Archispeak 329 - AU - Outdoor Trends in Multi-Family and Mixed Use Design

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Evan Troxel: Sara, welcome to the Archispeak podcast. Great to have you.

Sara Schneider: you. Nice to be here.

Evan Troxel: Before we get into the meat of this episode, the project types mixed use, multifamily, residential.

I would love it if you could introduce yourself to the audience and give us a little bit of your background.

Sara Schneider: Sure. so I have worked in the interior design field, um, for almost coming up on 20 years. I have a heavy hospitality background, so I've worked in hospitality nationwide here in the us. Um, and I've done a fair amount of very high-end residential. Um, and now working for TCA, we work mostly on multifamily, um, residential that comes sort of with a mixed use, bend and also some hospitality projects as well.

Evan Troxel: And where are you located? [00:01:00] Where's TCA headquartered out of?

Sara Schneider: Sure. So TCA, um, our headquarters are technically in Irvine, California, so we're in Orange County. Um, but we have offices in Los Angeles, Oakland, and now

Honolulu.

Cormac Phalen: Ooh.

Evan Troxel: Wow. Nice.

That's a good remote office. Um, well. My next question, just, just to kick us off here, is, can you give a, you said multifamily, you said mixed use, but can you just paint a picture of what projects you're talking about and, and just give us an idea of the types of projects that you've been working on.

Sara Schneider: Yeah, absolutely. so I lead the interiors, studio, I should say, I should have said that first for TCA. TCA Architecture obviously has. Has mostly an architecture arm to it. And between architecture and interiors, we're working on multifamily. Um, that could mean anything from a brand new high rise in a downtown urban area that has seven or 800 units in it.

It could be luxury. Um, it also means [00:02:00] walk-up buildings that are affordable housing that, um, have more of a sprawling infrastructure to them. Um, when I say mixed use, I mean that oftentimes our projects will have requirements to have, you know, retail, um, or restaurants or elements at the bottom of them. Um, oftentimes we could even have, um, multifamily in one part of the project as a tower.

Um. Hospitality, you know, maybe a, a hospitality brand comes in and has a component of, part of the, the overall development. Um, and then, you know, mixed use, uh, could be a, everything from retail to a grocery store to restaurants, um, down below.

Evan Troxel: does multifamily also encompass like a student housing or graduate housing component Potentially as well?

Sara Schneider: Yep. So we also work on student housing. Um, and those can be directly with university, uh, they could be offsite, so you know, both public and private [00:03:00] universities. Um, and so in those, the, you know, the elements of those projects are all very similar. So all of those types of multifamily projects have. Um, they have amenity spaces, they have indoor spaces, outdoor spaces. Um, so they're all different, but within the same family.

Evan Troxel: That's a perfect segue into, I think where we should start, which is let, let's talk about the things that kind of thread between all these project types before we jump into each one. So you mentioned. Outdoor spaces, amenity spaces, and maybe you can kind of talk about those in a generic sense of how would they apply to all of those project types?

Sara Schneider: Sure. So, because I have done so much hospitality, I often liken it to that, or everyone knows what the experience is to stay at a hotel, right? So sometimes, you know. There's an arrival sequence always with multifamily, whether you're a student housing, affordable, you know, [00:04:00] mid rate, market rate, luxury, there's always an an approach.

Um, you're always entering into some sort of a lobby that might have a leasing aspect to it. Um, you know, if it was a condo building, it would be a sales office. Um, if it's luxury, it's, it might be quite a nice leasing amenity space. so you always have that component. As you enter the lobby, we often have what we refer to as sort of a money shot. So there's that component of tying in the interior and the exterior right

away. If there's a pool, perhaps in the courtyard or a really great view, and you could really liken that to the same as hospitality.

You know, maybe you enter this beautiful lobby and then all of a sudden there's this opening of doors and you have the view of. The mountains if, if you're staying in a mountain resort or, you know, there's always that element and that really draws people in. And of course there's a sales component to it, so you want people to, to want to lease at your property. Um, you wanna have new residents. And so that's part of that immediate experience. Um, amenity [00:05:00] spaces are both indoor and outdoor. So we have everything from club rooms where you could have. Television components, games. Um, we'll talk a little bit more about that in detail later. But everything from a golf lounge to a spa, um, oftentimes those are located directly adjacent to an exterior, um, area that could be covered, and is maybe an extended part of that lounge, uh, but also could tie to a pool and those pool decks, you know. They could be on the ground floor, they could be on the

10th floor on the roof deck. It really depends on the type of product that we're building. Um, if, you know, if it's a wrap building or a, a walk up or a high rise.

Evan Troxel: One of the things that you said that I think is that I wanted to key into is this idea of first impressions. So you're really thinking about, because people don't own here or rent here yet, a lot of times the the cycle begins with [00:06:00] the tour, the sales, and so you're really trying to make a great first impression.

You talk about the money shot, right? It's like what's their experience? What do they see when they walk through the doors, or what happens when the doors open and you're really trying to. To grasp them kind of emotionally, even on some

level.

Sara Schneider: mean, if it's an exterior entrance, um, you know, is there port cochere? Where are they parking? Do they have the right way finding, um, our studio starts to touch all of that. Uh, way finding can be so related to the branding of the building. Um, and, you know, so that all of those, uh, components of what that looks like, the color scheme and the graphics all start to tie together from the minute that you, that you roll in and park your car. Um, I mean, sometimes just like a hotel, you could even be greeted with a concierge service, um, or somebody who will park your car for you, a valet service out front. And so. Just the branding of all of that experience as you start. And, and then we will really think about the experience is somebody [00:07:00] brought into the leasing office first?

