

Owning a Piece of The Strip

CityCenter's High-Rise Community Brings 'Urban Resort Residential' to Las Vegas

By E.P. La Brecque

Signs of change.

For a visitor to Las Vegas, the recent blossoming of high-rise, residential towers in the general vicinity of The Strip may seem vaguely familiar. The towers might remind them of the places they just came from, where a decade's worth of urban renewal has probably resulted in a flood of "loft living" options in their own downtowns. City life has been rediscovered.



Las Vegas doesn't have a downtown in the way that New York City has a downtown, but these new towers do suggest a kind of citified sensibility, and with it a promise: Be close to the action in a way that hasn't been possible before.

Clearly, something new is underway in the city that never sleeps. Is it undergoing yet another transformation, the visitor might wonder?

"Las Vegas is coming of age," says Tony Dennis, Executive Vice President of the Residential Division of CityCenter, the new, high-density, mixed-use development being built by MGM MIRAGE. "Las Vegas is maturing, not just as a place to visit, but as a place to enjoy the vacation lifestyle at home. MGM MIRAGE is the harbinger of this change."

A city-within-a-city.

To appreciate what's going on at its most grandiose, a short tour will have to suffice. First stop: Las Vegas Boulevard south of Bellagio. From this vantage point, you can survey the brisk-paced construction on a site that's massive, even by Las Vegas's super-sized standards: the hardhat zone covers 76 acres. A few visual clues identify it as the location of a place known as CityCenter.

To understand precisely what CityCenter is, stroll to the second stop on your tour (after first having called ahead to make an appointment): The CityCenter Residential Sales Pavilion, a striking modernist building of glass and metal located at Rue de Monte Carlo and The Strip. Opening early January 2007, this is the place that introduces the public to CityCenter.

Here's what you'll learn: MGM MIRAGE, the world's premier developer of luxury resort casinos, is creating something downright audacious: nothing less than a city-within-a-city that will reshape the Las Vegas skyline.

Located on 1,100 feet of frontage on the Las Vegas Strip adjacent to Bellagio, the \$7 billion urban resort district is the largest, private development in the United States. Its 18 million square feet of new construction bring together an array of elements designed, in the words of its promotional literature, "to express the best of refined urban living today and tomorrow."

CityCenter will be an international destination for entertainment, dining, nightlife, retail, art, and design. It will feature a 60-story resort casino designed to set a new standard, a retail and entertainment district showcasing the world's most sought-after brands, public spaces and amenities enhanced by a \$60 million public arts program, two boutique hotels with residential properties, a luxurious condo hotel, and a pair of residential high-rises.

President and CEO of Mirage Resorts and CityCenter project lead, Bobby Baldwin, has observed that another project in Las Vegas of the scale and nature of CityCenter won't happen again in our lifetimes. Scale is only the start of the story. To discover what really makes CityCenter tick, it pays to look closer.



"We've compressed incredible variety and appeal into the CityCenter location," says Dennis. "Key to CityCenter's attraction is the architectural design, quality of construction, and intuitive service across the board."

Designing for people and posterity.

Understanding that a great urban place depends on diversity, MGM MIRAGE is upholding a commitment to involve people of varied ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, and beliefs in every aspect of CityCenter's planning, design, construction, and operation. The company, widely acknowledged for its diversity leadership, views this commitment as one of the keys to creating a truly vital community.

At CityCenter, sustainability is diversity's counterpart: In a fast-growing city in the middle of the desert, CityCenter's planners and designers reason it only makes sense to use resources wisely. The very look and feel of the place – dense and vertical versus flat and spread out – suggest the kind of conscious decisions made at every level.

Sustainability has economic dimensions as well as environmental ones: Done right, sustainable buildings consume less energy and residential owners can pay lower utility bills. They might also see tax benefits.

With these concerns top-of-mind, CityCenter aims to be the first project in Nevada – and by far the largest anywhere – to receive LEED™ (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED certification is a benchmark for building performance in the areas of human and environmental health. It will factor in CityCenter's site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

"Our pursuit of LEED is a leadership statement – a statement of MGM MIRAGE as a company and as a developer," says Dennis.

Architecture and the art of the possible.

Can a genuine, dynamic and alive destination be created in a single stroke? MGM MIRAGE believes so – as long as the ideal mix of vision, resources and talent are in place. To plan, design and build CityCenter, the company selected world-renowned architects and the country's foremost builders, Perini Building Company and Tishman Construction. This group, together with an expanded team of top interior architects and designers, started with a dense, yet flowing, master plan developed by New York's Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut and Kuhn (EEK) Architects. From there, design extended from buildings and infrastructure (including an automated people mover) all the way down to the colors of countertops and the cutlery on the table.

A soaring resort casino, a shimmering retail and entertainment district, and a private transportation system.

