



Developer Unveils Ambassador Gardens

October 18, 2013 Rachel Young



City Ventures unveiled the first model of a luxury development called Ambassador Gardens located at the historic former site of the Ambassador College at a private dedication ceremony on Thursday. Ambassador Gardens will open to the public on Saturday, October 19.

“After almost four years of entitlement work, infrastructure and construction, we’re finally ready to show Pasadena what we’ve been working on,” project overseer Ben Besley said.

The Ambassador Gardens has been in the planning and development for the last 13 years. City Ventures obtained the project four years ago, and expects the project to take four more years to finish the 150 townhouses and flats along South Orange Grove, just one block from Old Pasadena. The townhomes and flats are priced from the low \$1 millions.

CEO of City Ventures Mark Buckland said, “We’ve been doing this a long time, more than 500 projects in California, and this is probably the best project we’ve ever done. We were able to spend a lot of time paying attention to all the details.”

Most impressed by the detailed cabinetry, Buckland said new homes usually do not have such craft inside. The attention to detail by City Ventures was encouraged by West Pasadena Resident’s association, the Singer Park Neighborhood Association, Pasadena Heritage and City Hall who helped imagine the property.

“It’s a beautiful place. I don’t know of another 19 acre property like this in Southern California. It’s got 100-year-old houses, 120-year-old trees and the city of Pasadena and all the neighbors have trusted us to take care of everything and very carefully build new homes within this historic fabric,” Ben Besley, Vice President of Development for City Ventures said.

VIP’s in attendance included Mayor Bill Bogaard, City Councilmember Margaret McAustin, City Councilmember John Kennedy, Richard Bruckner, City of Los Angeles Planning Director, architect Ron Nestor and visionary Mark Paolucci. Initially when the property went on sale in 1999, the year Bogaard first took office as Mayor, the Worldwide Church of God planned to demolish the existing sites and build 2,000 residential units.

“You can be sure that was not well received at City Hall because we recognized and because the neighbors treasured the elegance of this property and the structures that were on it,” Bogaard said.

Instead of the 2,000 units, about 71 units are currently underway by City Ventures, about 40 units were already on the property and up to 80 units are still under discussion to be located on the corner of Green Street and St. John Avenue, making for slightly over 200 residences.

“The City Ventures’ home building on the Ambassador College Property represents the final element, a very significant and important element of the reuse of 34 acres... What we see with the high school, what we see with Ambassador Auditorium, what we see with the homes and private ownership on South Orange Grove and the other structures that are here that have been upgraded and serving as apartments is something in the end, its not only a special contribution to southwest Pasadena, but I think almost unique entitlement process,” Bogaard said. “I’m delighted and proud of what City Hall accomplished in regard to this property.”

Called The Bungalows, the homes are designed to look and live similarly to the arts and crafts-style homes in the iconic Pasadena neighborhood. The Bungalows will include 10 townhouses and flats with architecture inspired by historic Pasadena designs in Craftsman and English Arts and Crafts styles. The residences are designed by William Hezmalhalch Architects and will include living spaces that range from 1,884 to 3,352 square feet.

“I think it’s spectacular and it’s even better than I imagined. The interior design team and the landscape team did such a good job and really pulled it all together,” the beaming architect Ron Nestor said.

The restored Merritt Mansion, one of Pasadena’s cherished pieces of history, was also unveiled serving as The Ambassador Gardens sales and design center. The mansion is expected to be sold as a single family home after the sales of The Bungalows are complete.

Pasadena Symphony and Pops, who is the resident orchestra in the Ambassador Auditorium, delighted guests with musicians dotting the property. The American Legacy Fine Arts provided the artwork for the project.

“Being able to preserve this piece of Pasadena history, to see it come to life again is so exciting. I Just love this sumptuous setting. My life is about art and I just want to share it with you,” artist Elaine Adams said.

The Ambassador Gardens is located where classrooms and administrative space for Ambassador College, operated by the Worldwide Church of God, once stood. The majority of the site was assembled in the 1960s and it was landscaped with lush greenery and trees, Craftsman and Japanese-garden elements such as lantern-lit walkways, cascading waterfalls and fountains, which still exist today.

“This campus is a truly unique place, it’s taken decades to become what it is and its been shaped by the people who have come before us. What’s remarkable about this point in time, is that this chapter in the story of this amazing place has been written and continues to be written by the people who are here tonight,” Besley said.

<http://www.pasadenanow.com/main/developer-unveils-ambassador-gardens>