

Places where people belong: contemporary destinations which celebrate a cultural legacy



Tachfine; Jardín Plaza Cúcuta; CityLife Shopping District; Nikolsky



Architecture; design concept; culture.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sonae Sierra is an international retail real estate company but it doesn't mean we leave aside the local impact and signature. Our Development Services team create design concepts that merge and celebrate the local culture in our and our clients' shopping centres.
- We successfully blend elements of past and present, tradition and innovation, to create places which integrate seamlessly with the local environment and community, allowing visitors to enjoy deeper experiences and a sense of belonging.

SOLUTION

All of our projects are unique with distinctive traces and elements. We've created in our recent development projects unique concepts with defined cultural characteristics, such as:

- **Tachfine:** inspired by the beautiful and harmonious arabesque patterns and traditional Maroquin arches, doors, tiles and ceilings.
- **Jardín Plaza Cúcuta:** where we will immerse visitors in the textures and colours of the natural tropical environment, integrating lush green areas and architectural design inspired by the patterns of nature.
- **CityLife Shopping District:** our design integrated the traditional piazza or urban square – the heart of Italian urban life – and landmark features at key interaction points to encourage people to gather and mix.
- **Nikolsky:** we created a design concept based on the timeline of the city's rich history and cultural importance as a centre of scientific knowledge within Ukraine.

Places where people belong: contemporary destinations which celebrate a cultural legacy



Tachfine; Jardín Plaza Cúcuta; CityLife Shopping District; Nikolsky



Globally



Development Services

Abstract

Sonae Sierra draws inspiration from local culture to conceive and implement inspiring architectural projects in retail and mixed-use destinations. We successfully blend elements of past and present, tradition and innovation, to create places which integrate seamlessly with the local environment and community, allowing visitors to enjoy deeper experiences and a sense of belonging. From Colombia to Italy, Morocco to the Ukraine, we have embraced the challenge of creating culturally meaningful shopping centres with impressive results.

Introduction

Creating a new destination that can position itself as an integral part of a place that already boasts a rich history and cultural heritage is a challenge, but for Sonae Sierra's Development Services team, it is also the best way to approach an architectural project. Having designed projects in 24 different countries across four continents, we have developed unique know-how and a deep understanding of how to approach this challenge.

continued...

Places where people belong: contemporary destinations which celebrate a cultural legacy

It's more than just adapting the designs to include local characteristics. With thoughtful planning, research and analysis, we take a holistic approach exploring local history, culture and artistic expression and developing a narrative that can unfold within the places we create. It means paying attention to detail and giving meaning and expression even to the small design elements. In operational shopping centres, it means reflecting culture as a dynamic and living entity, renewing it on an ongoing basis by integrating public art, exhibitions, cultural activities and local celebrations. Through this approach, we create places which people want to spend time in. Places that are of the highest architectural quality and are also exciting, uplifting and appeal to people's pride in their local heritage or add depth to their experience of a new culture.

Background

Sonae Sierra has recently developed four architectural projects which are testament to this strategy in action.

- **Tachfine** is a 24,310m² shopping centre located in Casablanca, Morocco, which opened in 2016. Sonae Sierra provided development and leasing services for the project for Marjane.
- **Jardin Plaza Cúcuta** is a shopping centre under construction in Cúcuta, Colombia, which is being developed by Sonae Sierra and Central Control. Representing a €52 million investment, it will house 180 brands within a gross leasable area (GLA) of 43,000m² and is scheduled to open in 2018.
- **CityLife** is a mixed-use urban regeneration scheme in Milan, Italy, which offers employees, residents and visitors an area of impeccable architectural quality that integrates green and community spaces through a design to promote social wellbeing. The shopping district, which was inaugurated in November 2017, encompasses 100 shop units within 32,000m² of GLA. Sonae Sierra has provided development, leasing and property management services for the shopping district on behalf of Generali Real Estate.

- **Nikolsky** is a mixed use project which was developed in Karkhov, Ukraine, in 2016. It includes a shopping centre of 52,000m² for which Sonae Sierra developed the architectural project.

Challenge

We want people to see their heritage reflected in the destinations we create. From bathrooms to food courts, we seek to ensure that every detail of our designs forms part of the story that we are telling to celebrate the cultural legacy of place. In this way, shopping centres should inspire a sense of pride and belonging among local residents. This in turn can generate higher footfall, higher retail sales for tenants and greater value for shopping centre owners.

We set ourselves this challenge on all the projects we design. The ambition to do something new and distinctive leads us to experiment with new concepts, but we also strike a balance between conceiving new solutions and using proven ones.



Jardín Plaza Cúcuta CGI

Places where people belong: contemporary destinations which celebrate a cultural legacy

Solution

When we undertake a new project, we really get to know the local neighbourhood. We visit the city, its museums and tourist attractions; we wander through the main squares and boulevards; we dine in local restaurants and observe the culture of the local people. Using the insights we have drawn from our experience, we create 'mood boards' which capture the sense of place. We then use the mood boards to draw up design directions in different options which we present to our client who can then choose their preferred inspiration for the architectural concept.

