80 percent.

March, 2011

Arches in Deer Park Receives ICSC Gold Sustainability Award

Tanger Outlets at the Arches in Deer Park, Long Island, N.Y., was awarded ICSC's Gold Sustainability Award for 2010. The award is part of ICSC's U.S. Design and Development Awards which recognize properties that exhibit innovative solutions and creative responses to market trends, as well as outstanding examples of design and development. Tanger Outlets at the Arches won the award in the New Project category. This category honors a specific new shopping center and demonstrates how new standards in design and construction were established.

In addition, the center's developers, working with Adams + Associates Architecture, design consultant Susan Blumenfeld, Cameron Engineering & Associates LLP, Aurora Construction, and the Town of Babylon, N.Y., were honored with a Silver Innovative Design and Development Award by ICSC. Tanger Outlets at the Arches in Deer Park opened in 2008 as a 740,000-sf retail/mixed use center. It is the first certified LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) shopping center in the state of New York. It includes more than 95 brand name and designer outlet stores, and a 16-screen cineplex. Winners of ICSC's U.S. Design and Development Awards program, along with winners from other regional design and development programs, will automatically be entered into the ICSC's Global Design and Development Awards competition, the Best of the Best VIVA (Vision, Innovation, Value, Achievement) Awards, and will be eligible to be named “The Shopping Center of the Year” or the “Best Sustainability Project.” The winners of the Best of the Best VIVA Awards are announced during RECon, ICSC's annual convention in Las Vegas, to be held May 22-25.