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## Tired Mall To Get Zing As Mixed-Use Site

LBG Real Estate is breathing new life into Richmond's 1.1 million-square-foot shopping mall, which has undergone rebranding to be known as The Shops at Hilltop and will include office, retail and housing.



*The city had previously rezoned the property to include more than just retail.*

RICHMOND, CA—**The Hilltop Mall** went into foreclosure nearly five years ago due to high vacancy rates and a lack of consumer traffic. Since that time, residents of Richmond have been holding onto hope for a Hilltop Mall comeback.

In July, **LBG Real Estate Companies**, in conjunction with **Aviva Investors**, purchased the mall located at 2200 Hilltop Mall Rd. Before the acquisition process began, LBG hired **AEI Consultants** to complete a full site evaluation, including environmental factors and facility condition. AEI also provided a cost and maintenance assessment to LBG.

**Holly Neber**, CEO of AEI Consultants, said the challenges were the age and condition of the roof and parking lot, and a number of items in need of upgrading. However, she told GlobeSt.com nothing was problematic in its phase one environmental assessment for future use as a multifamily, office or retail development.

"When we were approached about this project, we were very excited," says Neber. "We immediately saw the potential, both in the property itself, and just as importantly, in what investment and redevelopment of the site could do for the community of Richmond. As a company, we are intensely focused on the true positive impact our work and our clients' work can have on the value and the lifestyle of communities, and we wanted to be a part of this important project."

And now, LBG Real Estate Companies is breathing new life into Richmond's 1.1 million-square-foot shopping mall. Following the acquisition, the Hilltop Mall has undergone a rebranding and will now be known as **The Shops at Hilltop**.

The project is in the initial stages of redevelopment. It is set to begin with significant upgrades to both the exterior and interior, as well as the signage surrounding the property.

Anticipated tenant offerings include a movie theater, live theater, food court, grocery store, several restaurants, stores and services, and office space as well as residential units. LBG and Aviva created these plans in order to appeal to a wider variety of tenants, as well as to the area's shoppers.

"The city had previously rezoned the property to include more than just retail. We decided to take full advantage of that smart planning," says **Leslie Lundin**, managing partner for LBG. "With 77 acres at our disposal, it made perfect sense to create a mixed-use development that encompasses all of the community's needs."

This redevelopment project offers Richmond residents a location that not only provides multiple uses within the community, but also will act as a draw for visitors, enhancing the local economy, notes Neber.

"On one hand, it was a normal project but on the other hand, as residents of the East Bay, we remember Hilltop Mall to be the hot spot back when. It was once the place to be but has suffered since then," Neber tells GlobeSt.com. "We spend a lot of time asking the why in order to do good for the community."

AEI Consultants is an employee-owned international consulting firm that provides services to commercial lenders, property owners, managers, tenants, developers, industries, institutions, government agencies and insurers, including many Fortune 500 companies. These services include environmental, property and facility assessments; zoning and energy consulting; site investigation and remediation; industrial hygiene; and construction risk management.