

Domestic Retail

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Problem

Opportunities for local small businesses to engage in physical retail are often constrained by regulations and licensing requirements as well as costs, and those small businesses must compete with corporate retail chains that enjoy significant competitive advantages. This often restricts such businesses' physical presence and confines their operations to the digital sphere, where they are subject to lower overhead costs and less regulation, thereby depriving neighborhood communities of the positive externalities that locally situated retail businesses offer.

Participants

Small business owners
(existing and potential)

Infrastructure

Housing that can accommodate small business operations; marketing infrastructure (in lieu of street-facing storefronts), adequate licensing processes:

Pattern

Loosen local restrictions on residential businesses, enabling a wider variety of enterprises to operate out of individuals' homes. Given the rise of e-commerce and other online transactions, this would largely formalize types of commerce that already happen while enabling communities to locally capture more of the economic and social benefits that such businesses generate when physically grounded. As an example, in 2018 California legalized "microenterprise home kitchen operations," allowing anyone to run a licensed restaurant out of their home.¹

While models ranging from farmer's markets to street fairs to food trucks already offer relatively informal opportunities for a small business to have a physical footprint in a neighborhood, home businesses take this a step further, with even lower capital costs and fewer administrative hurdles to clear.



1. la.eater.com/2020/9/2/21418664/riverside-ab-626-home-restaurants-legal-california-chefs

Neighborhood Serendipity Protocols

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Problem

Many city dwellers complain that they do not know their neighbors and suffer from a dearth of opportunities to meet new people outside of narrow domains such as work and school. Many of the remaining opportunities for serendipitous encounters involve consumption—at bars and restaurants—or are only available to a subset of the general population, as in the case of parents bringing their children to a playground. While this is clearly a complex and deep-seated problem, exacerbated by phenomena ranging from economic conditions to technology, there may be simple and straightforward opportunities to alleviate it, however incrementally, by increasing serendipity at the neighborhood level.

Participants

Individual neighborhood residents and visitors

Infrastructure

Mobile apps that facilitate localized interaction

Pattern

Although the impulse to solve problems using mobile apps has long since become cliché, serendipitous interactions with one's neighbors are occurrences that apps still offer the potential to encourage. Dating apps and social media both provide imperfect models for the possibility of digitally augmented social interaction: the former by facilitating in-person meetings using location as a criterion and the latter by establishing digital forms of serendipity that are decoupled from their physical counterparts. There remains an opportunity to use localized social media (or something like it) to support a broader range of in-person interactions beyond dating, with a particular focus on the neighborhood as a meaningful geographic scope.

