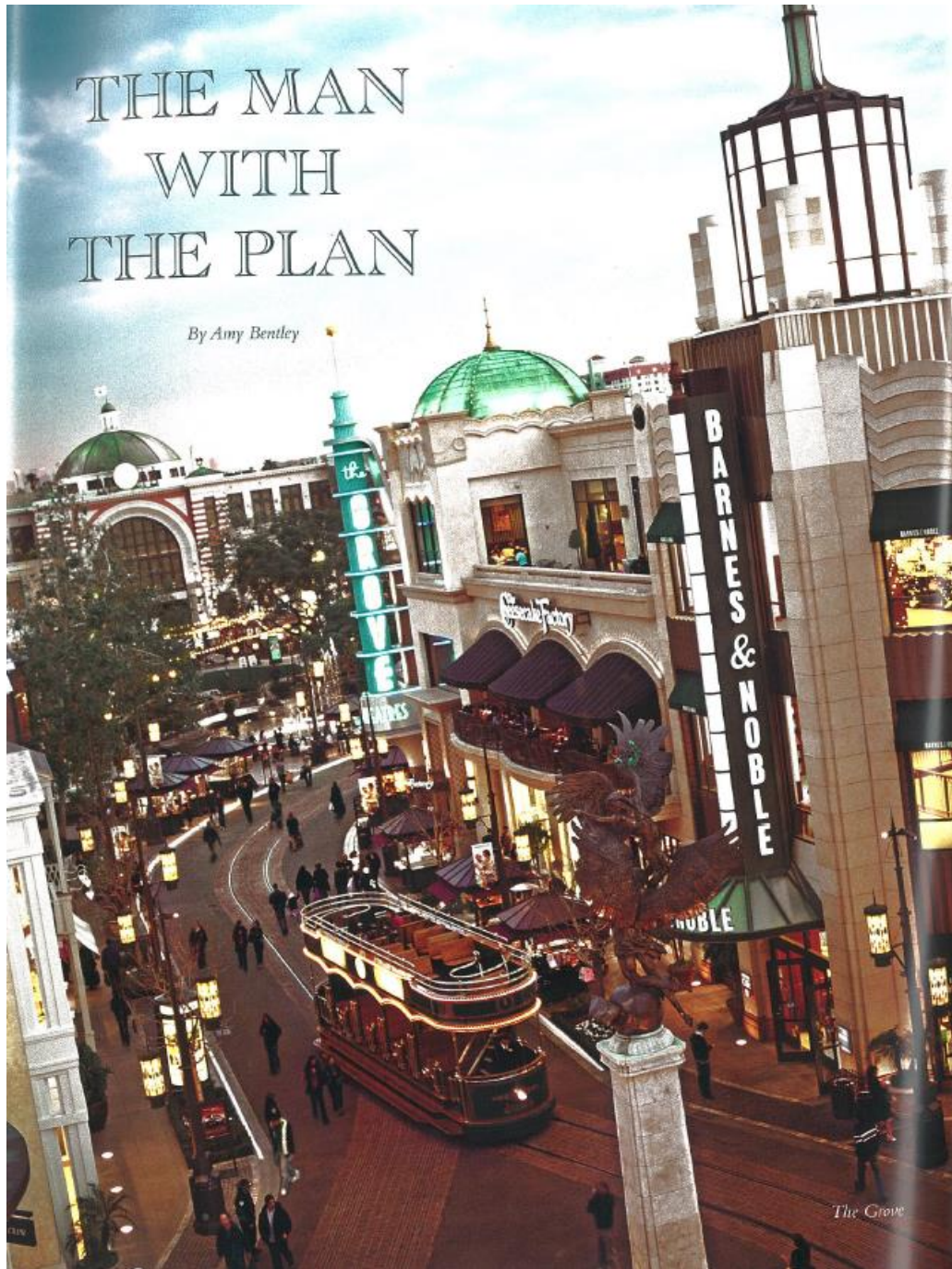


THE RESORT AT  
PELICAN HILL.  
NEWPORT BEACH

Fall 2015



## DEVELOPER RICK CARUSO TALKS SHOP

Once an epicenter for teenagers and all-around staple of American family life, the mall has evolved—or devolved—into an institution so withered that we can almost pronounce it dead. Rick Caruso's brand of shopping destinations may be the exception, and he may hold the keys to the revival of the shopping center.

A high-profile developer of residential, mixed-use and retail properties including The Grove in Los Angeles and Glendale's The Americana at Brand, Caruso has spent the better part of his career reimagining, reinventing and redefining today's shopping experience. Ironically, much of what's new has little to do with shopping. The secret ingredient? The experience.

Caruso and his company, Los Angeles-based Caruso Affiliated, have honed a signature approach to real estate development that enhances a sense of community.

"The underpinning to our success is the experience we wrap around these properties," said Caruso. "We don't build retail centers," he has said. "We build the center of town."