Are they brought into a lounge first to hang out while somebody comes to greet them? Are they greeting them with an iPad? Um, you know, which, which tour path are they taking to see, you know, a one bedroom, two bedroom, three bedroom? Um, and then of course those units, those model units, um. Are furnished and so what do, how does that get furnished so that that fits into the brand of the property as well?

Evan Troxel: You've mentioned a few different amenity type spaces that have always, I think I'll, I'll say always in air quotes, because this maybe just my perception have been indoors and now I think, I think the trend is that a lot of these are going more, you know, between indoor and outdoor or outdoor completely sometimes.

Can you talk about that shift that's been happening and what kinds of amenity spaces it applies to?

Sara Schneider: Sure. So I think we're seeing, we're seeing a lot more, um. I would say gaming, almost gaming and lounge spaces outside for sure. And that, uh, you know, the pool [00:08:00] deck is always an easy example. Maybe there's cabanas, um, maybe the cabanas are fully enclosed or are and more of an architectural element than what we would consider an FF&amp;E element, right?

And inside those cabanas, there might be an opportunity to rent them for. Um, to have your own barbecue or to have your own set of dining tables outside. Um, but we're also seeing so much of that on, you know, even if you can get little pockets, we call 'em sky decks on the building. And those could even just be on a three story building or four story building.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a, a skyrise. Um, and so what can you get in. 1500 square feet on the corner of the exterior of a building. And those are really big draws to even just be able to put a trellis up there. Have an outdoor fire pit and tv and, and what else can you cater to or, I guess the, the draw too with those types of spaces is to create more intimate zones for residents to

want to gather

or just, you know, maybe you, you're working from home and you wanna just have a shady spot. To go answer some [00:09:00] emails. Um, so we're always trying to create that indoor outdoor. I think fitness is always probably the other location that we're constantly seeing. You know, the request for, uh, doors that bifold all the way open and keeping equipment outside or being able to bring them outside or offering outdoor, um, you know, deck locations for yoga classes.

Oftentimes these properties will bring in, um, fitness amenities or like a fitness program as part of their fitness space.

Cormac Phalen: So let me ask you, you know, with the kind of expansion of outdoor spaces as an amenity, um, I know you don't just do things in California, but, do you also, look at ways of making those as, 365 day spaces or, three season spaces or, things like that?

Sara Schneider: Yeah, I think, um, you know, when the climate permits, 365 day spaces

are great. Um, we obviously are fortunate to have a lot of that in some of our markets. Um, we do [00:10:00] work a lot in California, um, and in Hawaii, uh, but we also have projects in the Midwest and the Northwest and, um. Those clients are asking for the same outdoor spaces and then it just becomes, uh, the question of weathering them.

You know, I think I mentioned earlier, the outdoor cabanas. Can the cabanas be architectural structures that are

truly covered with heating fans, misters, whatever that climate

requires. Um, and that would sort of carry from a lounge space to a fitness space. You know, it still needs to be. Semi enclosed, um, so that they can use it as much as possible.

That's always the goal. They really wanna use it

as much as possible. And we see that even in climates where

it snows, they still want the doors that are opening all the way up, um, and get people outside as much as they can.

Cormac Phalen: those Midwesterners are

special breeds.

Evan Troxel: Yeah, right. Having moved to Oregon recently, I, I still see people in the middle of winter walking around T-shirt and shorts, and I'm just like, how, how do you do that?[00:11:00]

So, so the question I guess then is how, how are you accomplishing that? Because it's more than just having a thick skin, right? There are building products and things that go into this. But are you, are you talking about movable barriers that are easy to take up and put pull down? Are you talking about give us kind of some ideas of the different things that you're using to deal with the inclement weather conditions where people want to be outside still?

Sara Schneider: Sure. Um, so shade structures for sure, and those could be as simple as, you know, we're working on a renovation right now where we have a great roof deck, but it is so sun beaten and they just have no, they're, it's not in their budget to build architectural elements up there right now. So we're using Sunshades, but we're doing them in a really unique way and it's meeting their

budget and it's. Giving their residents a whole new dining experience up on their fifth floor, um, roof deck. built-in heat, of course, always is preferred. Um, I would never prefer to have a space heater hanging out on a patio.

Um, so yeah, wherever we can get those, and there's so many options now with electric and [00:12:00] gas and custom colors.

I mean, you can really get whatever you want as long as you plan for it and coordinate it during the design process. Sun studies, I guess I didn't really mention that before, but we always do sun studies, especially on our roof decks. Um, and main sort of exterior thoroughfares to see is someone really gonna be able to be out there and if they aren't, you know, can we get some sort of a louvered roof structure,

you know, maybe the louvers open and close or pull open and shut with a fabric. Um, I think there's so many products on the market now that there's really a lot of choices. Um, it always comes down to

budget and, um,

and what will

Evan Troxel: It seems like flexibility, products that are flexible by nature can give you a little bit more leeway in the design, right? And, and it's easier to sell a client even on an outdoor space, an amenity when they have options throughout the year to adjust their space.

