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SAN PEDRO

Work nears for old courthouse site

Developers eye end of summer to start mixed-use apartment mid-rise



An eight-story mixed-use apartment complex with a ground floor public food hall will replace the demolished county courthouse at Sixth and Centre streets in San Pedro.

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After years of planning, construction is almost ready to launch an eight-story, mixed-use apartment mid-rise that will take the place of San Pedro's demolished courthouse.

Named Acqua Via – and featuring a ground floor public food hall named Union Hall – the development, 505 S. Centre St., will feature 300 apartments, with 20% of those set aside as affordable units.

Construction is expected to take about 28 months, bringing it into 2025.

“We’re working hard at it,” said Bill Cockrum, senior managing partner and president of Genton Cockrum Partners. “Our goal is to start construction by the end of summer, probably in September. There’s a lot to get accomplished, but we’re driving toward that deadline.”



Among the first stages of work on the mixed-use apartment complex at Sixth and Centre streets in San Pedro will be to remove the foundation of the old courthouse and surface parking lots, which have been kept in place to hold down the dust on the cleared site.

The project hasn’t been easy, Cockrum said.

From the advent of COVID-19 pandemic and now with high construction costs, staff shortages and an uncertain economy with rising interest rates, the challenges have been many, he said.

The focus on the ground floor retail space is a large food hall that would include full kitchens and room for food vendors, with separate inside spaces providing areas for

live music, gaming and golf swing suites. The goal: to activate the corner of Sixth and Centre streets, creating an anchor tenant for the downtown.

Planned outdoor space could seat some 80 people for live performances. That area would also include sound and video screens for showing sports or other live events, as well as space for art shows or exhibits.

"We've been at this (business) for 30 years, so we've been through a few cycles," Cockrum said of the ebb and flow of the economic and construction environment.

Initially, he said, developers were looking at the ground-floor space for a Trader Joe's.

But officials for the popular market felt their Western Avenue location served the area already.

The food hall, a concept that's caught on in many areas, including New York and Denver, will be called Union Hall, a hat tip to the developer's use of labor union construction.

Parking for 500 will be underground.

The courthouse, demolished in early 2022, operated from 1969 to 2014 and was among many county courthouses closed because of budget constraints. It handled criminal, civil, small claims and traffic matters in its six courtrooms and was opened to replace older courtrooms on the upper floors of the San Pedro Municipal Building.

The building was declared surplus property in 2016, opening the way for discussions to redevelop the 1.8 acre blocklong parcel at Centre and Sixth streets in downtown San Pedro.

Originally, construction was expected to begin in late summer of 2022.

At the request of the community, art deco elements were added into the design to better blend with San Pedro's historic downtown architecture. Early renderings showed a mostly contemporary look.

The project idea was launched in 2017 when the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved buying the property for \$5.2 million.

With the new L.A. waterfront development – dubbed West Harbor – coming online in the next couple of years, Cockrum said, San Pedro appears to have hit an "inflection" point.

Much of the waterfront infrastructure is getting finished, with West Harbor set to open sometime in 2024. Combined with a planned amphitheatre on the waterfront,

Cockrum said, and events such as the upcoming grand prix boat races coming later this month to the Port of Los Angeles, San Pedro appears to be coming into its own.

“Now,” he said, “it’s getting to the end and getting to the fun stuff, activating it. As it gets closer, it’s like aligning a Rubik’s cube.”



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Donna Littlejohn received a bachelor's degree (double major) in journalism and political science from California State University, Long Beach, and began her career in daily journalism with the San Pedro News-Pilot, transferring to The Daily Breeze staff in 1998 after the San Pedro publication closed.

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