



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Urban revitalization: Enhancing quality of life through mixed-use developments

Raymond I. Mbata \*

*Department of Architecture, Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt. Nigeria.*

International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 11(02), 191–198

Publication history: Received on 01 January 2024; revised on 01 March 2024; accepted on 04 March 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.11.2.0385>

### Abstract

Urban deterioration, economic stagnation, and social disintegration are complicated issues that can be effectively addressed through mixed-use development and urban rejuvenation. This paper looks at how mixed-use development might improve metropolitan regions' overall quality of life. It examines the various advantages of mixed-use development, such as enhanced walkability, accessibility to facilities, social interaction, economic vibrancy, and environmental sustainability, based on real data and case studies. The study also addresses important implementation guidelines and tactics and emphasizes how community involvement and cooperation are critical to the success of long-term urban renewal projects.

**Keywords:** Urban revitalization; Mixed-use development; Quality of life; Community engagement; Sustainability

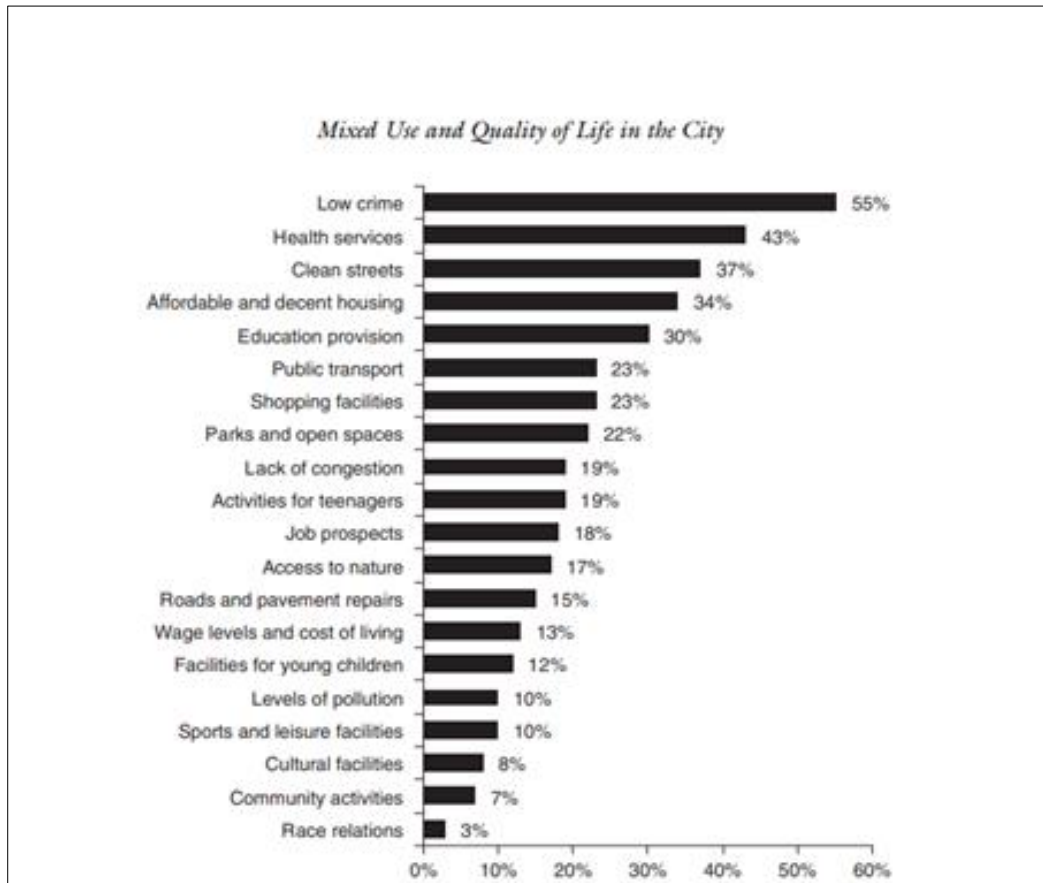
### 1. Introduction

Global urban areas are confronted with substantial obstacles arising from swift urbanization, increase in population, changes in the economy, and disparities in society. These issues frequently show themselves as falling quality of life, crime, abandoned buildings, and crumbling infrastructure. As a result, mixed-use development is becoming a more popular strategy used by developers, legislators, and urban planners to revitalize metropolitan areas and create more lively, liveable communities. In order to create a vibrant and diversified urban environment, mixed-use development integrates residential, commercial, and recreational functions into a single neighbourhood or district. The potential of mixed-use development to improve urban areas and people's quality of life is examined in this paper.

