

'Pop-up' stores are filling gaps in South Florida's retail space

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In the next few weeks, Halloween and Christmas stores will start filling some of South Florida's vacant retail space. But these "pop-up" shops aren't just for the holidays anymore.

Many retailers are using pop-ups to test a concept or to determine if they can generate enough sales to make inking a longer-term deal worthwhile.

Meanwhile, landlords have found pop-ups are a great way to fill vacant storefronts, while still leaving their options open, should a long-term tenant come along.

"If you can put in a retailer for 90 or 120 days while you are negotiating a lease with a longer-term tenant, then why not?" asked **Beth Azor**, a commercial leasing agent with Azor Advisory Services. "If I can take another few months and get cash flow in the meantime, then congrats to me."


Azor is leasing space to Spirit Halloween in Davie for a few months. At the same time, she's working with several potential long-term retailers who have shown an interest in the property.

While pop-ups have been around for years, many more retailers are jumping on the bandwagon.

Christina Norsig, founder and CEO of PopUpInsider, a national online exchange for temporary real estate, wrote a book about pop-ups. Miami is among those cities featured, as the art and fashion communities here have shown an interest in pop-ups.

"We had a tremendous amount of calls around Art Basel [in December] from designers and artists who wanted to attach themselves to the show," Norsig said.

"It's a nice way for smaller merchants to see if their ideas have legs," she said. "If you do well and find there is a following, you might be inclined to take a long-term lease."

Norsig's website has two South Florida listings: one at Mizner Park in Boca Raton and another at the Village of Merrick Park in Coral Gables. Both are owned by [General Growth Properties](#)  .

Although some landlords worry there's a stigma attached to taking temporary tenants, Norsig disagrees.

"If you rent to a nice, creditworthy tenant, the property will show better, there's action," she said. "Customers want to see activity and other merchants are excited."

The best potential pop-up stores are those that don't require much buildout. Azor said e-commerce provides a great opportunity for landlords looking to fill space.

"Zappos would be a great pop-up," she said. "They could do a small 1,000-square-foot store where you could come in, try on the shoes and, if you like them, order them online."

Michael Comras of Comras Co., a Miami Beach-based retail and commercial development leasing company, said he is working on several pop-up stores, though he declined to name his clients.

He said the interest from international clients has also been very strong.

"We get calls every day from people in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia," Comras said. "They will take a store for a month or a season, or come up with a creative concept. If they like the market, it sometimes turns into a new long-term lease; maybe at that location, maybe at another."

Nathan Werner, president of Retail Sites International in Fort Lauderdale, isn't convinced pop-ups are the way to go.

"You never know when the next good thing might come along, and you may miss out on that call," he said. "I would leave it vacant, rather than scare away someone who might sign for two years."

But **Steve Salzman**, a broker with the The Shopping Center Group in Miami, disagrees. He said leases can be written in a way that allows the landlord to take

back the space, while at the same time reimburse the tenant if it has made improvements.

“It can work as a win-win if the lease is structured to allow the landlord to recapture the space, while at the same time make the tenant whole,” Salzman said. “It’s better than a dark storefront.”

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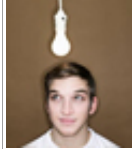
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