Sara Schneider: Yeah. And, you know, yes. [00:13:00] So definitely adjusting it for, um, the time of year, but also, you know. Uh, properties often want change. What they're using those, spaces for over time. You know,

right now it might be super cool to have a yoga deck and they've got a yoga instructor lined up, but maybe three years from now in that market, they can't sustain that or nobody's taking yoga anymore and now everyone wants to do something else.

And so just having the ability to have flexible spaces that are, um. It's still usable no matter what they're using 'em for, is really key. It's something we get asked for a lot indoor and outdoor. They, they, often the ask for spaces that are flexible to change the programming within them.

Cormac Phalen: I, I have to say this, that I've done a lot of exterior spaces with a lot of flexible spaces, but honestly, that is the first time I've ever heard the term yoga deck

Evan Troxel: Yoga day. It's because you don't work in this, in [00:14:00] this market

Cormac Phalen: clearly, clearly.

Evan Troxel: You've mentioned the sun. I al, I would assume wind too. I would assume that like wind tunnels become. A thing when you have mul, like a campus of buildings or a series of buildings and outdoor spaces between them and that that's gotta be something to challenging to deal with as

Sara Schneider: Yeah, especially in some of our urban environments, you get sort of those corridors of wind if it. The way that it comes

in through the buildings. And those are, that's something we really study with architecture in the early development stages so that we make sure that, you know, whatever walls or structures need to be put in place for the, the programming to be successful in that location, that, that, that's addressed.

Because it's so much harder to do it at the end. You

know,

you're

Cormac Phalen: right.

Sara Schneider: installing FFF and e and then someone says, wait a second,

it's windy up here. No one's

gonna sit here. You know,

Evan Troxel: Right.

One of the things that, that you mentioned were the kinds of spaces that are, people are going to, to kind of [00:15:00] maybe retreat to, but have a different. Uh, environment, if they wanted to work kind of outdoors one day, or, and I, I assume too, because we're talking about multifamily, we're talking about families and.

Because of Covid and the shift to doing more things in one place than we ever used to. Right. We, we used to go to the office, we used to go to the fitness center. We used to go to do out to eat and do all these things. And now those things are all happening in one place. I would assume that kind of having the indoor outdoor flexibility and linking of those spaces is important in these family scenarios.

And people kind of got used to that during Covid. Right. And they kind of, they, they still expect that to be the types of. Functionality in their spaces still. Right. So having a place to watch the kids play while you're preparing a meal or, you know, those kinds of examples, is that, is that the

Sara Schneider: Yes, for sure. So a lot of our, the way that a lot of these buildings for multifamily end up laying out [00:16:00] is you often have a series of courtyards throughout the development. Um, and it's great because one courtyard is sunnier in the afternoon, and the other one's

shadier because of the way the buildings are

oriented. And so they, they really offer different. Vibes or, or moods. And you do see people sort of congregating to, we have this one project, it's so great, and it was almost an accident. It's got this sort of alleyway space that's part of the property, but nobody had really thought of it. And it wasn't until we walked and we said, this is an awesome spot to hang out.

We ended up putting a fire pit there and lights and, and it's like the perfect cozy zone. Um, another good example is, in a student housing project that we have, we have a fitness facility that's adjacent to sort of a family area so that the kids can play outside, there's a playground and grass and, you know, theoretically mom or dad could be inside getting a quick workout and, and still have sight line of everybody and what's going

on out there.

Evan Troxel: Cool. There's so much [00:17:00] opportunity with, with outdoor, like, like you said, it was just, you thought it was just an accident, right? That you found it. And I, there's places in the towns around me where I, they have turned these, what used to be like an alleyway, a literal alleyway into an amazing outdoor space

with. String lights and tables and fire

pits and you know, and, and it's just become, and I think because people see that more often, then they want that at their place too, and they're asking for those kinds of things, or they're actually shopping for those kinds of amenities when they're going out and looking at these places.

So, shouldn't be overlooked. This is really, really great opportunity

Sara Schneider: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, think of. Probably some of the best meals you've ever had in Europe or Mexico, or you know, think about those alley streets in San Francisco. They're so awesome with the cobble

stones and their narrow and the scale is so important. You know, people want to feel held, you know, grand spaces are good for grand spaces in certain entry experiences, if [00:18:00] you will. But you don't always wanna sit in a

10 story,

you know?

Cormac Phalen: Right, right.

Sara Schneider: You know where.

Evan Troxel: If you

travel to Europe or Mexico City and you see these enormous plazas, it's, it's pretty rare to watch people walk across the middle of them, right? Unless they

really have to get to the other side.

They tend to stick to the boundaries and the edges, and they want to be

near something. I, I totally know what you're talking about.

It's, it's, and it's psychological on some level. It's like you wanna be held, like you said, it's, we don't know why we do it a lot

of times, but we just, that's just a behavior that, that I've observed as well.

Sara Schneider: Yeah.

Evan Troxel: Well, let's, do our best in this episode to hit a couple of different categories. Of project or product types, um, to help our audience just understand them better, but also maybe see what's going on in those, those different markets. So let's start with multifamily because we've seen that. You know, outside of urban areas over the last decades, it's mostly been focused on single family [00:19:00] residential.

Obviously there's been some apartments and condos, but what is happening now? Where are we? What are you seeing happening

in the

market for multifamily?

I.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, I mean, I won't be the expert on explaining all the why's. But multifamily has been on such an upward trajectory for years now. Um, and it's, we're really seeing that it's from a developer's perspective, kind of a home run. And so that's why I think it keeps getting repeated. 'cause people are, people are living, people are renting there.

