

Developments

From Mall to Mixed-Use Haven

Like many older retail centers in Los Angeles, Beverly Connection had been struggling with the loss of market share to updated, more dynamic centers nearby. But instead of competing with the new center developments and renovations, such as those at the Westside Pavilion, the Grove, and the Beverly Center, owner BevCon I LLC will transform the Beverly Connection into a mixed-use retail center that works in concert with its neighbors.

As part of infill and densification efforts in Los Angeles, Beverly Connection will incorporate residential components at both ends of the site to alter the dynamic of the center and take advantage of the otherwise thriving surrounding area. "There's great potential in a lot of these seemingly underutilized L.A. urban centers," says Mike Darner, principal at Gensler, project architect. "With residential elements, Beverly Connection will become a 24/7 community, bringing life back to the retail center as well as adding to the vibrancy of the area." The redevelopment includes a new pedestrian-friendly interior courtyard and a complete rebranding of the common area and the center.

Last upgraded nearly 20 years ago and located between the popular retail areas the Grove and the Beverly Center, the original retail center was a victim of their success. With a new focus on residential needs, including assisted living, residential condominiums, and retail businesses, the repositioned Beverly Connection will not only avoid competing with surrounding retail properties, but also will benefit from their proximity.

Gensler's collaborative approach among practices in its Los Angeles office is reflective of the mixed-use program for the site. "We've brought together our residential, retail, and branding and graphic design expertise to fashion a truly integrated mixed-use experience and project," says Darner.

The Beverly Connection project will take place in three phases, with an overarching goal of creating a more pedestrian-friendly urban outdoor mall. The first phase is renovation of the retail space to reposition the center with new tenants and better amenities. These efforts are ongoing and are themselves being phased to keep retailers open during the renovation. As such, some parts are currently under construction and others are still in development.

a new tunnel access to central parking, which allows the pedestrian-friendly promenade to happen," says Darner.

The project is currently in the approvals process with the City Planning Commission.



The first phase's opening is scheduled for this year's holiday season.

Although not currently zoned for residential development, the second and third phases include a condominium project with about 60 units and a Summerville-brand assisted living facility. The mixed-use retail condominium building will flank the project's north side and be linked through a landscaped exterior pedestrian promenade to a new mixed-use retail/assisted living complex on the south. Residents of the assisted living and condominium facilities will have unparalleled access on foot to services and restaurants in this part of a very automobile-focused city. "In fact, we've done away with the car, to a point, by creating

The inclusion of condominium and assisted living components serves to address the housing needs in a mixed-use context. Especially for the assisted living residents, access to a grocery store, a pharmacy, and other retail businesses is a key locational advantage. The schematic design of both residential components has been completed and construction is slated to begin by early next year.

Although already one of the most dense cities in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Los Angeles continues to explore new opportunities to encourage pedestrian activity through symbiotic mixed-use redevelopments.—Howard Kozloff, a freelance writer based in Santa Monica, California

SEPTEMBER 2005 ■ \$15.00

Urban Land

Growing In

Los Angeles Fills In
the Gaps

SUBURBAN REINVENTION ■ ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY ■ TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS ■ RETURNING DOWNTOWN