

Who is the interviewee?

Kristin Liles is a YouTuber by the name of UniComm Productions, on their channel they cover malls that used to alive with abundance of activity, but now these big commercial buildings lay empty, either defeated by surplus competing malls or online shopping. They are 43 years old I believe, I missed the opportunity to officially confirm in the actual interview, but I calculated this age based on the video they made on Forest Fair Mall because they mentioned that when they were 6 years old, this became one of their childhood malls when it opened in 1988. Their first childhood mall is Tri-County Mall. Kristin was inspired by Dan Bell, another YouTuber, who documents dead malls as well and tries to bring attention to the danger it brings to the public as they remain empty and unused. Kristin lives in West Virginia, but their home used to be Cincinnati, Ohio, where their childhood mall, Forest Fair Mall, still lies empty with hopes of redevelopment into a business park. Kristin believes that, based on their own research as shown through their video documentary on Cincinnati Malls, that the greed of developers and customers caused an overpopulation of malls, and this is defined as the term 'Overmalled.' Meaning the demand for more outweighed the need and it in turn caused the closure of many malls not only in Cincinnati, but along the Midwest because there was a lot of experimentation with different retail concepts. Furthermore, Kristin is of the opinion that there must be some sort of redevelopment or destruction of an abandoned mall to prevent the hazards that could occur. Even now, Forest Fair Mall still lies empty, it has been for 3 years. In the interview, Kristin mentions the dangers that have occurred when a mall stays abandoned and developers stay inactive. Kristin Liles gives listeners and readers the perspective that it is essential that people

know about the history of malls and the danger they bring when there is too much competing in one area. In Kristin's documentary of Cincinnati Malls, they mention that they also produce this type of content on their YouTube channel because they want to share how malls used to be to their children since in the future, there is the potential that malls could disappear and be completely replaced by other avenues of commercial like online shopping.

Historical context that was provided in Kristin Liles interview

Although Kristin Liles was not a shopper of Virginia Center Commons, Kristin gives listeners and readers plenty of information about the reasons that this mall and other malls were once such an attraction to others and later, was left abandoned to be either redeveloped, dismantled, or left to waste that could produce potential hazards. In their interview, Kristin said and illustrated that it was best that Virginia Center Commons and other dead malls are "demolished and repurposed because otherwise, it creates the potential of hazards."¹ When Kristin mentions the hazards that an abandoned mall brings, they bring up Northridge Mall. Although there has been plans for this mall to be demolished, it has not been touched for 21 years since its closure in 2003. Since then, there have been plenty of incidents where people have been hurt physically by this neglect. For instance, because there has been gang activity around this neglected

¹ Kristin Liles, "VCC Interview Kristin Liles," interview by Joa Kearney, March 30, 2025, *Virginia Center Commons Oral History Student Project Archive*, <https://www.vccoralhistorystudentproject.com/interview-with-kristin-liles>, accessed March 30, 2025.

building, on August 29 of 2024, a man was hospitalized after he was critically shot there.²

Because of the obvious presence of people trespassing this mall since its abandonment, there has been earlier cases where there has been “fires set ablaze, further damaging the property” at the potential of hurting those inside.³ In Kristin Liles’ interview, they even mention that an electrician, by the name of Victoriano Diaz, was even “killed when trying to close a fuse box because it was left damaged and open by a vandal.”⁴ Although Diaz was killed in this incident due to the owner’s reluctant to demolish this building, there has still been no accountability. His death serves as an example of the lack of accountability that many developers show when such incidents happen when malls are left abandoned and neglected. Thus, Kristin and other similar influencers attempt to draw attention to this ongoing problem of dead malls on *YouTube* and other forms of social connection.

² Mona Darwish, "Man Shot in Parking Lot at Northridge Fashion Center," *Orange County Register*, August 25, 2024, <https://www.ocregister.com/2024/08/25/man-shot-in-parking-lot-at-northridge-fashion-center/>.

³ Jeramey Jannene, "Fires Badly Damage Northridge Mall," *Urban Milwaukee*, July 24, 2022, <https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2022/07/24/plats-and-parcels-fires-badly-damage-northridge-mall/>.

⁴ Kristin Liles, “VCC Interview Kristin Liles,” interview by Joa Kearney, March 30, 2025, *Virginia Center Commons Oral History Student Project Archive*, <https://www.vccoralhistorystudentproject.com/interview-with-kristin-liles>, accessed March 30, 2025.