



# Find the perfect location

By Michael Sherlock  
co-author of *Jumpshift!*

The most complex of retail property issues can be reduced to a simple realisation – it's your customers' needs that have to be catered for. Bakers must keep in mind a few key points when looking at developing a new store.

During my career I have been both a bakery retailer and shopping centre developer, which has been helpful. If you can see how a deal stacks up on both sides, for the tenant and the landlord, ideally you can have a win-win for both. In selecting a site for your bakery I have found that the old adage of 'position, position, position' can be better understood by applying the following four commandments:

**Access:** Access to the centre and site for pedestrians and cars to approach the complex and bakery should be obvious, easy and inexpensive. Anything that makes it difficult for cars and consumers to enter the centre/store should be removed; examples are garden beds and ramps that treat customers like they are in a cattle run. Never accept steps in front of your bakery, they will decrease the customer count.

The idea of charging for parking in shopping centres is a difficult balancing act. Parking should be free for the first 180 minutes in suburban centres. It's OK to stop the park and rides, but not at the expense of discouraging shoppers looking for your great products.

**Exposure:** The centre/tenancy and its signs should be well exposed to all passing cars and pedestrians. Potential customers should be able at a glance to fully identify your retail offer is it a bakery/patisserie/bakery cafe/cake shop/pie shop or a combination?

Planting of trees and shrubs should be selective to provide shade or ground cover – not to hide the bakery and its signage. The truth is that the branding of your bakery and the signage is king. If you have ever dealt with a retail architect, you need to remind them that you will be there serving customers long after they have moved on with their poncey ideas.

**Tenancy mix:** Developers need to group together the compatible traders so they can trade off each other and make it easier for shoppers. Ideally, a bakery should be next to or near a newsagent, another early-morning trader. The other obvious co-traders are other fresh foodies, a supermarket and chemist. As a bakery needs a lot of customers, it is ideal to be near similar stores with a high generation of customers. The other thing to look for are traders that open the same hours as a bakery. Most bakeries are closed by 7pm, so being near shops such as take-away joints that only get busy at that time will not provide great spin-off benefits.

**Ant trail:** Every centre develops its own ant trail where customers naturally walk in moving around a centre. This has to be designed to eliminate the dead spots where customers do not walk. I always found that if your bakery was located between the exit to a supermarket and the car park you would pick up more customers who bought the bread on the way out and top loaded it on top of the trolley.

You need to have a good look at the site or the plans of the development before you sign on the dotted line. A bakery is expensive to set up, so do your research as it will pay off. Find out the ant trail, the traffic generators, and wait until everything is in place.

If a centre developer can provide these four 'commandments' to a bakery/retailer, then they have a chance to trade well and be a regular payer of market rent. I have opened more than 400 shops and if the environment is right, the store can trade strongly, never missing its rent for more than 30 years. I can also recall where developers thinking short-term have ignored them, leading to lots of heartache.

It always has been a win/win situation for both retailers and developers/centre owners to meet the challenges/opportunities and keep attracting customers in this new and rapidly changing environment.

Michael Sherlock, former CEO of Brumby's Bakeries and co-author of the recently published *Jumpshift!*, has suggestions for bakers on delivering exceptional customer service in these tough economic times. ■

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