It's, it's working. Um, you know, and markets have changed obviously in the last, call it 18 months or so, um, where.

Evan Troxel: a little bit,

Sara Schnieder: we're we're also seeing, um, at our firm, we also have the ability to

do a lot of affordable housing, but we touch luxury down to affordable and everything in between. And so I think that that's just servicing such a huge range of people, um, in all demographics in all areas.

And, you know, I'm in Orange County and the [00:20:00] multifamily market here is, is huge. Um. I think there's also a little bit of a generational shift with the view of home ownership, and so I think that plays a role to a certain extent, or the ability, um, sometimes to own homes in certain parts of the country, for sure.

California's expensive.

Cormac Phalen: So

let me ask you, in multifamily, are you starting to see a trend, speaking of like, it being hard to, for home ownership? I mean, are you seeing any trends towards, multi-generational within. I mean, because normally you think about, it's like, well, three bedroom, two bath, kind of, type things and, and are you seeing any shifts towards, multiple generations living in a multifamily development?

Sara Schnieder: You know, that's really interesting. I don't have a specific example of that, but I do know that some of our clients, um, who have, you know, very specific brands speak to this idea that they have multi-generations of [00:21:00] people living there that have decided to be renters, right? Like, we are not buying homes, and that is the case for.

A 25-year-old young professional, and it's the same case that they're seeing for 65-year-old retiree. They don't wanna deal with the home maintenance. The amenities that come with the, multi-family space are, can be quite

incredible. Um, and so they're seeing repeat residents who sometimes even move within their body of, of properties, right?

They might live in one city of one of their properties, move. Next door for different amenities or maybe work takes them there. But they're almost like you see in hospitality, right? You've got your Marriott points. They're sort of, they like the familiarity of what that brand might offer them, and so they like to stay within that family, but they're really choosing to stay in the rental market.

Evan Troxel: you mentioned amenities. I think that's the key word. That I want to hone in on because, uh, that is a big shift over the, the [00:22:00] la previous decades of multifamily. I think in that, that is a huge driver of the project, and I'm wondering who's doing the driving? Is it, is it the clients? Is it, is it the families or is it the developers being proactive about that?

Are they using that to differentiate? So before we get into what the amenities are that you're really seeing happening. Like, where is that coming from? Is it coming from demand or is it really being driven on the supply

side

of this equation?

Sara Schnieder: That's a good question. I think. Demand is different in different markets. So we have some projects that are in more urban markets and especially with, you know, when Covid started the coworking situation, that became a demand, right? Especially in urban markets as offices emptied out, in some of our maybe more Midwest markets, we're seeing demand for, call it spa and sauna spaces.

So I think, It's

probably twofold. Developers are trying to get a [00:23:00] one up for their next property, right? What can we offer that they don't have next door? But there's also definitely, you know, everyone's studying, wow, this is really popular at this property. This is really popular at this one.

Um, or we're, we're planning on attracting, uh, young professionals. We're planning on attracting families. And then that really changes what you're looking at offering.

Evan Troxel: Does your firm just do new ground up projects or do you do retrofits as well? And so,

okay, so you're nodding your head yes. So when it comes to. Amenity spaces with these retrofits and renovations? Is it, is it wholesale changes? Is it just slight updates? There's probably the whole gamut, but I, I would love to hear kind of some, some of

your experience there as

well.

Sara Schnieder: Sure. I, yeah, it is the whole gamut. Um, we're working on a property right now that's in the LA area, um, that is converting space that was completely unused into. Sort of this huge [00:24:00] clubhouse, coworking, rentable, uh, space. They happen to have a lot of square footage. And so for them it's a little bit of a game of return on investment.

They're creating spaces that can be rented. and that's actually not just this client that happens for a lot of clients is how can we help them make money on these

amenity spaces?

Evan Troxel: kinds of functions are they, are they using those to rent, rent them out for, to give people some ideas about topics to bring up if they have conversations around these project types, because I can imagine, you know, there's like kind of a community center aspect to it,

but I imagine there's, there's a

lot more I.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, of course. Yeah. So I,

I.

think for some of these, like clubhouse spaces for example, they're, most of them, you know, I would say are generally open to their community. They wanna create community. A lot of these, uh. Multifamily locations are, they'll even generate events for their, um, residents because they wanna bring people together.

And that's a big selling point for a lot of the, [00:25:00] a lot of the brands, um, spaces for gathering. And they're encouraging that. But then maybe part of it can be, you know, sectioned off and closed down for a private party. Or maybe there's two clubhouses that are adjacent to each other and you enter through different doors and they could both be open unless one gets rented.

Um, and so I, you know, I think you're seeing both.

Cormac Phalen: What was interesting is you were talking about the. Leaseable or rentable space for working. and I know Evan wanted to wait to get into some of the amenity stuff, but, I

Evan Troxel: I

think we, let's, let's do it. Let's, let's,

talk about 'em.

Cormac Phalen: because 'cause it, it is kind of interesting is, is, do you, have you seen a shift?

And, and I know Covid has kind of, changed the game. In a lot of the way that we approach things. But I mean, are you seeing a demand for like live work type, um, scenarios?

Sara Schnieder: yes. I think the short answer to that is yes, maybe not as much as we were a couple years ago. [00:26:00] Um, but I think it's definitely still a topic and what's been really successful for a lot of our properties is. Providing smaller podded spaces, uh, that can, you know, we call 'em zoom rooms or podcasting studios.

