

FRANCIS SCIRE'S LATEST GIG

In April Francis Scire began work at New York City-based O'Connor Capital Partners as a senior vice president and the head of leasing, marketing and brand management. Among other positions, Scire has been vice president of development and leasing at Up Markets (a division of WS Development) and vice president of leasing and luxury accounts at Simon. He has spent much of his career repurposing historic centers — such as Roosevelt Field, in Garden City, N.Y.; The Royal Poinciana Plaza, in West Palm Beach, Fla.; and Westminster Street, in Providence, R.I. At O'Connor Capital Partners Scire is concentrating on the leasing of five centers, among them Carmel Plaza, in Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif.; and The Shops at Canal Place, in New Orleans. He spoke with SCT's Rebecca Meiser about the keys to redevelopment success, about what he thinks the next retail trends will be, and about that time he appeared in a TV commercial for Chevrolet.

Your new title is a mouthful. How did this come about?

It's really a role that evolved while I was having conversations with the O'Connors about joining their firm. In today's retail climate, success is about making sure the experience is good — and that comes from a combination of leasing, marketing and just general branding. It just makes sense to have one person in charge of making sure all these things are connected and moving forward together. If we were a bigger firm, that role would probably be held by two different people.

How did you become involved in real estate?

When I graduated [from] Providence College [in 1988], all I really wanted was a job in New York City. I got a job as an internal auditor for a bank in the

city. It was a good first job. I learned about checks and balances and work-flow analysis. The hard part, though, was that you were analyzing other people's work instead of doing your own work. I tired of it after a few years and got into more of an accounting role. In 1992 I went for an interview at a real estate firm that did shopping center leasing. I got hired as their controller, and [I] loved the job. I worked for a guy named Woody Kaplan, who was one of the industry leaders, and he really taught me the business.

What attracted you to O'Connor Capital Partners?

I tell people [that] working at Simon is a bit like going to graduate school: You learn all the best practices and foundation of the industry there. But in the end, it's still a big corporation. What I love about this new job is that it gives me the ability to be on the leadership team, help make decisions and be involved in multiple branches. And being back in New York City really seems like I've come full circle. It's where I want to be for the long haul.

What would you say is the key to redevelopment success?

Authenticity. You have to figure out a way to make whatever project you're working on feel authentic to the consumer. It can't feel fake. Consumers can sniff out fakeness in a second. With Roosevelt Field, that meant we really needed to know the audience, know the market, know Long Island and know the consumer. One of the things we did was bring in this dining district, with eight new food vendors that had never been involved in a shopping center, most of whom were from Manhattan.

Of the tenant types you prefer, which are doing well?

I think what's doing well is still food. If done well and if it's well priced for



the market that it's in, restaurants can thrive. People like to spend money on food. I also think there's some white space in the whole multibrand, athletics leisure-wear area. And personally, I am always looking at more off-the-beaten-path kinds of things. I'm interested in wellness a lot. I think the combination of boutique fitness clustered with a wellness concept — like vitamin therapy — is part of where the industry is going in terms of gross leasable area or the repurposing of existing GLA.

Do you have any secret to share with regard to leasing success?

My advice for getting deals done in this climate is to be nimble and be flexible. And always remember that time kills deals.

You once appeared in a TV commercial. Tell us about that.

Do you remember the Sochi Olympics and how there was this whole thing about how you couldn't go there and be openly gay? Well, in defiance of Russia's anti-gay laws, Chevrolet ran a commercial featuring gay couples. They used a video segment from my husband's and my wedding in the commercial. We were only on for like one second — so we thought no one would see it. The commercial ran for the first time right before the U.S. team walked in the opening ceremony. The audience was huge. And I have never before or since gotten so many random calls or emails as I did when it ran. ■