

Back *in* time

New means old as Carytown shopping center's looks restored

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Cary Court, Richmond's oldest shopping center, is undergoing a much-needed face lift.

Owners of the center on West Cary Street in the heart of Carytown plan to restore its original 1938 art deco luster. The center was listed last year on the National Register of Historic Places.

Even the name will revert to its original moniker: Cary Court Park and Shop.

The \$1 million-plus project, which began early last month, should be completed by fall.

"It really is going to surprise everyone. It will have a lot more sparkle to it," said Bob Mills, a principal of Commonwealth Architects, the Shockoe Slip firm handling the project.

Renovating the center will help restore Cary Court to the magnet it once was for the Cary Street shopping district, said Jim McVey, vice president of Commonwealth Commercial Partners. It handles leasing and

management for the center's owner, Sauer Properties.

"Carytown is ready to explode, and this project will help push it that way," McVey said. "Cary Street has needed a focal point, and we want to be that."

Deborah Boschen, co-owner of Pink, the women's apparel store in Cary Court, agreed. She and other tenants in the center are excited about the changes. "The way it looked before, it had become an eyesore," she said.

In the interim, some shop owners have noticed a dip in sales since construction began.

Plans call for the original awning to be reused. It had been hidden under a sign facade added during a 1977 renovation.

Also, a custom-made match of the awning's pressed tin ceiling will be installed. A 14-inch stainless steel band around the edge of the canopy will be added. New store signs with neon lettering will be in-

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COURTESY OF COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS

In 1938, the Cary Court Park and Shop was the first center in Richmond to be built off from the road to provide off-street parking. Now, barriers keep shoppers Virginia and Bill Fergusson away from renovation areas. The project will restore Cary Court to its original art deco splendor.



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COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS

Carytown

— FROM PAGE C1

stalled to look similar to the signs used in 1938.

In addition, the parking lot also will be repaved, and parking will be added in the rear. The sidewalks in front of the stores will be colored concrete with granite pavers as a border. The sidewalk along Cary Street is being redone as well, with trees being added.

Cary Court Park and Shop was the first center in Richmond to be built off from the road to provide off-street parking. Additions were constructed in 1949 and in

1951. The center was renovated in 1960 and renamed Cary Court.

Talk about renovating the center had circulated for more than a decade.

Sauer Properties, a subsidiary of Richmond-based food manufacturer C.F. Sauer Co., bought Cary Court about 10 years ago. The company began working on the renovation idea about three years ago, McVey said.

Having the center listed on the National Register of Historic Places will let the company apply for tax credits once the renovation is done.

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