

Sonae Sierra borrows designs from nature to create award-winning shopping centre



ParkLake



2,600 parking spaces



Bucharest, Romania



Development Services & Sustainability Services



70,000 m²



Architecture; design concept.



200 shops

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Building a shopping centre that truly integrates in its surrounding and it's a part of the environment its truly a challenge. More than designing buildings Sonae Sierra designs experiences and shopping extensions of the places where the assets are.
- **ParkLake**, revolutionized Bucharest with an impressive shopping centre right at the entrance of the Titan Park.

SOLUTION

- To bring the outside in and the inside out to create harmony between the lake, the park and the shopping centre was the main focus of the project.
- With a design and architecture inspired in nature (specially earth and water as a reference to the park and the lake) **ParkLake** its truly a project that belongs to the surrounding area.

KEY NUMBERS AND FACTS

€180 million
investment

5 awards
received regarding the project
and its design

BREEAM Excellent
environmental performance
rating

€110 million
sales in 2017

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ParkLake



Bucharest, Romania



70,000 m²



200 shops



2600 parking spaces



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Abstract

Sonae Sierra's development project in Romania is one of the most outstanding new centres in its portfolio. **ParkLake**, a multi-award winning project built from scratch on the edge of a leafy yet city centre location, sets itself apart from any other project.

Its architecture and interior, heavily inspired by the natural beauty of the adjoining lake and park, are especially striking and give the destination a truly distinctive and 'park like' look and feel. This helps the mall blend into the surrounding landscape allowing consumers to enjoy nature, even in the heart of Bucharest. **ParkLake** includes beautiful vistas, naturally-lit interiors, alfresco dining, open air entertainment, outdoor pursuits and much more.

By bringing the outside in, the inside out and leveraging the natural beauty of the park setting, Sonae Sierra has brought a whole new dimension to the retail experience in Romania and has created one of the most alluring places to shop, visit and spend time in Bucharest.

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With its striking architecture, garden-like interiors and exceptional mix of tenants, restaurants and sports and leisure facilities, **ParkLake** has it all. Within one year of opening it has already been awarded five times and it has yielded an impressive €110 million in sales with almost 10 million visits in 2017. This popular destination is without doubt a game changer, and redefines the benchmark for modern European retail developments.

Introduction

Romania is an emerging retail market, and one that's attracting serious international attention. With its growing economy and consumption, exciting opportunities abound for pioneering retail developers and investors.

While Romania's economy maybe outpacing others in Europe, the penetration rate of shopping centres here is still quite low: in fact, at only 125m² of Gross Lettable Area (GLA) per thousand people, it's not even half the European average. The untapped potential, especially for high quality new retail developments, is substantial.

Background

In a joint venture with Caelum Development, **ParkLake** is the first shopping centre developed by Sonae Sierra in Romania and represented a 180 million euros investment.

ParkLake is situated in one of Bucharest's largest residential areas, on the edge of the beautiful Titan Park. This central yet verdant area is an extremely popular place for people to escape the hustle and bustle of city life. Yet with its network of cycling trails and outstanding transport links, the location is also exceptionally convenient. Trams, trains and buses bring over 1.5 million people within its grasp. And a staggering half a million people are within a short, 10-minute drive.

Nature plays a big part in the area's sense of identity and a growing body of research shows that interweaving nature into human spaces, even retail spaces, can be hugely

beneficial for both people and businesses. Other than making the retail space far more attractive to consumers, the evidence suggests that incorporating elements of nature into retail settings can also improve the customer experience, increase retail sales, and even allow landlords to command higher rents¹.

Challenge

At over 70,000 m², this was a large development and presented the kind of challenges typical of schemes of this scale and nature.

But being the company's first retail development in Romania, new relationships with foreign authorities and service providers needed to be forged, just like anywhere else. And understanding the rules and regulations in a new country is always a big challenge.

However, the greatest test of all lay in bringing to life the centre's highly original and naturally-inspired design. The vision for **ParkLake** takes the concept of sustainable design to an entirely new level, even for a company like Sonae Sierra adept at developing sustainable shopping centres.

The design stretches far beyond reducing the centre's environmental impact or meeting the highest sustainability standards. It goes so far as to create a mall that visually blends into its leafy setting and even takes advantage of it to improve the customer experience - with beautiful views, plenty of daylight and new open-air venues. This was an entirely new challenge for Sonae Sierra and was quite unlike other centres in Romania and indeed most of Europe.

¹ Natural Resources Defense Council (2013). The Green Edge: How Commercial Property Investment in Green Infrastructure Creates Value.

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Solution

The location's connection with nature, especially the adjacent park and boating lake, became the starting point for the centre's striking design which was heavily inspired by nature. Elements of nature – real or mimicked – were introduced throughout the centre's interior and exterior including green walls, views of nature and the use of natural patterns, textures, colours and materials.

For example, the entrance from the street boasts a dramatic copper skeletal portico. Its colours and patterns draw inspiration from the autumnal hues of the nearby park, and from the filtered light of nearby tree canopies originating two separated yet related entries: the park entry and the lake entry. While the park entrance is totally inspired and design to resemble the park – with greens and earth colours – the lake entrance elements gives a subtle yet interesting reference to the lake and water elements.



Park entrance



Lake entrance



Street entrance

Over on the parkside entrance, the glass design resembles the reflective pool of water in the local boating lake. It features huge, clear, fully glazed structures akin to the great greenhouses of the 19th century. Appearing see-through, these blur and break down the boundary between the internal and external, the shopping centre and the park, while also helping to flood the interior with natural light.



Parkside entrance

The themes of water and woodland are continued inside the centre, with the interior design featuring modern interpretations of tree houses, leafy foliage, frozen water, winter gardens, and a natural palette of materials that create a fresh and stimulating garden-like environment.

The design really takes advantage of its surrounding and allows visitors to enjoy natural light, views, and the great outdoors on a level unseen in other centres. For instance,

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the international food court includes a huge skylight and a terrace offering stunning views across the park.

A large, 22 000m², outdoor area has been transformed into attractive grounds that can be used for leisure and sports activities, kids play areas, seasonal markets, and even open-air entertainment and performances in the summer months. Spilling into the park, the greenery and landscaping within this space were purposefully chosen to blend in with the setting, as if becoming a natural extension of it.

Unsurprisingly the nearby park is very popular among families, and this played a big factor in the centre’s design. The entire complex is heavily focussed on families – incorporating not only stores but a family-friendly food court, a 14-screen multiplex cinema, a swimming pool, sports courts, bike racks, and generous play areas to encourage families to venture in and have some fun.



Materials, motifs, colours and patterns mimicking nature can be found throughout the centre’s spaces

Conclusion

This is a hugely successful project, completed on time, to budget and to an exceptionally high standard, particularly in terms of quality and sustainability. **ParkLake** became the very first project in Romania to hold both ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 certifications and in many ways redefines the benchmark for retail developments not only in Romania but in other areas of Europe as well.

The centre has become widely revered, particularly for its highly sustainable and striking architecture. Apart from receiving BREEAM Excellent environmental performance rating, the design has won a number of prestigious awards and accolades. These include Best Retail Project in South Eastern Europe, Best Retail Development & Developer in CEE and SEE, and Concept and Design of the Year.

A staggering 2,000 jobs were created during the centre's development and it continues to fuel the local economy through its ongoing operations and leasing strategies. These not only employ local people but bring new growth opportunities to home-grown brands. And it is this harmony with the surrounding area as well as its distinctive design, its sustainability and superior leisure offer, that all come together to make **ParkLake** a very special and immensely popular new retail destination.

Integrated solutions

