



**BY BRANDI SMITH**

**Going Live! In Austin: Retail Live!'s founder talks to REDNews about current trends**

After 13 years in commercial real estate in Tampa, Florida, Stacey Gilham made a big move; she packed up and headed to Austin, Texas.

"I underestimated the difficulty moving from one major market to another would present," she says. "I needed a way to get to know the players in the market as well as to better understand the retailers in Texas, which varied greatly compared to where I had come from."

The result was Retail Live!, a retail CRE trade event, which Gilham founded in November 2011. The first show was held the next August in Austin.

"Retail Live! presented me with an opportunity to touch nearly every active retailer and broker, landlord and developer in the market," Gilham says. "It started at a very personal level and to this day guides many decisions: What do I want to see at a trade show? What are some of my frustrations? What kind of connections do I want to make?"

From that first show in Austin, Retail Live! has expanded into Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Orlando, providing commercial real estate professionals a cost-effective, yet meaningful way to connect with retailers and industry professionals.

"That's something that didn't previously exist," says Gilham. "At Retail Live! we believe that you can make those connections without the high-pressure environment that so many other trade shows lend themselves to. If attendees are relaxed and having a good time those connections that ultimately lead to deals, will come organically."

As the Retail Live! team gears up for the next event, set for Aug. 31 in Austin, *REDNews* wanted to check in to see what kind of trends Gilham has seen here in Texas and across the U.S.

"Previously, certain categories of retail were seen as undesirable or second-tier. From gyms to family-entertainment concepts in general, those uses were viewed as the back-up plan or ruled

out altogether,” Gilham says. “Today, those very tenants that struggled to be placed in traditional developments are now highly sought-after.”

In general, she says Texas very much reflects national trends, with each market providing its own quirks. Gilham says one of the things she enjoys about working in retail is watching it evolve.

“It is always changing. It is no secret that the retail landscape is in transition. Retail development used to be driven by soft goods; entertainment and restaurants were somewhat of an afterthought,” she says. “Today, as nearly any industry publication or professional will point out, the drivers are fitness, entertainment and dining.”

Gilham says those shifts can be seen at Retail Live! events; though the number of retailers hasn’t changed, she says the makeup and mix is considerably different than it was when she started the event in 2012.

“We had a wide range of retailers in size and type,” says Gilham. “Because of the way retail has shifted in the past five years with a much heavier focus on dining and entertainment, we have seen a higher percentage of restaurant, fitness and entertainment-driven concepts in attendance at our shows.”



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To learn more about Retail Live! (including attendance and sponsorship), visit [retaillive.com](http://retaillive.com) or email Gilham at [stacey@retaillive.com](mailto:stacey@retaillive.com).

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