

Los Angeles Times

January 10, 2013

Broad museum to get new neighbor: \$120-million apartment tower

Developer Related Cos. will hold a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday for a 'simple and elegant' 19-story high-rise that will share a plaza with the museum.

By Roger Vincent, Los Angeles Times



A rendering of the apartment tower to be built next to the Broad art museum on Grand Avenue. A Related Cos. executive said the high-rise would be “simple and elegant, not fancy and extravagant,” so as not to compete with the museum and Disney Concert Hall. (Arquitectonica)

The Broad art museum being built next to the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles will soon be flanked by another noteworthy structure: a \$120-million apartment tower linked to the museum by a shared plaza.

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held Thursday for the 19-story apartment complex that is part of the vaunted Grand Avenue Project launched more than a decade ago to transform barren blocks on Bunker Hill.

Developer Related Cos., which recently completed the \$56-million Grand Park between the Music Center and City Hall, is building the 271-unit apartment tower south of the Broad museum on Grand Avenue between 2nd and 3rd streets.

It is intended to be the first residential phase of the Grand Avenue Project, once valued at more than \$3 billion. The project was to include a dramatic complex of high-rise towers designed by architect [Frank Gehry](#) with shops such as an upscale grocery store, plush condominiums and a five-star hotel.

Those plans were shelved during the recession and remain on hold. Business mogul and philanthropist [Eli Broad](#) struck an agreement with Related Cos. and public officials during the economic downturn to build a contemporary art museum on one of the parcels intended for the Grand Avenue Project.

Related Cos.' apartment tower and the \$130-million museum, called the Broad, will fill in the west side of Grand Avenue, which has been vacant for decades after a mid-20th century urban renewal project that razed Bunker Hill's aging residential and commercial structures.

Related Cos. is working with the Broad to build the connecting plaza, which will include landscaping, seating and places to dine, said Bill Witte, president of Related California, a division of New York-based Related.

"Obviously, we are happy to get something kick-started on Grand Avenue, but we are particularly pleased that we are doing it in concert with a public museum and with restaurants," he said. "The idea is to create a whole place, not just a series of buildings."

Creating a suitable neighbor for two high-profile buildings was a challenge, Witte said.

The Gehry-designed Disney Concert Hall, clad in shiny stainless steel, is internationally famous and used as a symbol of Los Angeles in entertainment and advertising. The design of the Broad calls for a tilted honeycomb facade of precast concrete evocative of the modern art within.

"You don't want to compete with the concert hall and the museum design-wise," Witte said. "You don't need another signature building."

Related Cos. hired Miami-based architecture firm Arquitectonica, which specializes in high-rise residences, to come up with a design Witte envisions as "simple and elegant, not fancy and extravagant."

As planned by Arquitectonica, the building will be a rectangular white prism punctuated by windows of varying sizes and proportions meant to create a dynamic display on its facade. The windows will gradually change in scale, culminating in full glass at the ground level on Grand Avenue and at the top of the building facing Hope Street and the freeway.

Rents are expected to start at about \$1,800 a month, Witte said, though 54 units will be offered at subsidized rates. The unnamed complex is set to be completed by the end of next year; Eli Broad has said he expects the museum to open in late spring or early summer 2014.

Its 500 or so occupants are expected to include people who work downtown — perhaps even at the Music Center — as well as wealthy art patrons in search of a *pied-a-terre* near their preferred recreation, Witte said. He hopes the area will be high-brow but not boring.

"The L.A. Live area is bustling and lively and has a bit of [Times Square](#) about it," Witte said. "This is a little quieter, a little more upscale, but still in the middle of things."

Los Angeles County Supervisor [Gloria Molina](#), chairwoman of the joint powers authority that oversees the Grand Avenue Project, called the apartment development "a welcome next step in the Grand Avenue Project, adding to earlier components of Grand Park and the Broad."

Related Cos. will ask the joint powers authority for an extension of its February deadline to start developing other elements of the Grand Avenue Project, Witte said.

The apartment tower will be near a Red Line subway station and a planned stop for the underground regional connector light rail that will link the Blue Line and Exposition Line with the Gold Line and Union Station by 2019.

"Downtown continues to gather momentum as a residential, cultural, civic and entertainment hub for our city," said Councilman [Jose Huizar](#), vice chairman of the joint powers authority and Los Angeles City Council representative for the area. "We look forward to the other components of Grand Avenue as the economy strengthens."