

Los Angeles Times

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7, 2005 SECTION C
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Condo Developers Make Environmental Pitch



URBAN PROJECT: A computer-generated view superimposes the planned condos, lower right, on a photo of Beverly Hills.

By Roger Vincent
Times Staff Writer

Plans for a \$500-million luxury condominium project in Beverly Hills involving celebrity architects, public gardens and an environmentally friendly design were unveiled by developers Tuesday.

The long-awaited proposal for the Robinsons-May site near the intersection of Wilshire and Santa Monica boulevards calls for two 12-story buildings, a two-story building containing town houses and two four-story loft buildings situated around landscaped gardens.

There also would be a one-story building along Santa Monica Boulevard for a high-end restaurant and a few shops.

Only a few details of the proposed 252-unit condo and retail project had leaked out before developers David Margulies and Arnold Rosenstein of New Pacific Realty made a

presentation to Beverly Hills city officials Tuesday.

Addressing the concerns of nearby residents, they said the project would not increase traffic congestion at the busy intersection, and that the tall buildings wouldn't cast shadows over neighboring houses, darken the playground at a nearby school or kill the grass at the Los Angeles Country Club.

Federated Department Stores Inc. decided last month to terminate its lease and close the Robinsons-May store in the spring, clearing the way for New Pacific Realty to move forward with its plan to build on the eight acres next to the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

New Pacific Realty bought the property from Equitable Life Assurance Society in 2003. The parcel had been pursued by several prominent builders, including Donald Trump.

"It's one of the last few underdeveloped properties in the city," said Mahdi Aluzri,



Beverly Hills' director of community development, in a recent interview. "It's a great opportunity for significant development at a gateway site."

A city planning committee recommended that the department store be replaced with a project that would be similar in scale to the hotel.

The restaurant and a few shops would provide "just enough retail to support the residents," Margulies said. "We're not trying to create a shopping destination."

Margulies, a former partner in Apollo Real Estate Advisors, said the project would be privately funded. Before joining New Pacific, Rosenstein developed 2,000 apartments and office buildings, Maple Plaza in Beverly Hills and World Savings Center in Brentwood.

New Pacific's largest previous project was the acquisition and redevelopment of Transamerica Center in downtown Los Angeles in partnership with Canyon-Johnson Urban Fund.

New York architect Richard Meier, one of the nation's best-known building designers, described the style envisioned for the Beverly Hills project as modern.



RETAIL: A computer drawing shows shops and a high-end restaurant planned for a building facing Santa Monica Boulevard.



PLAN: A computer-generated view from the Beverly Hilton looks down on loft-style housing, gardens and a 12-story condo building.

Meier's designs include the Getty Center museum in West L.A. and high-rise condos in New York. Philadelphia landscape architect Laurie D. Olin, who created the Getty gardens, designed the outdoor spaces, which would include waterscapes and sculpture gardens.

The developers said they intended to apply for a gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. If the council approves, 9900 Wilshire could be the first condominium project in the West to win such a designation for meeting environmental standards on energy efficiency, water use, construction methods and other factors.

The developers have also attempted to address simmering community concerns such as traffic and building shadows that could provoke opposition to their project. With more than 1,000 residential units planned or being developed in the area, many residents fear gridlock.

Traffic studies paid for by New Pacific found that its project would generate no more daily car trips than Robinsons-May does now.

Condos would range in size from 1,200 to 7,500 square feet. Prices won't be set until the project is closer to being built. Top-end condos in Beverly Hills now run more than \$2 million.

Tuesday's unveiling marks the beginning of an approval process that could take two or three years, Margulies said, and the project could change to meet the demands of the city and community.

"The situation is the same everywhere," said developer Jerry Snyder, who recently completed a nearby apartment and office complex. "People are concerned about the usual problems: traffic, traffic and traffic."

New Pacific hopes to garner endorsements from environmental groups and has received a nod from the Natural Resources Defense Council. Ashok Gupta of the resources council said he hoped that a successful development built to gold rating standards would encourage other developers to pursue green building practices.

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