It's only fitting that the centerpiece of an urban destination in Las Vegas be dedicated to gaming. To design CityCenter's resort casino, MGM MIRAGE selected Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects. Based in New Haven, Connecticut, the firm is known for its accomplished designs for especially large-scale buildings. Not to disappoint: CityCenter's resort casino gracefully soars to 60 stories. Its design will reflect environmentally conscious thinking while setting a new global standard for gaming and leisure.

New York's Studio Daniel Libeskind designed the faceted-roof, the retail and entertainment district at the heart of CityCenter, an international gathering place and premier shopping destination combining art, design and experience. Throughout its interior, New York's Rockwell Group introduced a series of striking environments designed to invite and engage, intrigue and relax.

To oversee the design effort, MGM MIRAGE turned to Gensler, the world's largest design firm. In addition to providing the conceptual and management "glue" to help ensure CityCenter's elements would work together, Gensler also designed the automatic people mover stations that will serve as the community's primary system of transportation.

A community of urban resort residences.

Four distinct CityCenter residential opportunities provide a wide range of choices for prospective CityCenter owners.

"CityCenter's residential products are designed for a wide range of sophisticated, real estate consumers, from those who want to have a place of their own as a getaway to those looking for a principal residence on a full- or part-time basis," says Dennis. "There is also a condo hotel that provides an opportunity for permanent residency, vacation home or daily rentals."

Vdara Condo Hotel (renderings above) represents the latter type of opportunity. At Vdara, New York-based RV Architecture, LLC, led by Rafael Viñoly, demonstrates how a soaring, 56-story condo hotel deep within CityCenter can embody restfulness and restraint. Vdara's graceful lines and distinctive, patterned, glass skin command attention from afar. Furnishings and materials selected by acclaimed interior architects and designers Brennan Beer Gorman Monk Interiors create chic, contemporary environments infused with warmth and comfort.

Steps away from Bellagio and CityCenter's own resort casino, the 1,543 fully-furnished, fully-equipped residences of Vdara are slated to include studios, one-bedroom suites and one- and two-bedroom penthouses ranging from approximately 500 to 1,850 square feet.

"Our residential ownership condo products include two choices," Dennis continues. "The first is a branded serviced lifestyle opportunity associated with a very well-established, super-luxury brand, Mandarin Oriental."

As an integral part of the hotel, **The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas** were designed by New York-based Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates, a firm recognized for the excellence and innovation of its buildings in cities around the world. From the outside, the building's colors and textures respond to the desert surroundings and crystalline light.

On the inside, its 227 condominium residences are perched above the vibrant life of The Strip on the highest floors of the hotel. The design and architecture firms of Tihany Design, Kay Lang & Associates and Paige & Steele Interior Architects have realized living spaces characterized by an artful, Eastern approach married with a contemporary style in a rich selection of colors, materials and finishes. The residential condominium is slated to include one- and two-bedroom residences as well as two- and three-bedroom penthouses ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 square feet.

Adds Dennis, "Our second residential condo product is a chic and sophisticated destination, also extremely luxurious, for a generation looking for something new."

This opportunity, at **The Harmon Hotel & Residences** graces the top 20 floors of a sleek 40-story hotel tower designed by the London-based firm of Foster + Partners, a firm noted both for the thought-provoking modernity of its work as well as its beautifully engineered, intelligent and efficient structures.

Residences provide full access to the hotel's stylish and supportive amenities, which include a technologically advanced conference facility, concierge, salon, spa, and fitness center. In addition, The Harmon's residences deliver views that maximize sightlines in multiple directions, including up and down The Strip. In addition to its 400 hotel rooms, The Harmon is slated to offer 228 condominium residences featuring studios, one and two bedrooms, and penthouses ranging from approximately 800 to 4,200 square feet.

"For another home ownership alternative, **Veer Towers** is all about the urban experience at its fullest," says Dennis.

Helmut Jahn Architects' design for the twin, residential high-rises known as **Veer Towers (renderings above)** is a masterful translation of energy and excitement into physical form: Its two, 37-story glass towers, each housing some 352 condo residences, soar above the city. Inclined at a dramatic five-degree angle, the towers seem to interact with each other.

Lobbies and public spaces developed by designer Francisco Gonzalez-Pulido showcase impressive works of art with plenty of natural light. Inside the residences, Dianna Wong Architecture & Interior Design, Inc., has created living spaces that impart a pure, simple aesthetic and sense of openness that picks up where panoramas leave off.

Veer presents a level of support geared to individuals on the go. They can choose from studios, one- and two-bedroom flats and penthouses slated to range from approximately 500 to 2,600 square feet.

"Each of Veer's residential buildings makes a unique contribution to the whole," says Dennis. "Together, they'll shape the next evolution of Las Vegas and become a global showcase of urban design. "

"From a location standpoint, CityCenter is at the center of everything that is Las Vegas," he notes. "Because it has so much to offer, we believe CityCenter will attract people from all over the world."