

Work on 16th Street Mall center nearly complete

Pavilions revived

By Margaret Jackson

The Denver Post

Posted: 10/29/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 10/29/2009 01:52:03 AM MDT



Construction to renovate the Denver Pavilions shopping center was approaching completion earlier this week. Gart Properties, which with ING Clarion bought the center for \$94.5 million last year, plans a grand "reintroduction" ceremony for the Pavilions on Nov. 10. (John Prieto, The Denver Post)

By the end of next week, the redevelopment of the Denver Pavilions downtown will be substantially complete, the bevy of construction workers gone and orange fencing removed to reveal a more open and inviting shopping center.

Gart Properties, which purchased the property last year, has planned a grand "reintroduction" ceremony for the property Nov. 10.

November and December typically are slow months for retailers in the Pavilions, said Matt Trasen, project manager for Gart.

Gart had to revise some of its plans because of the economy and made concessions to tenants who stayed through the redevelopment of the shopping center. But when the Denver Urban Renewal Authority stepped up in August with \$2.1 million, the company was able to restore some of the improvements it had cut.

The added money allowed Gart to renovate the public rest rooms, improve lighting and public spaces and install a large LED media panel and original artwork in glass tile around the elevator entries. The funding also will pay for a glass-enclosed valet elevator beneath the Glenarm Place bridge. DURA invested about \$30 million in the Pavilions when it was built 11 years ago.

Gart and ING Clarion paid \$94.5 million last year for the 347,000-square-foot center. The new owner is spending an additional \$25 million on renovations and tenant incentives.

Gart buys underperforming real estate at a discount, renovates it and leases it to stronger tenants. The company refinances the property, pays off its investors and enjoys the cash flow that the real estate generates.

Only five of the Pavilions' tenants have a visible presence along the 16th Street Mall, so Gart is installing two double-sided LED screens that will flash advertisements for the less-visible businesses.

"The idea is to give all 40 tenants a presence," Trasen said.

The shopping center spans both sides of Glenarm Place, a two-way street with no crosswalk. Gart is painting



A construction worker toils on an escalator covering at the Pavilions. Heated stairways have been built next to the escalators, which extend onto the 16th Street Mall. (John Prieto, The Denver Post)

a crosswalk between two large planters in the center of the street aimed at protecting pedestrians from traffic. It's also installing curb cuts and embedding LED lighting in the pavers.

Gart also has upgraded the elevators so they'll reach all five floors. Escalators extending onto the 16th Street Mall draw people to the upper floors of the shopping center. New heated and lighted stairways have been built next to the escalators.

Gart is continuing discussions with Brookfield Properties about plans for an adjacent hotel and office building, though the plans are on hold.

"While the economy is bad, you continue to study, communicate and look to see whether these things make sense," said Bill Lucas, vice president of leasing for Brookfield.

Margaret Jackson: 303-954-1473 or mjackson@denverpost.com