Although there is disagreement over what constitutes "quality of life," wellbeing is generally understood to be the combination of material and physical conditions as well as mental and social perceptions of wellbeing. How wellbeing is defined and measured is outside the purview of this discussion. Density, floor level, noise, and environmental qualities are built-environment factors linked to mental wellbeing. However, even these factors vary depending on the context, such as comparing a 20-story penthouse to a council block or dense communal living to atomized living. Regardless of the level of density or mixed use, the experience of various built environment configurations is both subjective and individualistic, based on social conditions and relations. However, studies of housing and wellbeing rarely take into account the combination of uses, occupants, and activity. Instead, the dwelling is viewed as an immutable form regardless of the mix of residential and non-residential uses within and in adjacent buildings. Rough measurements of density only account for the number of homes or people per hectare; they ignore other ambient aspects like views, public space, open space, and amenities. The spatial separation of land/building/economic uses from the industrial and especially the modern town-planning eras has meant that "mix" has been a more common element of the urban living condition than studies of urban morphology and city life tend to reflect. A resident's evaluation of livability takes into account both social and physical factors. The environment, facilities, and services are important considerations, and our research will take these aspects of living in mixed-use communities into greater account. The city has also been portrayed as a source of dialectical debate and a contradiction from classical to industrial and post-industrial eras; that

\* Corresponding author: Raymond I. Mbata

is, we either love them or detest them and we alter our behavior and attitudes toward them over the course of our lives. This explains, of course, our basic need and desire to bring the countryside into our cities through parks and gardens, both public and private, with hanging baskets, allotments, and city farms; it also explains the rediscovery of the amenity value of waterside developments with views of rivers, canals, and post-industrial docklands, which are frequently the sites of new apartment buildings and commercial mixed-use developments.



**Figure 1** Attributes that Contribute to Making Space and the Physical Environment a Good Place to Live (BVPI, 2007)

## 2. Urban Revitalization

Urban revitalization is the process of reversing the trend of environmental decline in a town by undergoing a more or less significant transformation in response to social, urban, or economic challenges. This is a set of programs aimed at restructuring the town's current layout, particularly in areas that are deteriorating due to social or economic factors. The goal of urban recovery is to balance an urban city's expanding population. These interchangeable rejuvenation procedures might be referred to by a variety of terms. According to Spandau et al. (2010:2), these terms include:

Renovating, rebuilding, restoring, recovering from rehabilitation, conserving, reconstructing, refurbishing, and Renaissance.

Physical, social, cultural, and economic facets of a situation can all be included under the umbrella term "revitalization. Finding a balance between the current fast metropolitan area growth and the preservation of urban identity, history, and tradition is the goal of revitalization. In addition, the rehabilitation project may create jobs, safeguard the environment, and give people access to enough urban infrastructure and services.

### 2.1. Mixed-use development

Urban areas today strive to be properly oriented to support the values of human interaction, adaptability, transparency, and synergy—ideas made possible by design. Because it would meet the needs of a wide range of people as well as investors and partners, this architecture is sought after. The goal of this thesis is to offer strategies for utilizing mixed-use developments as an integrated way to achieve urban rejuvenation. Cities are facing a multitude of issues as a result

of increased urbanization. Threats include inadequate housing, basic utilities (water, power, and waste disposal), residents living in subpar communities, a lack of social amenities, poverty, and the environment itself.

A single-use development was unable to address all of these urban issues, so suitable projects had to be built in order to rejuvenate the cityscape and enhance the social, cultural, and economic well-being of its citizens. Different uses Urban development is defined as the integration of various land uses, including commercial and residential, institutional, cultural, and industrial purposes, in a way that facilitates foot traffic and merges them both physically and functionally.

