Municipalities Are Becoming Retail Real Estate's New Dealmakers

CRE360 Partners Reports a Shift Toward "community-centric development" as Cities Move from the Sidelines to Actively Recruiting Health and Wellness Tenants

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Coming off the retail real estate industry's largest annual gathering in Las Vegas, CRE360 Partners is reporting a clear shift in how communities approach retail growth: [municipalities are no longer waiting for development to come to them](). Across roughly 100 meetings at the show, the firm's team saw cities and economic development authorities acting as proactive dealmakers — recruiting specific retailers, matching them to land and partners, and offering to fast-track approvals. The marketplace increasingly calls it "community-centric development."

From the Sidelines to the Negotiating Table
For years, municipalities fielded proposals rather than driving them. That has changed. Cities now arrive informed about entitlements, timelines and the economics that make a project work. Many approach retailers and developers directly, identify available sites, and commit to moving projects through approvals quickly. Sitting close to local activity, they often know about closures and openings before the broader market does.

"I've been to more than 20 of these shows, and I've never seen municipalities show up like this," said Ken Jacobs, Director of Real Estate at CRE360 Partners. "The mayor, the consultants, the whole team — they came with an agenda. They're telling us what their communities want and asking how we can help them get it done."

Beyond the Grocery Anchor
The ask has broadened, too. The daily-needs grocer remains the foundation of most viable retail development, but cities are now recruiting health, wellness and recreation uses — urgent care and other medical-retail formats, pickleball, tennis and similar amenities. The logic mirrors the

"last-mile" strategy that reshaped grocery: get as close to where people live as possible.

"These municipalities are proactively pursuing what their communities are demanding," said Karen Sebastian, Director of Real Estate Transactions at CRE360 Partners. "They're seeking out the right retailers, helping line up land and partners, and offering to move it through the process quickly. The opportunity for us is to come to them with the research that shows which retailers actually fit their community — and then help make it happen."

Why Research-Backed Recruitment Wins

As communities grow more sophisticated, they value data over wish lists. A city may want a marquee specialty grocer, but the demographics don't always support it. CRE360 uses trade-area research and a gravity-model sales forecast — built to match the methodology grocers use internally, and typically accurate to within roughly 5% — to identify the retailers a community can realistically attract, then builds a leasing strategy around that anchor. A credible forecast also moves a deal to the front of the line with decision-makers who may see 20 to 50 submissions in a week.

That pairing of in-house research with hands-on transaction execution helps municipalities and developers pursue a realistic tenant lineup rather than chase an unviable one.

"When you put a sales forecast in front of a decision-maker that shows a store will perform, it moves mountains," said Kevin Bissell, SVP of Real Estate Research at CRE360 Partners. "Municipalities understand that now. They don't just want a name on a list — they want proof that a retailer and their community are the right fit. That's exactly the work we do."

A Broader Development Rebound

After several years of limited ground-up activity, development is returning as capital becomes more accessible and demand strengthens, with particular momentum across the South and a warming Midwest. CRE360 expects research-led, community-centric planning to play a defining role in which projects move forward.

About CRE360 Partners

CRE360 Partners is an integrated retail real estate research and advisory firm helping retailers, landlords, developers and municipalities make better decisions. The firm combines in-house research — trade-area analysis, feasibility studies and gravity-model sales forecasting — with transaction execution across site sourcing, tenant and landlord representation, and lease negotiation, supporting clients from initial research through deal completion.
Research-Driven. Transaction-Ready. Make Better Decisions with CRE360 Partners.

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