

# BUILDING DESIGN + CONSTRUCTION

WHERE  
TECHNOLOGY  
AND INNOVATION  
COLLIDE

MAY/JUNE 2022

## RETURN TO WORK —OR NOT?

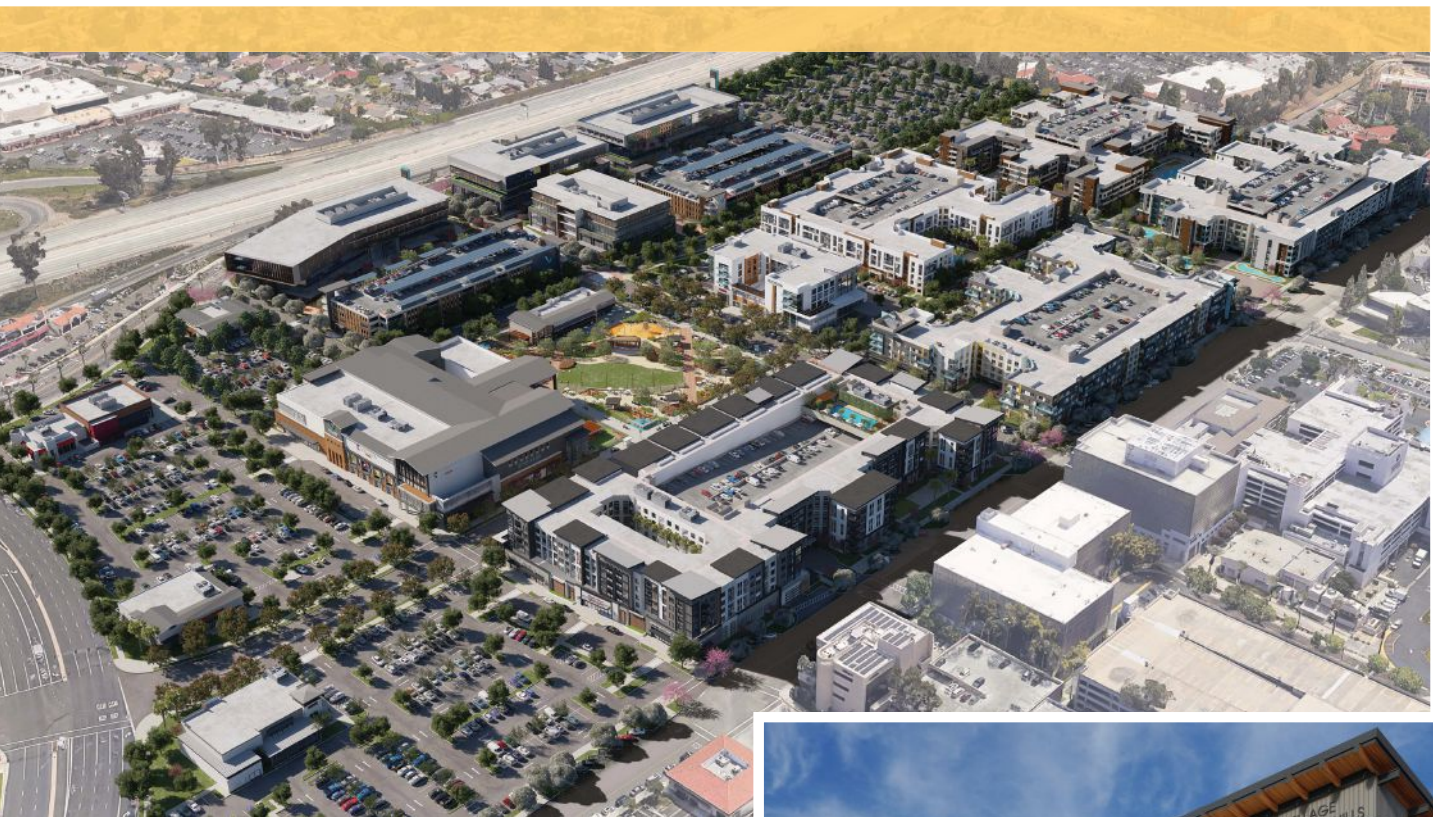
The Future of Commercial  
Office Buildings

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UPTOWN STATION, OAKLAND, CALIF.

