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The Latest Proposal For Garden Grove's 'Rusty Skeleton?' Affordable Senior Housing



Thy Vo/Voice of OC

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The latest developer attempting to revive Garden Grove's 'rusty skeleton' wants to convert the nine-story, rusted steel structure on Garden Grove Boulevard into 400 units of affordable senior housing, the largest affordable housing project in the city's history.

The proposal would include an "inter-generational" partnership with the Boys & Girls Club where seniors would mentor, volunteer and interact with youth from the Boys & Girls Club, said developer Alexis Gevorgian, a managing member of the firm AMG & Associates.

"Studies show seniors live longer when they are associated with youth," said Gevorgian.

The project would build on the existing steel frame, and includes 25,503 square feet of community rooms and recreational space and 12,938 square feet of retail on the first floor. It requires 310 parking stalls.

This latest proposal for the Galleria project, which is requesting an increase in density from the original 66 luxury condominiums planned for the site, will be right across the street from the city's largest mixed-use development, the Brookhurst Triangle project. That development includes 674 units of mid- to high-end apartments, 272,000 square feet of open space and 65,000 square feet of commercial space.

The original plans for the Garden Grove Galleria project stalled in 2009 when the bank financing the project refused to pay the developer's construction costs, citing a decline in the property's value during the economic downturn.

Since then the building's steel skeleton has sat unused and undeveloped, irritating residents and prompting [calls from some city council members](https://voiceofoc.org/2015/11/demolition-becoming-more-likely-for-garden-grove-eyesore/) (<https://voiceofoc.org/2015/11/demolition-becoming-more-likely-for-garden-grove-eyesore/>) to act on a 2013 order to demolish it.

Efforts to revive the site have been mired in lawsuits over the original project and both the bank, Cathay Bank, and property owner, the Emlen W. Hoag Foundation, have tried for several years to find a new developer to take over the project and [avoid a demolition order](https://voiceofoc.org/2015/12/garden-grove-postpones-vote-on-demolition-of-galleria-project/). (<https://voiceofoc.org/2015/12/garden-grove-postpones-vote-on-demolition-of-galleria-project/>)

Then in August 2016, Cathay Bank sold its interests in the property to AMG & Associates, ending the legal battle and allowing the project to move forward.

Gevorgian estimates the project will appear before the city's Planning Commission in the next 45 days. And there's urgency, he said, because a federal tax credit the project is relying on will expire in February. The company will need to secure all entitlements to the property before then.

If the project is approved by the Planning Commission and City Council, Gevorgian hopes the company will be able to break ground within six months.

The additional 400 units would make a modest dent in the city's long waiting list for affordable housing and rental assistance.

There are roughly 15,000 people on the city's waiting list for Section 8 federal housing assistance, according to Deputy City Manager Maria Stipe. The list receives between 100 and 200 new applicants a year, and in the first nine months of 2017, just 17 people were given housing assistance, said Stipe.

In August, the city celebrated the grand opening of Wesley Village (<https://www.jamboreehousing.com/affordable-housing-communities/properties-list/wesley-village?rwr-type=resident>), a multigenerational housing project by Jamboree Housing, which includes a senior living and adult day care facility as well as a Head Start preschool center. The 47-unit development, which sits on property owned by the Garden Grove United Methodist Church, includes 31 family units and 16 units for senior citizens.

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