

Malibu Mall Nears Completion

Real Estate: Local pushback delayed project

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Laying it on Line: The Park at Cross Creek developers shelled out \$1 million for individual pavers.

Before Malibu's first Whole Foods opens its doors in June, its 15-year lease will have already expired once.

It took even longer for developer Steve Soboroff and his partners Michael Heslov and Cindy McAfee to finish this shopping center project on a spit of land near Pacific Coast Highway.

The Park at Cross Creek development will have taken more than a decade of bitter political and legal battles before it opens. It represents the area's first ground-up shopping center in a generation — as well as a parable about development in one of the region's toniest coastal hamlets.

Building has never been easy in the small community full of Hollywood A-listers and wealthy families. Residents are particularly protective of their land and wary of any outsider development and chain stores that they worry could erode the city's small-town feel. It's so

anti-growth that the city, which was incorporated in 1991, has intentionally never built out a public, citywide sewer system, forcing developers to either build their own or pay into a special assessment district to connect to a limited city-run system for commercial properties.

“The community is very against change,” said broker Jay Luchs, an active real estate broker in Malibu. His team at Newmark Knight Frank is handling leases for The Park at Cross Creek, which is roughly 95% leased. “It becomes a challenge to be in a business where you have to fill spaces but also make people happy who don’t want any change.”

Malibu’s resistance seriously challenged Soboroff, president of the Los Angeles Police Commission, political player and a hardened real estate mogul who helped guide two of the region’s most controversial development plans: the buildouts of Playa Vista and the Alameda Corridor.

“I geared up for 10 years at Playa Vista, 10 years at Alameda; I wasn’t gearing up for a fight to build a park in Malibu,” he said.

But that’s what he said he’s done. Only 15% of the developable land at The Park at Cross Creek was used for nearly 40,000 square feet of retail. Other features including, 80 sycamore trees, a children’s garden and a deck overlooking a playground make it feel more like a park than a shopping center. That’s also what Malibu officials demanded.



The Park

The Santa Monica Mountains rise over the nearly 6 acre retail project, less than a mile from the glittering Pacific Ocean. Anchored by a 25,000-square-foot Whole Foods, the plaza was built by Torrance-based Del Amo Construction Inc. and is filled with small-format stores under 800 square feet that are designed to cater to nearby residents. Luchs said the small storefronts are rare and “less painful in terms of rent.”

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