SGC HORIZON





MERLONE GEIER PARTNERS (AIRIAL); AO ARCHITECTS (STREET LEVEL)



**AO Architects is the Executive Architect for the residential/mixed-use portion of Village at Laguna Hills, the redevelopment of a shopping mall on 68 acres in southern California, whose proposed 3 million sf will include offices (for which Gensler is the designer), apartments, a hotel, and retail. Its buildout could take 15 years.**

designed the project in partnership with Spina O'Rourke + Partners.

The project consists of two buildings: 111 Olive, a former department store that had previously been converted to 27,000 sf of office space and 10,000 sf of ground-floor retail, so its latest renovation is more cosmetic, says Clarke. Adjacent to this building was a vacant parking lot that will be transformed into 300 Banyan, a 12-story, 115,000-sf glass tower housing Class A office spaces, with an amenity floor that includes an indoor-outdoor gym (with its own entrance), and private outdoor terraces. There will also be a parking garage above 8,000 sf of ground-floor retail, lobby, and food and beverage options.

The two buildings will be connected by a public walkway that, according to B+H, is set up to be activated with food and beverage or retail popups, and cultural programming that might reinforce West Palm's emergence as an arts and entertainment center. 111 Olive is scheduled for delivery in the fourth quarter of 2022; 300 Banyan a year later.

In southern California, the developer Merlone Geier Partners is redeveloping what had been a



shopping mall on 67.8 acres into the Village at Laguna Hills, a 2.94-million-sf mixed-use community. This project has been in the works since 2015, and its latest proposal, which the city approved in April 2021, calls for up to 1,500 apartments in five buildings, 250,000 sf of "curated" retail, 465,000 sf of Class A office space in four buildings (plus an outdoor workplace campus), a five-story 150-key hotel, and a 2.6-acre outdoor park. There will also be two parking structures, 11 acres of landscaping, 6.5 miles of sidewalks and walkways, and a 50,000-sf, 1,200-seat cineplex. The buildout of this project could take up to 15 years to complete.

Loanna Magiati, a Principal with AO Architects, which is the executive architect on the residential/mixed-use portion of the Village at Laguna Hills,





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LAWRENCE ANDERSON



The 632,000-sf 333 Dexter is a mixed-use office building in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood. Designed by The Miller Hull Partnership and completed a few years ago, the two-tower project's goal has been to reconnect a city that has been deeply divided by highway and tunnel infrastructure. It creates a welcoming urban environment with large setbacks, street furniture, open plaza, and a ground plane that is a functioning landscape. 333 Dexter is also part of Miller Hull's Emission Zero initiative to offset greenhouse gases released up to the point of occupancy. (Its emission offset for this project was 10,008 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, with offsets funding the Dempsey Ridge Wind Energy Farm project.) The rest of the Building Team included Kilroy Realty (client), Swinerton (GC), Coughlin Porter Lundeen (CE), Magnusson Klemencic Associates (SE), Glumac (conceptual design engineer), Hewitt (Landscape Architect), Morrison Hershfield (envelope), Birkenstock Lighting Design (lighting), and SkB Architects (interiors).



recalls the original plan was more modest until big anchors like Macy's and JC Penney closed their stores in the mall, and caused the developer to A.) scale back on the redevelopment's retail, and B.) use the entire property to bring in other mixed-use elements.

Magiati places this project within the larger urbanization trend. In that context, mixed-use residential and retail "need to create a story" that buttresses the revitalization of the surrounding community, she says.

### PROGRAMMING TAKES PRECEDENCE

As mixed-use, as a building category, has evolved with more of a lifestyle/entertainment emphasis, a big part of any mixed-use development's success is its programming, asserts Lamar Wakefield, CEO of Georgia-based Wakefield, Beasley + Associates, a Nelson company for which mixed-use is its largest

practice. The firm's signature project—the 106-acre Avalon, which was completed in 2017—conducts up to 520 programmed events annually.