## **2.2. Why Mixed-Use as an Integrated Approach in Urban development?**

A mix of non-commercial uses, such residential, and commercial uses (including retail, offices, and entertainment), either vertically or horizontally, as specified in a mixed application handbook. According to the Mixed-Use Development Handbook, a mixed-use development is one that promotes integration, density, and compatibility of land uses while offering three or more significant revenue-producing applications. The city core is usually where one finds these kinds of developments. Locals will be able to stay close to their places of employment and recreation.

There are four styles of mixed-use development.

- First and foremost, mixed-use architecture takes the form of a single high-rise building on a single site that is combined in two or more forms. This form of development consists of a mix of retail and office space on the street, as well as residential units or hotel rooms on the office.
- Second, mixed-use development may take the form of two or more high-rise structures on the same property, each serving a distinct function. An office building, a residential building, and a hotel are the most common integrations. Different types of retail can be found on the ground levels of each use.
- A mixed-use development can involve a variety of various low-rise buildings on a single premise, as well as a different office space, with retail on the ground floor and residential areas above.
- Finally, a single mid-rise structure may house a mixed-use development on one site, especially in an urban setting, with ground-level retail and residential or office space above. Any of the four styles of mixed-use projects may be designed in an urban or suburban setting and is called an infill or extension project.

Therefore, it's important to note that mixed-use architecture is a popular design since it provides the following benefits: (The Planning and Community Health Research Center, American Planning Association).

- Lessening gridlock in the roads.
- A greater population and a wider variety of housing alternatives

Pedestrian-friendly landscapes and vegetation; better community character; more compact construction; shorter walking and driving distances between places of residence, places of business, and places of recreation the fundamental idea behind mixed-use complexes is to put people in closer proximity to the daily necessities.

It expands the possibilities available to both employees and residents. Well-designed mixed-use developments can significantly increase people's comfort and enjoyment in their daily lives. The efficient use of land and public infrastructure can also be improved by mixed-use development. When it comes to resources like parking lots, roadways, water, and even sewers, the appropriate set of applications can be incredibly effective.

## **2.3. Historical Developments of Mixed-Use Developments**

Mixing land uses is not a recent phenomenon. Since the early days of urban settlement, there has been mixed-use development. There are old mixed-use developments in England, Italy, Greece, Rome, and France. At the start of the 19th century, almost all urban areas had the following features: walking was the primary mode of transportation, there were mixed uses both inside and outside of buildings, and there were high densities inside cities and low densities outside of them. During the industrial revolution, there was a significant fall as a result of the widespread division of living and production spaces into structures with single functions.

People from rural areas came to big cities during this time to work in industries and offices. Due to the enormous demand for housing among these workers, numerous new urban districts were developed. Domestic housing was the main purpose at the time. Furthermore, a wide variety of plants have caused serious contamination of many kinds. There was less distance needed to avoid hazardous materials, toxic smoke, noise, and dirt. One might walk between the various parts of most industrialized cities. Mixed-use frequently reappeared as an instrument of urban resilience, bringing the public and private sectors together in expansive partnerships. Mixed-use development thrived as a result

of contemporary zoning procedures that assign land use based on function. The earliest and greatest example of mixed-use development is still the medieval city from the fifth to the fifteenth century, which is distinguished by its compact and small center.

Due to an increase in traffic and the necessity for open areas to conduct an expanding number of social and commercial activities, the city form was more open to the major Renaissance city centers. The most critical factor was safety, and mixed use and density were the sensitive reactions. Combining applications has evolved beyond the safe confines of antiquity and has grown less common over time depending on necessity. Early in the 20th century, the city garden movement—which aimed to create independent, green-belt, and public transit urban areas—was closely associated with mixed-use projects. This is comparable to early nodal growth in many modern cities and can be understood as a mixed-use neighborhood. The modern mixed-use era's most fruitful years were 1960–1970. The main drivers of mixed-use constructions were office, retail, and residential structures. During this period, the first significant mixed-use buildings emerged, with a focus on interior spaces (such as galleries and atria) and allowance for space flexibility. Use expansions were permitted as long as they incorporated street-level experiences. In the 1970s, mixed-use developments placed greater emphasis on the internal structure of the building and less emphasis on the surrounding surroundings. This was brought about by how well-liked the interior designs from the previous ten years were. It can also be attributed to the presence of retail malls and political unrest in urban areas.

