

Retail Design Creative Practices

COVID-19 has impacted retail business practices in every way imaginable. Retailers continue to become more creative to keep their stores going during these difficult times and have implemented many new ways of doing business. As retailers are reopening or looking forward to reopening, now is a time to implement some retail design practices to maximize their customers' shopping experiences and encourage purchasing. Retailers can utilize the following retail design best practices as they transition from closed stores to operating during COVID-19.

For further retail assistance, please contact:

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Tips For:

- Connecting with Customers
- Retail Exteriors
- Store Layout
- Merchandising



Connecting with Customers

Connecting with your customers remains an important component during the time living with COVID-19. As you plan to reopen or have reopened your store, remember that communicating with your customers and employees is more important than ever. Iowa's [Governor's Office](#) and the [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) (IDPH) are requiring retailers to follow specific guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within stores. These guidelines include such things as practicing social distancing, limiting the number of customers allowed at the same time, increasing hygiene and cleaning practices, and sharing these new procedures through signage.

Retailers know their customers well and may need to make additional changes in their business practices to ensure their customers feel safe shopping. Some additional considerations you may want to consider include the following tips.

Additional Tips to Connect with Customers:

- Reduce the number of customers in your store below the required 50% maximum occupancy. This can provide customers freer movement around the store allowing them to browse merchandise while practicing social distancing.
- Create specific "appointment only" times. This allows customer to shop at special times on their own. This would work especially well for smaller stores and provide the opportunity for specialized customer service.
- Implement or keep curbside pick-up for those customers not comfortable shopping in stores or for those at risk.
- Visually communicate to customers the extra steps you are taking to keep them safe. Reference the IDPH link above for specific measures you need to take in your store.

Window Displays

Window displays provide a great opportunity to grab the attention of customers and communicate your retail image. You only have a few seconds to attract a customer's attention; therefore, make sure to convey the quality and value of your store through your window displays. Remember, less is more when it comes to window displays.

Windows and doorways are now the key areas to address your store's response to COVID-19. You can make sure to communicate to your customers cleaning protocols, social distancing requirements, ordering options, and other efforts you may be taking to keep your customers safe. Still remember to keep these messages simple and up-to-date.

Tips for your window displays:

- Plan your displays by viewing your windows from your customer's point of view. View your windows from outside the store and from across the street.
- Avoid obstructing views of your displays with excessive signage, window treatments or other visual barriers.
- Keep your windows and the displays simple and clean to allow the customers to focus on the products in your displays.
- Refresh or update your displays every few weeks to generate new interest from customers.
- Avoid overwhelming merchandise with display props, only use props to enhance products on display.



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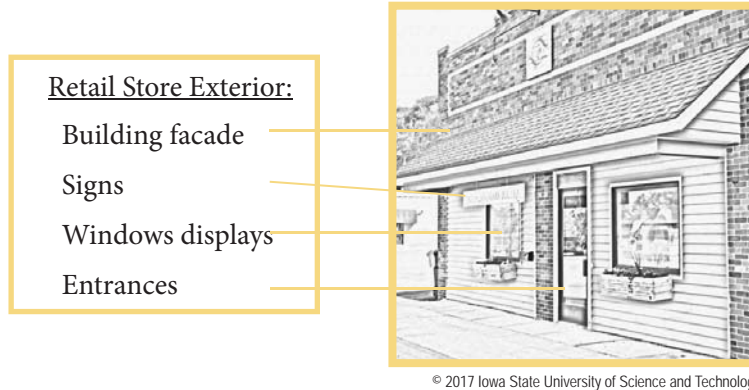
Resources: https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/IRI_resources

Utilize exterior storefronts to create a positive impression of your retail store. When considering long-term building improvements, many local Main Street and preservation programs offer low interest loans or matching grant programs for proper building restorations and improvements. Before implementing, any exterior changes, including store signs, make sure to check in your local community for design guidelines or storefront design manuals. Contact your local City Hall and Chamber of Commerce for more information about the programs or design guidelines available in your community.

Retail Exterior

Effective retailers create an image that communicates their store's quality and value to customers. Either called a retail image or brand provides the framework for all other retail decisions and when used consistently, the store becomes memorable. Storefronts become the first impressions that shape customer decisions to either enter the store or move on and shop elsewhere. The retail storefront provides retailers their first opportunity to communicate the quality and value to customers.

Storefronts can now also serve to communicate your store's safety procedures during this time of COVID-19.



Retailers can communicate their safety precautions during this time of COVID-19 before a customer enters the store. Follow guidelines set by the Iowa Department of Public Health and create the additional signage needed for customers to understand your store safety policies.

Entrances

Retail storefront information will influence customers seeking a safe shopping environment. Make sure to communicate all that you are doing to make your store safe for shoppers and employees. Creating a safe and great first impression combines your store's exterior facade, signs, entrances, window displays, and views of the interior. Here are some tips to get started on your store's image.