When it opened, Avalon was positioned as the Southeast's first "Experience Center," and it still serves as a touchstone for Wakefield Beasley's subsequent work, which more recently includes the master planning for a 450-acre mixed-use project in Georgia's Forsyth County being developed by homebuilding giants Empire Communities and Toll Brothers. It will include 2,400 residential units, 200,000 sf of commercial space, and a potential future school.

Wakefield Beasley is also the land planner for Rock Row, a \$600 million, 110-acre mixed-use redevelopment under construction in Westbrook, Maine, whose 2 million sf will include 400,000 sf of office space, 200,000 sf for medical leasing, 300,000 sf for



SmithGroup has been seeing an evolution of office mixed use toward an emphasis on lifestyle and entertainment. One example is the Chicago law office of Levin & Perconti, whose lobby area resembles a hotel's lounge-bar.

retail, a 20,000-sf food hall, 20-plus dining choices, 750 residential units, an innovation center, and the state's largest convention center. An 80,000-sf supermarket has already opened, and the medical research campus is scheduled to open next year.

Rock Row expects to host more than 200 shows and events annually, and is planning a permanent, four-season performance venue that will replace the temporary 8,200-seat Maine Savings Pavilion that Rock Row's developer Waterstone Properties Group closed last September once the redevelopment's construction shifted into higher gear.

Other mixed-use trends that Wakefield cites center on "more": more food and beverage, more roof decks, and more parking structures whose designs are adaptable if ride sharing leads to reducing personal car use.

### ZONING CAN LIMIT THE MIX

In a blog posted on March 17, 2022, Dean Strombom, FAIA, a Principal with Gensler's office in Houston, advocates for design that optimizes the

"human experience" by prioritizing wellness and a balanced lifestyle. He infers in that blog that creating more mixed-use destinations would be the surest course toward achieving that goal.

Gensler has been working with Brookfield Properties for several years on the redevelopment of Houston Center, a 1970s-era complex with 4.2 million sf over 9.2 acres, which was conceived as a city-within-a-city, although that never panned out as planned.

Phase 1 of this redevelopment, which was completed in 2020, made the center's 170,000-sf podium level more inviting by leveraging the nearby 12-acre Discovery Green park and convention center, and creating a large plaza for the five buildings in this grouping that Brookfield owns. Gensler's role included renovating the public space and tenant storefronts on the first and second floors, as well as the lower-level windows and shell. There's also a design option for a fourth-floor deck.

Phase 2, which is under construction, reimagines the two-level 200,000-sf mall known as

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**‘The definition of mixed use is now “more international” in that “everything is in the same building.”’**

— DAVID NICHOLSON, SBLM ARCHITECTS

The Highlight—“which is the only retail left downtown,” contends Strombom—by the addition of food and beverage and entertainment options that are active after work hours. (Interestingly, one of the tenants being kept on during this transformation is Kelsey Seybolt, a healthcare clinic.) There’s office

space above this retail, as well as in two of Houston Center’s towers connected by a skywalk. (D.E. Harvey was the GC on both phases.)

Phase 3, says Strombom, will be a “major renovation” of 3 Houston Center. Gensler—which has been in Houston for half a century and recently moved its offices into 2 Houston Center—“is trying to create a new downtown vitality” with this project, Strombom explains.

SBLM Architects in New York has also worked on recent projects that combine office space with places for employees to “hang out” after work, says David Nicholson, a Principal with that firm. He sees

the definition of “mixed use” as now being “more international” in that “everything is in the same building.” The most common combination is office-retail, although SBLM has worked on projects recently that mix these components with residential, hospitality, and event spaces.

As the 25-million-sf Hudson Yards megacampus in New York has opened in phases over the last few years, it has left in its wake an awful lot of vacant space in other buildings. SBLM, says Nicholson, has been working with several of those buildings’ landlords to rethink, remodel, and convert that space. He wouldn’t say to what, but Nicholson did note that clients are ambivalent about just how radically they want to change their office spaces, and about what they want to spend.

Nicholson lamented that New York’s zoning and building codes “haven’t gone far enough to encourage mixed-use buildings,” the main issue being the amount of square footage allowable for each component. “They could be doing more to help [vacant office space] become something else,” he says.+

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