



CASE STUDY

Ridgefield, Washington, Recruits Grocery-Anchored Development Using Buxton Analytics

The City of Ridgefield, Washington, has seen a lot of population growth in recent years – so much growth, in fact, that they are the fastest growing city in the state. People are flocking to Ridgefield for its small-town charm, natural environment, and proximity to larger cities.



With the population increase comes a need for services to support the growing community. A survey of residents revealed that a grocery store was a top priority, but telling the story of why Ridgefield was a great place for grocers to invest was a challenge that city leaders needed help to address.

Ridgefield found the help that it needed in Buxton. The company's experience working with both private and public entities, extensive roster of retail clients, and unique relationship model gave the city the confidence it needed to begin a partnership in 2016.

Finding the Right Grocery Match

The initial goal of the partnership was simple: connect Ridgefield with the right retailers who would meet the city's needs. Ridgefield City Manager Steve Stuart explains that city leaders "wanted to make sure a priority was a grocer and not just any grocer – a grocer that fit the unique qualities of Ridgefield."

PROFILE:

Rapidly growing city in Washington with 7,000+ residents

OBJECTIVE:

Recruiting a grocery-anchored retail development

RESULTS:

Recruited a 78,000 sq. ft. grocery-anchored development estimated to generate \$140,000 in sales tax revenue on construction and \$220,000 in annual sales tax revenue

Buxton carefully studied Ridgefield's trade area to identify both national and regional chains that open in markets like Ridgefield and that fit the city's criteria. Ultimately, Buxton recommended an independent grocery banner under Spokane-based URM. Buxton sent an introductory retail match report to URM and the city quickly landed an appointment with the company's vice president of store development. URM liked what the analytics said about Ridgefield and ended up recommending a different banner – fully-owned subsidiary Rosauers.

Overcoming Obstacles

At the time, Rosauers operated more than 20 locations in the Pacific Northwest but had no locations as far west as Ridgefield. The brand's management team was cautious about its westward expansion and needed proof that Ridgefield was the right fit.

"We spent over a year continuing to put more information together for them, using the analytics, using comparative analytics with their other stores to show how a Ridgefield Rosauers would perform in their chain, and showing them that it would be a high performer," says Stuart.

The numbers convinced Rosauers to move forward. With the help of a developer, the city and Rosauers identified the best site. That site presented a new challenge: the land was owned by the Port of Ridgefield, and a retail-focused development wasn't the port's priority. Once again, Ridgefield turned to Buxton's analytics in combination with other information to demonstrate "how this grocer-led development could create added benefits for all of the employment areas surrounding it," explains Stuart.

Economic Impact

In early 2018, the deal closed and the new 53,000 sq. ft. grocery store is scheduled to open in August 2019. But the benefits to the city of Ridgefield didn't end with landing a grocery store; the grocery store sparked an entire grocery-anchored development with an additional 25,000 sq. ft. of retail space that will open at the same time. The project also led to a separate vertical mixed-use development across the street. Estimated sales tax revenue on the construction of the grocery-anchored development is \$140,000. Additionally, the grocer and first phase businesses are expected to generate \$220,000 per year in sales tax for the city.

Reflecting on the project, Stuart notes that Buxton played an important role in the process. From helping to make the introduction to URM to providing on-demand access to the information needed to answer Rosauers' follow up questions, Buxton empowered Ridgefield to overcome obstacles and drive the development process.

Before partnering with Buxton, some Ridgefield leaders wanted to simply "knock on doors" and talk to retailers without data to back up the pitch.

"When we came into it, there were a lot of people hoping for the best, but hope is not a strategy," concludes Stuart. "That became the rallying cry for us in digging in and being more professional in our recruiting efforts to go after what we want to see here in Ridgefield."

If your community needs help taking a proactive approach to retail development, contact Buxton today to schedule an initial consultation.