We do, we do a lot of podcasting studios because if people are working from home, you're in the influence.

I know you get a better backdrop than my parking lot over here. Um, I mean, sometimes we even have a property right now that we're working on that has such an amazing view that that's what this one room, that's why we decided to make it a podcast studio.

Um, they have a lot of young professionals that live there. And so those rooms can be rented out, right? And it's small, but then we might also have space for a larger conference room. It can be open when it's not being rented, but it could also be closed down for meetings and maybe you're bringing clients in.

Um, some of our properties have the opportunity to have separate exterior entrances to these spaces. And so you could even have clients come to an address that is not your home. You know? Um, we might also talk a [00:27:00] little bit later about zoning, but a lot of our projects you need to have. Um, a certain level of retail on your ground floor.

Um, and so sometimes you can sort of bend those rules with live, work, addresses. And so that's

something that comes up once in a while too.

Evan Troxel: So is this kind of space consideration that you're talking about being marketed to the people who live there primarily, um, does it go beyond that as well? Like if somebody wanted to have their, I don't know if it, it was a development that was just incredible. Could you just have, you could hold a wedding there or a bar mitzvah or, I don't know, something from, from somebody outside in the community.

Because if they're really. Talking about engaging with the community, I assume there's some aspect

to marketing these beyond the

tenants of, of the,

the

property.

Sara Schnieder: That's a, that's a great question. I don't see a lot of that, but I mean, it reminds me of so many things. I mean, if. F we have roof decks on a lot of our properties. If you're going to a hotel roof [00:28:00] deck to

get married, you know, why not? If the other roof deck looks better, you could might as well just do it there.

Or you know how they have resort pass for hotels where you can go use the pool for the day. I mean, most of our places have all of those outdoor amenities. I don't know the details of insurance and all of that. I don't see a lot of that, of them opening it up to, um, to outside residents. But it is certainly.

Pretty much, I would say the selling point for these developers.

Evan Troxel: Oh, that's

interesting. I I was gonna ask you that because it's, it, it seems like that, but I also know I've never done developer work, but I know this is called desi, the design is actually a spreadsheet. Right. And, and I'm wondering like, what are the

values placed on these amenities? And it

sounds like they're,

they're prioritized at the top of the

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, I think they really are. Um, and, and all levels, right from luxury to market rate, uh, you know, down to affordable. I really think that it's important. Now, of course, different locations or property types have [00:29:00] a different level of that. I mean, some properties are just gonna rent out immediately no matter

what, because the demand is just so high and the amenities might not be as important.

Um, of course, floor plans are important for your units, um, and that's. Very carefully studied in the early stages about how many studios, one bedrooms, two bedrooms, maybe even three bedrooms that you have. So it's all important, right? But from a, leasing manager's perspective, you know, they're excited to take people on a tour of the property.

mean that's why, you know, we do get involved as much as we can, um, varies with each project. But when we can get heavily involved in the branding of the property with the maybe ownership's marketing team, a lot of times we start touching the way finding. We might even design the entire way finding package with a signage consultant because.

It, it all ties together, right? And just as you go to a restaurant and there's a uniform for the, for the, um, staff, and they might use a certain pad or, [00:30:00] um, whatever emblem is, you know, stitched into their name. And, you know, all of that is you have those same touch points when you're looking at signage or, um, approaching a desk or taking a pamphlet away with you.

Cormac Phalen: Well, I mean, if you're trying to create. An overall experience. I mean, you really are wanting to curate every bit of that experience from, what does it look like when we drive up to that, to that parking space, and then, traversed through everything and, and how is it, staged and seen and and stuff.

So,

yeah. and this is again, some of the things that a lot of times architects because. like say if it's working on a specific project and not like a larger kind of like grander experience sometimes, misses. whereas, in other cases, like, you know, I mean we certainly, when we were thinking about a, say an elementary school or something like that, curate that, that view all the way through, what are the experiences, where [00:31:00] are these moments, where are the things?

And it's interesting to see that that's something that's kind of. taken to an even bigger level when you're talking about like this, not just the, actual final product, but how the, the presale product.

Sara Schnieder: Sure. Yeah. And we have some projects where they'll, um. We'll bring in, you know, a local coffee shop that does, you know, like a coffee cart instead of just having the Keurig at the front desk. So you have an experience that's related to the neighborhoods. You have that connection there. Um, model units are often another, you know, big thing that it gets your opportunity to really finish telling the story.

'cause that's where multi-family differs so much from hospitality, right? Is you don't have hotel rooms, you have sort of very generally neutral units. Um, that people live in so that they can personalize it themselves. But when you have the opportunity to do a model unit, which is part of the sales cycle, you know, you could personalize that unit to go with the story of the property.

So [00:32:00] it just kind of is that next level of where am I? Does it feel like I'm in Hollywood or Kansas City, or you know, wherever I

Evan Troxel: Mm. You mentioned earlier that you came from hospitality designer. You have experience doing that. Is that influencing?

