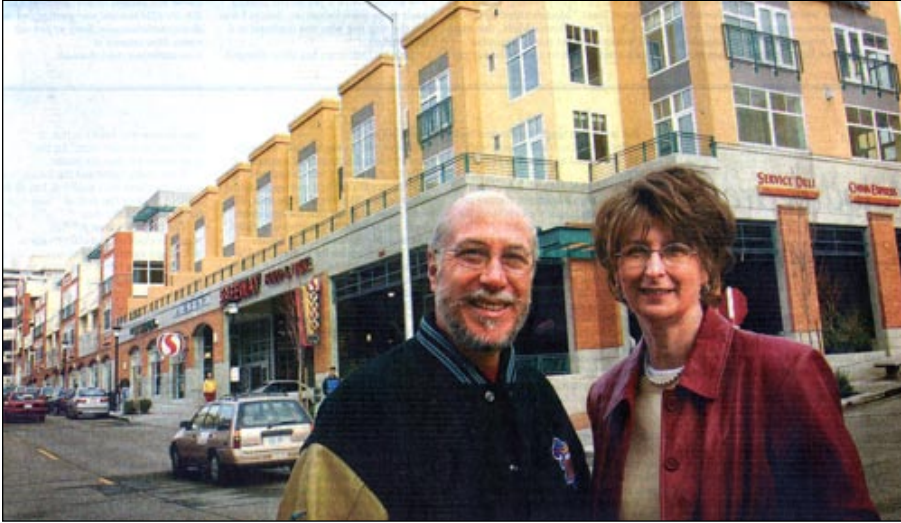


HOME/REAL ESTATE

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SECTION I

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ELLEN M. BANNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Jay and Sandy Lieberman recently moved from Arizona to Seattle and bought in TriBeCa, which is over the new Safeway on Queen Anne's Mercer Street.

Urban flavor

Townhouses, apartments atop supermarkets are a growing trend

By **Mark Hinshaw**

Special to The Seattle Times

Jay and Sandy Lieberman live right on top of where they shop. With the opening of TriBeCa on lower Queen Anne Hill — 51 flats and townhouses rising three stories above a Safeway — the Liebermans have become part of a development trend: multiple-floor dwellings above supermarkets.

For decades, large grocery stores followed a pretty standard formula — freestanding, single-story boxes set back from the street by a large parking lot. In recent years, though, stores in urban areas have reversed that formula by building up against the sidewalk and placing the parking off to the side in the rear — like the Safeway stores in Crown Hill and Capitol Hill.

But now, the idea of using the “air space” above the stores has taken root. Jefferson Square in West Seattle was an early example. Then, a few years ago, Uwajimaya in the International District was re-built with apartments on top. And last year, the quirky, five-story residential building called Epi in Fremont opened atop a ground-floor PCC market.

The Liebermans, who are in their mid-50s and retired, moved into TriBeCa on First Avenue West and Mercer Street a couple months ago. They were looking for an alternative to

the conventional detached house on an individual lot (like their previous home in Arizona) and found this new way of living offers a whole new set of choices.

For one thing, they are choosing to break their bond with a powerful tool of transport and symbol of status — the automobile.

“Doctors and dentists are all around us, we walk to events at Seattle Center, and we are still discovering the restaurants,” says Jay Lieberman. “Even our insurance agent is down the street. It’s like living in a small town.”

“We love the sense of a complete community,” says Sandy Lieberman. “Everything is a few minutes away.”

“We take the elevator downstairs to shop, and they let us bring the grocery cart right up and into the house,” says Jay. “But the best thing is that we can walk to everything else in the neighborhood.”

Dramatic lifestyle change

That’s quite a contrast to the practices of the past 50 years, when we have been sprawling across the landscape; consuming farmlands, wetlands and forests; and laying down subdivisions, shopping centers and suburban-style business parks in their place. Zoning regulations required “pure” groupings of land use — single-family residences in one area, shopping in another, jobs in yet another. One of the consequences has been that most people have to get in a car and drive blocks or miles to do anything. Buying a bag of groceries, picking up a child at day care or going to the dentist means slogging through thick



ELLEN M. BANNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Jay, left, and Sandy Lieberman check out a model of the TriBeCa, where they recently moved. The lower Queen Anne complex is above a Safeway and near doctor's offices and entertainment. "It's like living in a small town," says Jay Lieberman.

ropes of traffic. No wonder we have a transportation problem.

But something is changing. And while we might only be seeing the tip of the iceberg, there is a definite shift in choices and behavior. Perhaps the traffic has finally gotten bad enough; some people simply are tired of wasting time in queues of cars.

Or it could be that folks are thinking ahead to their own futures. Although we are living longer than in the past, at some point we might not be able to drive anymore. Some people probably do not relish the prospect of growing cut off from the pleasures of normal life.

Another factor is the state's Growth Management Act, which has been in effect for more than 13 years and places limits on expansion and directs growth into areas served by roads, transit and utilities.

Whatever the reason, more and more people now are living in forms of housing that once were considered novel in this region. Development of cottages, townhouses, in-town apartments and condominiums has increased dramatically, and not just in Seattle but in mid-sized cities and small towns as well.

Many cities are revising their building and zoning codes to allow for a greater mixture of uses and densities, both within neighborhoods and within buildings.

This is not so much new as a rediscovery of patterns of development common before the 1950s — walkable streets; nearby shops and services; and more compact, diverse and sociable neighborhoods.

Mixing and matching

With the opening of TriBeCa, these patterns have re-emerged, and now it seems that mixing a supermarket with housing makes sense — even for a national chain like Safeway. But this is no typical Safeway. Tucked into the sloping site, only the entrance pokes out. All the parking for the 35,000-square-foot store is underground. There's a special cart-only escalator, similar to one in the Target store in Northgate. Such escalators have been common in Canadian supermarkets for years.

In fact, the developer of TriBeCa is a Canadian. Don Milliken has brought his years of development experience in Vancouver, B.C., to Seattle, and his previous developments — the Larry's Market complex on Mercer Street and the Harvard Market in the Pike/Pine Corridor — were ground-breaking enter-

Developer:

TriBeCa-style

housing is the future



TriBeCa residents can enjoy the views from the roof deck, which is open to all. Other perks include taking the elevator to the Safeway below and bringing the "grocery cart right up and into the house" says resident Jay Lieberman.

prises. Milliken is pursuing an even more ambitious plan for Denny Way and Westlake Avenue, with hundreds of dwellings in towers and townhouses above a new form of QFC store.

Milliken might have found it much easier to build a free-standing supermarket, or a condominium complex. But he is a strong proponent of mixing uses.

"It was a challenge," he says. "Nevertheless, we concluded that not only would the neighborhood prefer to have a project of this type, but that it is simply the type of development that is the way to go for cities today."

For his \$27 million TriBeCa project, which was designed by Sienna Architects, Milliken was careful to blend the housing into the scale and texture of Queen Anne. Fifty-one dwellings - ranging in size from 750 to 1,600 square feet and in price from \$230,000 to \$675,000 - are terraced three stories above the supermarket, and residents have access to secure parking.

The Liebermans were impressed with the building's solid, soundproof construction. Even though their home looks out onto busy Mercer Street, there is hardly a hint of that inside. And if they want to enjoy the outdoors, there is a well-landscaped roof deck with dramatic views of Elliott Bay and the Space Needle.

Living on top of a grocery store might not appeal to everyone; some people will continue to hang on to their ideal of a large home on a large lot. But the growing number of places like TriBeCa demonstrates that we are — finally — being offered attractive alternatives.

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