

THE PACKING HOUSE

ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

A public/private partnership catalyzes downtown development through a focus on local food

LESSONS

- Effective partnerships among the public sector, private developers, and local food-oriented entrepreneurs can result in the creation of unique spaces that reflect the culture of the surrounding area.
- A food hall with a variety of local vendors can generate placemaking benefits that catalyze new development in the surrounding area.
- Food halls can facilitate opportunities to support budding food-based entrepreneurs by creating programs and spaces that train people in the culinary arts and support the expansion of area food businesses.

QUICK FACTS

Location

440 South Anaheim Boulevard,
Anaheim, CA 92805

Project type

Food hall

Development team

City of Anaheim, LAB Holding

Project cost

\$11.7 million

Project size

42,000 square feet (3,902 sq m);
one-acre (0.4 ha) land area

Project status

Opened in 2014

Financing

Anaheim Redevelopment Agency, HUD
funding for seismic retrofit, tenant/city-
paid improvements

Equity partner

Not applicable

The success of the Packing House has helped support the revitalization of downtown Anaheim. (Chet Frohlich, 2015)



THE PACKING HOUSE is a 42,000-square-foot (3,902 sq m) food hall that opened in 2014 in downtown Anaheim, California. The project, spearheaded by the city of Anaheim and LAB Holding LLC, transformed a former citrus packing facility—originally constructed in 1919—into a space that hosts a variety of local food vendors and includes an outdoor area that features community gatherings and a weekly farmers market.

Features and Innovations

- **42,000-square-foot (3,902 sq m) food hall:** The Packing House includes a mix of 28 vendors, such as bakeries, restaurants, coffee shops, and cocktail bars. All businesses are locally run, with no national chains on site.
- **Farmers market:** The adjacent Farmers Park hosts a weekly farmers market, operated by the Downtown Anaheim Association, that offers high-quality foods from southern California producers.
- **Food-focused events:** LAB Holding funds frequent community events, in collaboration with building tenants, outside the Packing House. These events have a strong food focus and celebrate the history of the citrus industry.

Creating Value: People, Planet, Profit

The city of Anaheim's redevelopment agency purchased the Packing House building in 2000, with a goal of creating a space that would attract residents and visitors to downtown. After engaging with developer LAB Holding and conducting community outreach sessions, the importance of granting public access to the building became clear, because it was one of the few remaining historic structures downtown.

To be true to the history of the building, the city and LAB decided to create a communal food hall with all local vendors. The city invested \$9 million to prepare the building and worked to streamline regulations that would affect development of the food hall by creating a "concierge service" for the project that is now available to all Anaheim businesses. This Business Assistance Program walks new entrepreneurs through the permitting process and assists them with construction.

John Woodhead, Anaheim's director of community and economic development, explains why the city decided to invest in the creation of the Packing House, stating: "Food-oriented retail was the answer we ultimately received by asking: How can we establish a cultural and commercial hub for our historic core? How can we preserve our remaining historic resources? How can we bring more activity to the heart of the city? And how can we give people a compelling reason to reside here? All of these goals are interdependent."

The Packing House supports the ongoing revitalization of downtown Anaheim. Since 2005, Anaheim has added more than 1,500 downtown residential units, and plans exist for at least another 1,000 in the next few years.

Area real estate companies, including Brookfield Residential, which is marketing a condominium development across the street from the Packing House, have cited the mix of local vendors at the food hall as a key amenity that attracts residents and business to the area.

Downtown Anaheim is also seeing the construction of new restaurants and retail space, and the commercial office market has rebounded. LAB, which recently purchased the Packing House property from the city, is advancing plans to transform nearby sites into commercial and mixed-used projects, including space for craft brewing, wine production, distilling, and additional retail, office, and residential space.

"Working with local restaurateurs is a great way to develop projects that reflect the spirit of your city's cultural environment and historic structures."

John Woodhead, Director of Community and Economic Development, City of Anaheim

LAB reports that the Packing House is performing well beyond the company's expectations, in large part because of its unique mix of tenants. Chris Bennett, director of development for LAB, explains the philosophy behind supporting local vendors: "We work with local independent operators in all of our projects. This approach allows us to create one-of-a-kind environments, have passionate operators who are dedicated to the project's success, and also keeps money circulating in the local economy."

To further support Anaheim's emerging chefs and entrepreneurs, LAB developed a program for new restaurateurs to audition for permanent spaces. The program has already allowed two businesses that started out in the weekly farmers market to move into the Packing House. In addition, a chef-run culinary arts program is located in an on-site event space, and LAB is working with the city to develop an incubator program that will help facilitate additional food entrepreneurship opportunities.