Multifamily now quite heavily. I can imagine as a family who goes on a vacation maybe to Vegas or something, and I rent a cabana at the side of the pool for a party or you know, maybe it's a significant birthday or an event or something, and then I come home. And the place that I live doesn't have any of that stuff, but what? That was an amazing experience. I'd love to have that more often. I'd be willing to pay a little bit more every month to have that. I would assume that that's

influencing

this kind of

work.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, I think it definitely is. Now one of the biggest differences, and this affects the design too, is staffing, right? A multifamily. Development or

residence building is not staffed the same way a hotel [00:33:00] is. And so you have a lot of spaces that are less manned, you know, we have a, we have a developer who has

some cafes in part of their, repertoire of buildings, of properties and they, um, you know, they have a hard time keeping that a profitable center for them.

The residents certainly like it, it brings people together. But you got a staff. A restaurant.

So, um, you know, different people can do it at different levels.

Evan Troxel: I just had this experience in my town the other day where I. I'm doing a remodel in the room next door here, and so I go to all the lumber stores and hardware stores to find the things I'm looking for, and I'll go to Home Depot or Lowe's and I cannot

get anybody to help me. I just can't get anybody to help me to, to your point, I mean, keeping the right number of staff and balancing that to how

many customers are there is rough. But I'll tell you what, like I go to this other

one across town that is a private one and somebody is waiting at the

door for me. To [00:34:00] help me. And

it's like they're smaller, but they care more.

I mean, it's obvious. And, and because of that, I want to go there and I wanna spend my money there and support that because it

gives me exactly what I need. And so it's not impossible to do this, right? It's, it, it just needs to be a priority for, for

these. Properties in these businesses to, to say the a happy customer is more important, or a satisfied customer is more important and more valuable ultimately in the long run. Um,

so Yeah.

it's just a business decision.

Right? But it's a, it's, it's

pretty obvious.

Sara Schnieder: And I think especially, you know, in the more luxury. Sector, you have more of an opportunity to do more of that. I mean, we have one client who They want their brand to be known as the hospitality brand for multi-family living. So they're really kind of going after this concept heavily.

They can do it because of where they're located and the clientele that they're after. So, you know, it's different

Cormac Phalen: so so what are the amenities that, this is just [00:35:00] me thinking about.

Evan Troxel: Yeah,

Cormac Phalen: future, future

retirement and in, in, in places that I might

want to, you know. Sure. You know, but I mean, you know, but it, but I am kinda curious. I mean, what are like some of the amenities like this, higher end, more hospitality oriented, multifamily,

Sara Schnieder: Sure. Yeah. I think, uh, you know, the rooftop deck is always a hot topic and what can you put up there? Can you get a pool up there? Can you get a pool on the fifth floor? If you can't put it on the 10th floor, you know, what, what can be built in early on? Um, how many pools do you have? Depending on if sort of a sprawling development or, or taller.

Um, you know, we always sort of generically say clubhouse, but oftentimes there's multiple rooms within a clubhouse or spaces that are divided into sort of a grand space. There's. You know, the hangout, cozier TV zone, maybe you can rent that room for movies or football games or whatever. Um, usually that, that might have like a full kitchen components.

You could [00:36:00] bring in catering and then maybe there's sort of a larger game room, if you will, um, that sort of just open to residents at all times. Some of them will staff bars, um, at certain, for certain events, maybe they're for the Super Bowl. The, the property will actually just bring in. a barista or bartenders or whatever it might be.

the cabanas, as you said, you know, being able to rent out special zones, um, is often going back to the clubhouse. They often have, you know, maybe a golf room, a screening room, um, connected to them. Fitness is huge, so people are almost always after the best. Thing they can get for their buck for fitness.

It keeps residents on the property. Um, it also is a huge selling point, 'cause now they don't need a gym membership. and so sometimes people like to get bigger with their fitness, with more of a spa component that's adjacent to it. Um, it could just be simple lockers, um, and a sauna room. Uh, [00:37:00] some of them have rentable, uh, actually spa rooms where you could have a masseuses come in or, or.

Have different services be provided. We often see the fitness facilities adjacent to the pool. Um, so that way you kind of have that full indoor outdoor connection and then, you know, maybe there's a shared locker or bathroom that's useful for the property. So, I don't know, there's sort of a rattling off of, of what we've been working on lately, but we really do see kind of a wide gamut, depends on what you got to work with.

Evan Troxel: Maybe we can shift to mixed use, because you're talking about some similar components, but we're gonna add a couple more and, and then kind of how it all ties together. Because, you know, I, I, I also think about a place like Disneyland where it's like the music is continuous as you're walking from one function to the other along the walkway and the lighting and. I mean, it's, it's another level even of wayfinding because you're adding in deliveries and front doors and back of house and all [00:38:00] these other things. So what's going on with mixed use and what, what are some more, fundamental considerations that you're making that are, that are different from multifamily with

that project

type?

Sara Schnieder: Well, I think, um, we're a couple things with the sort of the term mixed use. I mean, oftentimes our properties, uh, for, just for TC in general, what we're really good at building are, you know, let's just say it's a new project and the bottom floor has a whole foods, and then there's a tower with condos that they're selling, and then there's a tower with apartments and then there's.

Retail space, other retail space on the bottom because maybe the urban zone that that's in is, is required that they wanna have more street traffic and so they have to fill in other retail locations. And so there's sort of all these components that fit into it. Um, the other thing that we see a lot with mixed uses, kind of taking the conversion or addition to these sort of outdoor shopping centers.

