

MEDIA

San Francisco struggling to fill empty downtown storefronts: 'Vacancies operate like a virus'

One artist suggested turning vacant store fronts into public restrooms



By **Hanna Panreck** · Fox News

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San Francisco grapples with crime crisis as exodus continues

Former San Francisco police officer Joel Aylworth weighs in on the 'crisis' created by city officials on 'Cross Country.'

Cities such as San Francisco are struggling to fill [vacant downtown storefronts](#) while some try to find alternatives to fill ground-floor retail spaces, such as "small-scale manufacturing" and public restrooms.

"The ground-floor restaurant or ground-floor coffee shop or bar should not be seen as the moneymaker for an office high-rise, but as a benefit to the community to serve anyone that comes downtown," Robbie Silver, the head of San Francisco's Downtown Community Benefit District, [told the New York Times](#). "That mind-set has not really happened yet."

The paper also noted that Silver said "vacancies operate like a virus," as every empty storefront makes it more difficult for other downtown businesses to stay alive.

The New York Times reported that cities, like San Francisco, need to start considering alternatives to retail space.



SAN FRANCISCO HAS THE WORST PANDEMIC RECOVERY IN THE NATION AS THE CITY IS MIRED IN CRIME, HOMELESSNESS: STUDY

Ilana Preuss, the CEO of a consulting firm that helps cities revitalize their downtown areas, said "mixed use" buildings, which contain office space or housing in the upper floors and a commercial space on the first floor, were "everywhere."

"To fill vacant downtown storefronts now, cities will have to consider other such uses. Perhaps fewer coffee shops, and more health clinics, day care centers, university classrooms, live/work spaces and fabrication shops," the New York Times reported.

An artist who lives in New York suggested filling the empty stores with public restrooms, art studios or "spaces for free cultural programming or city services."



A sign which reads "Retail for Lease" is seen in downtown San Francisco as the city struggles to return to its pre-pandemic downtown occupancy rate, falling behind many other major cities around the country, according to local media, in California, U.S., June 27, 2023. REUTERS/Carlos Barria (REUTERS/Carlos Barria)

[MAJOR SAN FRAN RETAILER CONDEMNS CITY, STATE LEADERS IN FULL-PAGE AD: 'ABJECT DISREGARD FOR CIVILIZED CONDUCT'](#)

to [close their doors](#) due to safety concerns.

Whole Foods announced they would be shutting down their San Francisco location due to safety concerns in April.

In Washington, D.C., a Giant grocery store location announced it would stop selling major name brand items in an effort to deter theft.



A woman walks in an empty commercial retail area near Union Square in San Francisco as the city struggles to return to its pre-pandemic downtown occupancy rate, falling behind many other major cities around the country, according to local media, in California, U.S., June 7, 2023. REUTERS/Carlos Barria (REUTERS/Carlos Barria)

The grocery chain's location said it was [removing brands](#) like Advil, Colgate and Tide from their shelves in an effort to avoid shutting down due to high rate of theft.

The store had already taken drastic steps to increase security. Giant shoppers will also be required to show their receipts before exiting the store, according to the Washington Post.

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Hanna Panreck is an associate editor at Fox News.

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