



## Urgent Care Site Selection Tips

### Prime Users of Urgent Care

- Mainly middle to upper-middle income
- Few extremely poor or extremely affluent customers
- Women aged 24-55 working outside the home with children are heavy users

### Key Site Factors

- Your urgent care should be in a very accessible area where people are going to see it; not tucked away in a medical center. People don't go to medical centers when they think of urgent care. They're thinking about places that are going to be open and available to them when they're running their regular errands.
- Location must have high visibility and strong traffic volume.
- Think of your customers as coming from three primary sources (home, work and shopping). If there is a good balance between these sources, meaning that each source provides a significant number of potential customers, then your risk of having a "dog" location is greatly reduced.
- Women are the undisputed family health care decision-makers so you want to be near a location that she drives by frequently, such as a grocery store or a Wal-Mart. Ask yourself, "*does my customer spend considerable time outside of healthcare in this area?*"
- You want a high concentration of complimentary retail businesses nearby such as Starbucks, Kohl's, Lowe's, Target, PetSmart, banks, restaurants, pharmacies. Ask yourself, "*will the neighboring retail stores draw my customer to this area?*"
- Signage visibility is critical. Good signage is prominent, simple, clear, relevant and visible both day and night.
- Convenient parking is essential: 5-6 spaces per 1,000 SF. When people are sick or injured they don't want to walk a quarter mile after parking to reach you. The ease of driving up, parking and walking in to an urgent care is vital.

- Today's consumer demands convenience. Sites which are hard to get into or out of will have a strong negative impact on patient volume.
- Freestanding buildings with prominent signage tend to draw the most patients. If a freestanding building is not an option, end-cap spaces are preferred over in-line spaces.

### **Warning Signs: Things to Watch Out For**

- Bad retail corridor dynamics. Areas which are characterized by high business turnover, rock-bottom rents, empty storefronts and aging properties are "red flags."
- Poor retail synergy: Are the adjacent retailers attracting the extremely poor or the ultra-affluent? There is a low probability these groups will be your prime users.
- Too much direct medical competition in the area.
- Physical barriers. From a physical standpoint, Interstate highways, hills, rivers and large expanses of undeveloped land often negatively impact both the size and shape of customer trade areas.
- Psychological barriers. From a psychological standpoint, different levels of street lighting, a change in the character and physical conditions of the buildings lining a street, railroad tracks, income levels, ethnic composition and crime levels can impact both the size and shape of customer trade areas.
- Lack of convenient parking. A lack of parking or inconveniently situated parking can turn out to be the "kiss of death" for an urgent care.
- Site is challenging to get into or out of. Be careful about choosing a site which is restricted exclusively to right turns in and right turns out. Such limited access will definitely reduce the number of patients you see.
- Poor curb appeal. An urgent care needs an exterior that clearly invites potential patients to enter. Having an uninviting exterior is the same as a home seller with weeds and trash in his front yard. Buyers just keep on driving by assuming that it's the same inside.
- Building setback. The closer your urgent care is located to the street the better. If you were to put yourself in the shoes of a first-time patient, which of the following urgent cares would you be most likely to notice: the one located 100, 250 or 500 feet off the road?
- Excessive signage restrictions. Signs play an essential role in helping patients find you, creating business identity and building brand recognition. Zoning regulations in the community where you are opening your urgent care will regulate the size, total sign area, and placement of your signs. In addition, some property owners may also place restrictions on signs. If a potential location does not allow you to have prominent, attractive and functional exterior signage, beware!

- Wrong space size: For most urgent cares an effective operation ranges from 2,800 to 3,500 SF. If a space is too small, the services offered may be too limited and the waiting area may be inadequate during peak times like flu season. If the space is too large you will experience inflated costs without generating incremental revenue.
- Do not enter a highly competitive market without a strong, coordinated marketing and development strategy – that is unless you have deep, deep pockets and enjoy burning through your working capital.

## **NEXT STEP**

Do you have an Urgent Care Real Estate question? Call Mike Zelnik at **(614) 309-3288** or email him at [mike@nationalucrealty.com](mailto:mike@nationalucrealty.com). To learn more about National UC Realty, please visit **[www.nationalucr.com](http://www.nationalucr.com)**.