Notwithstanding their variations, all forms of mixed-use development succeed when they combine a range of uses, encourage pedestrian activity, capitalize on density to draw in people from outside the immediate area, create a dynamic and resilient environment, and are profitable. Currently, we are seeing a reversal of some of these patterns, and we are working hard to create meaningful, interconnected urban spaces. Thus, this is the re-engagement of multi-use buildings that replicate their past (i.e., the creation of mixed-use buildings with a purpose).

#### **2.4. Equity Considerations**

Mixed-use developments can improve the range of housing alternatives available, boost economic potential, facilitate non-vehicular access to destinations, and establish residential areas backed by a network of services. When public investments are a part of a mixed-use development, they can contribute to the equitable distribution of benefits by housing low-income community members and implementing measures to prevent uprooting existing businesses and residents. Communities can impose conditions on private developments that promote fair access to locations at various price points.

Some regions with increasing percentages of mixed land use may see a rise in rental prices; this could be because tenants demand shorter commutes and shopping trips, as well as easy access to retail. In communities where these preferences are prevalent, tenants (residential and commercial) may face increased living expenses and even face displacement. Numerous mitigation strategies can improve housing accessibility, small company viability, and inclusion for residents of all income levels. Some of these strategies include enforcing rules for affordable housing and expanding access to business loans. Because mixed-use development can appeal to community members of all ages, this is especially helpful for towns interested in encouraging residents to age in place.

#### **2.5. Connection to Small and Rural Towns**

Achieving a balance between preserving local assets and varying land uses in small and rural towns can result in compact, walkable areas that are advantageous to all residents. The environment, economy, society, and health can all benefit from mixed-use developments.

Because mixed-use areas offer easy access to destinations, they are attractive to businesses as well as community members. Compact mixed-use areas may encourage residents to walk, bike, or roll to their destinations, which can improve the general health of the neighborhood. By installing pedestrian facilities like street trees and benches together with clean sidewalks, these neighborhoods can improve the quality of walking.

According to Design for Health (2008), mixed-use districts may also have a good effect on community health by fostering social cohesiveness through increased interaction among neighbors. This is particularly beneficial in small and rural communities where inhabitants may reside in faraway areas.

Economic effects include a rise in the demand for residential and commercial space in town centers, a decrease in the need for new infrastructure (e.g., by utilizing the current utility delivery systems rather than building a larger network), and a decrease in the cost of certain services (e.g., emergency services) compared to single-use developments. The preservation of open space and lower air pollution due to fewer vehicle miles driven are two examples of the

environmental benefits, which can be in line with small-town and rural agendas for the preservation of natural areas and improved air quality.

## 2.6. Benefits of Mixed-Use Development

- **Better Walkability:** By combining residential, commercial, and recreational facilities close together, mixed-use complexes create surroundings that are more pedestrian-friendly. This promotes bicycling and walking, lessens reliance on cars, and improves general public health and wellbeing.
- **Access to Amenities:** Mixed-use complexes give their residents easy access to a variety of facilities, including parks, grocery stores, schools, healthcare centers, and cultural institutions. This is made possible by the mix of uses inside the property. Convenience and quality of life are improved for locals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds by this accessibility.
- **Social contact and Community Building:** By providing chances for impromptu meetings and shared experiences between residents, employees, and guests, mixed-use developments promote social contact and community cohesion. Common areas like parks, plazas, and community centers provide as hubs for people of all backgrounds to come together, interact, and form bonds.
- **Economic Vitality:** By drawing in businesses, producing jobs, and raising taxes, mixed-use development boosts regional economies. Mixed-use developments, through their revitalization of neglected urban areas, stimulate entrepreneurship, attract investment, and catalyze economic growth, all of which contribute to the overall prosperity and resilience of communities.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** By lowering car miles driven, minimizing sprawl, and conserving natural resources, mixed-use development helps to promote environmental sustainability. Cities may lessen the effects of climate change, enhance air quality, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging compact, mixed-use development patterns.

---

## 3. Case Study: Missoula, Montana

A prime example of a mixed-use development strategy is Missoula, Montana, which places a high priority on enhancing the quality of life for its citizens while promoting economic expansion and environmental sustainability. This case study analysis looks at the main elements and results of Missoula's strategy for mixed-use development, emphasizing its achievements, difficulties, and lessons that other towns might learn from it.

