



BUSINESS / RETAIL

With Pop-ups at Boston Seaport, It Takes a Village

WS Development believes Boston is underserved by new retail concepts.

By [David Moin](#) on July 18, 2018



The Current at Boston Seaport. Rendering by nArchitects

Pop-ups are ubiquitous but there's a different take on the format debuting Sunday in the Boston Seaport.

It's called The Current and it's a permanent setting for nine contiguous pop-ups, each selling different products yet tied together by a common theme, mission or narrative, giving the businesses a dimension beyond the product offering.

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The Current plans to host a new set of pop-ups every six months, with a different theme each time. The first iteration, called the She-Village at The Current, contains female-founded and female-run businesses conveying empowerment.

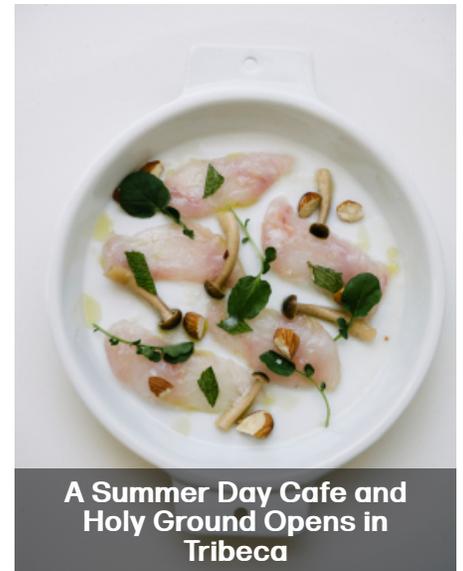
“The strength of The Current is being able to bring like-minded, mission-based businesses all together in one space,” said Samantha David, chief operating officer of WS Development, which is a major participant in Boston Seaport’s transformation.

WS Development, based in Chestnut Hill, Mass., develops, owns, operates and leases urban buildings and lifestyle, power, community and mixed-use centers. It is the retail partner for South Boston’s 23-acre Seaport district. WS Development also controls 12.5 acres of the seaport where it is creating offices, a hotel, residential, parking lots and other uses. Boston Seaport is the city’s largest development project.

The Current contains nine small boutiques, ranging from 180 to 380 square feet and resembling cabanas, considering their diminutive size and wood frames. Each has its own entrance.

Brooklyn-based architecture firm nArchitects created the design, taking inspiration from the tiny house movement and to convey a “micro urban identity” with modular fabrication and green spaces. “In the middle of the largest new developments in Boston, we imagined a more intimate retail experience. In the spirit of a village center, we hoped to connect the typically indoor experience of retail with the civic excitement of streets and plazas,” said Mimi Hoang, principal at nArchitects.

The Current runs alongside the Seaport Common public space and Seaport Boulevard, forming a retail corner. Nearby are several new entries to the seaport, among them SoulCycle, Juice Press, Warby Parker, Outdoor Voices, Mr. Sid, Shake Shack, Lululemon and ShowPlace Icon Theatre. So far, WS Development has brought in about 500,000 square feet of retail to the seaport, or about a third of the targeted 1.5 million square feet of retail.



As David sees it, The Current is multipurpose — to incubate start-ups, expose digital-only businesses to brick-and-mortar and possibly graduate them to permanent retail spaces within the seaport or other WS Development properties, introduce out-of-town brands to the market, and support companies that stand for something other than just selling product. Even if The Current doesn't project the immensity of a flagship anchor store, it becomes "a focal point" for Boston Seaport, said David.