### THE ART OF PLACEMAKING

Caruso cut his teeth on The Grove, once a 20-acre piece of dirt adjacent to the historic Los Angeles Farmers Market that many had rejected because of its location. Caruso, as adamant then as he is today, insisted that if he could create a physical and emotional link between

the old and the new, he could effectively tug at the heartstrings of residents and integrate that space into their daily life. At The Grove, that link came in the form of the now-iconic Grove Trolley, which tools around the center, picking up, dropping off and delighting customers of all ages.

The emotional bond is fortified by another critical component: the customized guest experience. Caruso's reputation for upping the fun and convenience factors of shopping, dining and entertainment is actually driven by a strategic implementation of both

subtle and highly visible amenities.

### THE SUBCONSCIOUS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Forget the big box indoor mall of yesteryear, with its bland storefronts, recycled air and tacky fast food court. Caruso's projects are



*The Americana at Brand, Glendale California*

paean to scale and detail, design and comfort, all blended so seamlessly that shoppers get the sense that they are in perfect union with their surroundings.

"Experience means more than customer service," said Caruso. "It's about great architecture, great landscaping, the right music, cleanliness and safety. Every detail counts."

To the central fountains, pleasing architecture, trendy cafés, high-end shops and faux snowfalls, Caruso adds touches like concierge services for patrons. Planning a 9-year-old's birthday party? The concierge will arrange for everything from invitations to gift-wrapping, from a private trolley

to a table for 15 at the American Girl store.

"The primary shopper is always the woman," notes Caruso. "You want to create an experience where she doesn't feel she has to leave. So we create all these things to keep the family happy."

Caruso debuted a unique program during the 2014 holiday season, offering The Grove patrons free Uber rides to and from home. Caruso said the successful program would "most likely" be offered again this year, noting that it dovetailed perfectly with the company's mission.

"We are looking to transport people to a better frame of mind. We try to give our guests something they can't buy: time. If I drive you here, I'm giving you back time."

### A FUTURE IN SHADES OF GREEN

Caruso hopes to further his run with three major projects that tip their hat to the trend toward green and mixed-use development.

An open-air shopping "destination" in Carlsbad, dubbed the 85/15 plan for Caruso's pledge to develop just 15 percent of the more than 200 acres of strawberry fields, lagoon and open space, will be designed to fit Carlsbad's casual, upscale lifestyle. The plan was recently approved via a citizen-led initiative rather than through a typical review. "We wanted the residents to be part of the process," said Caruso, "so that the community would be proud to call it its own."

## "WE ARE LOOKING TO TRANSPORT PEOPLE TO A BETTER FRAME OF MIND."

—RICK CARUSO

In Santa Barbara County, Caruso is making his first foray into the hotel business. The company has acquired the 100-year-old Miramar Hotel,

along with 18 acres of oceanfront property in exclusive Montecito. Construction on a brand new structure, to be renamed the

Rosewood Miramar Beach Montecito, begins in February and has an opening target of 2018, at which time, said Caruso, "people will step out of their rooms onto one of the prettiest beaches along the West Coast."

In another move to preserve local history, Caruso is renovating the Masonic Temple building

in Glendale. Located across from The Americana at Brand, the nine-story edifice was built in 1927 and sat empty for 50 years. Caruso Affiliated is converting it to office space and has leased half of the building to a Fortune 300 company.



*Rendering of Rosewood Miramar Beach Montecito*

### WORK-LIFE BALANCE PUTS FAMILY FIRST

Caruso's family-oriented developments take a page from his personal credo, which also drives the company's in-house culture. A happily married father of four, Caruso considers his family his top priority, and he urges his 300 corporate employees to follow suit by encouraging them to attend soccer games, recitals and school events.

Caruso's family-oriented developments take a page from his personal

*Palisades Village (mixed-use dining, entertainment and retail collection in Pacific Palisades) is scheduled to open fall 2017.*

"You have to leave your house happy," he said. "Work is important, but family comes first. When you build your schedule around that, things tend to work better."

Having witnessed its impact on the shopping experience, Caruso Affiliated added its own corporate concierge to take care of employee chores, such as picking up the dry cleaning and bringing in meals for those working long hours. Caruso aims to ease what he calls the "second shift" so employees can end the day with time to spare. "The more I give back by reducing your workload during the second shift, the happier you'll be at home and the more productive you'll be at work."

Caruso, who has flirted with entering politics, isn't ruling out a future run. It wouldn't be his first time in the civic spotlight. In 1985, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley appointed Caruso commissioner for the Department of Water and Power, making



him the youngest commissioner in city history. In 2001, Mayor James Hahn appointed him to the Board of Police Commissioners; he was subsequently elected commission president.

All in all, Caruso can't complain.

"I'm fortunate in that I don't see any major blemishes in my life so far. I'm thrilled with my family, thrilled with the work environment and have enjoyed my public service. I don't sit around thinking about regrets," he said with a chuckle. "There's nothing you can do about it anyway." 📍



*Above: Rick Caruso.  
Left: 333 La Cienega  
(mixed-use luxury residential  
tower in Los Angeles) is  
scheduled to open fall 2018.*

*All images courtesy of Caruso Affiliated.*