

REAL ESTATE

Sherman Oaks OKs Sunkist Building Revamp

DEVELOPMENT: Apartments and Trader Joe's in future for Riverside Drive site.

Four years in development and counting, the IMT Sherman Oaks Project, a redevelopment of the former **Sunkist Growers Inc.** headquarters, moved forward last month at a presentation where project representatives unveiled new designs incorporating revisions based on local input.

"It's a development that suits the neighborhood, the community of Sherman Oaks," said

Nancy Sogoian, co-chair of Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association's Sunkist Committee, which worked with **IMT Residential** of the design. During the Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council Planning and Land Use Committee hearing, the new design received a unanimous positive vote.

At the May 16 gathering, about 40 people

watched as land use attorney **David Rand** of **Armbruster Goldsmith & Delvac LLP** walked attendees through the amendments and adjustments made to IMT's plan.

Buffered by Calhoun Avenue to the east, Hazeltine Avenue on the west, Riverside Drive



PHOTO BY MICHAEL AUSHENKER

Packed: Attorney David Rand presents IMT plans at Sherman Oaks meeting.

north and Los Angeles River Channel and the Ventura Freeway to the south, IMT's project will include a redux of the building at 14130 Riverside Drive formerly occupied by the citrus marketer. Sunkist began relocating its headquarters out of Sherman Oaks in 2014; it now at a 50,000-square-foot site at 27770 Entertainment Drive in Valencia.

The building's new design will feature mixed-use elements such as a Trader Joe's. IMT worked with neighborhood representatives to reduce square footage. The residential portion of the project shrank by 87,500 square feet, while the retail area decreased by 11,800 square feet to about 27,500 square feet.

The residential section will include 249 units. The renovated Sunkist building intends to attract entertainment and technology tenants.

Project architect **Scott Johnson**, a principal

at **Johnson Fain**, told the Business Journal that density reduction and the expansion of open space occurred in two tranches – with a downsizing of density from 298 to 278 apartments two years ago, and then several months ago when "a proposal emerged to increase and out-board the open space along Hazeltine, which resulted in an additional reduction to 249."

The IMT Sherman Oaks Project now includes five times the open space required by the city of Los Angeles' municipal code.

Planning committee Chairman **Jeff Kalban** told the Business Journal following the presentation that the project will serve as "a benchmark for all future projects in Sherman Oaks."

At the meeting, spirits appeared high as Johnson unveiled his designs and discussed a buffer of hedges shielding residences along dead-ended Calhoun from the complex.

"(Per the residents on Calhoun), it will be a gated situation," Rand added.

Rand said that while there is no plan to lock up an onsite park overnight, they will install 24-hour security to discourage vagrancy and homeless encampments.

"We're setting a standard for Sherman Oaks," said Sherman Oaks Chamber of Commerce leader **Vicki Nussbaum**.

Renee Weitzer, senior planning deputy for the office of Council District 4 City Councilman **David Ryu**, conveyed Ryu's emphatic support for IMT's concept.

"In all of my 39 years of doing development, I don't remember a developer who completely turned around a project," Weitzer said.

Nevertheless, several longtime residents

along the proposed development's perimeter voiced their displeasure.

"They won over the community by exhaustion," said **Viviana Ramirez**, a neighbor since 1977. "I'm scared it's no longer going to be my neighborhood. It's not going to be peaceful, it's going to be downtown L.A."

Ultimately, Kalban said, progress in Sherman Oaks is inevitable and IMT has been working in tandem with the community to best mitigate inconveniencing neighbors.

"This is an example of the good things that can happen when a community works together with a developer. IMT has stepped up to the plate and should be commended," Kalban said.

Newhall's New Parking

On May 10, about 50 people took part as the city of Santa Clarita held its ribbon-cutting for the Old Town Newhall Parking Structure at the venue's entrance between Railroad Avenue and Main Street.

The new structure, located at 22551 9th St., now offers 372 more vehicular stalls to locals and visitors.

"We're not charging for parking," said City of Santa Clarita Communications Specialist **Mayumi Miyasato** of the free, non-meter site.

In line with the Santa Clarita 2020 plan, the parking structure joins mixed-use complex Newhall Crossings and a Laemmle theater, both due for a 2019 debut.

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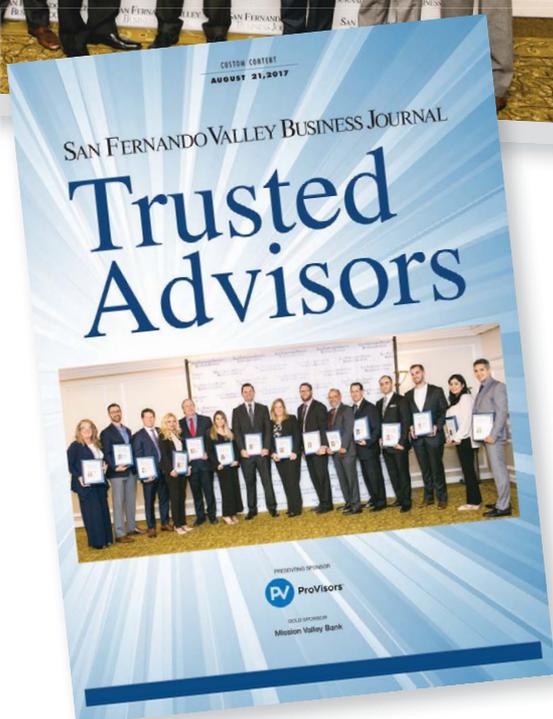
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