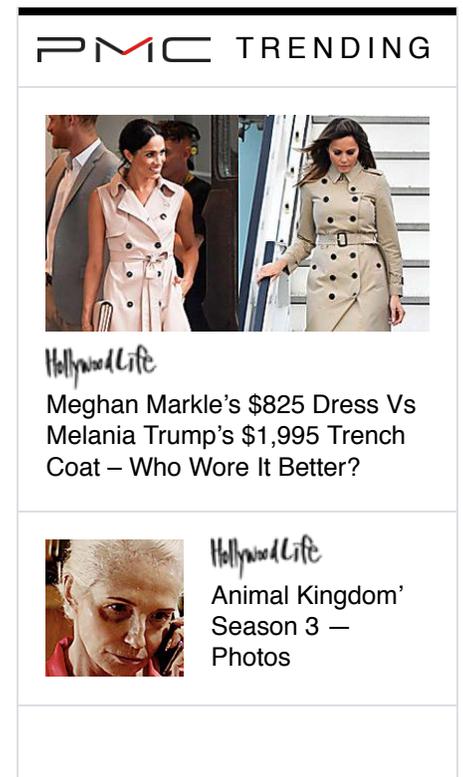
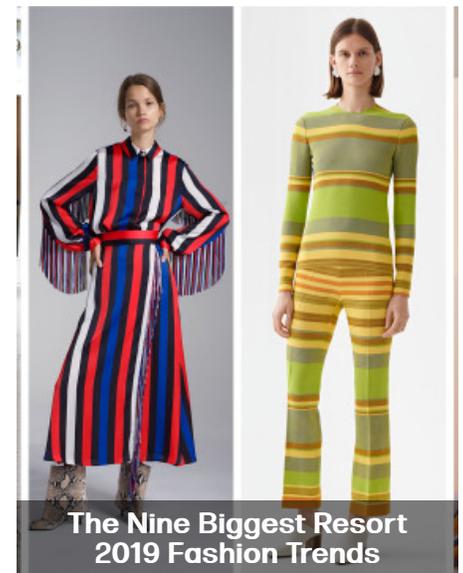
"Most of the pop-ups are young and new, but almost all of them have really impactful online followings," said David. The She-Village at The Current, she added, "creates this amazing, ongoing female block party. It will inspire other women and small businesses to grow their own ideas and tell their stories."

For two of the brands at the She-Village, it's their first foray into brick-and-mortar. They are Brass, a women's apparel retailer with "accessible, high-quality" pieces, and Booty by Brabants, a Rio-inspired booty-lifting activewear firm. For Orly Khon, a local online florist with a pop-up at a local Restoration Hardware, the She-Village marks the firm's first storefront.

With five other brands, the She-Village marks their entry into the Boston market. They are Monica + Andy, organic essentials for moms and babies; The Giving Keys, a social-impact-focused jewelry brand; Margaux, a luxury shoemaker; Bref, a Montreal gallery and boutique with pieces from emerging artists and brands, and Havenly, an interior design firm. Cynthia Rowley will also have a pop-up at the She-Village.

Each brand will run its own boutique, though there is a team of nine women at WS Development working on marketing, graphics, landscaping and operations of The Current.

David said selecting the first round of pop-ups for The Current was "an amazing problem" since so many businesses could have been picked. Aside from reflecting female empowerment, the key criteria was whether the businesses would be complementary and work well together in the same setting. Another criteria was whether the brands would appeal to the



wide range of residents, office workers and visitors in the area, from the twenty- and thirtysomethings working at Amazon, which took 500,000 square feet of space in the Seaport, to retirees and empty-nesters.

“We look at the market and try to uncover what people are thirsting for,” said David. “Boston is generally underserved in emerging retail concepts, fashion and what’s new. The community has changed significantly here over the last decade — we now have the highest concentration of Millennials in the country, being over a third of Boston’s population. As such, we sought out first to brick-and-mortar concepts, new-to-Boston brands and those that we thought would create a mix worthy of exploring and sticky enough to bring people back.”

David declined to divulge what the theme of the second iteration of The Current will be six months from now, aside from saying, “We are quite committed to being mission-driven. The shops are selling goods but also coming together for a second purpose.”

Asked if The Current could be duplicated, David replied, “It could certainly travel to our other projects,” whether that’s Chestnut Hill, Mass., Madison, Wis., Tampa or Palm Beach, Fla., or elsewhere.



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ucci-Dapper Dan lineup, which launched imagines archival pieces of the designer specially tracksuits and jacket styles – in Gucci's signature fabrics and decorative motifs. Gucci leitmotifs, including embroidered medallions, bold letterings and the house's signature green and red stripes, stand out on their jackets, T-shirts and tanks, in addition to their hats, which are offered in GG-printed nylon and leather. A new yellow Gucci logo also makes its appearance, inspired by the original sign of the Harlem store, reports @sandrasalibian. (via @marcopoulos_official) #wwdfashion

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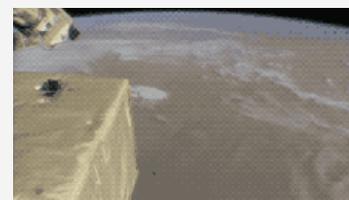
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