We really listen to our clients. We question deeply to uncover what they have in mind for the project, taking into consideration that they might want to disrupt the local culture and environment as well as celebrate it, and also being cautious not to replicate over-used symbols and clichés. Exploring these tensions all forms part of our cultural engagement process.

This approach of deep research and engagement has enabled us to develop unique design concepts aligned to cultural features and historical references in shopping centres which are now recognised as iconic destinations within their catchment areas and have proven highly popular with residents and visitors alike.

More recently, it has helped us to create architectural projects of outstanding quality in Morocco, Colombia, Italy and the Ukraine:

- At **Tachfine** in Casablanca, Morocco, we drew inspiration from the scientific advances of the Islamic Golden Age, creating a concept that focused on celebrating accomplishments in trigonometry, astronomy and geometry. The shopping centre interior is divided into areas dedicated to each of these themes. Architectural design was inspired by the beautiful and harmonious arabesque patterns and traditional Maroquin arches, doors, tiles and ceilings.



Tachfine entrance

- At **Jardín Plaza Cúcuta** in Cúcuta, Colombia, we will immerse visitors in the textures and colours of the natural tropical environment, integrating lush green areas and architectural design inspired by the patterns of nature. A walk through the shopping centre will connect visitors with the external environment through the presence of nature-based architectural concepts, plants and water features whilst celebrating the culture of traditional markets, handicrafts; costume and local celebrations. In addition, the site will retain 30 ancient indigenous trees and 7,000 newly-planted trees along with a large variety of plant species.

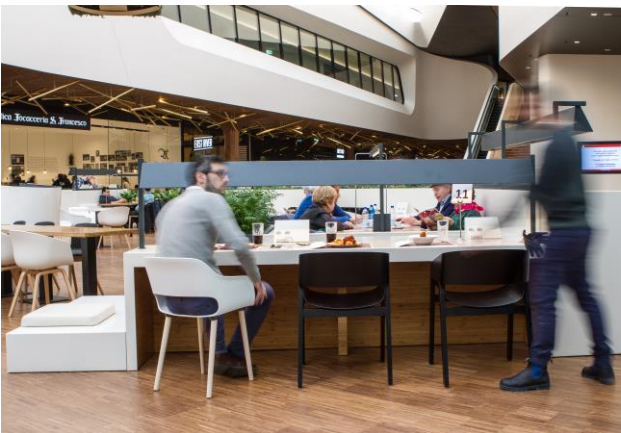


Jardín Plaza Cúcuta food court CGI

- At **CityLife Shopping District** in Milan, Italy, we have reflected the city's propensity for glamour and revived historical urban planning concepts to create places where people can meet. We studied the ancient layout of Italy's cities, which were formally planned around paths and nodes populated by awe-inspiring landmarks. Our design integrated the traditional piazza or urban

Places where people belong: contemporary destinations which celebrate a cultural legacy

square – the heart of Italian urban life – and landmark features at key interaction points to encourage people to gather and mix. Consequently, **CityLife Shopping District** combines cutting-edge architectural features, latest technologies and contemporary art with traditional cultural ideas in an elegant form.



CityLife Shopping District food court

- At **Nikolsky** in Karkhov, Ukraine, we created a design concept based on the timeline of the city's rich history and cultural importance as a centre of scientific knowledge within Ukraine. Time itself is conceived as a thread that unites past and present, and is represented as a historical outline of the Kharkov region that is located around the perimeter of the upper level of the building. Other key architectural features include the "Medallion of Kharkov" which displays the growth of the city throughout its history; the "Tree of Kharkov Personalities", a suspended helical structure embossed with the names of all Kharkov's celebrities and a symbolic line which passes through the central mall area to mark the geographical location of Kharkov as the largest city on the 50th parallel north line of latitude.



Nikolsky – "Tree of Kharkov Personalities"

Moreover, historical references are interwoven into all design elements, from the bathrooms to the car park. Internal boulevards feature patterns inspired by traditional folk designs used to decorate Easter Eggs (pysanka); decorative doors have interpreted the patterns of the Blagoveschensky Cathedral and tenant signs feature the city's historic coat of arms.

Conclusion

With these projects and many others, Sonae Sierra has successfully created cutting-edge, contemporary destinations which celebrate cultural legacies. We have found that creating themed architectural projects does not automatically entail a higher project cost. What is more, they offer commercial and social advantages. Shopping centres designed according to this philosophy have proven themselves as places that people like to be, sustaining high levels of visitor traffic which translate into strong financial performance. They add to visitors' enjoyment and sense of well-being, and help to position these shopping centres as major destinations within their cities.