

News

In-depth: Richmond's Hilltop Mall reinventing itself for 21st century

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RICHMOND (KRON) -- Hilltop Mall in Richmond has seen better days.

But now, developers say not to worry because the mall is not dying--it's changing.

On Friday night, KRON4 has an in-depth look at what is to come for this once popular East Bay spot.

"They would have like 700 people in the center court and really utilize it and make it into a public space that you don't normally see," IBG Real Estate Companies Managing Partners Leslie Lundin said.

That's a far cry from what it looks like now. While the grand spiral walkway and an art installation known as the Solar Cantata remain, many shops are empty, and on any given weekday, there can be just as many security people on hand as there are shoppers.

But Lundin thinks the shops at Hilltop can once again be a vibrant community space that draws people in from all over the East Bay.

"We call it a transformation," Lundin said. "It's not that the mall is dying, the mall is changing."

One of the proposed new entrances into the Hilltop Mall.



The mall is to include brand names as well as smaller retailers. In the rendering, a two-story space for a fashion brand.

Lundin's company bought the 77-acre site last year and plans to redevelop it into a mall for the future.

"We put a suggestion box out to the community to say what do you want, and pretty consistently people said great restaurants," Lundin said. "We want entertainment. People need a safe place to hang out, a sheltered place to hang out, and hang out with their kids, and play with their kids. And this is the perfect environment for it."

The redevelopment plan calls for not only a facelift inside and out, but a change in the mix of tenants.

There will be a movie theatre, a live theatre, a food hall, and 50,000 square feet of

restaurants and various entertainment-related tenants which could include bowling, billiards, and karaoke.

There will also be an enlargement of the mall's central court.

"We're going to be creating a larger common area because that's what people want," Lundin said. "People want space for more kiosks and more exhibit space."

Lundin says familiar retailers will also be on hand, as well as unique ones like one bookstore, specifically geared to those who live in the area.

"The reason why the multi-cultural bookstore is successful is because it is curated; because somebody has gone out to find books



The interior atrium is to include a social space for events as well as a coffee and drinks bar.

about children from different cultures," Lundin said. "And it's amazing they keep telling us stories about kids who are dragging their parents back to this store because it's something they have never seen before."

But this mall of the future also will focus on services. The existing 24-hour fitness will be joined by a 99 Ranch Asian Supermarket, and developers also hope to add health care providers and spa services--and a future phase would use some of these empty parking lots to bring housing to the greater Hilltop by the Bay Development.

"What we do want are walkable communities, so ultimately, our goal is to create a

walkable mixed-use community, and this retail property is going to be an amenity for this entire community, like a downtown," Lundin said.

Developers agree it's a sizeable undertaking.

"It's huge," Lundin said. "It is, but we're enjoying it, and we think the community is going to love it as well when we get done."

Construction is set to get underway this summer, with a Phase 1 grand opening during the summer of 2019.

Parts of the mall will remain open during the transformation.