



THE LOS ANGELES MALL, across from City Hall, is now desolate due to telecommuting and online access to municipal departments.

The fading face of Civic Center

L.A. struggles with how to repurpose spaces in its once-thriving mall since the pandemic

BY THOMAS CURWEN

When James Sears came back to work in the Los Angeles Mall in the fall of 2022, he hoped he wouldn't be alone. He had been away from his shoe repair shop for a year and a half.

The mall, across the street from City Hall in the Civic Center, was a wasteland, its walkways empty, the food court and most restaurants locked or boarded up.

Except for some palms and other trees, the landscaping had been reduced to dirt. The fountains were dry.

Sears, 81, tried to be patient. He dusted the counters and chairs. He cleaned up where there had been a water leak, and he waited. But no one came. One day, he posted a handwritten note and slid shut the steel gate.



JOHN SHEPPARD, a retired city real estate manager, recalls a once-vibrant downtown mall, now marked by empty courtyards.

CLOSED
Will reopen when people start to wear shoes.

Sears' decision reflects a truth about downtown Los Angeles that is forcing small businesses, landlords and property managers to think hard about the future. With buildings standing empty and shops still boarded up, the traditional use of space is no longer viable.

The Los Angeles Mall is unique in both design and ownership. It is located below street level — two sunken courtyards connected by a broad tunnel under Temple Street — and is owned and managed by the city of Los Angeles, which once counted on the income from tenants like Sears.

Sears has stopped paying rent, and while the city has forgiven what he owes, its Department of Water [See L.A. Mall, A10]

Jan. 6 defendants cling to Trump promise of pardons

California men among some 1,500 anxious for clarity on their future.

BY KEVIN RECTOR AND BRITNY MEJIA

Out of the more than 1,500 criminal defendants charged in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, David Dempsey is

among the most notorious.

The Van Nuys man was accused by federal prosecutors of being "one of the most violent rioters" that day. He was sentenced in August to 20 years in prison — one of the stiffest penalties to date — after pleading guilty to assaulting a law enforcement officer with a dangerous weapon and breaching the seat of Congress.

Now Dempsey is among a large number of Jan. 6 defendants who are anxiously awaiting news from President-elect Donald Trump on whether and how he will make good on a sometimes muddled campaign promise to pardon them.

"We're all on our heels and preparing for anything — whether that is nothing happening, or more individualized relief, or a blanket

pardon," said Amy Collins, a lawyer based in Washington, D.C., who represents Dempsey and several other Jan. 6 defendants.

"We really just don't know how to expect this process to go, because of how unconventional Trump is. He's full of surprises," she said. "We have to be ready for anything, and for any guidance that may come in a formal or informal way."

Trump backers stormed the Capitol in an effort to block Congress from certifying Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election, after the then-president held a rally near the White House that day. Federal authorities have said 140 police officers were assaulted — many were seriously injured, others died — and millions of dollars in damage was incurred.

[See Jan. 6, A5]

Argument for 'social housing' intensifies in L.A.

Tenants want to own their buildings, and 'mansion tax' could facilitate their cause.

BY PALOMA ESQUIVEL

Several years ago, investors bought the Koreatown fourplex where Mary Carmen Martinez had lived for nearly two decades and tried to push the tenants out.

Martinez, a restaurant worker, and her neighbors decided that they would fight to stay, hanging signs on the windows that said "No cash for keys" and going to court together to successfully challenge one neighbor's eviction.

She knew how critical rent-controlled apartments were for working people, how

her modest-sized unit helped her make a life in Los Angeles. When her children were babies, they could crawl around safely and not be cramped like they had been before. And her mother was able to come live with her, helping care for her kids while she made ends meet.

The apartment, she says, "is a whole life. A life of struggle, of scarcity, of living, of working."

Through persistence and a bit of good timing, she and her neighbors emerged successful after working with a nonprofit group that bought the building. Now, they're on the cusp of owning the property themselves — with a promise to keep it affordable and never make a significant profit from it.

If it works, Martinez, 56, said, "I'll feel like I've accomplished something."

[See Social housing, A6]



MARY CARMEN MARTINEZ, shown at her Koreatown apartment, is part of a group of tenants who are trying to bring a "social housing" model to their building.

Pertussis cases surge in Golden State

Highly contagious whooping cough is at levels not seen since the COVID crisis.

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

Whooping cough — a highly contagious and potentially dangerous illness — has surged in California this year, staging a comeback to levels not seen since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across California, there were fewer than 300 reported cases of whooping cough, also known as pertussis, all of last year. This year, 1,744 cases were reported statewide as of the end of September, according to the California Department of Public Health.

Those at highest risk from whooping cough are infants younger than 1 year old, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Other people at higher risk of severe illness include those who are immunocompromised or who have moderate-to-severe asthma.

In Los Angeles County, there have been 347 confirmed and probable whooping cough cases so far this year, up from 126 reported in all of 2023 and more than quadruple the 2022 total.

Nationwide, the number of reported whooping cough cases in 2024 is higher than what was reported in 2019, the last year before the pandemic. In recent years, many common respiratory illnesses saw large declines in transmission — in part because of the preventive measures put in place to combat the coronavirus.

So far in 2024, the number of whooping cough cases in Los Angeles County is 3.5 times higher than at the same point last year.

"We're definitely noticing that more and more schools are reporting several of their students having infection," said Dr. Nava Yeganeh, medical director for Vaccine Preventable Disease Control for the L.A. County Department of Public Health. "We're keeping a close eye on [See Pertussis, A8]"

Things to know about Bondi
Longtime Trump loyalist is the new pick to serve as U.S. attorney general after Gaetz's withdrawal. **NATION, A4**

Will ByteDance, Trump tango?
While president, he sought to ban TikTok. Could his return to office help save it? **BUSINESS, A7**

UCLA's Foster grasps rivalry
Snubbed by USC as a player, Bruins coach is highly motivated to beat the crosstown Trojans. **SPORTS, B12**

Weather
A touch of rain.
L.A. Basin: 61/55. **B8**

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