

# HB's Retail Round Up

## AN UPDATE ON NEW AND IN-PROGRESS DEVELOPMENTS

By Gwen Kleist

Over the years, Huntington Beach has seen many changes, but in terms of retail development, perhaps the most exciting ones of all are a trio of major projects currently in the works (including Bella Terra, which opened to rave reviews last fall with plans for further expansion).

When complete, The Strand, Pacific City and Bella Terra will change the face of the city, attracting more upscale visitors and providing locals with more shopping, dining and entertainment options – a fact that will certainly impact the city's residents and business owners alike.

The Strand and Pacific City are currently under construction in downtown Huntington Beach, and will each offer retail shops, restaurants, office space and a hotel. Pacific City will also feature a Residential Village.

"We are looking forward to these two new projects," says Laurie Payne, community relations officer for the City of Huntington Beach. "They will change look and feel of downtown and make Huntington Beach a more attractive overnight destination."

Bella Terra, situated just off the 405 Freeway at Beach Boulevard, has been open since September and is already experiencing tremendous success as a destination for dining, shopping and entertainment.

All three of these new developments will provide an enormous boost to Huntington Beach's economy, providing additional retail sales tax and property tax revenue, creating thousands of new jobs and drawing customers – both local and tourists – to Huntington Beach throughout the year.

### The Strand

Capitalizing on its prime location along Fifth Street, just off Pacific Coast Highway and overlooking the Pacific Ocean and HB Pier, The Strand is poised to transform nearly three acres of land into an upscale collection of shops, restaurants and office space.

The Strand will also be home to a 157-room boutique hotel operated by Joie de Vivre Hospitality. Joie de Vivre is the largest boutique hotel company in the state, and the second largest in the



The Strand...

Pacific City, below...

nation. Its hotels attract a discriminating crowd, with current locations in San Francisco, Silicon Valley, Marin County, Napa Valley and the Brentwood-Bel Air section of Los Angeles.

According to its developers (the CIM Group), The Strand will "provide retail, restaurant and hotel services to a population that will ideally adopt this block as its gathering place. Each building reflects a distinct design that enhances the unique attributes of its site, and each is connected by pleasant, open-air pedestrian walkways lined with outdoor shopping and dining destinations."

To accommodate the large number of anticipated visitors and in an effort to keep downtown traffic congestion to a minimum, a two-level, 470-space subterranean parking structure is also being built below the new property.

Construction began on this project in 2005, when CIM Group began its pre-development phase. This included street improvements, water sampling, re-routing of utilities and other necessary preparations.



The underground parking structure was completed earlier this year and construction of The Strand will continue through early 2008. The Joie de Vivre hotel and The Strand's other restaurants and retailers are expected to be open for business in March 2008.

### Pacific City

Sure to add a touch of class to downtown Huntington Beach, Pacific City is currently under construction and will continue through 2009.

Pacific City is a 31-acre site located directly across from the beach on PCH, between First and Huntington Streets. It will be a mixed-use development that will include 191,000 square feet of retail space, a 195-room boutique hotel, office space and a residential village.

"With stylish shops, lively restaurants and bars, chic condos and a boutique hotel, Pacific City will be the spot in Orange County to live, work and play," says Paul Makarechian, president and CEO of Makar Properties.

The Retail Promenade of Pacific City will be relaxed and reflective of its beachfront atmosphere. An ocean-themed monument at the corner of PCH and First Street will mark its entrance, and a wide boardwalk, elevated above PCH, will provide shoppers with breathtaking ocean views and cool ocean breezes.

Above the retail shops and restaurants, Pacific City will offer premium office space. Approximately 30,000 to 60,000 square feet of office space is proposed within the Retail Promenade.

Adding to the ambience, a boutique hotel and spa will be part of Pacific City. Though Makar Properties cannot announce the name of the hotel at this time, they report that it will feature the finest amenities and services, including a day spa, restaurant and pool, designed to attract a distinguished and upscale clientele.

Finally, located directly behind the Retail Promenade, is the Residential Village. The Residential Village will feature 516 condos ranging from 850 to 2,350 square feet. Gardens, greenbelts, and playgrounds will define the neighborhood, while a pedestrian walkway provides easy access to all the shops, restaurants and entertainment venues in Pacific City.

The first phase of the Residential Village will be complete in April 2007, with 136 units available; the estimated completion date for all 516 condos is spring 2008.

Retail stores and restaurants are scheduled to open in fall 2008, with the boutique hotel following in spring 2009. A Senior Center is also scheduled to open in 2009.

According to a representative on its web site, the development



Formerly known as the Huntington Beach Mall, Bella Terra opened in September 2006 after a \$170 million renovation that transformed the property (originally built in 1966) from an enclosed mall into a beautiful open-air lifestyle center.

"will introduce many exciting elements that will enhance the energy of downtown Huntington Beach. Pacific City will be a 'lifestyle district' designed to serve residents and visitors, while helping to support the future economic vitality of Huntington Beach."

### Bella Terra

The new Bella Terra totals 777,000 square feet and is designed to evoke images of an upscale Italian village, featuring lush landscaping, fountains, and courtyards. More than just a shopping center, Bella Terra is a retail, dining and entertainment destination, dedicated to providing community-focused activities to the residents of Huntington Beach. Programs include a Kids Klub, free outdoor concerts and holiday activities (such as a Christmas tree lighting ceremony and visits by the Easter Bunny).

Bella Terra boasts 71 shops and restaurants, including King's Fish House, California Pizza Kitchen, The Cheesecake Factory, Bed Bath & Beyond and Barnes & Noble, plus a 20-screen Century Theaters multiplex and small outdoor amphitheater. Kohl's has occupied the former Broadway department store building since 2003.

Plans are currently underway to add additional retail as well as new residential space to Bella Terra, at the former site of the Montgomery Ward department store.

"Our initial plans for the Montgomery Ward building are for a mixed-use development with retail on the bottom floor and either condos or apartments on top," says Patricia Apel, senior real estate manager for Bella Terra.

Huntington Beach residents have welcomed this new shopping center with open arms.

"Bella Terra has been a tremendous boom to the city," says Payne. "There are a number of great offerings and the theater is always busy."

With Bella Terra already finding success and Pacific City and The Strand on the horizon, Huntington Beach is certainly experiencing some major changes. And like all good things, change is something to embrace as the new developments help to move our city forward – a fact that will undoubtedly translate to economic rewards that all of its citizens will reap in the years to come. **HB**