

WHAT'S TRENDING IN ENTERTAINMENT DESIGN

By Brandon Willey

In the fast-changing entertainment world, location-based entertainment (LBE) leaders are adopting new design approaches. These strategies focus on improving the guest experience, being eco-friendly, offering interactive features, and providing top-notch amenities. This changes how venues are designed and run and raises the bar for what guests expect at your establishment.

Putting Guests First

One big design idea is called Guest First. The Guest First design philosophy embraces the importance of focusing on the guest experience when developing or redesigning a bowling or family entertainment center. According to Natasha Whittaker from Dynamic Designs, this principle calls for “creating a well-rounded center that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also safe and operationally feasible.” She emphasizes that “owners must be willing to invest in the design phase, recognizing that thoughtful planning and financial commitment at this early stage can significantly enhance the guest experience and the facility's long-term success.”



Natasha Whittaker

Designing with the guest in mind also means changing how spaces are set up to match what people want. Caroline “CC” Cannon from Thrillz High Flying Adventure Park suggests opening up layouts, making impressive entrances, and ensuring guests have clear views of the fun happening at the center in order to build excitement.



Caroline “CC” Cannon



Grand lobby with sight lines

And the look is changing too. Whittaker notes that venues are moving towards brighter, more relaxed atmospheres. They're ditching the dark industrial feel for softer colors and adding natural elements like plants and wood.

It's also important to consider everyone who might come, from kids to adults. Creating spaces and activities for all ages ensures that families can have fun together. As Cannon explains, “It's important to create the specific vibe that you want the guest to experience, and that starts before they even enter the center all the way to the marketing the guest receives after their visit.”

Sustainability Matters

The imperative for sustainable design in the development of bowling entertainment centers is growing as the industry pivots toward operational efficiency and environmental consciousness. Sustainable design is no longer an optional add-on but a core component of modern planning and development. Integrating green technologies, eco-friendly materials, and energy-efficient components marks a significant evolution in how today's centers are conceived and constructed. Whittaker highlights the use of LED lighting, low-flow toilets, and bathroom enhancements as examples of sustainable practices that can significantly reduce an environmental footprint.

LED lighting, for instance, consumes up to 75% less energy than traditional incandescent lighting, while low-flow toilets can save thousands of gallons of water annually, underscoring the potential for significant operational cost savings.

Interactive and Upscale Experiences

“Interactivity is so in right now!” emphasizes Cannon. The integration of technologies such as projection-mapped floor games as well as attractions that have physical interactive elements like a trampoline with a vertical wall that has lighted buttons to tap while jumping exemplifies the shift towards creating dynamic, engaging environments and attractions.

Whittaker goes on to mention that the increased role of food and beverage in elevating guests’ experience cannot be overstated. No longer an afterthought, this culinary shift has been driven by the growth of competitive socializing LBE concepts like Puttshack, Flight Club, and F1 Arcade.

Additionally, introducing outdoor entertainment areas and green spaces adds another dimension to the guest experience and new revenue potential for operators. Outdoor areas and green spaces offer a break from the indoor excitement and cater to people who enjoy being outside. Taking inspiration from concepts that merge entertainment with natural settings, such as Camp Pickle (but without the pickleball), centers can offer guests a unique blend of activities and relaxation opportunities. These spaces provide a break from the high-energy indoor environment and cater to a growing preference for experiences that connect with the outdoors and offer a diverse experience.

Creating Immersive Experiences

Another big trend is designing spaces that tell a story and engage all the senses. This means paying attention to every detail, from the design of the building to the lighting and special effects. The goal is to transport guests to another world, whether it’s a historical setting or a fantasy land.

Whittaker emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the smallest details to ensure consistency and depth throughout the facility. This could involve anything from the architectural design of key areas in the center to incorporating specific materials, lighting, projections, and effects that collectively support the atmosphere you want to deliver.

In an industry constantly evolving, entertainment center operators embrace new design strategies to stay ahead. From prioritizing the guest experience to integrating sustainability and providing interactive, upscale offerings, these changes are reshaping not only the physical spaces but also the expectations of visitors.

Bottom line: By keeping up with the latest tech, catering to different tastes, and paying attention to design, venues can attract more visitors and stay successful for the long haul. ●



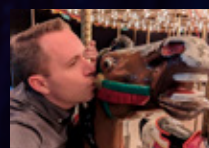
VIP bowling settee



Unique seating options



Unique mini attractions



Brandon Willey, ICAE, is co-founder of the LBX Collective and Premier LBX Group, co-host of The LBX Daily Show, and founder and CEO of Hownd. Brandon has an intense passion for the attractions industry and extensive knowledge of location-based entertainment. Brandon is the former chair of IAAPA’s FEC Committee and now sits on the North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee. You can connect with him at [LinkedIn.com/in/bwilley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bwilley).