

\$25 million makeover in works for north side mall

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A once vibrant outdoor pedestrian mall on St. Louis' north side is about to get new life.

Two groups are planning a \$25 million redevelopment that will transform the North 14th Street open-air mall into a mix of residential, retail and commercial use. A string of vacant buildings will be rehabbed in the first phase of the development. The development is near the popular Crown Candy Kitchen at 1401 St. Louis Ave.

The Old North St. Louis Restoration Group and the Regional Housing & Community Development Alliance (RHCDA) are partnering on the venture. In recent months, the groups have acquired more than 90 percent of the property in the development area.

The mall spans two blocks on 14th from St. Louis Avenue to Warren Street. In 1977, 14th Street was blocked off to create a pedestrian thoroughfare. In the years since, the mall has deteriorated. Today, most of the former storefronts are boarded up, even as the area around the mall has seen redevelopment in the form of rehabs and new construction.

Rosemann Architects designed the master plan for the new redevelopment effort, which includes opening up 14th Street to vehicle traffic and adding shops, apartments and office space. The residential units will include apartments, lofts and live-work spaces.

The RHCDA is funding the property acquisition through its Predevelopment Loan Fund that was established in 1993.

"We are known for tackling tough development projects and making them work with innovative and creative financing techniques," said Gary Mudd, director of development and marketing for the RHCDA.

The RHCDA is a not-for-profit developer and developing consultant. Since 2000, it has rehabbed or added several hundred housing units to underdeveloped urban areas in St. Louis. The RHCDA receives its funding from fees received for consulting jobs, grants and contributions. Stephen Acree is executive director of the RHCDA.