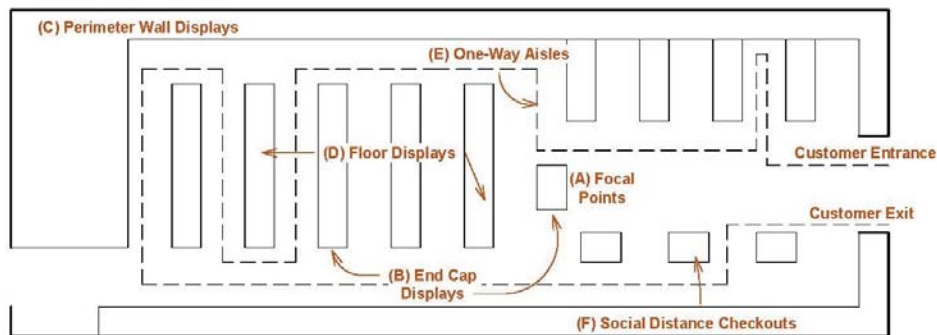
Retail Layout

Retail floor plans are influenced by a wide range of factors including your store size, how many customers can safely shop, type and variety of merchandise, and number of employees. Floor plans for shopping during COVID-19 will show customers how to move through the store, how to safely shop merchandise, and where customer service areas are located. Avoid cramming too much into your store, work toward balancing a great selection of merchandise and the undesirable experience of clutter. Although you can have 50% of your maximum capacity, consider how customers can practice social distancing and consider the maximum number of customers to safely shop in your store.

Successful COVID-19 floor plans

- Create safety and comfort for customers
- Keep employees safe at work
- Meet customer expectations
- Organize merchandise
- Minimize visual clutter
- Maintain customer interest

Grid or Straight Floor Plan Example

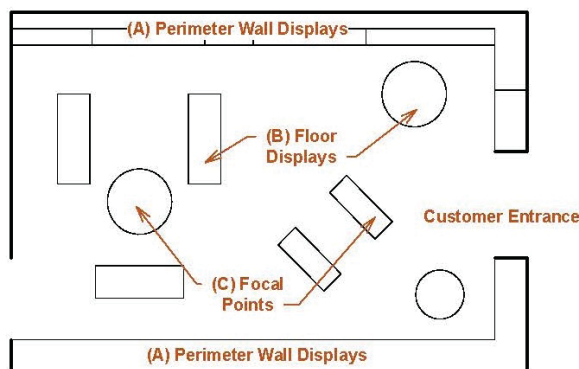


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The grid or straight floor plan

- Typically used for retail stores with several merchandising categories such as grocery stores or hardware stores
- Provides the opportunity to create **focal points (A)** through special displays like **end cap displays (B)**
- Provides customers access to the entire store by using **perimeter wall displays (C)** and **floor displays (D)**, for merchandising and circulation. **One-way aisles (E)** are created for safe customer circulation with social distancing in mind.
- Create **social distance checkouts (F)** to provide safe distances for customer and employees.

Mixed Floor Plan Example



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The mixed floor plan

- Typically used for smaller stores and not dependent on merchandise
- May need to require less than 50% capacity for safe shopping
- Moves customers toward **perimeter wall displays (A)** by using straight and angled **floor displays (B)** through special displays.
- Provides the opportunity to create **focal points (C)** highlighting new merchandise.

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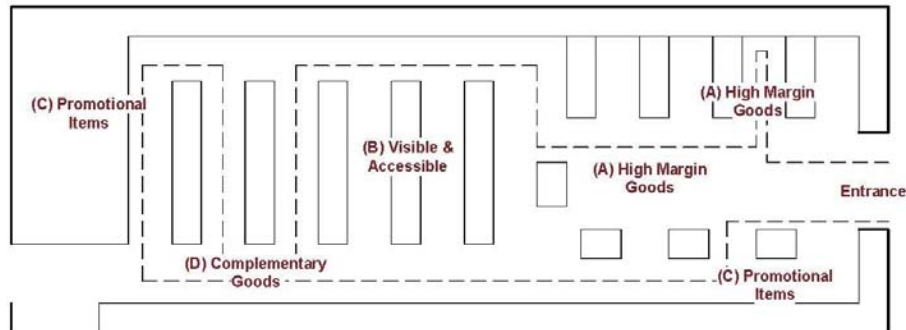


Retail Merchandising

Even after your store reopens from COVID-19 closures, product placement and the use of effective displays can influence the spending habits of your customers. For example, bring in new items and highlight them as customers enter the store. Seeing and trying out new merchandise helps create returning customers.

Not all retail space is of equal value

High traffic areas are more profitable than low traffic areas. Place your high profit margin products in the areas that have the most customer traffic to help increase sales of high profit items.



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A: Place **High Margin Goods** sensory products near the entrance of the store. Entrance displays, both in front of the door and to the right, create a positive perception and encourages additional shopping.

B: Make sure displays are **Visible and Accessible** to customers so they may interact with and try the merchandise.

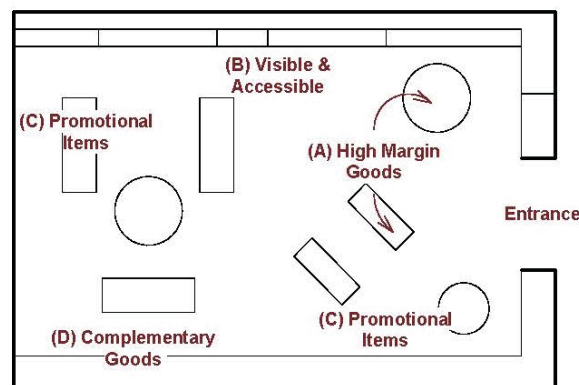
- o As a customer walks through the store, displays are arranged to be in their line of sight and gain attention.

C: Place **Promotional Items** in the front of the store for only a brief time to inform customers about new or special merchandise.

- o If a sale lasts for several weeks, move the sale items to the back of the store and interested customers will search for the bargain.

D: Place **Complementary Goods** near or with each other to show how they work together and stimulate additional purchasing.

See Retail Layout for more details on store floor plans



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