### 3.1. Background of Missoula, Montana

Western Montana's Missoula is renowned for its scenic surroundings, abundance of outdoor activities, and energetic locals. It does, however, have issues with urban sprawl, traffic jams, and a lack of affordable housing, just like many other cities. In response, in order to solve these problems and maintain the city's distinct identity and natural surroundings, city planners and community stakeholders have adopted a mixed-use development approach. A range of mixed-use approaches were used in Missoula, Montana, as part of the Sxwtpayen Area Neighbourhoods Master Plan (formerly known as the Mullan Area Master Plan) to promote affordability. The "Equity in Land Use" tool, which the plan uses, mandates that developments incorporate "a mix of building and unit types." It talks about plans to build a new neighbourhood school as well as mixed-use hubs with offices, retail spaces, dining options, and entertainment areas.

The design places a strong emphasis on interconnected public spaces that are secure for bicyclists and pedestrians, which can raise physical activity levels. The plan also outlines suggestions for public involvement that take into account transportation choices and elements of the built environment that promote active living, like wide walkways and outdoor seating. The plan aims to promote mixed-income neighbourhoods in tandem with a mixed-use community vision. This is achieved by creating an affordable housing land trust, augmenting the stock of mixed-use housing, and pinpointing prospects for generating "missing middle" housing or multi-unit developments that coexist with single-family homes.

Recognizing the importance of giving residents the flexibility to grow or shrink within the same community, the design expands opportunities for individuals of various life stages and economic backgrounds. It is an addition to the city's 2019 housing strategy, *A Place to Call Home: Meeting Missoula's Housing Needs*, which lowers obstacles to the construction of affordable housing and offers financial incentives to expand the options for mixed-income housing. The plan is compatible with the Mullan Area Traditional Neighbourhood Development Form-Based Code of the Missoula County & City of Missoula, which sets design guidelines for built environment zones with varying physical and social attributes, including a Mixed-Use Center Transect Zone.

### 3.2. Components of Missoula's Mixed-Use Development

- **Downtown Revitalization:** Reviving downtown Missoula is at the center of the city's mixed-use development strategy. Remodeled and repurposed historic buildings serve a variety of economic, cultural, and residential purposes. This has contributed to the development of a thriving urban center with a wide variety of services and events.
- **Smart Growth Principles:** The city of Missoula has placed a strong emphasis on smart growth concepts, including walkability, transit-oriented development, and compact architecture. To improve liveability and lessen reliance on automobiles, mixed-use buildings, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and green areas are encouraged to be included in new development projects.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Missoula has put in place a number of programs to make sure that people of all income levels may find acceptable housing options because it understands how important affordable housing is. This involves enticing developers to incorporate affordable units into their developments and collaborating with charitable groups to produce chances for subsidized housing.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** A fundamental component of Missoula's mixed-use development strategy is sustainability. To reduce its environmental effect and fight climate change, the city has put in place energy efficiency initiatives, renewable energy subsidies, and green building regulations. In addition, initiatives are being made to protect and improve natural places for recreational and ecological purposes, such as parks and riverbank walks.



Source: Google (2024).

**Figure 2** Caras Park-Downtown Missoula



Source: Google (2024)

**Figure 3** Proposed mixed-use development at Fort Missoula



Source: Google (2024).

**Figure 4** Missoula development mixed-use zoning

## 4. Findings and Analysis

- **Economic Growth:** The downtown area has seen increased investment and economic growth as a result of Missoula's mixed-use development strategy. The restoration of old structures has drawn in new companies, eateries, and cultural organizations, boosting the city's tax income and employment prospects.
  - **Enhanced Quality of Life:** The walkability, accessibility to amenities, and environmental stewardship of Missoula have made a positive impact on the quality of life of its citizens. While open spaces give chances for outdoor activities and relaxation, the bustling downtown offers a wide variety of entertainment and leisure possibilities.
- Social Equity:** Initiatives for affordable housing have aided in addressing Missoula's housing affordability issues and advancing social fairness. In order to guarantee that everyone may profit from the city's efforts towards mixed-use development, housing alternatives for inhabitants of all income levels are being offered.

