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## The Restoration Of Larchmont Mercantile Brings New Life To Los Angeles' Famed Larchmont Boulevard

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The exterior of Larchmont Mercantile PAVEL BENDOV / ARCHEXPLORER

Larchmont Village is one of the most unique neighborhoods in all of Los Angeles. Rich in history, it's one of few places that's walkable and feels like a true town in the middle of a big city. One of the hallmarks of the area is Larchmont Boulevard, which is known for its variety of retail shops, restaurants, and businesses. The opening of a new retail concept called the Larchmont Mercantile marks a new era for the neighborhood.

Located at 124 ½ -148 North Larchmont Blvd, the structure was purchased from Charlotte Lipson Trust by Los Angeles-based real estate investment firm Christina in 2018 for \$23.5 million, according to the Los Angeles Business Journal.

This is the first transfer of ownership for the building in more than a century. Lipson died in 2017 at age 100. Los Angeles Business Journal notes she was the daughter of Julius La Bonte, who was one of Larchmont Village's original developers during the 1920s. Christina is a Malibu-based real estate sponsor and manager. For nearly 45 years, the firm has sponsored direct real estate investments in the Westside region of Los Angeles. Christina offers accredited investors the opportunity to own coveted investment-grade real estate

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such as Larchmont Mercantile through its programmatic series of private equity real estate companies.

Now that the building is finally renovated, Larchmont Mercantile is officially the largest retail space on the boulevard, offering fourteen contiguous retail storefronts across 17000 square feet of commercial space.

“We believe that the project is ideally positioned to capitalize on the evolving demand of both consumers and retailers while staying true to the fundamentals that have historically contributed to the vibrancy of the neighborhood,” says Lawrence N. Taylor, Founder and CEO of Christina.

## **The Restoration**

Christina tapped fame architectural firm Gensler to renovate and restore the building. Given the history, it was badly in need of repairs and desperately needed to be brought up to code. It was also made ADA accessible in compliance with the City of Los Angeles' Disabled Access requirements. This included the path of travel upgrades to improve accessibility from the street and sidewalk to the entrances of each suite. Christina's reimagination of Larchmont Mercantile prioritizes the inclusivity of the high street retail shopping experience to ensure it can be enjoyed by all who love Larchmont Village.

Gensler designed four unique architectural facades to generate a cohesive vision that would maximize the retail openings while breaking up the long unassuming exterior to resemble distinct "buildings." This aesthetic was inspired by the property's original character and the main street charm of the area. “The vibrant shopping and dining district of Larchmont Village is an integral part of Los Angeles lifestyle. Our design preserves the historic nature of the street while providing a modern environment for the new tenants who are attracted to the district,” says Duncan Paterson, Principal, Gensler. “Larchmont Mercantile sets a new bar for design in the area while working with the charm and scale of the neighborhood.”

In addition to the extensive facade work, the team upgraded many of the storefronts, windows, doors, and building systems.

## **The Tenants**

While tenants have come and gone from Larchmont Boulevard over the years, especially during the pandemic, this building provides an excellent opportunity for retailers to build

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out the spaces from scratch. “Larchmont Mercantile will be a catalyst for the neighborhood, drawing innovative merchants and retail brands to one of the most desirable, pedestrian-oriented streets in Los Angeles. We saw the tremendous opportunity to restore the dated, landmark building into an inclusive, architecturally significant, and contemporary centerpiece in the Larchmont Village Shopping District,” says Taylor.

Christening the launch of Larchmont Mercantile is Holey Grail Donuts, an incredibly popular Hawaiian-based donut brand known for its taro-based treats. The company first gained recognition as a food truck in Kauai, quickly developing a cult following and expanding its presence across Hawaii. Larchmont Mercantile will be one of the brand's first locations in Los Angeles, with another store set to open in Santa Monica in Spring 2022. Skin Laundry, which is a chain of medspa spas known for pioneering the laser facial, has also signed a lease.

In addition to those retailers, Credo Beauty, Boba The Great, Hidden Jeans, and The Scent Room have also signed leases. Considering the beauty of the building and the dream location, more tenants will likely sign on soon.