

“The Dolce Vita Tejo shopping centre is being reimaged as a retail resort”

Repurposing retail

With the ongoing shift to online, owners and developers must reinvigorate retail space. Savills experts select five of the most innovative solutions from around the world

The retail landscape is changing. As online shopping continues to rise, the overall need for physical space is decreasing, affecting values in some locations. They say necessity is the mother of invention, and owners and developers are finding increasingly creative solutions for transforming derelict and declining sites into desirable new developments. It goes without saying that no two sites are the same, and that what works in one will not necessarily work in another. Size and location are crucial factors, as is the need to develop a sustainable, future-proof building, both in terms of usage and environmental standards. Conversion to residential use is by no means the ‘silver bullet’, either. Here are five solutions, from alternatives such as office and industrial space to reinvigorating existing retail with mixed-use schemes that improve footfall.

Artistic licence

Vanke Times Center, Beijing, China
“A former shopping mall in Beijing’s busy Chaoyang district has been transformed into a 47,000 sq m mixed-use ‘urban complex’ that blends retail space with offices, exhibition space, art installations and a bamboo meditation garden. Designed by architects Schmidt Hammer Lassen, the basement and ground levels of the four-storey building are still dedicated to retail, while the upper floors house offices, event spaces and green spaces, including the second-floor meditation garden with its white stone gravel floors and bamboo forest. The entrance atrium is dominated by a striking suspended sculpture installation by French artist Charles Pétillon.”
Lesley Wang, Retail Director, Savills Beijing

Google it

One Westside, Los Angeles, US
“This redevelopment of the Westside Pavilion shopping mall in West Los Angeles will create 54,000 sq m of office space. Opened in 1985, the 72,000 sq m mall was once home to 70 retailers and a 12-screen cinema. The latter, along with a restaurant on the site, will remain when the conversion is completed in 2022. Developers Hudson Pacific and Macerich plan to spend up to \$475 million on improvements, using the mall’s high ceilings, skylights and multi-level atrium to create light-filled, state-of-the-art offices. Google has committed to a 14-year lease of the development and could also absorb a separate part of the mall, a former Macy’s store that is currently owned by GPI Companies.”
Joshua Gorin, Vice Chairman, Los Angeles Office Lead, Savills

Prime site

Amazon fulfilment centre, Ohio, US
“Once laying proud claim to the title of the world’s largest mall, Randall Park Mall in North Randall, near Cleveland, Ohio, has been repurposed into an 82,000 sq m warehouse by Amazon. The existing building was demolished in 2014 and replaced by a multi-level distribution centre, which opened in late 2018 and now employs more than 2,000 full-time staff. The \$177 million development is expected to attract new businesses, such as restaurants and retailers, back to the local area, and Amazon has already made substantial contributions to the local community, including \$76,000 to fund a senior citizen transport programme in North Randall.”
Adam Petrillo, Head of Industrial Services Group, Savills



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- 1 Vanke Times Center** A dramatic art installation dominates the atrium
- 2 Dolce Vita Tejo** Adventurous leisure and retail mix at this Lisbon development
- 3 Cantium Retail Park** Plans include 1,200 new homes in two blocks of flats

Leisure centre

Dolce Vita Tejo, Lisbon, Portugal
“The Dolce Vita Tejo shopping centre near Amadora is being reimaged as a retail ‘resort’, adding cultural and outdoor attractions to the traditional shopping experience. The country’s second-largest shopping centre attracts 15 million visitors a year – but the ambition is for it to become Portugal’s premier retail and leisure destination experience. The new concept will be renamed Ubbo, and add activities including miniature golf, a climbing wall and a water park to the existing two-level, 80,000 sq m shopping centre. The central square will also host a variety of events, and will be home to one of Europe’s largest permanent LED displays.”
Cristina Cristovão, Retail Director, Savills Portugal

Master plan

Cantium Retail Park, London, UK
“This redevelopment of a tired retail park on Old Kent Road in south-east London will transform it into a desirable residential, retail and dining destination. The designs, submitted by developer Galliard Homes and asset management company Aviva Investors, include 1,200 new homes in two blocks of flats – 35% of which would constitute affordable housing – along with 15,800 sq m of retail space, restaurants and a new park and square. The proposals are part of a public consultation under Southwark Council’s Area Action Plan, which sets out its visions, planning policies and masterplans for key regeneration areas.”
Mark Garmon-Jones, Director, UK Investment and Repurposing, Savills