### 4.1. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Balancing Growth with Preservation:** Missoula faces many challenges, one of which is striking a balance between development and growth and the preservation of its natural and cultural legacy. The city needs to carefully control development pressures as it expands in order to maintain its status as a livable and sustainable community.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Missoula continues to encounter issues with mobility and transportation even in spite of initiatives to encourage walkability and transit-oriented development. The city's ongoing initiatives include decreasing dependency on cars, increasing cycling infrastructure, and improving public transportation alternatives.
- **Community Engagement:** Projects involving mixed-use development must successfully engage the community. Missoula has discovered how crucial it is to incorporate locals, companies, and other interested parties in the planning process in order to guarantee that decisions about growth align with the interests and values of the community.

### 4.2. Principles and Strategies for Successful Implementation of a Mixed-use development

- **Comprehensive Planning:** Comprehensive planning that takes into account the special qualities and requirements of the surrounding community is necessary for a mixed-use development to be successful. To achieve this, it is necessary to include stakeholders, carry out market studies, and create adaptable land use and zoning regulations that can handle a wide range of purposes.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Mixed-use development and public transportation infrastructure, like bus and rail lines, are integrated through transit-oriented development. TOD lowers reliance on cars, encourages the use of other forms of transportation, and improves accessibility and mobility for locals by situating housing, jobs, and services close to transit hubs.

- Adaptive Reuse and Historic Preservation: While maintaining their architectural character and cultural legacy, urban neighbourhoods can be revitalized through the adaptive reuse of existing structures and historic preservation. Through the creative repurposing of abandoned or underutilized buildings, cities can revitalize historic neighbourhoods and encourage sustainable development methods.
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Through adaptive reuse of existing structures and historic preservation, urban areas can be regenerated while preserving their architectural character and cultural legacy. Cities can support sustainable development approaches and rehabilitate historic areas through the creative repurposing of unused or abandoned structures.

---

## 5. Conclusion

A comprehensive strategy for urban revitalization, mixed-use development improves people's quality of life, stimulates economic growth, and supports environmental sustainability. Mixed-use development mixes residential, commercial, and recreational uses into transit-accessible, walkable neighbourhoods to create lively, welcoming communities where people can live, work, and play. However, for implementation to be effective, all parties involved—government organizations, developers, companies, and community members—must provide meticulous planning, teamwork, and dedication. Cities need to put mixed-use development first going ahead because it's a critical tactic for building more livable, resilient, and egalitarian urban settings. One striking example of how mixed-use development can improve a city's quality of life, stimulate its economy, and support environmental sustainability is Missoula, Montana. Missoula has developed a vibrant urban environment that emphasizes affordability, embraces smart growth principles, and involves stakeholders in order to appreciate its natural and cultural past and look toward a sustainable future.

---

## References

- [1] Alpopi C. & Manole C., (2003) Integrated Urban Regeneration – Solution for cities revitalize. *Procedia Economics and Finance* (178 – 185). Elsevier B.V
- [2] Azlina, B.M.Y., Prof. Chris, E. & John, M. (2012) *Waterfront Development for Residential Property in Malaysia*. Malaysia.
- [3] Caves R. (2004). *Principles of Intelligent urbanism*. In *encyclopedia of the city*. London: Routledge.
- [4] Herndon, J.D & Dr. Drummond, W. (2011) *Mixed-Use Development in Theory and Practices: Learning from Atlanta's Mixed Experiences*. Atlanta.
- [5] Rabiński, J.S. et al (2009) *Mixed-Used Development: A Call for Research*. Georgia State University, GA 30302-3991
- [6] Ramlee, M. et al (2015) *Revitalization of Urban Public Spaces: An Overview*. Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Malaysia.
- [7] Rojc, P. (2022b, May 4). What is Mixed-Use Development? Planetizen Planopedia. <https://www.planetizen.com/definition/mixed-use-development>
- [8] Supporting active living through Mixed-Use developments. (n.d.). American Planning Association. <https://www.planning.org/blog/9227408/supporting-active-living-through-mixed-use-developments/>
- [9] Sustainable mixed-use development. (n.d.). <https://www.nadigroup.com/practice-areas/mixed-use-development>