So adding multi-family residential into [00:39:00] those developments that maybe already exist, or maybe they're starting it that way. And so you can just come downstairs and walk straight to the coffee shop, do your grocery shopping, have dinner out, and you don't really have to leave the general vicinity. And just like you're talking about Disneyland, I mean, especially in those instances, you're kind of creating Disneyland, right?

You can have the music coming out of the speakers when you come downstairs, you can have. Outdoor dining, that is connected to your restaurant, that's connected to the elevator, that goes straight up to your, your, space. And so, um, yeah, I think you're really creating a brand again, you're, you're creating an experience for people who live there and for the visitors who are coming to see them.

Evan Troxel: I'm curious what you find the most challenging aspect of those types of projects are maybe in the early design stages of it, because. It's not like custom residential and it's very different project type because of all of these [00:40:00] potentially competing, uh, traffic, circulation and security, I would assume is a, is a big part of this as well.

Like who can access

what and when and where and how. And so, so what is, what is, what do you think are the challenging aspects

to this project type?

Sara Schnieder: I should have my architecture buddies next to me because they would have an answer for the, their beginning of the project. Right. And then interiors would have an answer for our beginning. I guess for us, what's not challenging in a bad way, but actually kind of exciting in those types of projects is that you have the opportunity to have multiple clients.

So you might have your developer client that you're developing 400 units for, and they've got this retail shopping center and. They're putting in x, y, Z boutique market, right? Well now you've got x, y, z boutique market going in and they want you to work on their space, right? So now you kind of have a project within a project.

Um, and those are really special for us, especially our studio. 'cause we're kind of [00:41:00] boutique anyway. And so we like to, to touch the individual clients.

Evan Troxel: and are there competing interests there sometimes, or do you really feel like everybody's moving in the same

direction and it's

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, no, there can be competing interests. Sure. And then of course, you know, it's sort of like an HOA, you've got rules. You know, somebody wants to paint the corner of, of their restaurant blue, but the other person says, no, we only do black awnings. And you know, so we got a little

Evan Troxel: And signage. Signage and like, there has to, you

actually have to develop the standards for a lot of that stuff because you're gonna have different tenants

moving in and moving out over the decades, and they all have to adhere to the look right, or the, the experience that,

that the property

wants to create for

everybody.

Sara Schnieder: Right. Yeah. Which is not, you know, it's, again, it's just so similar to hospitality. You have a book of standards for a hotel brand. You know, if you're staying at a Westin, you're handed the book of standards that you need to follow to make sure you check all the Marriott boxes, but then you also need to personalize it.

[00:42:00] For the location that you're in and, and have it feel special than any other Westin that

they stayed at. So it's the same, right? That you gotta develop that base brand, that base set of standards to follow.

Evan Troxel: I'm interested in, You talked about a project you're doing in LA and I assume that at least on the West Coast, and this has come up in other episodes in this series, is that there's a big outdoor component, right? You, you've talked a little bit about some of those types of amenities, but is that happening beyond just the West coast and, and maybe you can just talk about the. The types of changes in design approach that you make depending maybe on the region that you're putting a project in, but I assume there's a big outdoor component

here, but, but where

else?

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, everybody wants to be outside, right? For as long as you possibly can. Um, we have a slew of current projects that happen to be in the Kansas City area and. Does the architecture need to be different to work with the weather? Yes. You know, we have vestibules [00:43:00] that you have to walk through and there's different heating and AC components and, but everybody's asking for doors that fold all the way open.

Everybody wants it, even if you can only use it for four months out of the year instead of, you know, eight or nine. I don't know why we call them California rooms, but we often say that it's a California room. When you have this sort of. Of completely trellised outdoor area, just outside of an interior space, whether it's a clubhouse or a fitness facility or whatever.

And, and yeah, people wanna be out there as as much as they can and there's different requests for that, of course, architecturally for what needs to happen and heating components and or cooling components. But, um, but I, I would say the indoor outdoor is really an ask wherever you are.

Cormac Phalen: If it. Makes you feel any better? On the East coast, we call 'em Florida rooms.

Sara Schnieder: Okay, good. The Florida room makes me think of the screened in, right, because then you've got the bugs to deal

Cormac Phalen: Well, yeah, that, that's usually a

[00:44:00] component too. But now, now with the advent of kind of like the, the roller

screens, I mean, you can, change the whole, landscape of kind of how that room, really kind of acts.

Sara Schnieder: I think that the other thing too, that we see a lot, and this is where we sort of cross paths with the landscape designer often is, you know, are we putting in umbrellas or are we building permanent trellis? Because you know, if it's a permanent trellis and we can put a covering on it, people can use it even if it is sprinkling or.

Whatever versus the umbrellas, they're all gonna get taken down. We gotta have a place to

store them. Where are they going? They're gonna be destroyed in three years, you know? So there's that, that lifecycle products. we all know how the budgets work, right? Does does it go into the built budget or does it get put into the FF&amp;E?

It falls out. When you turn it upside down budget, it's, it's still the same money. You're just trading buckets.

Cormac Phalen: And you know, developers are gonna start to look at that. And they say, well, if it's something that I have to replace in three [00:45:00] years, is it something that I want to invest in from day one? Or is that one of the value engineered items that we can then go do something else with?

Evan Troxel: I think we can hit this one quickly, but we, we talked a little bit about when we were brainstorming this episode, uh, student housing and I have a very specific. View on what student housing is. And when I read what was written here, I was kind of blown away by this idea. I had never even considered family

student housing because, and it totally makes sense.

