



9/18/06: One Hot Market

Downtown Speeds Along With 158 Projects

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“It seems that no matter where one looks, construction crews are working in the shadows of cranes and empty lots are giving way to gleaming multi-million dollar (in a couple cases, multi-billion dollar) developments that are bringing thousands of new residents into the heart of the city.”

AMBASSADOR HOTEL SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC PARK

Pre-construction work and grading have started on the multi-school campus at the site of the former Ambassador Hotel west of Downtown. Plans call for building an 825-seat school for kindergarten through third grade students; a 1,400-seat facility for fourth through eighth graders; and a 2,150-seat high school. The campus will include two gymnasiums, a swimming pool, a soccer field and extensive athletic facilities. The upper level of the former Coconut Grove nightclub will become a 522-seat auditorium, while the lower level will hold dining facilities and a cafeteria. The 24-acre Wilshire Boulevard site will also have a one-third-acre public park, which will include an art installation relating to the social justice ideals of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in the hotel. The \$55 million elementary school is expected to break ground this fall. The \$150 million middle and high schools are scheduled to begin construction in summer 2007 and finish two years later.

LAPD HEADQUARTERS

The Department of Public Works' Bureau of Engineering is still trying to raise additional fund and negotiate on the single bid from contractor Tudor Saliba on the proposed 11-story, 500,000 square foot police headquarters at First and Spring streets. Currently the budget for the project stands at \$340 million. Negotiations should be finished in the next few months, with construction starting sometime after that, said Sam Tanaka, a Bureau of Engineering program manager. The proposed structure will include police administrative and investigative offices, a Compstat Command Center, a 450-seat auditorium and a 200-seat café. Community protests last year prompted the Police Commission to include a public park in the design; now a 130-by-200 foot park-like stretch of grass and trees is planned for Second Street, and there will be an expanded plaza on First Street. Downtown-based DMJM, a firm with experience in designing high-security public buildings, is the architect. Construction was originally scheduled to finish by June 2008.

GOLD LINE EASTSIDE EXTENSION

The pair of boring machines tunneling the underground section of Metro's light rail connector to East Los Angeles have completed the first phase of work to the station at First and Soto streets, and will now continue on to First and Lorena streets. The six-mile, \$899 million project will extend the Gold Line from Union Station in Chinatown across the 101 Freeway via a reinforced concrete bridge, the pouring of which should begin in coming weeks. Realignment of the First Street sidewalks between the future Alameda Street/First Street station and the First Street Bridge will also start soon. Officials hope for a completion date in late 2009, and they estimate the extension could eventually carry as many as 23,000 riders a day.

CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

A staff of 174 has moved into the \$80 million headquarters of this nonprofit healthcare foundation since its grand opening in April. The four-story, 201,140 square foot building stands on a 6.5-acre campus at Main and Alameda streets near Union Station; it also houses the Center for Nonprofit Management and Community Partners on the building's second floor. The development, which includes research facilities, meeting spaces and a courtyard, was designed by the architecture firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios. The California Endowment had been based in the western San Fernando Valley.

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE

Bidding for the second phase of a 1 million square foot courthouse at First Street and Broadway in the Civic Center has been cancelled. Plans had called for the structure to hold 41 courtrooms, 40 judges' chambers and office space for federal agencies. The 3.6-acre site was purchased from the State of California for \$2.5 million. The project next to City Hall was budgeted at \$314 million. The project could eventually return, though changes are expected if it does.

COLBURN SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS EXPANSION

A topping-off ceremony was held in July and construction is scheduled to wrap by next summer on the \$120 million expansion of the Colburn School at 200 S. Grand Ave. Crews have completed the project's 12-story exterior, which will house up to 145 students, and drywall, plumbing fixtures, electrical and air conditioning systems are being installed throughout the project, said Colburn spokeswoman Barbara Vyden. The 326,000 square foot expansion will hold Colburn's new college-level Conservatory of Music and the expanded community program, and will feature a 200-seat performance venue along with classrooms, a 7,000 square foot rehearsal hall, 50 practice rooms, a cafeteria and offices. Downtown-based Pfeiffer Partners is the architect. The school is expected to open in fall 2007.

USC GALEN EVENTS CENTER

Completion of USC's new arena at Figueroa Street and Jefferson Boulevard in the Figueroa Corridor is slated to finish this fall, just in time for the beginning of volleyball season, said Carol Dougherty, senior associate athletic director at the school. The \$89 million, 225,000 square foot structure on seven acres just west of the 110 Freeway will seat 10,258 for the 130 events it will host each year, including all men's and women's home volleyball and basketball games. The complex will include athletic department offices and three practice gymnasiums as part of its Athletic Pavilion. A garage will accommodate 1,200 parking spaces. The arena is being designed by the Downtown office of architecture firm HNTB.

LIBRARY COURT

Units in the \$20 million Library Court are set to open this month. The project at 630 W. Sixth St. near the Richard J. Riordan Central Library, features 90 condominiums ranging from 570 to 1,185 square feet. With finished walls, granite countertops and checkered windows that vary in translucency, they are intended to provide a Manhattan feel in Downtown Los Angeles, said Walter Eeds, CEO of Newport Beach-based developer Greystone Group. Architect Brenda Levin took the original structure – a 1960s international-style office building – down to the studs and added a top floor, removed material for the interior courtyard and made room for 10,000 square feet of retail space. Six restaurants are currently located on the first floor, including Wolfgang Puck's Gourmet Express and Mitaki Sushi. Units start at \$420,000.