Uh, grad students who already have families want amenities in student housing. And at

Cormac your firm

does student housing too. Right. And so this was totally new to me. I maybe you guys can. explain this because I, I think it's super interesting. I mean, obviously it makes total sense once you hear it, but, but

introduce this idea.

Sara Schnieder: yeah, we, well we do student housing as well. And um, I think with student housing, just as you said, you know, you have I [00:46:00] also have the view, right? I remember my freshman dorm, and we do that also. However, you

have the range of graduate students, faculty who are living on campus, you know, they have families and so.

Just as we're building a quote unquote clubhouse or shared space, we're doing the same for student housing and it's a place to gather, it's a place to study, you know, maybe we don't call it a coworking space, it's a study room. But really it's the same, things. There's fitness, um, you know, maybe there isn't always a pool.

Sometimes there is, but maybe there isn't a pool. But there might be outdoor play equipment that's built into the landscape because. Kids are there. Um, maybe there's a childcare component that gets built in. Um, so we, we see rooms like that that are often adjacent to these family centers or fitness areas.

So yeah, there's all of that in student housing.

Cormac Phalen: So let me ask you this, from the aspect of, do you do a lot of, or do you [00:47:00] do any kind of like developer student housing? because we have seen a huge uptick in the trend for developer student housing or, you know, kind of basically a P3 partnership between, developers who are developing off campus housing, but they're also developing it, both with the, you know, kind of single. Almost like dorm type, rooms all the way up to family rooms, and then the amenities that come with those of things like the, onsite daycare, onsite fitness, onsite, health centers and things like that. Um, so I'm, I'm curious if you guys have been doing any of that, because I know that you guys do a lot of developer work and we see this huge uptick in, in those kind of

projects.

Sara Schnieder: Yes. The short answer is yes. Yes, we have. We have developers that we work with that are. Um, you know, maybe a lot of, uh, there's groups that really focus just on student and, and affordable housing. Like, that's their niche. And so, yes. That, that is a [00:48:00] client of ours as well as direct to, you know, perhaps a private university that's adding dorms or maybe a private university that you're contracted with, but then they have to build off campus 'cause they're out of space.

Um, so, so we see that too. We have, we have both types of clients.

Cormac Phalen: Yeah, I will, I will say there's a a, a completely different mindset now. I'm not in that studio, but I see the work that's going on in that studio. and to see the, you know, you were, you were talking about, oh, I remember, my freshman dorm. I remember my freshman dorm was very similar to my. Barracks when I was in the Army and the freshman dorms, like, you know

where my son is at school right now is. Palatial in comparison, and it is all about the experience. It, there are, large, rooms that are, dedicated to more hospitality than, just kind of like, there are, [00:49:00] you know, obviously carved out like student study spaces and, in, small gathering spaces.

But then there's these larger, more hospitality oriented things and, and just to see. The difference in, what, 20 plus and more on the plus side of, of things, from what, the dorms were when I was a student. It's just, it, it's, it's interesting, you know, to see that that shift in them and, and in fact, I even see, Universities basically leveling the, the dorms that we went to school in to

do these more amenity based housing developments.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah. And there's, I mean, just like there's different clients, right? There's different. You know, public university, private university, they all have different means to be renovating. Um, and different reasons for drawing in people to be living on campus. And so it really varies what you can do.

Sometimes they are a little bit more stark because I mean, when it comes down to it, you're, [00:50:00] it's gotta be cleanable. Wipeable.

Cormac Phalen: Yeah.

Sara Schnieder: They don't wanna replace it for 10 years, you

Evan Troxel: Hold up under the

Sara Schnieder: yeah.

yeah.

Evan Troxel: Right,

does seem like the big shift has gone from building, uh, it very rigorously and about kind of processing a part of a student's life where it was mostly about going to school and classes to now being much more of a draw to even

attract students. To the campus and their families and keep them there and have them, you know, really connecting into the services that are offered when it, if, if it does come to daycare and it does come to food service and it does come to kind of. Creating a community on campus, it, it's really driving value toward, toward that side of it. I think, uh, it's a very interesting shift, you know, comparing

it and contrasting it to

the, the old days of the dorms, right? Which were, which were like little

cells

in a box, right?

Cormac Phalen: Yeah.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah. No, I think you're right.

I mean, the lifestyle of where you're [00:51:00] choosing to spend a lot of money is, is important. Yeah.

Evan Troxel: I think you just nailed the word there that I've been searching for here because, and maybe this is, this is what we can wrap up with, but you really are designing, we've said experience, but lifestyle

is really hits all of these different pieces of multifamily, whether it's strictly multifamily or mixed use or. Luxurious sounds very luxurious. Student housing, I mean, this, it, it's really about creating a lifestyle, creating a brand that attracts people who identify with that, wanting that lifestyle or it is their lifestyle and they wanna maintain that. To really draw them in and create space that is, uh, gonna

deliver on

all of those different metrics.

Sara Schnieder: Yeah, absolutely.

Evan Troxel: Cool. Well, this has been a, a educational for me, especially not having done any of these project types, and a fascinating [00:52:00] conversation. Thank you so much for spending the time to, to share this information with our audience, and we'll have links to you and your firm in the show notes for the episode.

Is there anything else that you wanna

mention here before we say our

goodbyes?

Sara Schnieder: No, it's just, it's been lovely to chat with you both. Thank you so much for having me.

Cormac Phalen: Thank you for being here.